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1817



HELPS TO COMPOSITION;

OR,

SIX HUNDRED

SKELETONS OF SERMONS;

SEVERAL

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SERMONS PREACHED

BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY.

BY THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M. A.

Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ST. PAUL.

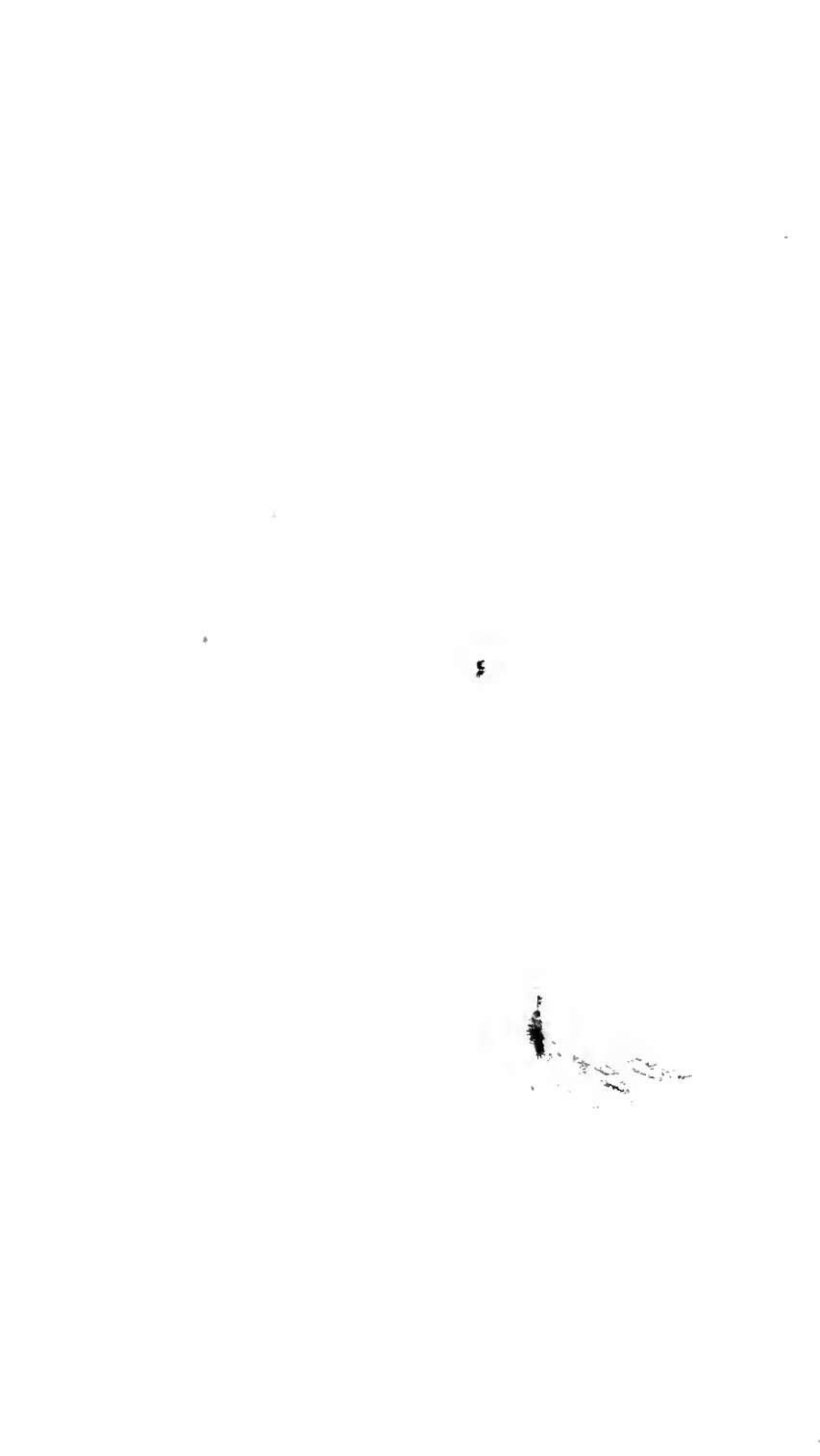
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PREFACE.

THE following work was published separately: the first volume, containing Claude's Essay, with the Sermon on the Gospel Message, and the four Skeletons which are annexed to that Sermon *for the purpose of briefly illustrating Claude's Essay*, and the first hundred of the Skeletons, was published first; and passed through *three editions*. The other four volumes followed.^a In the Prefaces belonging to the different parts of the work, the Author stated all that he judged necessary for explaining his views of composition in general, or of the doctrines which he has delivered in his own compositions in particular. And that his sentiments may no longer be detached, he now presents them to the reader in one view, but under distinct heads.

I. *Why the Author published Claude's Essay.*

THIS Essay on the composition of a Sermon was originally written by the Rev. John Claude, a minister of the reformed religion in France, who preached upwards of forty years with great acceptance, first at St. Afrique,

^a The author renews, with unfeigned gratitude, his former acknowledgment of the very kind and liberal assistance, which he received from the University in the first publication of this work: and if any thing could have stimulated him to greater exertion in preparing it for the press, it would have been the desire he felt of rendering it not altogether unworthy of their patronage. He is proceeding in a similar work, which will be posthumous: but whether *as an whole* he live to finish it or not, every distinct Skeleton will be left, without any further correction, ready for the press.

afterwards at Nismes, and lastly at Charenton. It was translated from the French, and published in the year 1778, by the Reverend Robert Robinson, who also was a man of very considerable erudition, and who presided over a dissenting congregation in Cambridge. The Essay itself appears admirably calculated to answer the end proposed: but, it must be confessed, the notes which the translator has added, and which are at least four times as large as the original work, are not altogether so unexceptionable as might be wished. The compiler says in his preface (which will enable us to form a pretty accurate judgment of the whole), "The following short Essay was published in its present form for the use of those studious ministers in *our* protestant *dissenting* churches, who have not enjoyed the advantage of a regular academical education." He afterwards informs us, that he "translated the Essay for his own edification; then added several quotations, intending them for small exercises for one of his sons; and that, ten years afterwards, having sprained his ankle, he improved the leisure which this accident occasioned, in preparing this book for publication." And then he concludes with saying, "This plain tale is the best account I can give of a work, which it might have appeared arrogant in me to publish, and of a collection of notes, which *must seem an odd farrago*, unless the different views of the compiler at different times be considered."

It would be invidious and unbecoming to suggest any thing unnecessarily that should depreciate the compiler's merit. But it will be expected that some reason should be assigned for the omission of almost all his notes. We are under the necessity therefore of observing (what any person who reads a single page of them *must see*) that they were compiled for "*dissenting* ministers;" and that, after making all possible allowance for the views of the compiler, they are indeed "AN ODD FARRAGO." But a far more serious ground of objection against them is, that they are replete with levity, and teeming with acrimony against the established Church. The preface itself, short as it is, will afford us but too just a specimen, both of the matter contained in them, and of the spirit which they breathe throughout. "*I will venture to affirm*, says Mr. Robin-

son in spite of Lord Clarendon, and Dr. Burn, that we have not a brother so ignorant, and so impudent, as to dare to preach to seven old women in an hogstie, what Doctors and Bishops have preached before Universities and Kings."

The reader may judge from hence of some out of many reasons, which induce the Editor, as a minister of the established Church, to publish this Essay without the incumbrances with which the translator had loaded it. There can be little doubt but that the notes have prevented many from perusing it, who might otherwise have been much profited by its contents: and it is hoped, that, now it is sent forth in its native dress, and may be read without exciting either bigotry or disgust, it will become an object of more general attention.

II. *Why he annexed the Gospel Message and the four Skeletons to it.*

THE various methods, which Mr. Claude has proposed for the treating of different subjects, are all exemplified in the Skeletons annexed to his Essay. But the particular *topics*, which he mentions as Sources of invention, may be rendered more profitable by being brought *into one view*. And the *different modes of treating* subjects, which he suggests, may be more clearly understood, by being all exemplified *on One Text*. This idea having occurred to the Author's mind, he has maturely weighed it; and the more it engaged his attention, the more firmly he was persuaded of the utility of carrying it into effect. But he was aware, that, to propose a text in four different points of view, without, introducing any material repetitions, was no easy matter. If indeed he had chosen to take separate parts of the text for the several discourses, he would have found it easy enough to avoid the most distant approach to tautology: but such a mode of discussing subjects he does not altogether approve: the principal points in every text ought, in his judgment, to be the leading features of the discourse formed upon it: and upon that principle he has constructed the Skeletons which are annexed to this Sermon. Another and a far greater difficulty, was to include no less than twenty-seven different topics in one discourse, and yet to preserve (what

no sermon should want) unity and perspicuity throughout. But being very solicitous that nothing should be omitted which could contribute to the perfection and usefulness of that invaluable Essay, he has made the attempt: with what success he leaves to a candid public to determine. He begs the reader, however, to take notice, that *the introducing of all the topics into one discourse is a thing by no means to be imitated*. It is done here only with an intention to set in a clear light the nature and use of those topics. In fact, a person who would write a judicious discourse, must not only not undertake to bring in *every* topic, but he must not fetter himself by an endeavour to illustrate *any* topic. He must consult the nature of the text or subject he is discussing, and must follow whithersoever that may lead him. The mind filled with any subject, will naturally suggest such topics as are most calculated to reflect light upon it: whereas a regard to this or that particular topic will be very likely to render the discourse incoherent and confused.

III. *The nature and intent of his own Skeletons.*

INSTRUCTION relative to the composition of Sermons is of great importance, not only to ministers, but, eventually, to the community at large. And it were much to be wished that more regard were paid to this in the education of those who are intended for the ministry. It has sometimes been recommended to the younger clergy to transcribe printed sermons for a season, till they shall have attained an ability to compose their own. And it is to be lamented, that this advice has been too strictly followed: for, when they have once formed this habit, they find it very difficult to relinquish it: the transition from copying to composing of sermons is so great, that they are too often discouraged in their first attempts, and induced, from the difficulty they experience in writing their own sermons, to rest satisfied in preaching those of others. Hence has arisen that disgraceful traffic in printed sermons, which instead of meeting with encouragement from the clergy, ought to have excited universal indignation. To remove, as far as possible, these difficulties from

young beginners, is the intent of these Skeletons. The directions given in Mr. Claude's *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, which is prefixed to these Skeletons, cannot fail of being helpful to every one who will study them with care: but there appears to be something further wanted; something of an intermediate kind between a didactic Essay like Claude's, and a complete Sermon; something, which may simplify the theory, and set it in a practical light. Mr. Claude himself has interspersed several sketches, with a view to illustrate the different parts of his Essay: but these, though suited to the end which he proposed, are not sufficiently full to subserve the purpose of which we are now speaking.

A scheme, or Skeleton ^b of a discourse, is that species of composition to which we refer. It should be not merely a sketch or outline, but a fuller^c draft, containing all the component parts of a Sermon, and all the ideas necessary for the illustration of them, at the same time that it leaves scope for the exercise of industry and genius in him who uses it.^c The pious and learned Bishop Beveridge has written four volumes of such Skeletons, under the title of "Thesaurus Theologicus:" and if the Author had intended them for publication, he would probably have so completed his design as to supersede the necessity of any similar work. Even if the Editor had disposed the materials in a more judicious method, they would have appeared to much greater advantage. That so great a Divine should write so many compositions of that kind *solely for his own use* is a clear demonstration of his judgment with respect to the utility of them in general: and the circumstance of his never intending them for the public eye, is sufficient to exculpate any one from the charge of presumption who should attempt an improvement.

The particular intent of the Skeletons.

The following Skeletons are not intended particularly to exemplify Mr. Claude's rules: the examples, which he himself adduces in confirmation of his directions, are sufficient for his purpose;

^b For this use of the word "Skeleton," see Johnson's Dictionary.

^c A Student would find it not unprofitable, in this view, to analyze some judicious Sermons, and to make use of those *analyses* as the groundwork of his own compositions.

and the multiplying of other examples would rather have diverted the reader from his subject than aided him in the prosecution of it. There are indeed all the different kinds of discussion contained in the Skeletons. But instead of illustrating *particular* rules, they are *all* intended rather to illustrate one *general* rule; namely, to shew how texts may be treated in a *natural* manner. The Author has invariably proposed to himself three things as indispensably necessary in every discourse; UNITY in the design, PERSPICUITY in the arrangement, and SIMPLICITY in the diction.^d

How they were composed. It may perhaps be not unuseful to point out the manner in which these discourses are formed. As soon as the subject is chosen, the first enquiry is, *What is the principal scope and meaning of the text?* Let us suppose, for instance, that the text of the ninth Skeleton were the subject. Upon examination, it appears to be a soliloquy of the Deity, expressing what He had seen to be the workings of Ephraim's mind, and declaring the emotions which the sight of his penitent child had occasioned within his own bosom. Having ascertained this, nothing is to be introduced into any part of the discourse, which does not, in some way or other, reflect light upon the main subject. The next enquiry is, *Of what parts does the text consist, or into what parts may it be most easily and naturally resolved?* Here an obvious division occurs: it is evident that the text contains, 1st, The reflections of a true penitent; and, 2dly, The reflections of God over him. This division being made, the discussion of the two parts must be undertaken in their order. But how shall we elucidate the first head? Shall we say, that the penitent is roused from his lethargy, humbled for his transgressions, stimulated to prayer? &c. &c. Such a distribution would, doubtless, contain many useful truths; but they are truths which may be spoken from a thousand other texts as well as this; and after they had

^d It is not intended by "Simplicity of diction" that the language should never be figurative, or sublime: the language ought certainly to rise with the subject, and should be on many occasions nervous and energetic: but still, it is a vicious taste to be aiming at, what is called, *fine language*: the language should not elevate the subject, but the subject, it.

been spoken, the people would still be left without any precise knowledge of the portion of Scripture which should have been opened to them. If the text did not contain any important matter, it would *then* be proper, and even necessary, to enter in this general manner into the subject: but if the text itself afford ample means of elucidating the point that is under discussion, it is always best to adhere to that. In order then to enter fully into the subject, we examine more carefully, *what are the particular reflections which God noticed in the penitent before us?* And here we observe a further discrimination: the penitent's experience, is delineated at two different periods; one in the beginning, and the other in the progress, of his repentance. This distinction serves to open an easy method for arranging what shall be spoken.

Upon investigating still more accurately his expressions, it appears that he laments his past incorrigibility in the ways of sin, and, with an humble expression of his hope in God, implores converting grace. Soon afterwards, reflecting with a kind of joyful surprise upon the progress he has made, he thankfully ascribes the honour to God, through whose illuminating and converting grace he has been enabled to make such attainments. This experience being not peculiar to Ephraim, but common to all true penitents, we illustrate and confirm it by suitable passages of holy writ. *A similar process is then pursued with respect to the second head: and when that is arranged and discussed in like manner, we proceed to the application.* The nature of the application must depend in some measure on the subject that has been discussed, and on the state of the congregation to whom it is addressed. Where there are many who make a profession of godliness, it will be necessary to pay some attention to them, and to accommodate the subject *in part* to their state, in a way of conviction, consolation, encouragement, &c. But where the congregation is almost entirely composed of persons who are walking in "the broad way" of worldliness and indifference, it may be proper to suit the application to them *alone*. In either case it may be done by inferences, or by address to distinct characters, or by a general address: but, for the most part, either of the former methods is preferable to the last. As for the exordium, *that is the*

last part to be composed; and Mr. Claude's directions for it cannot be improved.

Here then is an example of a discourse made on a text that affords an abundance of useful and important matter. But this is not the case in all texts: take the tenth, for instance. In that, the general scope of the text is, to declare the value of the soul; the distribution of it into its leading parts might be varied in many ways: but whatever distribution were adopted, one must of necessity supply from one's own invention matter for the illustration of it; because the text itself, though very important, does not limit one to any particular considerations.

By the adoption of such a plan as this, many good ends are attained: for not only is unity preserved, and a perspicuity diffused through the whole, but a variety of ideas suggest themselves which would not otherwise occur to the mind: an hackneyed way of treating texts will be avoided: the observations will be more appropriate: they will arise in a better order, and be introduced to more advantage: the attention of the audience will be fixed more on the word of God: their memories will be assisted: and the very reading of the text afterwards will bring to their minds much of what they have heard: besides, they will be more enabled to discern beauties in the Scripture when they peruse it in their closets. But it may be thought, that, on this plan, it will be always necessary to use divisions. This, however, is by no means the case: every text drawn up after this manner, must of necessity have an unity of design; and wherever *that* is, the *divisions may be either mentioned or concealed, as the writer shall choose*. Let the fore-mentioned text in Jer. xxxi. be treated without any division at all; and the same arrangement will serve exactly as well as if the divisions were specified.

It will stand thus—

“A true penitent in the beginning of his repentance reflects on his incorrigibleness in the ways of sin, and pleads with God to turn and convert his soul—

“When he has advanced a little in his repentance, he reflects with gratitude on the progress he has made, and he gives the glory of it to God—

“In such a state he is most acceptable to God—

“Whilst he can scarcely find terms whereby to ex-

press his own vileness, God accounts no honours too great for him—

“He owns him as a pleasant child; expresses his compassionate regard for him, promises to manifest his mercy towards him, and grants him all that he himself can possibly desire”—

Divest the tenth Skeleton also of its divisions, and it will be equally clear.

“By ‘the world’ we are to understand pleasure, riches, and honour—

“This, if considered *in itself*, is vile; if, *as estimated by the best judges*, worthless—

“The soul, on the contrary, if considered *in itself*, is noble; and if, *as estimated by the best judges*, invaluable—

“Such being the disparity between the value of the world, and that of the soul, we cannot but see what must be the result of a comparison between them—

“We suppose, for argument sake, that a man may possess the whole world, and that after having possessed it for awhile, he loses his own soul: what in the issue would he be profited?—

“Whether we enter generally or particularly into this subject, the result will be still the same.”

These two Skeletons are selected in order to exemplify this idea, 1st, In a subject where the whole matter is contained in the text; and, 2dly, In a subject where nothing but the general idea is suggested: and if the reader will give himself the trouble to examine, he will find that *every one of the other Skeletons may, with equal ease, be drawn out in the same manner*. This is a point of considerable importance: for if the mind were necessarily cramped and fettered by this method of composition, it would be inexpedient to adopt it. But it is manifest that it leaves the mind at most perfect liberty: and while many advantages arise from it, there is no room at all for the principal objection, which might at first sight appear to lie against it. But though these observations are made to shew that discourses might be formed from the Skeletons as easily without divisions as with them, it is not to be thought that the mention of the divisions is a matter of indifference: the minds of the generality are not capable of tracing the connexion and coherence of a discourse:

their attention will flag; they will lose much of what they hear; and have no clue whereby to recover it: whereas the mention of an easy and natural division will relieve their minds, assist their memories, and enable them to “mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the word.

The manner in which they should be used. If any student, who has a view to the ministry, should choose to employ a part of his sabbath in perusing any of these compositions, he would do well first to get a clear view of the great outlines of the discourse, and then to consider, under each part, what is contained in the brackets; consulting, as he proceeds, the passages of Scripture that are quoted. After this, if he will write over the whole, interweaving those passages, *or such parts of them as refer immediately to the subject*, adding only a few words here and there to connect the whole, he will find that every Skeleton will make a discourse, which, if read distinctly, will occupy the space of nearly half an hour. In this way he may attain, without any great difficulty, a considerable knowledge of the Scriptures, together with a habit of thinking clearly and connectedly on the principal doctrines contained in them. If any one, who has entered upon the sacred office, should think them worthy of his attention, a different method of using them should be adopted. He, having finished his academical studies, has his time more at his own command; he should therefore make himself perfect master of the Skeleton before him, and then write in his own language, and according to his own conceptions, his views of the subject: and he will find that “*verba provisam rem non invita sequentur.*” It is proper however to observe, that those parts, which have only one mark — after them, need very little enlargement; whereas those which have three marks — — — should be more fully opened.

A caution to be attended to in using them. But there is one caution which requires peculiar attention. In the Skeletons many passages of the holy Scriptures are quoted, partly for the conviction of the reader’s own mind, and partly to furnish him with the proper materials for confirming his word. These passages, if they were *all formally* quoted, would make the sermon a mere rhapsody, a string of texts, that could not fail to weary and disgust the audi-

ence. But if they be glanced at, if the proper parts only be selected, and interwoven with the writer's own language, they will give a richness and variety to the discourse, at the same time that they will be peculiarly grateful to those who delight in the word of God. There is however another extreme, which would be no less pernicious: if no passages be *formally* adduced, many parts of the discourse will appear to want confirmation. The proper medium seems to be, to quote them expressly when there is reason to apprehend that any doubt is entertained respecting the truth that is insisted on, or where the citing of them will give peculiar weight to the point in hand: in all other places the language of Scripture should be used rather to enrich and adorn our own.

Objections
against them
considered. It cannot be but that a work of this nature should be liable to many objections. Persons will vary in their judgment with respect to it according as they affect or disregard order; according as they relish or disapprove the use of Scripture language; according as they have been habituated to close thinking, or have been accustomed to a desultory way of communicating their ideas; and, lastly, according as they acquiesce in the unsophisticated doctrines of Scripture, or fondly attach themselves to human systems.

But the author begs leave to observe, that the very plan of suggesting the whole substance of a sermon in two pages, of shewing in so small a space how to *introduce, divide, discuss, and apply* every subject, and of referring to the most important passages of Scripture that can reflect light upon it, necessarily precludes all the ornaments of language, and induces somewhat perhaps of obscurity. But if there be found some reason for that complaint, "*brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio,*" it is hoped the candid reader will consider it as a fault incident to the plan itself; and if he meet with any expression which appears too unqualified, he is requested to remember, that a thousand qualifying clauses might be introduced into a full discourse, which could not possibly find place in such compositions as these: if he would regard these in their proper view, he must consider them only as rough materials prepared to his hand, that out of them he may con-

struct an edifice, modelled and adorned according to his own taste.

There is another objection indeed, which has been mentioned to the Author by some of his most judicious friends. It is feared that these Skeletons, especially if their number be increased, may administer to sloth and idleness. But he apprehends they are so constructed, that they cannot possibly be used at all, unless a considerable degree of thought be bestowed upon them. Nor does he think that any person, who has ever found the pleasure of addressing his congregation in his own words, will be satisfied with reciting the compositions of another. On the other hand, if some who would otherwise have preached the sermons of others, be drawn gradually to compose their own, and if others, who have been rude and incoherent, be assisted in the exercise of their judgment, it will tend to wipe off disgrace from the established Church, and eventually, it is hoped, to benefit the souls of many.

It is not possible to say what is the best mode of preaching for every individual, because the talents of men are so various, and the extent of their knowledge so different. It seems at all events expedient that a young minister should for some years pen his sermons, in order that he may attain a proper mode of expressing his thoughts, and accustom himself to the obtaining of clear, comprehensive, and judicious views of his subject: but that he should always continue to write every word of his discourses seems by no means necessary. Not that it is at any time expedient for him to deliver an unpremeditated harangue: this would be very unsuitable to the holy and important office which he stands up to discharge. But there is a medium between such extemporaneous effusions and a servile adherence to what is written: there is a method recommended by the highest authorities, which, after we have written many hundred sermons, it may not be improper to adopt: the method referred to is, to draw out a full plan or skeleton of the discourse, with the texts of Scripture which are proper to illustrate or enforce the several parts, and then to express the thoughts in such language as may occur at the time. This

plan, if it have some disadvantage in point of accuracy or elegance, has, on the other hand, great advantages over a written sermon: it gives a Minister an opportunity of speaking with far more effect to the hearts of men, and of addressing himself to their passions, as well by his looks and gesture, as by his words.

Archbishop Secker, in his last charge, after observing, in reference to *the matter* of our sermons, "We have, in fact, lost many of our people to sectaries by not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical," (p. 299.) adds, in reference to *the manner* of our preaching, "There is a middle way,^e used by our predecessors, of setting down, in short notes, the method and principal heads, and enlarging on them in such words as present themselves at the time: perhaps, duly managed, *this is the best.*" (p. 315.) He then proceeds to express his disapprobation of what is called Mandating of Sermons, or repeating them from memory. This custom obtains much among foreign Divines, and throughout the whole Church of Scotland; and in the Statute Book of our University there is an order from King Charles II. that this should be practised by all the Clergy, as well when preaching before the University and at Court, as before any common audience.^f This shews at least, that if a Minister had thoroughly studied his discourse, it was deemed no ob-

^e i. e. Between written discourses, and unpremeditated addresses.

^f "Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen,

"Whereas his Majesty is informed, that the practice of reading Sermons is generally taken up by the Preachers before the University, and therefore continued even before himself, his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure that the said practice, which took beginning with the disorders of the late times, be wholly laid aside, and that the aforesaid Preachers deliver their Sermons, both in Latin and English, by memory or without book, as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of all foreign Churches, to the custom of the University heretofore, and the nature and intendment of that holy exercise.

"And that his Majesty's commands in the premises may be duly regarded and observed, his farther pleasure is, that the names of all such ecclesiastical persons, as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching, be from time to time signified unto me by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, upon pain of his Majesty's displeasure.

MONMOUTH.

"October 8th, 1674."

(Page 300 of the Statute Book.)

jection against him that he delivered it without book. But the way proposed by Archbishop Secker seems far preferable, on account of the unnecessary increase of labour to the minister, and because the repeating of a sermon will most generally appear, as the Archbishop justly expresses it, like “the saying of a lesson.” Many other authorities of the greatest note might be adduced (as those of Bp. Wilkins, Bp. Burnet, Abp. of Cambray, &c.) if it were the Author’s wish to vindicate this mode of preaching: but he is far from thinking it proper for all persons, or in all places. He considers it however as extremely useful, where a minister’s talents will admit of it. But, after all, the great concern both of Ministers and private Christians is, to enjoy the blessing of God upon their own souls. In whatever manner the truth may be delivered, whether from a written discourse or memoriter, or from a well-digested plan, they may expect that God will accompany it with a divine energy, if they be looking up to Him in the exercise of faith and prayer. In this hope the following Sermon, and the Skeletons annexed to it, are sent forth into the world: and if, by means of them, the excellency of the Gospel may be more clearly seen, its importance more deeply felt, and its strengthening, comforting, sanctifying efficacy more richly experienced, the Author’s labours will be abundantly repaid.

IV. *The Sentiments and Doctrines contained in them.*

IN the discussion of so many subjects, it cannot fail but that every doctrine of our holy religion must be more or less canvassed. On every point the Author has spoken freely, and without reserve. As for names and parties in religion, he equally disclaims them all: he takes his religion from the Bible; and endeavours, as much as possible, to speak as that speaks.^b Hence, as in the Scrip-

^b If in any thing he grounded his sentiments upon *human* authority, it would not be on the dogmas of Calvin or Arminius, but on the Articles and Homilies of *the Church of England*. He has the happiness to say, that he does *ex animo*, from his inmost soul, believe the doctrines to which he has subscribed: but the reason of his believing them is not, that they are made the Creed of the established Church, but, that he finds them manifestly contained in the sacred Oracles.

tures themselves, so also in this work, there will be found sentiments, not really opposite, but apparently of an opposite tendency, according to the subject that is under discussion. In writing, for instance, on John v. 40. "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,*" he does not hesitate to lay the whole blame of men's condemnation on the obstinacy of their own depraved will: nor does he think it at all necessary to weaken the subject by nice distinctions, in order to support a system. On the contrary, when he preaches on John vi. 44. "*No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him,*" he does not scruple to state in the fullest manner he is able, that "We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will:"ⁱ nor does he judge it expedient on any account to soften, and palliate, and fritter away this important truth. While too many set these passages at variance, and espouse the one in opposition to the other, he dwells with equal pleasure on them both; and thinks it, on the whole, better to state these apparently opposite truths in the plain and unsophisticated manner of the Scriptures, than to enter into scholastic subtleties, that have been invented for the upholding of human systems. He is aware, that they who are warm advocates for this or that system of religion, will be ready to condemn him as inconsistent: but, if he speak in exact conformity with the Scriptures, he shall rest the vindication of his conduct simply on the authority and example of the Inspired Writers. He has no desire to be wise above what is written, nor any conceit that he can teach the Apostles to speak with more propriety and correctness than they have spoken.

It may be asked perhaps, How do you *reconcile* these doctrines, which you believe to be of equal authority and equal importance? But what right has any man to impose this task on the preachers of God's word? God has not required it of them; nor is the truth or falshood of any doctrine to be determined absolutely by this criterion. It is presumed, that every one will acknowledge

ⁱ The Tenth Article.

the holiness of God, and the existence of sin: but will any one undertake to reconcile them? or does any one consider the inability of man to reconcile them, as a sufficient ground for denying either the one or the other of these truths? If then neither of these points are doubted, notwithstanding they cannot be reconciled by us, why should other points, equally obvious in some respects, yet equally difficult to be reconciled in others, be incompatible, merely because we, with our limited capacity, cannot perfectly discern their harmony and agreement?

But perhaps these points, which have been such a fruitful source of contention in the church, are not so opposite to each other as some imagine: and it is possible, that the truth, may lie, not exclusively in either, nor yet in a confused mixture of both, but in the proper and seasonable application of them both; or, to use the language of St. Paul, “in rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Here the Author desires to speak with trembling. He is aware that he is treading upon slippery ground; and that he has but little prospect of satisfying any who have decidedly ranged themselves under the standard either of Calvin or Arminius. But he wishes to be understood: he is not solicitous to bring any man to pronounce his Shibboleth; much less has he any design to maintain a controversy in support of it: he merely offers an apology for the sentiments contained in his publication, and, with much deference, submits to the Public his views of scripture truth: and, whether they be perfectly approved or not, *this* he hopes to gain from all parties, a favourable acceptance of what they do approve, and a candid forbearance in the points they disapprove.

This being premised, he will proceed to state the manner in which these apparently opposite tenets may, in his judgment, be profitably insisted on.

It is supposed by many, that the doctrines of grace are incompatible with the doctrine of man's free-will; and that therefore the one or the other must be false. But why so? Can any man doubt one moment whether he be a free-agent or not? he may as well doubt his own existence. On the other hand, will any man who has the smallest spark of humility, affirm, that he has “made himself to differ; and that he has something which he has

not received" from a superior power?^k Will any one refuse to say with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am?"^l

Again; as men differ with respect to the first beginnings of a work of grace, so do they also with respect to the manner in which it must be carried on; some affirming, that God has engaged to "perfect that which concerneth us;" and others, that even St. Paul had reason to fear "lest he himself should become a cast-away." But why should these things be deemed incompatible?^m Does not every man feel within himself a liableness, yea, a proneness to fall? Does not every man feel, that there is corruption enough within him to drive him to the commission of the greatest enormities, and eternally to destroy his soul? He can have but little knowledge of his own heart who will deny this. On the other hand, who that is holding on in the ways of righteousness, does not daily ascribe his steadfastness to the influence of that grace, which he receives from God; and look daily to God for more grace, in order that he may be kept by *his* power through faith unto salvation?ⁿ No man can in any measure resemble the scripture saints, unless he be of this disposition. Why then *must* these things be put in opposition to each other, so that every advocate for one of these points must of necessity controvert and explode the other? Only let any *pious* person, whether Calvinist or Arminian, examine the language of his prayers after he has been devoutly pouring out his soul before God, and he will find his own words almost in perfect consonance with the foregoing statement. The Calvinist will be confessing the extreme depravity of his nature, together with his liability and proneness to fall; and the Arminian will be glorifying God for all that is good within him, and will commit his

^k 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^l 1 Cor. xv. 10.

^m Benhadad *might* have recovered from his disease, though God had decreed that, by Hazael's device, he should die of it (2 Kings viii. 10.) So we *may* (for aught that there is in us) die in our sins, though God has decreed that he will save us from death. In both cases the decree of God stands; but the possibility of the event, *as considered in itself*, remains unaltered. Neither our liableness to perish prevents the execution of God's decree; nor does his decree alter our liableness (*in ourselves*) to perish.

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 5.

soul to God, in order that "HE who has laid the foundation of his own spiritual temple, may also finish it."*

Doubtless either of these points may be injudiciously stated, or improperly applied. If the doctrines of Election and Predestination be so stated as to destroy man's free agency, and make him merely passive in the work of salvation, they are not stated as they are in the Articles and Homilies of our Church, or as they are in the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, if the doctrines of free-will and liability to final apostasy be so stated as to rob

* Zech. iv. 9.

A circumstance within the Author's knowledge reflects so much light upon this subject, that he trusts he shall be pardoned for relating it.

A young Minister, about three or four years after he was ordained, had an opportunity of conversing familiarly with the great and venerable leader of the Arminians in this kingdom; and, wishing to improve the occasion to the uttermost, he addressed him nearly in the following words: "Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions, not from impertinent curiosity, but for real instruction." Permission being very readily and kindly granted, the young Minister proceeded to ask, "Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved, that you would never have thought of turning unto God, if God had not first put it into your heart?"—"Yes, says the veteran, I do indeed."—"And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by any thing that you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?"—"Yes, solely through Christ."—"But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?"—"No; I must be saved by Christ from first to last."—"Allowing then that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?"—"No."—"What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?"—"Yes; altogether."—"And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?"—"Yes; I have no hope, but in him."—"Then, Sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is, in substance, all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree."

The Arminian leader was so pleased with the conversation, that he made particular mention of it in his journals; and notwithstanding there never afterwards was any connexion between the parties, he retained an unfeigned regard for his young inquirer to the hour of his death.

God of his honour, and to deny that he is both “the *Author* and the *Finisher* of our faith,” they are equally abhorrent from the sentiments of our established church, and from the plainest declarations of holy writ.

The author humbly apprehends, that there is a perfect agreement between these different points; and that they are equally salutary or equally pernicious, according as they are properly or improperly applied. If, for instance, on hearing a person excuse his own supineness by saying, “I can do nothing, unless God give me his grace;” we should reply, “This is true; it is God who alone can give you either to will or to do.”—What would be the consequence? we should confirm him in his sloth, and encourage him to cast all the blame of his condemnation upon God himself. But if we should bring before him the apparently opposite truths, and bid him arise and call upon God; we should take the way to convince him, that the fault was utterly his own, and that his destruction would be the consequence, not of God’s decrees, but of his own inveterate love of sin.

Let us suppose, on the other hand, that a person, having “tasted the good word of life,” begin to boast, that he has made himself to differ, and that his superiority to others is the mere result of his own free-will: if, in answer to him, we should immediately descant on our freedom to good or evil, and on the powers with which God has endued us for the preservation of our souls, we should foster the pride of his heart and encourage him, contrary to an express command, to glory before God:* whereas, if we should remind him, that “by the grace of God we are what we are,” and that all must say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise,” we should lower his overweening conceit of his own goodness, and lead him to acknowledge his obligations to God.

Let us illustrate the same in reference to the two other doctrines we mentioned, namely, The perseverance of the saints, and our liableness, in ourselves, to “make shipwreck of the faith.” Suppose a person say, “I need not be careful about my conduct;” for “God has begun the

* 1 Cor. i. Rom. iii. 27.

good work within me, and has engaged to perform it till the day of Christ: "if we were to begin extolling the covenant of grace, and setting forth the truth of God in his promises, we should countenance his error at the very time that he was turning the grace of God into licentiousness. But if we should warn him against the danger of being given over to a reprobate mind, and of perishing under an accumulated load of guilt, we should counteract his sinful disposition, and stimulate him to flee from the wrath to come."

On the other hand, if a humble person should be drooping and desponding under a sense of his own corruptions, and we should spread before him all our difficulties and dangers, we should altogether "break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax:" but if we should point out to him the fulness and stability of God's covenant; if we should enlarge upon the interest which Christ takes in his people, and his engagements that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hand;"^p it is obvious, that we should administer a cordial to his fainting spirit, or (as God requires of us) we should "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and comfort the fearful heart."

These sentiments may perhaps receive some confirmation from the conduct of the apostle Paul. In administering the word, he consulted the state of his auditors, and apportioned to them either "milk or strong meat," according to their ability to digest and improve it.^q In reference to this we may say, that the doctrines of human liberty, and human frailty, together with the other first principles of Christianity, are as milk, which those who are yet "babes in Christ," must have set before them: but that the doctrines of grace, or "the deep things of God," are rather as strong meat, which none can digest, unless they have grown to some stature in the family of Christ, and "had their spiritual senses long exercised in discerning good and evil:"^r and that, as strong meat, which would nourish an adult, would destroy the life of an infant; and milk that would nourish an infant, would be inadequate to the support of a man oppressed with hard

^p John x. 27, 28.

^q 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

^r Heb. v. 12, 14.

labour; so is it with respect to the points which we have been considering. Or, if we may be permitted a little to vary this illustration, the one sort of truths are as food proper to be administered to all; whereas the other are rather as cordials for the support and comfort of those who need them.

In a word, there seems to be a perfect correspondence between God's works of providence and grace: in the former, "he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," yet leaves men perfectly free agents in all that they do; so in the latter, he accomplishes his own eternal purpose both in calling, and in keeping, his elect; but yet he never puts upon them any constraint, which is not perfectly compatible with the freest operations of their own will.

The Author well knows that these doctrines *may be*, and alas! *too often are*, so stated as to be really contradictory. But that they *may be* so stated as to be profitable to the souls of men, he hopes is clear from the illustrations that have been just given.^s

He trusts he shall be pardoned if he go yet further, and say, that, in his judgment, there not only is no positive contradiction in this statement, but that there is a *propriety* in it, yea, moreover, a *necessity* for it, because there is a *subserviency in these truths, the one to the other*. God elects us; but he carries his purpose into effect by the free agency of man, which is altogether influenced by rational consideration. So also he carries on and completes his work in our souls, by causing us to feel our proneness to apostatize, and by making us cry to him daily for the more effectual influences of his grace. Thus, while he consults his own glory, he promotes our greatest

^s Many have carried their attachment to system so far, that they could not endure to preach upon any passage of scripture that seemed to oppose their favourite sentiments; or, if they did, their whole endeavour has been to make the text speak a different language from that which it appeared to do. In opposition to all such modes of procedure, it is the author's wish in this preface to recommend a conformity to the scriptures themselves without any solicitude about systems of man's invention. Nor would any thing under heaven be more grateful to him than to see names and parties buried in eternal oblivion, and primitive simplicity restored to the church.

good, in that he teaches us to combine humility with earnestness, and vigilance with composure.

The Author would not have troubled the Reader with this apology, were it not that he is exceedingly desirous to counteract that spirit of animosity, which has of late so greatly prevailed against those who adhere to the principles of the established church. Not that he has himself any cause to complain: on the contrary, he has reason to acknowledge, that his former volume met with a far more favourable reception from the public than he ever dared to expect.[†] But he would wish his work to be brought to this test—Does it uniformly tend

TO HUMBLE THE SINNER?

TO EXALT THE SAVIOUR?

TO PROMOTE HOLINESS?

If in one single instance it lose sight of any of these points, let it be condemned without mercy." But, if it invariably pursue these ends, then let not any, whatever system they embrace, quarrel with an expression that does not quite accord with their views. Let them consider the general scope and tendency of the book: and, if it be, as he trusts it is, not to strengthen a party in the Church, but to promote the good of the whole; then let smaller differences of sentiments be overlooked, and all unite in vindicating the great doctrines of SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST.

[†] See Brit. Critic for April 1797.

^u By this expression the author means, that such is his abhorrence of every principle which militates against any one of the points referred to, that he conceives it almost impossible that a word should fall from his pen, which, if candidly interpreted, can be justly said to contradict them.

CLAUDE'S
ESSAY

ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON:
WITH ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

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ESSAY
ON THE
COMPOSITION
OF A
SERMON.

CHAP. I.

ON THE CHOICE OF TEXTS.

THERE are in general *five* parts of a sermon, the exordium, the connexion, the division, the discussion, and the application: but, as connexion and division are parts which ought to be extremely short, we can properly reckon only *three* parts; exordium, discussion, and application. However, we will just take notice of connexion and division after we have spoken a little on the choice of texts, and on a few general rules of discussing them.^a

^a Bishop Wilkin says, "Preaching should have its rules and canons, whereby men may be directed to the easiest and readiest way for the practice of it. Besides all academical studies of languages, sciences, divinity, &c. besides all these, there is a particular *art of preaching*.—Two abilities are requisite in every one; a right understanding of sound doctrine, and an ability to propound, confirm, and apply it to others. The first may be without the other; and, as a man may be a good *lawyer*, and yet not a good *pleader*; so he may be a good *divine*, and yet not a good *preacher*. One reason why men of eminent parts are so slow and unskilful herein, is, because they have not been versed in this study, and are therefore unacquainted with those proper rules and directions by which they should be guided in the attaining and exercise of this gift. It hath been the usual course at the university, to venture upon this calling in an abrupt, over-hasty manner. When scholars have passed over their philosophical studies, and made some little

1. *Never choose such texts as have not a complete sense; for only impertinent and foolish people will attempt to preach from one or two words, which signify nothing.*

2. Not only *words* which have a complete sense of themselves must be taken: but they *must* also include the *complete sense of the writer*, whose words they are; for it is his language, and they are his sentiments, which you explain. For example, should you take these words of 2 Cor. i. 3. *Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort*, and stop here, you would include a complete sense; but it would not be the apostle's sense. Should you go farther, and add, *who comforteth us in all our tribulation*, it would not then be the complete sense of St. Paul, nor would his meaning be wholly taken in, unless you went on to the end of the fourth verse. When the complete sense of the sacred writer is taken, you may stop; for there are few texts in scripture, which do not afford matter sufficient for a sermon; and it is equally inconvenient to take too much text, or too little; both extremes must be avoided.

When *too little* text is taken, you must digress from the subject to find something to say; flourishes of wit and imagination must be displayed, which are not of the genius of the pulpit; and, in one word, it will make the hearers think, that self is more preached than Jesus Christ; and that the preacher aims rather at appearing a wit, than at instructing and edifying his people.

When *too much* text is taken, either many important considerations, which belong to the passage, must be left out, or a tedious prolixity must follow. A proper measure, therefore, must be chosen, and neither too little, nor too much matter taken. Some say, preaching is designed only to make scripture understood, and therefore they take a great deal of text, and are content with giving the sense, and with making some principal reflections:

entrance on divinity, they presently think themselves fit for the pulpit, without any further enquiry, as if the gift of preaching, and sacred oratory, was not a distinct art of itself. This would be counted very preposterous in other matters, if a man should presume on being an orator because he was a logician, or to practice physic because he had learned philosophy," &c.

Wilkin's Ecclesiastes.

but this is a mistake; for preaching is not only intended to give the sense of scripture, but also of theology in general; and, in short, to explain the whole of religion, which cannot be done, if too much matter be taken; so that, I think, the manner commonly used in our churches is the most reasonable, and the most conformable to the end of preaching. Every body can read scripture with notes and comments to obtain simply the sense: but we cannot instruct, solve difficulties, unfold mysteries, penetrate into the ways of divine wisdom, establish truth, refute error, comfort, correct, and censure, fill the hearers with an admiration of the wonderful works and ways of God, inflame their souls with zeal, powerfully incline them to piety and holiness, which are the ends of preaching, unless we go farther than barely enabling, them to understand scripture.

To be more particular, regard must be paid to circumstances, times, places, and persons; and texts must be chosen relative to them. 1st, In regard to *times*. I do not, I cannot, approve of the custom of the late Mons. Daillé, who used to preach on the feast-days of the church of Rome, and to choose texts on the subjects of their feasts, turning them to censure superstition: I do not blame, his zeal against superstition: but as for the Romish feasts, they are for the members of the church of Rome, and not for us; and, it is certain, our hearers will neither be instructed, nor encouraged by such sorts of subjects: methinks they should be preached seldom, and soberly. It is not so with particular times, which belong to ourselves, which are of two sorts, *ordinary*, which we call *stata tempora*, which every year return at the same seasons; or *extraordinary*, which fall out by accident, or, to speak more properly, when it pleases God. Of the first kind are Lord's-supper-days; or days which are solemnized amongst us, as Christmas-day, Easter, Whitsuntide, Ascension-day, New-year's-day, and Good-friday, as it is called. On these days, particular texts should be chosen, which suit the service of the day; for it would discover great negligence to take texts on such days, which have no relation to them. It is not to be questioned but on these days peculiar efforts ought to be made, because then the hearers come with raised expectations, which, if

not satisfied, turn into contempt, and a kind of indignation against the preacher.

Particular days not fixed, but *occasional*, are fast-days, ordination-days, days on which the flock must be extraordinarily comforted, either on account of the falling out of some great scandal, the exercise of some great affliction, or the inflicting of some great censure. On fast-days, it is plain particular texts must be expressly chosen for the purpose: but on other occasions it must rest on the preacher's judgment; for most texts may be used extraordinarily, to comfort, exhort, or censure; and, except the subject in hand be extremely important, the safest way is not to change the usual text.^b For ordination-days extraordinary texts, and agreeable to the subject in hand, must be taken, whether it regards the ordainer, or the ordained; for very often he, who is ordained in the morning, preaches in the afternoon.

I add one word touching sermons in strange churches. 1. Do not choose a *text which appears odd*, or the choice of which vanity may be supposed to dictate. 2. Do not choose a *text of censure*; for a stranger has no business to censure a congregation which he does not inspect: unless he have a particular call to it, being either sent by a synod, or intreated by the church itself. In such a case the censure must be conducted with wisdom, and tempered with sweetness. Nor, 3. Choose a *text leading to curious knotty questions*; then it would be said, the man meant to preach himself. But, 4. Choose a text of ordinary doctrine, in discussing which, doctrine and morality may be mixed; and rather let moral things be said by way of exhortation and consolation than by way of censure: not that the vicious should not be censured; for reproof is *essential* to preaching: but it must be given soberly, and in general terms, when we are not with our own flocks.

^b Perhaps by *texte accoutumè* Mr. Claude means such a text as would come in a precomposed *set of sermons*.

CHAP. II.

GENERAL RULES OF SERMONS

ALTHOUGH the following general rules are well known, yet they are too little practised: they ought, however, to be constantly regarded.

1. A sermon should *clearly* and purely *explain a text*, make the sense easy to be comprehended, and place things before the people's eyes, so that they may be understood without difficulty. This rule condemns embarrassment and *obscurity*, the most disagreeable thing in the world in a gospel-pulpit. It ought to be remembered, that the greatest part of the hearers are simple people, whose profit, however, must be aimed at in preaching: but it is impossible to edify them, unless you be very clear. As to learned hearers, it is certain, they will always prefer a clear before and obscure sermon: for, first, they will consider the simple, nor will their benevolence be content if the illiterate be not edified; and next, they will be loth to be driven to the necessity of giving too great an attention, which they cannot avoid, if the preacher be obscure. The minds of men, whether learned or ignorant, generally avoid pain; and the learned have fatigue enough in the study, without increasing it at church.^c

2. A sermon must give *the entire sense of the whole text*, in order to which it must be considered in every view. This rule condemns *dry and barren explications*, wherein the preacher discovers neither study nor invention, and leaves unsaid a great number of beautiful things, with which his text would have furnished him. Preachments of this kind are extremely disgusting; the mind is neither

^c Bishop Burnet says, "A preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of *the most unlearned man in the whole parish*, and must therefore put such parts of his discourses as he would have all understand, in so plain a form of words, that it may not be beyond *the meanest* of them. This he will certainly study to do, if his desire is to edify them, rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and high-spoken man."

Past. Care, chap. 9.

This opinion accords with that of an ancient orator: *ρητορικῶς μὲν καλεῖται τῶς ἐν τῷ πληθει λαλεῖν δυνάμενος*; eloquentes dicimus eos qui ad populum verba facere possunt. *Isocrates Orat. at Nicoc. 3.*

elevated nor informed, nor is the heart at all moved. In matters of religion and piety, not to edify much, is to destroy much; and a sermon *cold* and *poor* will do more mischief in an hour, than a hundred rich sermons can do good. I do not mean, that a preacher should always use his utmost efforts, nor that he should always preach alike well; for that neither can nor ought to be. There are extraordinary occasions, for which all his vigour must be reserved. But I mean, that, in ordinary and usual sermons, a kind of plenitude should satisfy and content the hearers. The preacher must not always labour to carry the people beyond themselves, nor to ravish them into ecstasies: but he must always satisfy them, and maintain in them an esteem and an eagerness for practical piety.

3. The preacher must be *wise, sober, chaste*. I say *wise*, in opposition to those impertinent people, who utter jests, comical comparisons, quirks and extravagancies; and such are a great part of the preachers of the church of Rome. I say *sober*, in opposition to those rash spirits, who would penetrate all, and curiously dive into mysteries beyond the bounds of modesty. Such are those, who make no difficulty of delivering in the pulpit all the speculations of the schools, on the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, the eternal reprobation of mankind; such as treat of questions beyond our knowledge; *viz.* What would have been if Adam had abode in innocence; what the state of our souls after death; or what the resurrection; and our state of eternal glory in paradise. Such are they, who fill their sermons with the different interpretations of a term, or the different opinions of interpreters on any passage of scripture; who load their hearers with tedious recitals of ancient history; or an account of the divers heresies which have troubled the church upon any matter; all these are contrary to the sobriety of which we speak, and which is one of the most excellent pulpit virtues. I say farther *chaste*, in opposition to those bold and impudent geniusses who are not ashamed of saying many things which produce unclean ideas in the mind. A preacher cannot be called chaste, who, speaking of the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin's womb by the power of the Holy Ghost without the intervention of man, is not

careful of saying any thing, that may shock the modesty of some, and give occasion of discourse to the profanity of others. There are I know not how many subjects of this kind; as when the eternal *generation* of Jesus Christ the Son of God is spoken of; when the term *regeneration* is explained, which Scripture useth to express our conversion; or when we treat of that *seed* of God, of which, according to St. John, we are born; or when we enforce the *duties* of husbands to wives, or of wives to husbands; or when we speak of the *love* of Jesus Christ to his church, under the notion of a *conjugal* relation; or when eternal felicity is spoken of under the image of a *banquet*, or of a *marriage-feast*. On all such subjects, chastity should weigh the expressions, and make a judicious choice, in order to keep the hearers minds at the greatest distance from all sorts of carnal and terrestrial ideas. The likeliest way of succeeding in these cases is to beware of pressing metaphorical terms too far; to adhere to general considerations, and if possible to explain the metaphorical terms in few words, and afterwards to cleave entirely to the thing itself.

4. A preacher must be *simple* and *grave*. *Simple*, speaking things full of good natural sense without metaphysical speculations; for none are more impertinent than they, who deliver in the pulpit abstract speculations, definitions in form, and scholastic questions, which they pretend to derive from their texts;—as, on the manner of the existence of angels; the means whereby they communicate their ideas to each other; the manner in which ideas eternally subsist in the divine understanding; with many more of the same class, all certainly opposite to simplicity. To simple I add *grave*, because all sorts of mean; thoughts and expressions, all sorts of vulgar and proverbial sayings, ought to be avoided. The pulpit is the seat of good natural sense; and the good sense of good men. On the one hand then, you are not to philosophize too much, and refine your subject out of sight; nor, on the other, to abase yourself to the language and thoughts of the dregs of the people.

5. The understanding must be informed, but in a manner, however, which *affects the heart*; either to comfort the hearers, or to excite them to acts of piety, repent-

ance, or holiness. There are two ways of doing this, one formal, in turning the subject to moral uses, and so applying it to the hearers; the other in the simple choice of the things spoken; for if they be good, solid, evangelic, and edifying of themselves, should no application be formally made, the auditors would make it themselves; because subjects of this kind are of such a nature, that they cannot enter the understanding without penetrating the heart. I do not blame the method of some preachers, who, when they have opened some point of doctrine, or made some important observation, immediately turn it into a brief moral application to the hearers; this Mr. Daillé frequently did: yet I think it should not be made a constant practice; because, 1st, what the hearer is used to, he will be prepared for, and so it will lose its effect; and 2dly, because you would thereby interrupt your explication, and consequently also the attention of the hearer, which is a great inconvenience. Nevertheless, when it is done but seldom, and seasonably, great advantage may be reaped.

But there is another way of turning doctrines to moral uses, which in my opinion is far more excellent, authoritative, grand, and effectual: that is, by treating the doctrine contained in the text, in a way of *perpetual application*.^d This way produces excellent effects, for it pleases, instructs, and effects all together.^e But neither must this be made habitual, for it would fatigue the hearer, nothing being more delicate, nor sooner discouraged, than the human mind. There are fast-days, Lord's-supper days, and many such seasonable times for this method. This way, as I have said, is full of admirable fruits; but it

^d This subject being fully handled in Chap. VII. the Translator omitted one page of Mr. Claude here, because its substance is repeated in the chapter referred to. He was fully justified in taking such a liberty with this *posthumous* work of Mr. Claude's: and similar liberties are used by the Editor, with a view to the real improvement of the treatise itself.

^e *Docente te in ecclesia non clamor populi sed gemitus suscitetur; lachrymæ auditorum laudes tuæ sint. Jerom. ad Nepot.*

Optimus est enim orator qui dicendo animos audientium et docet, et delectat, et permoveet. Docere debitum est, delectare honorarium, permoveere necessarium. Cic. de Orat.

must be well executed,^f with power and address, with choice of thoughts and expressions, otherwise the preacher will make himself ridiculous, and provoke the people to say,

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus.

6. One of the most important precepts for the discussion of a text, and the composition of a sermon, is, above all things, to avoid excess: *Ne quid nimis*.

1. There must not be too much *genius*; I mean, not too many brilliant, sparkling, and striking things; for they would produce very bad effects. The auditor will never fail to say, The man preaches himself, aims to display his genius, and is not animated by the spirit of God, but by that of the world. Besides, the hearer would be overcharged; the mind of man has its bounds and measures; and as the eye is dazzled with too strong a light, so is the mind offended with the glare of too great an assemblage of beauties. Farther, it would destroy the principal end of preaching, which is to sanctify the conscience; for when the mind is overloaded with too many agreeable ideas, it has not leisure to reflect on the objects; and without reflection the heart is unaffected. Moreover, ideas which divert the mind are not very proper to move the conscience; they flatter the imagination, and that is all. Such a preacher will oblige people to say of him, He has genius, a lively and fruitful imagination: but he is not solid. In fine, it is not possible for a man, who piques himself on filling his sermons with vivacities of imagination, to maintain the spirit all along; he will therefore become a tiresome tautologist: nor is it hard in such sermons to discover many false brilliances, as we see daily.

2. A sermon must not be *overcharged with doctrine*, because the hearers' memories cannot retain it all, and by aiming to keep all, they will lose all; and because you will be obliged either to be excessively tedious, or to propose the doctrine in a dry, barren, scholastic manner,

^f This style of writing or preaching is no where exemplified to greater advantage than in a late publication, entitled *Scripture Characters*, written by the Rev. Thomas Robinson.

which will deprive it of all its beauty and efficacy. A sermon should instruct, please, and affect; that is, it should always do these as much as possible. As the doctrinal part, which is instructive, should always be proposed in an agreeable and *affecting* manner; so the agreeable parts should be proposed in an *instructive* manner: and even in the conclusion, which is designed wholly to affect, agreeableness must not be neglected, nor altogether instruction. Take care then not to charge your sermon with too much matter.

3. Care must also be taken *never to strain any particular part*, either in attempting to exhaust it, or to penetrate too far into it. If you aim at exhausting a subject, you will be obliged to heap up a number of common things without choice or discernment; if at penetrating, you cannot avoid falling into many curious questions, and unedifying subtilties; and frequently in attempting it you will distil the subject till it evaporates.

4. *Figures must not be overstrained.* This is done by stretching metaphor into allegory, or by carrying a parallel too far. A metaphor is changed into an allegory, when a number of things are heaped up, which agree to the subject, in keeping close to the metaphor. As in explaining this text, *God is a sun and a shield*; it would be stretching the metaphor into an allegory to make a great collection of what God is in himself; what to us; what he does in the understanding and conscience of the believer; what he operates on the wicked; what his absence causeth; and all these under terms, which had a perpetual relation to the *sun*. Allegories may be sometimes used very agreeably: but they must not be strained, that is, all, that can be said on them, must not be said. A parallel is run too far, when a great number of conformities between the figure, and the thing represented by the figure, are heaped together. This is almost the perpetual vice of mean and low preachers; for when they catch a figurative word, or a metaphor, as when God's word is called a *fire*, or a *sword*; or the church a *house*, or a *dove*; or Jesus Christ a *light*, a *sun*, a *vine*, or a *door*; they never fail making a long detail of conformities between the figures and the subjects themselves; and frequently say ridiculous things. This vice must be avoided, and you

must be content to explain the metaphor in a few words, and to mark the principal agreements, in order afterwards, to cleave to the thing itself.

5. *Reasoning must not be carried too far.* This may be done many ways; either by long trains of reasons, composed of a quantity of propositions chained together, or principles and consequences; which way of reasoning is embarrassing and painful to the auditor: or by making many branches of reasons, and establishing them one after another; which is tiresome and fatiguing to the mind. The mind of man loves to be conducted in a more smooth and easy way; all must not be proved at once; but, supposing principles, which are true and plain, and which you, when it is necessary, are capable of proving and supporting, you must be content with using them to prove what you have in hand. Yet I do not mean, that in reasoning, arguments should be so short and dry, and proposed in so a brief a manner, as to divest the truth of half its force, as many authors leave them. I only mean, that a due medium should be preserved; that is, that without fatiguing the mind and attention of the hearer, reasons should be placed in just as much force and clearness as are necessary to produce the effect.

Reasoning also may be overstrained by heaping great numbers of proofs on the same subject. Numerous proofs are intolerable, except in a principal matter, which is like to be much questioned or controverted by the hearers. In such a case you would be obliged to treat the subject fully and *ex professo*; otherwise the hearers would consider your attempt to prove the matter as an useless digression. But when you are obliged to treat a subject fully, when that subject is very important, when it is doubted and controverted, then a great number of proofs are proper. In such a case you must propose to convince and bear down the opponent's judgment, by making truth triumph in many different manners. In such a case, many proofs associated together to produce one effect, are like many rays of light, which naturally strengthen each other, and which all together form a body of brightness, which is irresistible.

6. You must as much as possible abstain from *all sorts of observations*; foreign from *Theology*. In this class I

place, 1. *Grammatical observations* of every kind, which not being within the people's knowledge, can only weary and disgust them. They may nevertheless be used when they furnish an agreeable sense of the word, or open some important observation on the subject itself, provided it be done very seldom and very pertinently.

2. *Critical observations* about different readings, different punctuations, &c. must be avoided. Make all the use you can of critical knowledge yourself; but spare the people the account, for it must needs be very disagreeable to them.

I add, 3dly, *Avoid philosophical and historical observations*, and all such as belong to *Rhetoric*; or if you do use them, do not insist on them, and choose only those, which give either some light to the text, or heighten its pathos and beauty; all others must be rejected.

Lastly, I say the same of passages from *Profane Authors*, or *Rabbies*, or *Fathers*, with which many think they enrich their sermons. This farrago is only a vain ostentation of learning; and very often they who fill their sermons with such quotations, know them only by relation of others. However, I would not blame a man who should use them discreetly. A quotation not common, and properly made, has a very good effect.

CHAP. III.

OF CONNECTION.

THE connection is the relation of your text to the foregoing or following verses. To find this, consider the scope of the discourse; and consult commentators; particularly exercise your own good sense; for commentators frequently trifle, and give forced and far-fetched connections all which ought to be avoided, for they are not natural; and sometimes good sense will discover the scope and design of a writer far better than this kind of writers.

There are texts, the connections of which (I own) it will be sometimes difficult to perceive. In such a case, endeavour to discover them by frequent and intense meditation, or take that which commentators furnish; and

among many, which they give, choose that which appears most natural; and if you can find none likely, the best way will be to let the passage alone. The connection is a part which must be very little insisted on, because the hearers almost always pass it over, and receive but little instruction from it.

When the coherence will furnish any agreeable considerations for the illustration of the text, they must be put in the discussion; and this will very often happen. Sometimes also you may draw thence an exordium: in such a case the exordium and connection will be confounded together.

CHAP. IV.

OF DIVISION.

DIVISION, in general, ought to be restrained to a small number of parts: they should never exceed four or five at the most: the most admired sermons have only two or three parts.^g

There are two sorts of divisions, which we may very properly make; the first, which is the most common, is the division of the *text* into its parts: the other is of the *discourse*, or sermon itself, which is made on the text.^h

This last, that is to say, the *division of a discourse*, is proper, when, to give light to a text, it is necessary to

^g Mr. Claude's direction to be sparing of divisions is worthy of regard by all. Quintilian (who follows Cicero, Æschines, Demosthenes, &c.) says, *Qui rectè dividerit, nunquam poterit in rerum ordine errare. Certa sunt enim non solum in digerendis questionibus, sed etiam in exequendis, si modo rectè dicimus, prima, ac secunda et deinceps: cohæretque omnis rerum copulatio, ut ei nihil nec subtrahi sine manifesto intellectu, nec inseri possit.—Quint. Inst. lib. xi. cap. 2.*

A proper method of division may be seen in the following specimen from Cicero.

Causa quæ sit videtis: nunc quid agendum sit considerate. *Primum* mihi videtur de genere belli; *deinde* de magnitudine; *tum* de imperatore deligendo esse dicendum. *Primum* bellum Asiaticum genere suo grave et necessarium esse. 1. Quia agitur gloria populi Romani. 2. Quia agitur salus sociorum. 3. Quia aguntur vectigalia maxima. 4. Quia aguntur fortunæ multorum civium. *Tertium* Pompeius est bonus imperator, quia in eo sunt *quatuor* virtutes, quæ bonum imperatorem commendant. 1. Scientia rei militaris. 2. Virtus. 3. Auctoritas. 4. Felicitas. *Pro lege Manilia.*

^h These may be called *textual* and *topical*.

mention many things, which the text supposes but does not formally express; and which must be collected elsewhere, in order to enable you to give in the end a just explication of the text. In such a case you may divide your *discourse* into two parts, the first containing some *general considerations* necessary for understanding the text; and the second, the *particular explication* of the text itself.

1. This method is proper when a *prophecy of the Old Testament* is handled; for, generally, the understanding of these prophecies depends on many general considerations, which, by exposing and refuting false senses, open a way to the true explication; as appears by what has been said on Gen. iii. 15.ⁱ *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;* and on the covenant made with Abraham, &c. &c.^k

2. This method is also proper on a *text taken from a dispute*, the understanding of which must depend on the state of the question, the hypotheses of adversaries, and the principles of the inspired writers. All these lights are previously necessary, and they can only be given by general considerations: For example, Rom. iii. 28. *We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Some general considerations must precede, which clear up the *state of the question* between St. Paul and the Jews, touching justification; which mark *the hypothesis* of the Jews upon that subject, and which discover the *true principle* which St. Paul would establish; so that in the end the text may be clearly understood.

3. This method also is proper in a *conclusion drawn from a long preceding discourse*; as for example, Rom. v. 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Some think that, to manage this text well, we ought not to speak of *justification* by faith; but only of that *peace*, which we have with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. I grant, we ought not to make justification the chief part of the sermon: but the text is a conclusion drawn by the apostle from the preced-

ⁱ See Skel. 147

^k These general considerations appear better still in an *exordium*.

ing discourse; and we shall deceive ourselves, if we imagine this dispute between St. Paul and the Jews so well known to the people, that it is needless to speak of it; they are not, in general, so well acquainted with scripture. The *discourse* then must be divided into two parts, the first consisting of some *general considerations* on the doctrine of justification, which St. Paul establishes in the preceding chapters; and the second, of his *conclusion*, *That*, being thus justified, *we have peace with God*, &c.

The same may be said of the first verse of the viiith of Romans, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*; for it is a consequence drawn from what he had been establishing before.

4. The same method is proper for *texts* which are *quoted* in the New Testament *from the Old*. You must prove by *general considerations* that the text is properly produced, and then you may come clearly to its explication. Of this kind are Heb. i. 5. 6. *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*: ii. 6. *One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* iii. 7. *Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* There are many passages of this kind in the New Testament.

5. In this class must be placed divisions into *different respects*, or *different views*. These, to speak properly, are not divisions of a text into its parts, but rather different applications, which are made of the same text to divers subjects. *Typical texts* should be divided thus; and a great number of *passages in the Psalms*, which relate not only to David, but also to Jesus Christ: such should be considered first literally, as they relate to David; and then in their mystical sense, as they refer to the Lord Jesus.

There are also typical passages, which beside their literal senses have also figurative meanings, relating not only to Jesus Christ, but also to the church in general, and to every believer in particular; or which have different degrees of their mystical accomplishment.¹

¹ I omit two short but injudicious illustrations of this, acquiescing fully in the opinion of the translator, that *types* should be handled cautiously, and soberly, and always under the immediate direction of the New Testament writers. A man is always safe when he follows these guides.

For example, Dan. ix. 7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day:* (which is a very proper text for a fast-day,) must not be divided into *parts*; but considered in different *views*. 1. In regard to *all men* in general. 2. In regard to the *Jewish church in Daniel's time*. And, 3. In regard to *ourselves at this present day*.

So again, Heb. iii. 7, 8. *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness,* (which is taken from Psalm xcv., and which also is very proper for a day of censure or fasting,) cannot be better divided than by referring it, 1. To David's time. 2. St. Paul's. And, lastly, To our own.

As to the *division of the text* itself, sometimes the order of the words is so clear and natural, that no division is necessary; you need only follow simply the order of the words. As For example, Eph. i 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* It is not necessary to divide this text, because the words divide themselves; and to explain them, we need only follow them. Here is a grateful acknowledgment, *blessed be God.* The title, under which the apostle blesses God, *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The reason, for which he blesses him, because *he hath blessed us.* The plenitude of this blessing, *with all blessings.* The nature or kind, signified by the term *spiritual.* The place, where he hath blessed us, *in heavenly places.* In whom he hath blessed us, *in Christ.* Remark, as you go on, that there is a manifest allusion to the first blessing, wherewith God blessed his creatures, when he first created them, Gen. i. For as in the first creation he made all things for his own glory, Prov. xvi. 4. *The Lord hath made all things for himself;* so in this new creation, the end, and perpetual exercise of the believer, ought to be, to *bless and glorify God.* All things in nature bless God as their creator: but we bless him as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* God blessed the creation immediately, because it was his own work: here, in like manner, he blesses us, because we are his own new creation; *we are,* says the apostle, *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,* chap. ii. 10. *There the Lord divided his blessing, giving*

to every creature a different blessing: He said *to the earth*, Bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit: *to the fishes* of the sea, and *to the fowls* of the air, Be fruitful and multiply; and *to man* he said, *Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion: Here*, believers have every one his whole blessing, for each possesseth it entirely. The creatures then received but an imperfect blessing: but we have received one as full and entire as God could communicate to creatures. Their blessing was, in the order of nature, a temporal blessing: ours, in the order of grace, a *spiritual* blessing. *There* upon earth; *here* in heavenly places: *there* in Adam; *here* in Christ.

It may also be remarked, that the apostle alludes to the blessing of Abraham, to whom God said, *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*; and a comparison may very well be made of the temporal blessings of the Israelites, with those spiritual benefits which we receive by Jesus Christ.

Most texts, however, ought to be formally divided; for which purpose you must principally have regard to the order of nature, and put that division, which naturally precedes, in the first place; and the rest must follow, each in its proper order. This may easily be done by reducing the text to a categorical proposition, beginning with the subject, passing to the attribute, and then to the other terms; your judgment will direct you how to place them.^m

^m Oratio cujus summa virtus est perspicuitas, quam sit vitiosa si egeat interprete! *Quint. Inst. lib. i. c. 4.*

Allowing that texts are to be divided after reducing them to categorical, i. e. to single propositions, either simple, the subjects and predicates of which consist of single terms; or complex, the subjects and predicates of which are made up of complex terms; allowing that the *subject* is to be considered first, then the *attributes*, which in logic are the same with predicates, or what may be affirmed or denied of any subject; allowing all this, yet it must not be forgotten that this operation, and these terms, belong to the laboratory, and should never appear in prescriptions to the people; especially as Mr. Claude's proposed end may be better answered without them. He aims to make divisions *natural*: here is an example.

Archbishop Flechier, on Saul's conversion, considers, first *what Jesus Christ did for St. Paul*. 2. *What St. Paul did for Jesus Christ*. In the first part he opens divine compassion, as a spring whence

It, for example, I were to preach from Heb. x. 10. *By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all;* I should not think it proper to speak first of the will of God, then of our Sanctification, and lastly, of the Cause of our sanctification, which is, the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ: it would be much better to reduce the text to a categorical proposition; thus, *The offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once made, sanctifies us by the will of God:* for it is more natural to consider, 1. The nearer and more *immediate cause* of our acceptance, which is, *the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ.* 2. Its *effect*, our *sanctification.* 3. Its first and more *remote cause*, which makes it produce this effect, *the will of God.*

It remains to be observed, that there are two natural orders, one natural in regard to subjects themselves, the other natural in regard to us. The first considers every thing in its natural situation, as things are *in themselves*, without any regard to our knowledge of them; the other, which I call natural *in regard to us*, observes the situation, which things have as they appear in our minds, or enter into our thoughts. For example, in the last-mentioned text, the natural order of *things* would require the proposition thus: By the will of God the offering of the body of Christ sanctifies us; for, 1. The will of God is the decree of his good pleasure to send his Son into the world. 2. The oblation of Jesus Christ is the first effect of this will. And, 3. Our sanctification is the last effect of his oblation by the will of God. On the contrary, the natural order in regard to us is, 1. The offering. 2. The sanctification, which it produces. And, lastly, The will of God, which gives it this efficacy.

When in any text the natural order of things differs from that which regards our knowledge of them, we may take that way which we like best; however, I believe, it would be best to follow that of our knowledge, because it is easiest, and clearest for the common people.

There are texts, which contain the end and the means; the cause and the effect; the principle, and the conse-

flowed Paul's creation preservation, conversion, gifts, graces, usefulness, &c. The second part relates the use that St. Paul made of all these, out of gratitude, and to God's glory. *Fleisch. Ser. tom. i.*

quence deduced from the principle; the action, and the principle of the action; the occasion, and the motive of the occasion: in these cases it is arbitrary either to begin with the means, and afterwards treat of the end; with the effect, and proceed to the cause, and so on; or to follow the contrary order. For instance, 2 Tim. ii. 10. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory.* It is plain, that the text has three parts; the *sufferings* of the apostle; the *end* he proposes; and the *principle*, from which he proposes this end. The order is then arbitrary: you may either speak, first of St. Paul's *love* to the elect; secondly, of the *salvation*, which he desired they might obtain in Jesus Christ; and, thirdly, of the *sufferings*, which he endured in order to their obtaining it; or, first, of his *sufferings*; secondly, of the *end*, which he proposed in them, the salvation of the elect with eternal glory; and, thirdly, of his *love* for the elect, which is the principle.

But though, in general, you may follow which of the two orders you please, yet there are some texts that determine the division; as Phil. ii. 13. *It is God who worketh effectually in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.* There are, it is plain, three things to be discussed; the *action* of God's grace upon men, *God worketh effectually in you*; the *effect* of this grace, *to will and to do*; and the spring or source of the action, according to *his good pleasure*. I think the division would not be proper if we were to treat, 1. Of God's good *pleasure*. 2. Of his *grace*. And, 3. Of the *will* and *works* of men. I should rather begin with volition and action, which are the *effects* of grace; then I should speak of the *grace* itself, which produces willing and doing in us effectually; and, lastly, of the *source* of this grace, which is the good pleasure of God. In short, it is always necessary to consult good sense, and never to be so conducted by general rules as not to attend to particular circumstances.

Above all things, in divisions, take care of putting any thing in the first part, which supposes the understanding of the second, or which obliges you to treat of the second to make the first understood; for by these means you will throw yourself into a great confusion, and be obliged to

make many tedious repetitions. You must endeavour to disengage the one from the other as well as you can; and when your parts are too closely connected with each other, place the most detached first, and endeavour to make that serve for a foundation to the explication of the second, and the second to the third; so that at the end of your explication the hearer may with a glance perceive as it were, a perfect body, or a finished building; for one of the greatest excellencies of a sermon is, the harmony of its component parts, that the first leads to the second, the second serves to introduce the third; that they which go before, excite a desire for those which are to follow: and, in a word, that the last has a special relation to all the others, in order to form in the hearers' minds a complete idea of the whole.

This cannot be done with all sorts of texts, but with those only which are proper to form such a design upon. Remember too, it is not enough to form such a plan, it must also be happily executed.

You will often find it necessary in texts, which you reduce to categorical propositions, to treat of the *subject*, as well as of the attribute: then you must make of the subject one part. This will always happen, when the subject of the proposition is expressed in terms that want explaining, or which furnish many considerations: For example; *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* This is a categorical proposition, and you must needs treat of the subject, *he who abides in Jesus Christ, and in whom Jesus, Christ abides.* So again, *He that believeth in me hath everlasting life. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* The two last ought to be reduced to categorical propositions, the subjects of which are, *they who are in Christ.* In these, and in all others of the same kind, the subject must make one part, and must also be considered first; for it is more natural, as well as most agreeable to the rules of logic, to begin with the subject of a proposition. Sometimes it is necessary not only to make one part of the subject, and another of the attribute; but also to

make a third of the connection of the subject with the attribute. In this case, you may say, after you have observed in the first place the subject, and in the second the attribute, that you will consider in the third the *entire sense of the whole proposition*: this must be done in these texts; *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. He that believeth in me hath eternal life, &c.*

Sometimes there are, in texts reduced to categorical propositions, terms which, in the schools, are called *syncategorematica*; and they relate sometimes to the subject, and sometimes to the attribute.ⁿ

When in a text there are several terms, which need a particular explanation, and which cannot be explained without confusion, or without dividing the text into too many parts, then I would not divide the *text* at all: but I would divide *the discourse* into two or three parts; and I would propose, first to explain the terms, and then the subject itself. This would be necessary on Acts ii. 27. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption.* To discuss this text properly, I think, the discourse should be divided into three parts, the first consisting of some *general considerations*, to prove that the text relates to Jesus Christ, and that Peter alleged it properly: the second, of some *particular considerations* on the *terms*; *soul*, and which signifies *life*; *grave*, which also signifies *hell*; on which the church of Rome grounds her opinion of Christ's descent into, what her divines call, *limbus patrum*; *holy*, which in this place signifies immortal, unalterable, *indestructible*; *corruption*, which means not the *moral* corruption of sin, but the *natural corruption* of the body. Finally, we must examine the *subject* itself, the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ.

There are many texts, in discussing which, it is not necessary to treat of either subject or attribute: but all the discussion depends on the terms *syncategorematica*.^o For example, John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* The categorical propo-

ⁿ *Syncategorematica*. Of this kind are those words, which of themselves signify nothing, but in conjunction with others in a proposition are very significant.

^o See page 100.

sition is, God loved the world; yet it is neither necessary to insist much on the term God, nor to speak in a common-place way of the love of God: but divide the text into *two* parts; first, the gift which God in his love hath made of his Son; secondly, the end for which he gave him, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. In the first, you must shew how Jesus Christ is the *gift* of God: 1. In that he did not come by principles of nature. 2. Inasmuch as there was nothing among men to merit it. 3. In that there was nothing among men to excite even the least regard of any kind. 4. There was not the least proportion between us and so great a gift. But, 5. There was, on the contrary, an infinite disproportion; and not only a disproportion, but an opposition and a contrariety. Then pass to the *cause* of this gift, which is love; and after having observed that it was a love of complacence, for which, on the creature's part, no reason can be rendered, particularly press the term *so*, and display the greatness of this love by many considerations. Then go to the second point, and examine, 1. The fruit of Christ's mission, the salvation of man, expressed negatively, that *he should not perish*, and positively, that *he should have eternal life*. Speak of these one after another. After this observe, 2. For whom the benefit of Christ's mission is ordained, *believers*. And, lastly, enlarge on the word *whosoever*, which signifies two things. 1. That no believer is excluded from the benefits of Jesus Christ. And, 2. That no man, *as such*, is excluded from faith, for all are indifferently called.

In texts of *reasoning*, the propositions which compose the syllogism must be examined one after another, and each apart.

Sometimes it will be even necessary to consider the *force* of the reasoning, and to make one part of that also.

Sometimes we shall find a *proposition concealed*, which it will be proper to supply. You must in such a case consider, whether the hidden proposition be important enough to make a part, which it will sometimes be, as in Rom. iv. 1. *What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God*. Divide this text into two parts. 1. Con-

sider the question, *What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?* And, 2. The solution. As to the question, first establish the sense, which depends on the meaning of the words *after the flesh*, that is to say, according to natural principles; either in regard to the birth of Isaac, who came into the world, not in an ordinary way and according to the force of nature, for Sarah was barren and beyond the age of child-bearing; or, as Abraham's natural state in marriage was a figure of the state of his soul in regard to God. *According to the flesh*, also signifies, according to works in regard to his justification before God. The sense of the question is, then, *What shall we say of Abraham our father?* was he *justified* before God by his works? Nor must you fail to remark, that in St. Paul's sense, *according to the flesh*, is opposed to, *according to the promise*; that is, the way of nature opposed to a supernatural way.

Secondly, Observe the *importance* of the question with the Jews, who looked upon Abraham as their father, the root of which they esteemed themselves the branches, deriving all their claims from him; so that it was extremely important to clear up the state of Abraham, and in what manner he was justified; for thereon depended the ruin of that pretended justification, which the Jews endeavoured to establish by the law, that is, by works.

Pass now to the solution, and observe, that it is a reason, and that the particle which we translate *but* should be translated *now*;^p thus, *If Abraham were justified by works,*

^p The translation in this part was so faulty, as clearly to shew, either that Mr. Claude had totally misunderstood the Apostle, or that the Translator had misunderstood Mr. Claude. The Editor not being able to procure a sight of the original, could not, in either of his former editions, satisfactorily solve the difficulty. But he has at last procured the very copy of Claude which Mr. Robinson made use of; and finds that the mistake was altogether in the Translator: who rendered the words, *or*, and *donec*, by *because*. Mr. Claude says, *Cette particule que nous avons traduite, mais, doit être traduite par or, de cette sorte; Certes si Abraham a été justifié par les œuvres, il a de quoi se vanter envers Dieu. Ce qui fait voir qu'il y a une troisième proposition que l'Apôtre a teüe, mais qu'il faut nécessairement suppléer, sçavoir cette conséquence; Donc Abraham n'a pas été justifié par les œuvres.*

he hath whereof to glory before God. Now he hath nothing to glory of before God. By which we see, there is a third proposition, which the apostle concealed, but which must necessarily be supplied, which is this conclusion, *Therefore Abraham was not justified by his works.* As the solution of the question depends on this proposition, and on the proofs, which establish it, the three propositions must be treated separately; 1. Every man who is justified by works, hath whereof to glory before God. 2. Abraham, what advantages soever he had otherwise, had nothing to glory of before God. 3. The conclusion suppressed, *therefore Abraham was not justified by his works.*

There are texts of reasoning which are composed of an *objection* and the *answer*, and the division of such is plain; for they naturally divide into the objection and the solution. As Rom. vi. 1, 2. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Divide this into two parts, the objection and the answer. The objection is, first, proposed in general terms, *What shall we say then?* 2. In more particular terms, *Shall we continue in sin?* And, 3. The reason and ground of the objection, *because grace abounds.* The solution of the question is the same. In general, *God forbid.* In particular, *How shall we live in sin?* And the reason, *We are dead to sin.*

There are some *texts* of reasoning which are extremely *difficult* to divide, because they cannot be reduced to many propositions without confusion, or savouring too much of the schools, or having a defect in the division; in short, without being unsatisfactory. In such a case, let ingenuity and good sense contrive some extraordinary way, which, if proper and agreeable, cannot fail of producing a good effect. For example, John iv. 10. *If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water:* I think it might not be im-

At the conclusion of the paragraph the Translator again renders *done, because;* and thereby destroys all the sense of the passage. The meaning of Claude is simply this: *If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory before God. Now he hath nothing to glory of before God: therefore he was not justified by his works.*

proper to divide it into *two* parts; the first including the *general propositions* contained in the words; and the second, the *particular application* of these to the Samaritan woman. In the first, observe these following propositions: That Jesus Christ is the *gift* of God—That though he asked for drink, he is the *fountain of living water* himself—That he is the *object* of our knowledge, both as the *gift* of God; and as the *fount* of living water—That an *application* to him for this living water, flows from our knowledge of him—That he gives the water of life to *all, who ask it*. In the second part you may observe, that Jesus Christ did not disdain to converse with a *woman*, a Samaritan woman, a *schismatic*, out of the communion of the visible church, a very *wicked* woman, a woman who in her schism and sin *disputed* against the truth—That Jesus Christ *improved this opportunity* to teach her his grace, without amusing himself with directly answering what she said.—You may remark the *ignorance* of this woman in regard to the Lord Jesus: she saw him; she heard him; but she did not know him: from which you may observe, that this is the general condition of sinners, who have God always before their eyes, yet never perceive him—That from the woman's ignorance arose her *negligence* and loss of such a fair opportunity of being instructed. Observe also the *mercy* of Jesus Christ towards her; for he even promised to save her. When he said, *If thou wouldst have asked of him, he would have given thee living water*; it was as much as if he had offered to instruct her.—Remark too, that Jesus Christ went even so far as to *command* her to ask for living water; for when he said, *If thou wouldst have asked him*, he did as much as say, Ask him now.—Observe, finally, that he *excited* her to seek and to know him, and removed her ignorance, the cause of all her mistakes and miseries.

There are sometimes *texts which imply* many important *truths* without expressing them; and yet it will be necessary to mention and enlarge upon them, either because they are useful on some important occasion, or because they are important of themselves. Then the text must be divided into two parts, one implied, and the other expressed. I own this way of division is bold, and must neither be abused, nor too often used; but there are oc-

casions, it is certain, on which it may be very justly and agreeably taken. A certain preacher on a fast-day, having taken for his subject these words of Isaiah, *Seek the Lord while he may be found*, divided his text into two parts, one implied, the other expressed. In the *first* he said, that there were *three* important truths, of which he was obliged to speak: 1. That *God was far from us*. 2. That *we were far from him*. And, 3. That there was a *time*, in which God would not be found, although we sought him. He spoke of these one after another. In the first, he enumerated the *afflictions* of the church, in a most affecting manner; observing, that all these sad events did but too plainly prove the absence of the favour of God. 2. He enumerated the *sins* of the church, and shewed how distant we were from God. And, in the third place, he represented that sad time, when God's patience was, as it were, wearied out; and added, that then he displayed his heaviest judgments without speaking any more the language of mercy. At length coming to the part *expressed*, he explained what it was to *seek* the Lord; and by a pathetic *exhortation*, stirred up his hearers to make that search. Finally, he explained what was the *time* in which God would be found, and renewed his exhortations to *repentance*, mixing therewith hopes of pardon, and of the blessing of God. His sermon was very much admired, particularly for its order.

In *texts of history*, divisions are easy: sometimes an action is related in all its *circumstances*, and then you may consider the *action* in itself first, and afterwards the *circumstances*, of the action.

Sometimes it is necessary to remark the *occasion* of an action, and to make one part of it.

Sometimes there are *actions* and *words*, which must be considered *separately*.

Sometimes it is not necessary to make any division at all: but the order of the history must be followed. In short, it depends on the state of each text in particular.

To render a division agreeable, and easy to be remembered by the hearer, endeavour to reduce it as often as possible to simple terms. By a simple term I mean a *single word*, in the same sense as in logic what they call *terminus*

simplex is distinguished from what they call *terminus complex*. Indeed, when the parts of a discourse are expressed in abundance of words, they are not only embarrassing, but also useless to the hearers, for they cannot retain them. Reduce them then as often as you can to a single term.

Observe also, as often as possible, to *connect* the parts of your division together; either by way of opposition, or of cause and effect, or of action and end, or action and motive, or in some way or other; for to make a division of many parts, which have no connection, is exceedingly offensive to the hearers, who will be apt to think that all you say, after such a division, is nonsense; besides, the human mind naturally loving order, it will much more easily retain a division in which there appears a connection.^a

As to *subdivisions*, it is always necessary to make them; for they very much assist composition, and diffuse perspicuity through a discourse: but it is not always needful to mention them; on the contrary, they must be very seldom mentioned; because it would load the hearer's mind with a multitude of particulars. Nevertheless, when subdivisions can be made agreeably, either on account of the excellence of the matter, or when it will raise the hearer's attention, or when the justness of parts harmonize agreeably one with another, you may formally mention them: but this must be done very seldom; for the hearers would be presently tired of such a method, and by that means cloyed of the whole,^f

CHAP. V.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED BY WAY OF EXPLICATION.

I PROCEED NOW from general to more particular rules, and will endeavour to give some precepts for invention and disposition.

^a This direction of Mr. Claude's, like most of his other rules, is founded on the knowledge of human nature, which delights in orderly connections, and is extremely disgusted with every thing incongruous.

^f *Subdivisions*. This directs us how to understand Mr. Claude's whole book, which abounds with subdivisions. It is plain he means chiefly to aid in *composing*, rather than in *delivering* the sermon.

I suppose then, in the first place, that no man will be so rash as to put pen to paper, or begin to discuss a text, till he has well comprehended the sense of it. I have given no rule about this before; for a man, who wants to be told, that he ought not to preach on a text before he understands it, ought at the same time to be informed, that he is fitter for any other profession than that of a minister.

I suppose, secondly, that the student, having well understood the sense of his text, begins by dividing it; and that, having the several parts before his eyes, he very nearly sees what are the subjects which he will have to discuss, and, consequently, what ought to enter into his composition.^s

I suppose, farther, that he is a man not altogether a novice in divinity: but that he is acquainted with common-places, and the principal questions, of which they treat.

Supposing all these, the first thing that I would have such a man do, is to observe the *nature of his text*; for there are doctrinal, historical, prophetic, and typical texts. Some contain a command, others a prohibition;

^s As for *composing* (says Bishop Wilkins) it will not be convenient for a constant preacher to pen *all* his discourse, or to tie himself to *phrases*; when the matter is well digested, expressions will easily follow; whereas to be confined to words, besides the oppression of the memory, will much prejudice the operations of the understanding and affections. The judgment will be much weakened, and the affections dulled, when the memory is over-burthened. A man cannot ordinarily be so much affected himself, and consequently he cannot affect others, with things he speaks by rote; he should take some liberty to prosecute a matter according to his *more immediate apprehensions* of it; by which many particulars may be suggested not before thought of, according to the working of his own affections, and the various alterations that may appear in the auditory; and, besides, they will breed a *παρρησια*, such a fitting confidence as should be in that orator who is to have a power over the affections of others, which such a one is scarcely capable of. *Wilkins's Ecclesiast. sect. 2.*

This reminds me of what Quintilian says upon *extempore* speaking: "*Maximus vero studiorum fructus est, et velut præmium quoddam amplissimum longi laboris, extempore dicendi facultas: quam qui non erit consecutus, mea quidem sententia, civilibus officiis renuntiabit, et solam scribendi facultatem potius ad alia opera convertet.— Quid multus stylus, et assidua lectio, et longa studiorum ætas facit, si manet eadem quæ fuit incipientibus difficultas? Periisse profecto confitendum præteritum laborem, cui semper idem laborandum est,*" &c. *Quint. Inst. lib. x. cap. 7.*

some a promise, others a threatening; some a wish, others an exhortation; some a censure, others a motive to action; some a parable, some a reason; some a comparison of two things together, some a vision, some a thanksgiving; some a description of the wrath, or majesty of God, of the sun, or some other thing; a commendation of the law, or of some person; a prayer; an amplification of joy, or affliction; a pathetic exclamation of anger, sorrow, admiration, imprecation, repentance, confession, of faith, patriarchal or pastoral benediction, consolation, &c. I take the greatest part to be mixed, containing different kinds of things. It is very important for a man who would compose, to examine his text well upon these articles, and carefully to distinguish all its characters, for in so doing he will presently see what way he ought to take.

Having well examined of what kind the text is, enter into the matter, and begin the composition; for which purpose you must observe, there are two general ways, or two manners of composing. One is the way of *explication*, the other of *observations*: nor must it be imagined that you may take which of the two ways you please on every text, for some texts must be treated in the explicatory method, and others necessarily require the way of observations. When you have a point of *doctrine* to treat of, you must have recourse to explication; and when a text of *history*, the only way is observation.

In discernment upon this article the judgment of a man consists; for, as texts of scripture are almost infinite, it is impossible to give perfect rules thereupon; it depends in general on good sense: only this I say, when we treat of a plain subject, common and known to all the world, it is a great absurdity to take the way of *explication*; and when we have to treat of a difficult or important subject, which requires explaining, it would be equally ridiculous to take the way of *observations*.

The difficulty, of which we speak, may be considered either in regard to the *terms* of the text only, the subject itself being clear, after the words are explained; or in regard to the *subject* only, the terms themselves being very intelligible; or in regard to *both terms and things*.

If the *terms* be obscure, we must endeavour to give the true sense: but if they be clear, it would be trifling to affect to make them so; and we must pass on to the difficulty, which is in the subject itself. If the subject be clear, we must explain the terms, and give the true sense of the words. If there appear any absurdity or difficulty in *both*, both must be explained: but always begin with the explanation of the terms.

In the explication of the *terms*, first propose what they call *ratio dubitandi*, that is, whatever makes the difficulty. The reason of doubting, or the intricacy, arises often from several causes. Either the terms do not seem to make any sense at all; or they are equivocal, forming different senses; or the sense, which they seem at first to make, may be perplexed, improper, or contradictory; or the meaning, though clear in itself, may be controverted, and exposed to cavillers. In all these cases, after you have proposed the difficulty, determine it as briefly as you can; for which purpose avail yourself of criticisms, notes, comments, paraphrases, &c. and, in one word, of the labours of other persons.

If none of these answer your expectation, endeavour to find something better yourself; to which purpose, examine all the circumstances of the text, what precedes, what follows, the general scope of the discourse, the particular design of the writer in the place where your text is, the subject of which it treats, parallel passages of scripture which treat of the same subject, or those in which the same expressions are used, &c. and by these means it is almost impossible that you should not content yourself. Above all, take care not to make of grammatical matters a principal part; but only treat of them as previously necessary for understanding the text.

To proceed from terms to *things*. They must, as I have said, be explained, when they are either difficult or important. There are several ways of explication. You may begin by *refuting* errors, into which people have fallen; or you may fall upon the subject immediately, and so come to a fair and precise *declaration of the truth*; and, after this, you may *dilate*, (if I may venture to say so) by a deduction of the principles, on which the text

depends, and on the essential relations, in which it ought to be considered.[†]

The same method must be taken, when texts are misunderstood, and gross and pernicious errors adduced. In such a case, first reject the erroneous sense, and (if necessary) even refute it, as well by reasons taken from the texts, as by arguments from other topics; and at length establish the true sense.

Take for example, John xvi. 12. *I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now.* You must begin by proposing and rejecting the false senses, which some ancient heretics gave of these words. They said, Jesus Christ spoke here of many *unwritten traditions*, which he gave his disciples by word of mouth after his resurrection—An argument which the church of Rome has borrowed, to colour her pretended traditions. After you have thus proposed the false sense, and solidly refuted it, pass on to establish the true, and shew what were the *things* which Jesus Christ had *yet to say* to his disciples, and which they *could not then bear*.

I would advise the same method for *all disputed texts*. Hold it as a maxim, to begin to open the way to a truth by rejecting a falsehood. Not that it can be always done; sometimes you must begin by explaining the truth, and afterwards reject the error; because there are certain occasions, on which the hearers' minds must be pre-occupied; and because also truth, well proposed and fully established, naturally destroys error: but, notwithstanding this, the most approved method is to begin by rejecting error. After all, it must be left to a man's judgment when he ought to take different courses.

There are texts of explication, in which the difficulty arises neither from equivocal terms, nor from the different senses in which they may be taken, nor from objections which may be formed against them, nor from the abuse which heretics have made of them; but from the *intricacy of the subject itself*, which may be difficult to comprehend,

[†] Mr. Claude here explains Acts ix. 5. not as expressing merely that Paul's opposition to him was fruitless, but as saying, that it arose from the hardness of his heart; as though *σκληραν σοι* had been put for *σκληροτης σου*. The Editor, not thinking the interpretation just, has omitted it. The Reader, if he wish to see an illustration of the point before him, may refer to the first head of Skel. 85.

and may require great study and meditation. On such texts you need not, you must not, amuse yourself in proposing difficulties, nor in making objections; but you must enter immediately into the explication of the matter, and take particular care to arrange your ideas well, that is to say, in a natural and easy order, beginning where you ought to begin; for if you do not begin right, you can do nothing to the purpose; and, on the contrary, if you take a right road, all will appear easy as you go on to the end.

If, for example, I were to preach from this text, *The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*; I would divide this text into two parts. The first should regard the ministry of the law; the second, that of the gospel: the one expressed in these words, *The law was given by Moses*; the other in these, *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. I should subdivide the first into two parts; the *law*, and its *author*, Moses.

I would then enter into the matter, by saying, that I could not give a more just idea of the law than by placing it in opposition to grace and truth; so that, to consider it well, we must observe it in two respects; as a ministry of *rigour* opposed to grace; and as a ministry of *shadows* and imperfections opposed to *truth*.

To explain the law as a ministry of *rigour*, I would observe, that in the design of God in sending his Son into the world, and in bringing men to salvation, it was necessary, before he began the work, to prepare the way, and to remove those obstacles, which, had they not been removed, would have frustrated his design. One of these obstacles was man's *ignorance* of himself and God. He was ignorant of himself; for he was a sinner immersed in crimes, an object of the eternal vengeance of the Creator, deserving to be plunged into hell, a slave of unrighteousness, of himself incapable of the least degree of holiness, and yet more so of delivering himself from the curse under which he was, and of entering into communion with God. Yet, ignorant of his state, he believed himself worthy of the love of God, capable of acquitting himself well of his duty, and of answering the whole end of his creation, enjoying himself with as much pride, quietness, and haughtiness, as if he had been the happiest of all creatures.

On the other hand, man had indeed some confused ideas of the divinity; and, before the coming of Christ,

he could not but see in the works of nature, the providence, the justice, and the majesty of God: but all these ideas were entombed in an almost infinite number of errors, and all became useless, by the infinite dissipations which worldly objects caused, by the natural blindness of his mind, and hardness of his heart. In one word, he slept a double sleep, equally ignorant of his misery and his duty. The sword of divine justice was upon him; but he did not feel it: and although the condition of his nature, and his dependence upon God, bound him to almost infinite obligations, yet he did not perceive them.

It was therefore needful, before Christ came into the world, to awaken man from his double security. He must be made to feel the greatness of his sins, the curse that he had drawn on himself, the horror of hell, which he deserved, the excellent glory that he had lost, and the Creator's indignation, to which he was exposed. It was needful to discover to him his inability to raise himself from that profound abyss into which he was fallen; to make him see, in all their extent, the rights of God, what mankind were obliged to render to him, and how far they were from an ability to do it. It was needful, in one word, to mortify their vanity, to abase their pride, and to conduct them, all-trembling, confounded, and afraid, to the foot of God's tribunal, in order that they might receive with joy the declaration of his mercy.

This was the end which God proposed in the ministry of the law, and for this purpose. 1. He manifested himself from the highest heavens in all the magnificence of infinite Majesty, to which all that pompous train belongs, which accompanied the publication of the law, and surrounded mount Sinai with thunderings and lightnings.

2. He declared all his rights over the creature, and the duty which a creature naturally owes him, by that admirable moral law, the words of which he caused them to hear from the midst of flaming fire, and which at length he wrote with his immortal finger on tables of stone.

3. He shewed most clearly and intelligibly, what a just and innocent creature might naturally hope for from him; and on the contrary, what a sinner had to fear. *Do this* (said he) *and thou shalt live;* and on the other hand, *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the law to do them.*

4. Moreover, as all this tended to discover to man his sin, God was pleased to declare to him the necessity of satisfaction, without which he might not hope for mercy. This declaration he made by ordaining a great number of propitiatory sacrifices, the use which he settled among them; for all the parts of the ceremonial law were so many public informations that divine justice must be satisfied, before mankind could hope for mercy.

5. To shew yet further the sovereign dignity and infinite glory of God above the creature, and to abase man in his presence, and reduce him as it were to dust and ashes, he loaded the Israelites, to whom all the Economy belonged, with a yoke of ceremonies, heaping them one upon another, and ordaining the observation of all under the same penalty of a curse, which had accompanied the publication of the moral law.

Finally, Because all this exterior revelation would have been useless on account of the natural blindness of all mankind, God accompanied the law with a degree of his Spirit, or of that inward light, which, by illuminating the eyes of the understanding, produces not any true regeneration, nor any real consolation, but only opens a man's eyes to see the greatness of his sin and misery, discovering those sad objects, and exciting those painful agitations, which St. Paul describes in the 7th of the Romans, and which ever terminate in this exclamation, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

After you have thus explained the law, as it is a ministry of *rigour*, in opposition to *grace*, you must proceed to consider it in the other view, as opposed to *truth*.

You may observe, in the first place, that the term *truth* is in the holy scripture put in opposition to *promise*; inasmuch as truth is the accomplishment and execution. God, to soften the great rigour of the law, which of itself could only produce despair in the souls of the Israelites, and render their condition more miserable than that of other people, mixed in that economy a revelation of mercy; and the first discoveries of this mercy are in the promises and prophecies which God gave them touching the Messiah. Immediately after the fall, he said, *I will put enmity betwixt the woman and the serpent; her seed*

shall bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent his heel. He represented it more fully to Abraham in the covenant made with him, and afterward reminded them in Jacob's blessing, that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came; and unto him should the gathering of the people be.* And Moses himself filled them with hopes in these admirable words, *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, him shall ye hear.*

2. *Truth* is also taken in scripture for *substance*, in opposition to figures and *shadows*; and here it means that of which God had given a model in the Jewish dispensation. His divine wisdom placed in full view a thousand beautiful images of what he intended to do for the redemption of men. Here you may observe the principal figures under the law, and shew the use of them; for they were intended to maintain the hope, and support the souls of the Israelites, till the Messiah came, before whose coming eternal salvation was declared to them.

You may add, 3dly, That the term *truth* is taken also for perfection, in opposition to the *beginnings* and seeds of the gospel, in a degree sufficient for the salvation of the people of Israel. The mercy of God was manifested to them, not only for ages to come, but for themselves in particular; for they were called, the remission of their sins was promised, their eternal salvation declared, the Messiah proposed not only to their speculation, but also to their faith; the spirit of adoption, consolation, and perseverance, was communicated to them. Yet, if all this be compared with the New Testament dispensation, you will find only beginnings and foretastes, in comparison with that admirable plenitude which we have received by Jesus Christ.

4. You may subjoin, that whatever advantages the Israelites had, or whatever degree of grace was diffused in the Mosaic ministry, all together; however, it is called *law*: the reason is, that the denomination of an economy must be taken from the predominant part of it. Now, it is certain, in that dispensation, justice prevailed above mercy, the measure of the spirit of bondage exceeding that of the spirit of adoption; for which reason St. John

makes no difficulty of including all under the name of law; *The law, says he, came by Moses.*

Having thus explained what the law is, go on to its author, Moses. And first, set aside in a few words the false erroneous sense which may be given of these words, that Moses was the first and principal author of the law. You may observe, that St. John did not intend to take from the law the glory of its divinity: God was the first and principal author of it, as is evident: Because the law was a fulfilment of what God promised to Abraham in the covenant made with him: Because, in all that economy, there was too great wisdom to be the work of man: And, in fine, because it was attended with so many miracles, and with so much happy success. In all this, it is impossible not to acknowledge the finger of God. In this dispensation, then, Moses was only the dispenser, the servant of God.

The true sense of St. John's words being thus established, you must enquire *wherein the ministry of Moses consisted*, and make it appear, that he was not a true mediator, who by his merit or dignity inclined God to be reconciled to man. For, as men were sinners, he, who had power to reconcile God to men, must suffer for sin, and offer to the Divinity a sufficient propitiation: but this Moses could not do, being only a simple creature; a simple creature! nay, he was a sinner, and had need of a propitiation himself, so far was he from being able to give one for another; we must not therefore attribute that glory to him. Entirely to prevent such a thought, Divine Wisdom has related three remarkable things in Moses's history. 1. The sins and failings of Moses. 2. That the priesthood was assigned to Aaron his brother, and not to him. And, 3. That not he, but Joshua, had the honour of leading the Israelites into the land of Canaan. Moreover, to be the real mediator of a covenant between God and men, it would have been necessary for him to have been master of the hearts of men, that he might answer to God for their obedience to his commands, and perseverance in his love. Moses could not do this. He spoke to the ear, he exhorted, censured, promised, threatened, he did all that a mere creature could do: but he could not absolutely govern their hearts and minds, nor bend and turn

them as he would; God only was capable of a dominion so great.

In what then did the ministry of Moses consist? I answer, in three great advantages. 1. He was a mutual *interpreter* between God and the people. He ascended the mountain to present to God the people's promises of obedience, and their engagements to his service; and when God had given him his orders, he came down to speak on the Lord's part to the people, to declare his ordinances, to make them understand his laws, and to collect, in the name of God, the solemn Amens, by which the people consented to the blessings, and to the curses: thus he was reciprocally the interpreter of God to the Israelites, and of the Israelites to God. What the people said, when they saw the majesty of God upon the mountain, and when trembling they cried, *Let not the Lord speak to us; but speak thou with us, and we will hear;* Exod. xx. 19. implies the office of which I speak.

The second advantage of the ministry of Moses was this: it was accompanied with the supreme and infinite power of God, who, according to his promise, when he called him, wrought *miracles* by him: *I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders: and thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.* Indeed the miracles that God wrought by the ministry of his servant, were very great; he turned the waters into blood, &c.

The *inspiration* of Moses was his third advantage. Having delivered the Israelites from bondage; having separated them from all other people; having associated them in one body; having established a covenant between God and them; having prepared in the midst of them an ordinary service and settled religion; God chose him to write the whole history, and filled him with the Holy Spirit, to enable him to perform a work so important. It was he who first began to compose that admirable book called the *Scripture*, which is the church's eternal rule, the foundation of our consolation, instruction, and hope.

Having thus explained the first part, pass on to the second, *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* You must explain what grace is, and what truth is; you may apply both to the person of Jesus Christ, and to the manner of

his conversation here upon earth; for there were two perpetual qualities diffused through all his converse, *affability* and *sincerity*; affability, or sweetness, expressed by *grace*; and integrity, or sincerity, expressed by *truth*. Sinners are generally governed by two contraries, anger and deceit:

Astutum gestant rabido sub pectore vultum.

They are profound, mysterious and impenetrable; and under specious appearances they hide the most fatal designs; like those clouds, which, under luminous aspects, conceal thunder and lightning, and hail and storm. The heart of Jesus Christ was all love, peace and benevolence towards men, and all his exterior was sincerity and sweetness.

But although this be true, yet this is not the sense of these words. *Grace and truth* are put here for the *gospel* of Jesus Christ. *Grace* in opposition to the rigours of the law: *truth* in opposition to prophecies, figures, and imperfect beginnings.

1. The gospel is called *grace*, because God has manifested himself to us not with all the pompous and majestic grandeur with which he accompanied the law, when he published it on mount Sinai, but in a mild and *gentle manner*, under the veil of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ; for which reason St. Paul says, *Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*. Formerly, it was God manifest in thunder and fire; God manifest in the tabernacle-cloud; God manifest in the splendor of angels: but now it is, God manifest in *the flesh*, in a familiar manner, in a manner which no more frightens and alarms us.

2. *Grace*, because it consists only in a revelation of the *mercy* of God, in a declaration of remission of sins, and of his parental love, &c.

3. *Grace*, because it comes to us by the *pure good pleasure* of God, without our having contributed any thing to it, either by our merit, or by preparations to receive it; or even by the least desire after it. He hath given it to us *freely* in every sense; the blessing itself exceeds our merit; the manner of bestowing it bears no proportion to our goodness; for God gave it to us when we did not think of it, when we had no merit to render us worthy of

it, yea, when we had only dispositions contrary to it. God loved us even when we were enemies.

4. *Grace*, because the Gospel is not only an outward invitation, which reaches the ear; but it is an inward ministration of the Spirit, it is *the power of God to salvation*. It is a word attended with *divine efficacy*, which converts us, and makes us new creatures.

5. *Grace*, in regard to the *manner*, in which the quickening Spirit, who accompanies the word, works in us; for he operates neither by enthusiasms, nor ecstasies, nor violent transports, as formerly in the prophets; but by a gentle and tranquil impression admirably adapted to rational creatures. It is by enlightening our understandings, by rectifying our reason, &c.

The Gospel is also called *truth*,^u 1. In opposition to prophecies in the law, which were only promises; the Gospel is the accomplishment of these; therefore Jesus Christ said upon the cross, *It is finished*; and at another time, *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*. For this reason the Gospel is called *the promise*, because it is the execution of the great and glorious promises of God. God, in regard to the Gospel, calls himself *Jehovah who is*: under the law he calls himself *Jehoveh who will be*: but under the Gospel, *who is, who was, and who is to come*. For, having accomplished his ancient promises, he hath laid firm foundations of future glory.

2. *Truth*, in opposition to the ancient Jewish figures, of which Jesus Christ is the substance. *The law was a shadow of good things to come*: but the Gospel exhibits the substance, the original, the archetype of what was represented in the law, the true spiritual Israel of God, the true deliverance from spiritual Egypt, the true manna, the true tabernacle, the true Jerusalem,—all these we have under the Gospel.

3. *Truth*, in opposition to the imperfect beginnings under the law. We are no longer under Tutors and Governors; but children at full age. *We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adop-*

^u The Editor has omitted here, in the subsequent sketch of this discourse, three particulars which he deemed injudicious; namely, that the Gospel was, *not erroneous*, like the religions of the heathens—*not unsatisfactory and uninteresting*, like philosophy—*not transitory*, as earthly things.

tion whereby we cry, Abba, Father. I cannot help remarking, by the way, the ignorance of Messieurs of Port Royal, who have translated this passage *My Father* instead of *Abba Father*, under pretence that the Syriac word *Abba* signifies *father*. They did not know, that St. Paul alluded to a law among the Jews, which forbid *slaves* to call a free man *Abba*, or a free woman *Imma*. The apostle meant, that we were no more slaves, but freed by Jesus Christ; and, consequently, that we might call God *Abba*, as we may call the church *Imma*. In translating the passage then, the word *Abba*, although it be a Syriac word, and unknown in our tongue, must always be preserved; for in this term consists the force of St. Paul's reasoning.

You may now pass to the consideration of the *author* of the Gospel. *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* Here you may observe what was common both to Moses and Jesus, and what advantages Jesus Christ had over Moses.

First then, Jesus Christ, like Moses, was reciprocally an *interpreter*, on God's part bringing to men the mysteries of revelation; and on men's part presenting to God their faith, piety, prayers, and promises of obedience.

2. His ministry, like Moses's, was accompanied with *miracles* of divine power, and glory, &c.

3. He, like Moses, caused his gospel to be *written* for a perpetual rule; by which the church is to conduct itself to the end of the world.

But, whatever agreement there might be between Moses and Jesus Christ, there is no comparison between the one and the other. For,

1. Moses was not the author of the law, he was only the *dispenser* of it; God himself pronounced the most essential part out of the midst of the flames, and wrote it in the end with his own finger on tables of stone: but Jesus Christ is the *author of grace and truth*; for the Gospel is founded on his blood, on his propitiation, and merit.

2. Moses was not, properly speaking, the mediator of God's covenant with the Israelites, although he is so called in Scripture, because he was a typical mediator, that is, a simple *interpreter* between God and the people. If God honoured him thus, it was neither in consideration of his personal merit, nor on account of the love which God had for him, that such a covenant was made; Moses himself was a sinner, and a real mediator he wanted for himself;

but with Jesus Christ, on his own account, and for the love which the Father had for him, the covenant of grace was made, &c.

3. Moses could indeed *report* the sentiments and words of the people to God: but he could neither become a guarantee for their present sincerity nor for their future perseverance: not only because he could not govern their hearts, but even because he did not know them: but Jesus Christ is men's surety and respondent to God, both for the sincerity of their faith and holiness, and also for their final perseverance; for he intimately knows the hearts of men, and, being Lord of all, bows and turns them as he pleases.

4. The Spirit, which accompanied the legal economy, did not proceed from Moses; Moses was neither the *source*, nor the *dispenser* of it: but Jesus Christ is the true origin of this blessing; it is his Spirit, which the faithful receive; *Of his fulness* (says St. John) *have all we received, and grace for grace.*

5. Moses's miracles were wrought not by his own, but by a *foreign* power: but Jesus Christ wrought his miracles by his own power, &c.

Finally, Moses was only established as a *servant* over the house of God; but Jesus Christ as a Son, that is, as Master and Heir. For Moses indeed was a mere man: but Christ is the *Son of God*, and *God hath blessed him for ever*. Of him Moses prophesied, when he said, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me, him shall ye hear.* Deut. xviii. 15, 16.*

There are some texts which must be discussed by way of explication, although neither terms nor things are difficult; but because the matter is important, and a medi-

* This *literal* method of explication, of which Mr. Claude has given the above example, is very justly accounted the *best* way of interpreting Scripture. The Editor however takes the liberty of observing, that it might have been better if Mr. C. had made fewer subdivisions, and had been more particular in his choice of them. It seems best to adopt those which give a *just* view of the subject, and to reject every thing which appears forced or fanciful.

The specimen now exhibited, though not altogether free from exception, is by no means unworthy of attention. And as it may help to give the Reader some insight into the nature and use of the Ske-

tation of it beautiful and full of edification. Passages of this kind must needs be proposed in all their extent.

Take, for example, these words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 7. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* This passage is of this sort; the terms are easy, and the subject, of which St. Paul speaks, has no difficulty: but yet, on account of the importance of the matter, it must needs be explained, or, to speak more properly, extensively proposed.

I would then divide this text into two parts; the first should be the apostle's *proposition*; and the second, the *reason*, which he gives for it. His proposition is contained in these words, *We have this treasure in earthen vessels.* The reason, which he assigns, is contained in the following words, *That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

In order to treat of the first properly, you must examine

1. What is the *treasure*, and, 2. How it is *in earthen vessels.*

letons, it is here drawn out in the form of those Skeletons; and the more important hints, which elucidate the different parts of it, are subjoined in notes.—The Reader is requested to cast his eye over it first, *omitting what is contained in the brackets.*

I. The ministry of the law.

The law may be considered as a ministry of *Rigour*, as opposed to *Grace*.

[Man knew neither himself nor his God—

It was necessary therefore to discover to him his misery, and his duty—

This was the end which God proposed in the ministry of the law—

The ministration of the law was well calculated to answer this end^s—]

^s God awfully displayed his own Majesty on Mount Sinai; and by the perfect law which he promulgated, He shewed at once what a Creature ought to do, and what a Sinner must expect: And while by the ceremonial law he declared the necessity of an atonement, He loaded the Israelites with an insupportable yoke of ceremonies, enforcing the observance of them by the severest penalties; and gave just such a portion of his Spirit, as might enable them to see their guilt and misery, and dispose them to receive the promised Messiah.

This *treasure* is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which in scripture is represented to us under various images borrowed from human things. Sometimes it is called a *light*, *the day-spring from on high* visiting us when we sat in the region and shadow of death: Sometimes it is called *life*: Sometimes a *resurrection*: Sometimes a *net cast into the sea*: Sometimes a *seed*: Here it is represented under the image of a *treasure*:

1. On account of its *worth* and excellence; for what can be so valuable as this gospel of Jesus Christ? &c.

2. Because of its *abundance*; for here are infinite riches, &c.

3. For its *truth* and reality; for it is indeed a *heavenly treasure*, which this world cannot afford, which grace only gives, and gives only to the elect. In this sense the Gospel in the parable is likened to *treasure hid in a field*, and to a *pearl of great price*, &c.

4. *Treasure*, which cannot be *possessed* without joy, without jealousy, without caution, &c.

5. The apostle, in the preceding verses, had called the

It may be considered also as a ministry of *Shadows*, as opposed to *Truth*.

[It held out *Promises* of what was afterwards to be accomplished:—

It exhibited in *Types* the mercies which God had in reserve for them—

It imparted *the Beginnings* of that salvation, which was to be afterwards more largely bestowed—

Yet it could only be called "*Law*," because, however the Grace of the Gospel was blended with that economy, the *legal* part was predominant—]

The author, or dispenser of this law was *Moses*.

[God indeed was the first and principal author of this law—

Moses was only the Mediator by whom God dispensed it—

Nor as a Mediator was He a real, but only a typical Mediator:—]

¹ Gen. iii. 15. and xlix. 10. Deut. xviii. 15.

² To prevent entirely the idea of his being *really* the Mediator of the Covenant, Divine Wisdom has recorded his sins and failings; and it is worthy of observation, that the priesthood was assigned, not to him, but to his brother Aaron; and that not He, but Joshua, had the honour of leading the Israelites into Canaan.

Gospel, light, glory, and knowledge; *The light* (says he) *of the glorious Gospel of Christ; the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* This treasure, then, is a treasure of *light*, a treasure of *glory*, a treasure of *knowledge*; and, what is more, of the light, the glory, and the knowledge of *God*.

6. The Gospel may be considered either as received and possessed by simple believers, or as it is deposited in the hands of the *ministers* of the Gospel. I own, it is worthy of being called a treasure in both considerations; but most in the second: for this Gospel is found in ministers in a more full and abundant measure than in others; they have accumulated much more light, much more knowledge. But if it be thus with ordinary ministers, how much more does it deserve to be called a *treasure* as the *apostles* possessed it?

The apostles had the Gospel, 1. In all its *extent*, not being ignorant of any of its mysteries, &c. 2. In all its *degrees*, penetrating even to the bottom of divine mysteries, &c. 3. In all its *purity*, without any mixture of error.

As the dispenser of it He was greatly honoured by God.

[He was the *Interpreter* of the Israelites to God, and of God to them^a—

He was employed to *shew forth the Mighty power of Jehovah*—

He was inspired to *transmit in writing* the history of his own nation—]

II. The ministry of the Gospel.

“Grace and truth” are here put for the Gospel of Jesus Christ—

The Gospel is called *Grace* in opposition to the *Rigours of the Law*.

[God manifested himself in it, not as on Mount Sinai with thunderings, but in a *gentle manner*, under a veil of human flesh—

In it he reveals his *mercy* and parental love—

It is his *free Gift*, according to his *own good Pleasure*—

It is accompanied with a *Divine Efficacy* to the souls of men—

It operates on us, not enthusiastically, but in a *rational manner*—]

^a Exod. xx. 19.

This *treasure* in them was, as it were, in a public magazine; or as the waters of a fountain are in its bason, &c.

7. Farther, the Gospel is called a *treasure* in opposition to the false *treasures of the earth*, which are nothing in comparison of this. If David said of the revelation of the law, *The judgments of the Lord are more desirable than gold, yea, than fine gold*; what would he have said of the mysteries of the Gospel, had he lived under a revelation of them?

8. This treasure was once hid in God's decrees; but now it is a treasure set forth and *displayed* in the Gospel; for which reason St. Paul, speaking of the Gospel, says, *In it are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*: as if he had said, those treasures, which were formerly hid in God, are now revealed in the Gospel. In the same sense he said, *The mystery hid from ages and from generations is now made manifest to the saints*, Col. i. 26.

But *this treasure* (says the apostle) is in us, as in *earthen vessels*. You may introduce this article by observing the use of Gideon's pitchers and lamps; and you may farther

It is called *Truth* in opposition to *Falsehood*.

[It is the *accomplishment* of what existed only in *Promises* before—

It is the *Substance* of what was before exhibited in *Types*^b—

It is the *Completion* of what, under the law, was only *begun*^c—]

The author of this Gospel was Jesus Christ.

[He, like Moses, was an *Interpreter* between God and Men—

His Ministry also, like Moses's was accompanied with *miracles*— [tual rule—

He moreover caused his Gospel to be *written* for a perpetuity—
As such He was honoured infinitely above Moses.

[Moses was only the *Dispenser* of the law, but Christ was the *Author* of Grace and Truth—

Moses did not *procure* the Covenant of which he was Mediator; whereas the Covenant of Grace was given, *not only through Christ, but on his account*—

Moses could only *report* God's will to men; but Jesus Christ both reported it to them, and became a *Guarantee* for their performance of it—

Moses was not the *Source*, nor even the *Dispenser* of the Spirit, that accompanied the legal economy; but Christ communicates the Spirit out of *his own Fulness*^d—

^b Heb. x. 1.

^c Rom. viii. 15.

^d John i. 16.

observe, that when the Lord committed the dispensation of his word to *angels*, he put it into *precious* vessels; when he was pleased immediately to reveal it *himself*, either in visions, dreams, or familiar interviews with his saints, it was in its source, *without* vessels; when he declared himself by the *sun*, moon and starry heavens, the treasure was indeed in vessels, but in vessels grand and *glorious*: for which reason, when David, in the sixteenth Psalm, said, *The heavens declare the glory of God*, he displayed at the same time the grandeur of the heavens, and particularly of the sun. When God committed his word to *Moses* and the *prophets*, he might be said to put the treasure into vessels of *iron* and *brass*: but when he committed it to the apostles, it was put, properly speaking, into *vessels of earth*.^e

The apostles are, 1. *vessels*, not authors of the Gospel, nor founders of the benefits of it, but simple *instruments*; vessels which contain the treasure, but do not give it its value; for the excellence of the Gospel is not derived from their dignity; we do not believe it on their account; on the contrary, it is the treasure which they contain that gives them authority and value.

2. *Earthen vessels*. 1. For the *meanness* of their condition; they were poor sinful men. St. Paul himself a tent-maker, intoxicated with self-love, a persecutor, &c. 2. *Earthen vessels*, for the *afflictions* to which they were subject. They were exposed to all sorts of accidents; to accidents of *nature* as other men; to calamities which

^e In the *first* edition we here omitted an Illustration, which the Translator, with too much justice, calls "very far-fetched:" and in the *subsequent editions* we have endeavoured to consult the benefit of the Reader, by abridging or expunging such parts as tended to mislead the judgment, and to divert his attention from the main scope of the argument.

Moses wrought Miracles by a *foreign* power; but Jesus Christ by *his own*—

Moses was established over *God's house* as a *Servant*; but Jesus Christ as a *Son*, (i. e. a Master and Heir) over *his own house*—]

* * * It is hoped that the Skeletons annexed to this Essay will be found to correspond, in some measure, with this Specimen, as far as respects the *Discussion*: But they will differ in four other respects: they all have an *Exordium*: all are illustrated and confirmed by a great variety of *References to Scripture*: all have the *Connexion* of the different parts suggested: and all have an *Application* of the Subject to various descriptions of Hearers.

belonged to their *office*, as persecutions, prisons, banishments, &c. 3. *Earthen vessels* in regard to their own *infirmities*. St. Peter's *dissimulation* (which Paul reprov'd to his face;) his *rashness* in dissuading Christ from dying (which drew on him that reproof, in which Christ call'd him Satan;) his *stupor* on mount Tabor; his *fall* in the high-priest's palace; the *unbelief* of Thomas; the *contention* between Paul and Barnabas; the spirit of authoritative *pride*, which made them dispute who should be the greatest; their spirit of *revenge* against the Samaritans, on whom they would have made fire descend from heaven, &c.; all these infirmities prov'd their brittleness and frailty.

You may also remark the *wisdom* of the apostles. When they were contemn'd for their *meanness*, they exalted themselves by their *treasure*, and call'd themselves servants of Jesus Christ, ambassadors of God, &c.; they *magnified their office* (as St. Paul speaks) on proper occasions: but when the excellence of their ministry was likely to make them overvalued, they humbled, and, as it were, annihilated themselves, calling themselves *earthen vessels*. When Paul and Barnabas were driven from Iconium, and fled to Lystra, to shew the glory of their ministry they wrought a miracle; but when the people took them for gods, they tore their garments, and cried, *We are men*.

Proceed now to the second part of the text, and examine two things: 1. The excellency of the power of the Gospel. 2. The design of God in putting such a treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of that power might be of him, and not of men.

1. *The excellency of this power*.—This consists, 1. in the happy *success* of the Gospel in the *conversion* of men, which may be represented as a victorious and triumphant power, and even as an excelling, that is, a prevailing and almighty energy. Here you may remark the extensive success of the Gospel, and how, in a very little time, the whole earth was fill'd with Christian converts. You may add the difficulties, which the Gospel surmounted; it rose above obstacles *within*, the natural corruption of men, prejudices of birth and education, love of false religions, &c.; obstacles *without*, contradictions of philosophers, persecutions of Jews, calumnies on the Gospel and its

ministers, persecutions of kings and magistrates, &c. ; obstacles in the *Gospel itself*, which exhibited one who was crucified, *foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews*. Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties, conversions abounded in every place.

2. *The excellency of this power* consists in that admirable and *divine virtue which is in the doctrine of the Gospel*, to humble man, to comfort, instruct, exhilarate, and embolden him, to fill him with faith and hope, to change and sanctify him ; and, in one word, to convert and transform him into another man.

3. *The excellency of this power* consists in the *miracles* which accompanied the preaching of the apostles. These miracles were great, and worthy of all admiration. They healed the sick, they raised the dead, they foretold future events, &c,

4. *The excellency of this power* consists in the *energy of the Holy Ghost*, which accompanied the preaching of the Gospel. He was a Spirit of illumination, a Spirit of patience, a Spirit of peace, &c. and even with extraordinary gifts did he accompany the word, with the gift of tongues, &c.

Having explained the excellence of this power, go on, 2dly, to shew the *end* that God proposed, which was, that *this power might appear to be of him, and not of men*: for this reason did he put this treasure into earthen vessels. St. Paul's reasoning proceeds upon this principle ; that men are inclined to ascribe to second causes, effects, which belong only to the first cause. Whenever we see any great event which dazzles us, instead of elevating our thoughts to God, and giving him the glory, we meanly sink into creature attachments, as if the event were to be ascribed to instruments. This appears,

1. By the example of the *heathens*, who, seeing the marvels of nature, *worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator*, with which St. Paul reproaches them. Beholding the sun and the astonishing effects which it produced in the world, they rose no higher, they took it for a god, not considering that it was only a servant, and an image of God, the invisible sun.

2. This appears by the *Lycanians*, of whom we just now spoke ; who, seeing Paul and Barnabas work a miracle, would fain have sacrificed to them as to gods, not

considering that they were only instruments of the infinite power which reigns in the world.

3. This appears still farther by the example of the *Jews*, who, although they were instructed in the knowledge of the true God; yet, when they saw Peter and John restore a cripple, crowded about them, and obliged those apostles to say to them, *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?*

4. This appears even by the example of *St. John*, who, all apostle as he was, suffered himself to be surprised by this imprudent inclination: so natural is it to all mankind! Being dazzled with the glory of the angel, who talked with him, he fell prostrate before him, and would have adored him, had not the angel corrected his folly by saying, *See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant: worship God.*

And, after all these sad examples, we still see the same spirit of idolatry in the *church of Rome*; for thence proceed the adorations of relics, saints, angels, and I know not how many other superstitions, which attach them to creatures, imagining that by their means they receive some particular blessing.

God then, in order to stem this torrent, and to preclude such an abuse of his apostles, as the attributing of the marvellous effects of his Gospel to them, was pleased, while he employed them to convert mankind, to attemper that honour with the meanness and frailty of their condition. He suffered them to *appear earthen vessels*, as they really were, in order that their dust and ashes, their weaknesses and imperfections, might serve for a corrective, or a counterpoise to the glory of such a great and admirable ministry.

Moreover, it is certain, their *meanness* very much contributed to *display* the glory of the *divine power* in the work of the Gospel, and fully to convince mankind that the power was only of God. Never does God appear more conspicuous, than when he uses instruments, which have no proportion to the work that they perform. Never did the divine power appear more glorious, than when it abased the pride of Pharaoh and all Egypt by the simple rod of Moses. Had the Lord employed armies, how-

ever wonderful the success had been, human power would have diminished the divine splendor. Never did this power of God appear more than in the ruin of Jericho, the walls of which fell at the bare sound of Joshua's rams'-horns. Apply to this the words of *Mons. Cappel in his Theses*, "Never did the power of Jesus Christ appear more, than when he subjugated principalities and powers, and triumphed over them by the ministry of the cross." The triumphs of the Gospel are the same. Sinners, tax-gatherers, tent-makers, ignorant people without letters, without arms, without powers, without intrigues, without human help, without philosophy, without eloquence, contemptible, persecuted people, in one word, *earthen vessels*, triumphed over the whole world with the sound of their voice. Idols fell; Tempels were demolished; Oracles were struck dumb; the reign of the devil was abolished; the strongest inclinations of nature were diverted from their course; people's ancient habits were changed; old superstitions annihilated; all the devil's charms, wherewith he had stupefied mankind, were dissolved; people flocked in crowds to adore Jesus Christ; the great and the small, the learned and the ignorant, kings and subjects, whole provinces, presented themselves at the foot of the cross, and every thought was captivated to the obedience of Christ: It is not enough to say, *This is the finger of God*: we must rather exclaim, *This is the outstretched arm of the Lord!* O happy *earthen vessels!* glory, in that ye were only dust and ashes; your weakness, brittleness, and nothingness, display a thousand times more the glory of the great Master who employed you, than the greatest dignity could have displayed it, had ye been golden vessels, angels or cherubims, dominions or thrones!^f

^f The Editor has left this discourse in the same state as in the former editions, in order to illustrate his reason for altering or omitting some that follow. Mr. Claude's *Rules* are so good as scarcely to admit of any improvement; and he is, for the most part, happy in his illustration of them. But in some of the longer discourses he multiplies Subdivisions, so as to obscure, and almost destroy, the unity of the subject. This is the case, in a measure, in the preceding discourse. Under the *first Subdivision* of the first general head, he has no less than eight subdivisions more, (the four last of which, at best, are superfluous, and tend to perplex, rather than elucidate, the sub-

Observe, farther there are *two* sorts of explications. The first is simple and plain, and needs only to be *proposed*, and enlivened with clear and agreeable elucidations.

The other kind of explications must not only be stated and explained, but they must also be *confirmed* by sufficient evidence. Sometimes a text speaks of a *fact*, which can be confirmed only by proofs of fact: sometimes it is a matter of *right*, that must be established by proofs of right: and sometimes it is a subject made up of *both* fact

ject;) and under the *second Subdivision* of the same head, he has subdivision after subdivision. The same fault obtains under the second general head also: and in some other of his discourses, he seems (in opposition to his own rule, *page 36, sect. 3.*) studious to say all that can be said, instead of selecting what is most pertinent and proper. The Editor conceives the present discourse would have been more perspicuous and instructive, if the more select parts of the latter subdivisions had been compressed into one *continued* illustration of the former subdivision: Thus—

I. The proposition; *We have this treasure in earthen vessels*

The Gospel is here justly represented under the image of a *treasure*

[There is no other treasure so *valuable*, so *abundant*, so *substantial*—

Nor can it be possessed without joy, without jealousy, without caution—]

And it was in the Apostles as *in earthen vessels*

[They were not authors of the Gospel, but mere *instruments* to receive and dispense it—

Though honoured thus, they were still *mean*, and *full of infirmities*—]

II. The reason which he gives for it; *That the excellency, &c.*

There is an *excellency of power* in the Gospel

[There is a *divine virtue* in the *doctrine of the Gospel* to humble and comfort men—

And, when *confirmed by miracles* and *applied by the Holy Ghost*, it had wonderful *success in their conversion*—]

God's design in committing such a treasure to earthen vessels was, that this power *might appear to be of him, and not of men.*

[Men are ever inclined to ascribe to second causes, effects, which belong only to the first cause: *e. g.* The Heathens, the Lycaonians, the Jews, and even St. John himself—

And it was to preclude such an abuse of his Gospel, that he employed such weak instruments to propagate it throughout the world—]

If the Reader will only bear in mind, that *the discourses are introduced solely with a view to illustrate the rules*, he will require no further apology for the alteration or omission of such as obstruct, rather than advance, the general design of this Essay.

and right; and consequently proofs of right, as well as proofs of fact, must be adduced. We will give an example of each.

For the first, take this text, Phil. ii. 6. *Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* Having explained what it is to be in the *form of God*, and to *count it not robbery to be equal with God*, namely; that it is to be God, essentially equal with the Father, and co-eternal with him, &c. you must needs make use of proofs of *fact* on this occasion; for every one sees it is a fact, which it is necessary to *prove*, not merely by the force of St. Paul's terms, but also by many other Scripture-proofs, which establish the divinity of Jesus Christ.

But were you to preach from the 14th and 15th verses of the same chapter, *Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;* it is evident, that, after you have explained the vices which St. Paul forbids, and the virtues which he recommends, the exhortation must be confirmed by reasons of *right*, which shew how unworthy and contrary to our calling these vices are; how much beauty and propriety in the virtues enjoined; and how strong our obligations are to abstain from the one, and to practise the other.

Our third example includes proofs of *both* kinds. Take the 7th verse of the same chapter, *Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:* or the 8th verse, *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross:* or the 9th verse, which speaks of Christ's exaltation. Having explained the subject, you must endeavour to confirm it, not only by proofs of fact, but also by proofs of right; to which purpose you must prove, 1. That the fact *is* as St. Paul says. And, 2. That it *ought to be* as it is, by reasons taken from the wisdom of God, &c.

In like manner, in discussing this text, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;* after you have proposed in a few words the

apostle's doctrine, it ought to be confirmed, as well by proofs of fact, which make it plain, that God has always been pleased to observe this method, as by proofs of right, which shew that he does thus with a great deal of wisdom. You will meet with an almost infinite number of texts of this nature.

There are sometimes texts of explication, in which we are obliged to explain some one great and important article consisting of many branches. As for example, predestination; and efficacious converting grace. In this case, you may either reduce the matter to a certain number of *propositions*, and discuss them one after another; or you may reduce them to a certain number of *questions*, and discuss them in like manner: but you ought (choose which way you will) to take particular care not to lay down any proposition, or any question, which is not formally contained in your text, or which does not follow by a near and easy consequence; for otherwise you would discuss the matter in a common place way.

For example. *It is God who worketh effectually in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* After you have explained what it is *to will*, and what *to do*, and have observed in a few words, that St. Paul's meaning is, that God is the author of both in us by the power of his grace, you may reduce the whole explication of the operation of his grace to five or six propositions. 1. God by his holy Spirit illuminates the *understandings* of men; for working in us *to will* must necessarily be by illuminating the understanding. 2. That operation of grace, which illuminates the understanding, is practical, and not barely speculative; but descends even to the *heart*. St. Paul says, *God works in us to do*. 3. The *first dispositions* to conversion are effects of grace as well as conversion itself; for St. Paul not only says, *God worketh in us to do*, but he adds, he worketh in us *to will*; now this will consists in dispositions to conversion. 4. This operation of grace does not consist in putting us in a state capable of converting ourselves, as the admirers of sufficient grace say; but *it actually converts* us: for the apostle says, *God worketh in us to will and to do*. 5. The operation of this grace, which converts us, is of victorious *efficacy*, and obtains its end in spite of all the resistances of nature; for St. Paul

says, *God effectually worketh in us to will and to do*; which means, that when he displays this grace, nothing can resist him. 6. When God converts us, whatever irresistibility there is in this grace, he displays it nevertheless in us, in a way which neither destroys our nature, nor offers any violence to our will; for St. Paul says, *God worketh in us to will*; that is to say, he converts us by inspiring us with love for his Gospel, in gentle ways suited to the faculties of our souls.

Above all, take care to *arrange* your propositions well, when you take this method. Place the most general first, and follow the order of your knowledge, so that the first propositions may serve as steps to the second, the second to the third, and so of the rest.^b

Sometimes, what you have to explain in a text will consist of one or more *simple terms*; sometimes in certain ways of speaking *peculiar* to Scripture, or at least of such great importance, that they will deserve to be particularly weighed and explained; sometimes in *particles* which they call syncategorematica; and sometimes in propositions. For example, *simple terms* are, the divine attributes, goodness, mercy, wisdom, &c. The virtues of men, faith, hope, love, &c. Their vices and passions, ambition, avarice, vengeance, wrath, &c. In short, simple terms are single words, and they are either *proper* or *figurative*. In order to explain *figurative* words, you must give the *mean-*

§ The editor takes the liberty of observing, that *this* mode of illustrating a subject appears to him too refined and complex. He would rather recommend a more simple method. The thing to be explained is, the operation of divine grace: and it is to be explained in an immediate reference to the text. It might be said then, that its operation is *sovereign, rational, efficacious*. It is *sovereign*, the result of "God's good pleasure," since man has not so much as a disposition to good, till God has given it him; and therefore can have nothing in himself that can induce God to give it him. It is *rational*; for God influences us to action, not as mere machines, but by illuminating our understanding, and inclining our "will." It is *efficacious*; for, if he work in us "to will," he will surely work in us "to do:" nor, however separate, in idea, volition and action may be, shall they ever be separated in his people's experience.

This would include the principal observations of Mr. Claude, and render them both more intelligible, and *more easy to be remembered*.

^b *Arrange your propositions well*. Nothing elucidates a subject more than a conformity to this rule. Cicero's three words are well known, *afte, distincte, ornate*.

ing of the figure in a few words; and without stopping long upon the figure, pass to the thing itself. And in general observe this rule, *never insist long on a simple term, unless it be absolutely necessary*; for to aim at exhausting (as it were,) and saying all that can be said on a single word, is imprudent in a preacher, especially when there are many important matters in the text to be explained. Should any one (for example) in explaining these words of Isaiah, *His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*; should a preacher, I say, insist on each term, and endeavour to exhaust each word, he would handle the text in a common-place way, and quite tire the hearer. You ought then, in discussing such passages, to select the most obvious articles, and to enlarge principally on essential remarks.ⁱ

Sometimes there are simple terms, of which you must only take notice cursorily, an *en passant*, as it were, just as they relate to the intention of the sacred author. For example, in St. Paul's ordinary salutations, *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*, it must not be imagined that each of the terms or phrases is to be considered *ex professo*, either *grace*, or *peace*, or *God the Father*, or *Jesus Christ*: but the whole text is to be considered as a *salutation*, a benediction, an introduction to the epistle, and in these views make necessary remarks on the terms. Observe the method of Mons. Daillé in his expositions of the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians.^k In one word, take care to explain

ⁱ *Enlarge on the most obvious articles.* The more pains (says the Archbishop of Cambray,) the more pains an haranguer takes to dazzle me by the artifices of his discourse, the more I should despise his vanity. I love a *serious* preacher, who speaks for *my* sake, and not for his own; who seeks my salvation, and not his own vain-glory. —I would have him naturally a man of good sense, and to reduce all he says to good sense as the standard of his discourse. His studies should be solid: he should apply himself to reason justly; and industriously avoid all subtle and over-refined notions. He should distrust his imagination; and not let it influence his judgment. *He should ground every discourse upon some evident principle; and from that draw the most obvious and natural consequences.* Letter to the French Academy, sect. 4.

^k *Observe the method of Mons. Daillé.* This famous preacher expounds the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians in a course of

simple terms as much as possible, in relation to the present *design* of the sacred author, and to the circumstances of the text; for by these means you will avoid common places, and say proper and agreeable things.

Sometimes you will meet with texts, the simple terms of which must be discussed professedly; and in order to give a clear and full view of the subject, you must give a clear and distinct idea of the terms.

For example. 1. Tim. i. 5. *Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* Divide the text into three parts, the *first* of which may be the *commandment*, of which the apostle speaks—the *second* its *end*, *charity*—and the *third*, the *principles*, from which this charity or love proceeds, from a *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, and *faith unfeigned*. You must first, then, particularly enquire what this *commandment* is, and remark three different senses of the term: it is put, 1. particularly for the *moral law*. 2. For the *preaching of the Gospel*, (for the Greek word will bear this meaning)—and, 3. In general for the *true religion*. In explaining the word in the *first* sense, you may shew why the *law* is called the *commandment*, on account of the *natural authority* of the *truths themselves*; for the law contains nothing but what must needs be a creature's duty—on account also of the authority of the *legislator*, who is God our sovereign Master, &c. Taking the word in the *second* sense, something pertinent may be observed on the *necessity of preaching the word*: Remark the wisdom

sermons. He usually takes for his text that number of verses, more or less, which contains the whole subject, of which the apostle speaks. He does not trifle with *terms*: but he takes the *subject*, and, collecting it into two, three, or four propositions, discusses it in a sensible and edifying manner. One example follows. Phil. iii. 18, 19. *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.* The exordium of this sermon is taken from Matt. xiii. 24, &c. and the subject is divided into two parts: 1. The manner of St. Paul's address. *I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping.* 2. The matter of it. It is a description of bad Christians and bad ministers in the Christian church. They are remarkable for five bad qualities, or conditions: 1. They are *enemies of the cross of Christ*. 2. *Their end is destruction*. 3. *Their god is their belly*. 4. *They glory in their shame*. 5. *They mind earthly things*.

of God, who, in order to discover the mysteries of the Gospel to men, not only sent the apostles to us at the beginning, not only commanded us to instruct each other by mutually communicating our knowledge, not only gave us the Holy Scriptures, that we might search them and increase our knowledge, but who, over and above all these, has established a gospel ministry in his church, in order that his word might be preached in common to all. Remark the great *benefit* and utility of this preaching. Observe also that *Jesus Christ*, whilst he was upon earth, was pleased to sanctify this admirable mean by his own practice and *example*, &c. In explaining the word in its *third* meaning, to which I think you should principally attend, you must shew why religion is called a *commandment*. 1. Because it is not an indifferent thing, which may be delayed as we please, but a *necessary obligation* imposed on all mankind. 2. Because *religion, in all its parts, ought to proceed from God*: for as he has not left it to the choice of man to have, or not to have a religion; so neither has he left it to his fancy to invent such a worship as he chooses: therefore St. Paul calls superstitions *εθελοθρησκείας will-worship*. Indeed religion consists in obedience of faith, obedience of discipline, and obedience of morality: but whatever does not bear the divine impress can never be acceptable to God. *In vain*, says Jesus Christ, *they honour me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*. *May God*, says St. Paul, *make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ*. Hence it is, that not pastors only, but all believers are called the *servants* of God, to signify that they execute *his* commands, and are heartily devoted to his pleasure.

Passing now to the second point, two things must be examined: *first*, What is this *charity* or *love*? and, *secondly*, How is it the *end of the commandment*? Both these must be accurately discussed.

As to the *first*, you must remark, that *the principal object of our love is God*, to an union with whom the soul elevates itself, by emotions of *love* as to the supreme perfection; by emotions of *desire* as to the supreme good of a creature; by emotions of *gratitude* as to the only source of all the blessings which we enjoy; by emotions of ten-

derness and *sympathy* as with a father of whom we are the children; by emotions of *acquiescence* and *joy* for the possession of communion with him; and, in fine, by emotions of *zeal* in his service and for his glory, since God is our last end, to whom all that we are, and all that we can do, ought to refer.

You may remark, again, that this *love* makes God *reign* over us in a manner the most noble, and the most worthy of himself. He reigns over all creatures, by his Influence, or by his Providence, or by his Justice. By his *influence* he reigns over the heavens, the elements, and all inanimate creatures, moving and directing them as he pleases. He reigns in his *providence* over the wicked, turning and bowing their wills as he chooses. He reigns in hell by his *justice*. None of these ways of exercising authority are comparable to that dominion which our love gives him; for as he fills our whole heart, he pervades all its principles; as he is, in all its emotions, as cause, object, and end; so that there is a perfect harmony between him and our hearts. When he reigns by his power over *inanimate* things, properly speaking, he is neither their end nor their object; he is only the power which moves them. When he reigns over the *wicked* by his providence, the wicked have another end, and another object. When he reigns in *hell* by his justice, the miserable sufferers, far from acquiescing in his avenging strokes, murmur, rebel, and blaspheme against him. But when he reigns in the hearts of his *saints* by love, he not only displays his power, but he is himself the object on which the saints act, the end to which they move; and there reigns a perfect harmony between God and his creatures.

You may observe farther, that when we give our love to the creatures, withdrawing it from God, it is an act of injustice to ourselves, and an insult on God. It *insults God*; for we rob him of what belongs to him. It is *injurious to ourselves*; for we deprive ourselves of a glory for which we were created, and after which we might lawfully have aspired: thus we are doubly unjust, and doubly outrageous.

And, besides all this, as these sorts of unions are heterogeneous, without fitness and proportion, they are accompanied with an almost infinite number of *inconvenien-*

cies: for if we love inanimate things, as the miser doth, who loves his silver and gold; or as the worldling doth, who loves diversions, hunting, gaming, assemblies; or as some love arts and sciences; we love those things which have no love for us; and we give our hearts to that which has no heart to return the present which we make. What pleasure is there in loving that which cannot love again? Does not the happiness of friendship arise from mutual possession? But what mutual possession can there be between a heart and a heartless object? between us and a thing which not only cannot impart itself to us, but which is even incapable of any, the least degree of consolation in possessing us? If we love the world, I mean the men of it, I own they have hearts as well as we, they are capable of loving us as well as we are of loving them; but besides that, they have frequently hearts ungrateful and incapable of friendly affection, or hearts already disposed of, or divided hearts, which cannot love enough, because they love too much, or hearts light and unfaithful, which cannot be depended on: besides all this, it must be confessed, the hearts of creatures were never made for each other; they are all void, imperfect, *poor, miserable, blind, and naked*; and what alliance can you make between void and void, imperfect and imperfect, poor and poor, blind and blind? Emptiness naturally demands union with abundance, imperfection with perfection, poverty with riches, and error with truth. Our hearts then are made only for God; for in him only can they find what they desire; he only can supply what they want.

Having thus discussed *love* as it regards God, pass on to its second object, which is our *neighbour*. Remark first, that notwithstanding our saying the hearts of men are not made for each other, we mean to *explain* this by distinguishing two different times. The first is, while our hearts are empty and poor, miserable and blind, and, consequently, incapable of imparting any good to others, capable only of being a burden to them, at such a time we must not dream of loving the creature, because, being like ourselves, we can neither give nor receive any benefit; then we must only love God. The second time is, when, being united to God, we have already felt the ef-

fects of a happy communion, and are made partakers of his abundance, perfection, and knowledge. Then we may love the creature; for then we may be able to benefit him by imparting what we have received. Then it will not be misery joined to misery, and blindness to blindness: but if they, whom we love, be good people, it will be light forming an union with light, and abundance with abundance; and if they be wicked men, our reason may dissipate their errors, our perfection correct their imperfection; and our riches supply their poverty.

You must, moreover, remark the *difference* between these two emotions of love, one towards God, the other towards man. One is a first, original, and independent love; the other is only subordinate and dependent, a reflexion of the first. One ought to reign in our hearts, not only to hold the first rank and to be elevated above all other love, but also to reign over the heart itself, so that the heart should not be the master of this love, but love on the contrary should be master, sole and absolute lord of the heart: the other ought to obey, to occupy the second place, and to occupy it so that the heart should always remain master. One ought to be infinite, boundless, and beyond all measure, proportioned to its infinite object; but the other ought to be finite, ruled and measured in proportion to the finite creature, who is its object.

Proceed now to the *second* part, which is to shew how this *love is the end of the commandment*; and repeat the *three* senses which you have given of the term.

1. It is the end of the *moral law*, the summary of which is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself*. In effect, all our offences, as well against the first as the second table of the law, proceed either from the want or imperfection of this virtue; for did we love God and our neighbours as we ought, we should neither offend the divine Majesty, nor our brethren. On this account St. Paul calls *love the bond of perfectness*; for it is a perfect bond, which unites us to God and to our neighbours, without allowing any thing to separate us, or suffering any thing contrary to such an holy communion.

All the virtues which the particular articles of the moral law require of us, are only so many branches of this

love; this is the *general virtue*, the parent and protector of all the rest, a virtue diffused through all, giving them their motion, their action, and their value. I say *motion* and *action*; for it is love only which makes us truly religious towards God, and really just towards man; this makes the interests of both dear to us. A heart devoid of love is incapable of serving either God or man. I say also their *value*; for could we exactly observe all that the law commands, if we had not love, if we performed these things from a principle of fear, or a mere consideration of duty, it is certain, all our obedience would be disagreeable to God.

Besides, love is the *end* which the moral law proposes; for it tends to render God an amiable object, by shewing him to be our God, and by removing from our eyes every divinity but his. In like manner, it tends to inspire us with love for all mankind, by teaching us to consider them as creatures of the God who made us, creatures on whom he has bestowed the same blessing, having made us all of one blood, formed us all of the same matter, and aggrandized us all with the same image.

In regard to the second sense of the term *commandment*, which is *preaching*, it is plain, the *end* which ought to be proposed in it is *love*. If a preacher would produce this in his hearers, he must neither propose his own glory, nor any other *hidden thing of dishonesty* (to use the language of Scripture,) nor even barely to acquit himself of the duty of his charge; he should aim at winning the hearts of men to God, and uniting them together. It is for this that the word is to be preached in common to all, that all may have but one heart and one soul towards God.

The Holy Scripture doubtless has regard to this, when it treats of our communion with Jesus Christ under the image of a body, of which Jesus Christ is the head, and we the members; not only members of this head, but members also of each other, as St. Paul speaks. For this we are told, that we are animated with the same spirit, which is the spirit of the Lord, partaking all of the same life, as with Jesus Christ, so also with all other believers; for as the union, which nature has established between the parts of our bodies, is such that there can be no different interests among them, no conflicts together, no an-

tipathies against each other; so the union, which grace makes between us under one same head, Jesus Christ, forms such an harmony, that what ever difference there may be in us separately, yet, altogether we are but one and the same, as well with the Lord as with each other. Now the end of the ministry is to make this admirable *union*. On this account St. Paul says, *He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of it-self in love.*

In fine, if by the term *commandment* you understand *religion in general*, it is no less evident that its *end* is *love*; for, whatever it proposes to us of mysteries, precepts; doctrines, objects of faith, or objects of hope, all are fruits of God's paternal love towards us, and, consequently, motives to us to love him with all our souls. The church, which religion forms and composes, is only one great family, where all are brethren, all participating the same inheritance, nourished with the same food, and living under the same discipline.

Civil society distinguishes persons, families, cities, provinces, and assigns to each peculiar rights; for it is founded on that love which each individual has for himself, and regulated by laws of equity, protecting each member in his own property. The end of civil society is to satisfy each individual's *self-love*, by enabling each to enjoy the advantages which commerce and public peace produce; and, in order that self-love may long enjoy these advantages, society requires us to do to each, as we would that each should do unto us.

Religion establishes another society, the bond of which is *love*; but not self-love: and therefore it makes of the church one single city, one single house, one single province, one single good, one sole interest; individuals en-

joy the whole; all is common there; it does not propose to render to each what belongs to him, for nothing belongs to any one, the whole belongs to all; God is the God of all; Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all; his blood, his merit, his spirit, his kingdom, his heaven, all belong to all without distinction, without partition. St. Paul was well acquainted with this, when he said, The care of all the churches was upon him from day to day; *Who is weak*, adds he, *and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?*

The third part of the text consists of the *principles*, from which this *love* ought to proceed: *a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned*. You may remark, 1. that a *pure heart* may signify a *sincere* and honest heart, opposed to a heart double and hypocritical: for it is true, that our love ought to be accompanied with openness and integrity: it should have its seat in an upright soul, free from fraud and dissimulation. A feigned love is hatred covered with a veil of friendship: or at best, it is coldness and indifference hid under appearances of zeal. Of this kind are worldly friendships, which last no longer than while they serve a turn, and vanish as soon as they become unprofitable. What numbers are animated only by this false love? They profess to love God and their neighbours, they give all the outward signs of it: but their love does not proceed from a *pure heart*; could you penetrate their souls, you would find nothing but self-interest; and, in regard to God and their friends, nothing but negligence and contempt. How many are there whose love to God and man is only base and selfish? They love God because God has a salvation to give them; and they love their neighbours because some advantages will arise from commerce with them. Should these considerations cease, their love would expire with them. This is not to love with a *pure heart*. Sincere love must be independent on self-love. God must be loved because he is supremely lovely; and our neighbour, because he is the image of God, and because he and we make but one mystical body of Jesus Christ.

2. By a *pure heart* we may understand an heart *sanc-tified* and disengaged from every kind of uncleanness and vice. This distinguishes Christian love: 1. From that *idolatrous love* which false religions inspire; for this pro-

ceeds from a prejudiced mind. A heart defiled with sin is capable of only a blind carnal criminal zeal, a rash impetuosity towards a false object, in favour of which the mind is prepossessed. Christian love, on the contrary, proceeds from a *pure heart*, that is, a heart truly regenerate, a heart where sin is dethroned, and where holiness and righteousness reign. 2. Christian love is also hereby distinguished from *worldly friendship*. This last is a sympathy of many hearts conspiring together in the service of vice as a master. Thus debauchees love each other, drunkards associate together, thieves unite, the voluptuous are delighted with each other's conversation; vice makes associates as well as virtue, and conformity among sinners produces some kind of love. Christian love is not of this nature, it proceeds from a *pure heart*; it is the sympathy and communion of many souls joined together in bonds of the same piety, the same integrity, the same sanctity.

3. Methinks a *pure heart* may also be understood as opposed to a heart perplexed and embarrassed, as that of a *superstitious* person is. Superstition is a confused medley of different, contrary, and inconsistent sentiments. Sometimes it rises into excessive boldness, and suddenly it sinks into timidity and scrupulosity; now it swells with haughtiness, then it shrivels with horror: its tones, like false music, are without order, without measure, without rule. True and genuine love cannot proceed from a mind in this state, it demands a *pure heart*, a mind uniform and well-regulated, entertaining such ideas of God and our neighbour as we ought.

To this the Apostle adds a *good conscience*, which is almost the same as the *pure heart*, of which we have spoken: for to love God with a good conscience is to love him sincerely, free from scrupulosity, without fraud, without hypocrisy, without a mixture of interest, without dependence on self-love: it is to love him neither with a transient impetuosity, nor with the imperfect desires of enjoying his communion and presence; but with a real and faithful application to all that regards his glory, to the obedience of his commands, and the observation of his laws. In one word, it is so to love him, as to be able to assure ourselves that we do love him, so that when

we examine ourselves on this point we may be able to satisfy our own minds.

In fine, St. Paul says, this love proceeds from *faith unfeigned*; which means that faith is the *parent* of this love; for it is from the knowledge and persuasion which we have of God's love towards us, that this love arises in our hearts, both to God and man. You may here summarily relate what Scripture teaches us concerning the ineffable abundance of God's love to us, particularly in giving us his Son, and his Holy Spirit, which are the two most admirable fruits of the love of God. Observe also what a perfect and supremely amiable idea of the Divinity faith gives us, in opposition to the imperfect light of nature; and remark also, that this *faith* must be *unfeigned*, true, and lively; not consisting in a bare speculation of gospel mysteries, but in an extensive practical knowledge of Christian doctrines, and in a full persuasion of the truth of divine revelation. In this manner simple terms should be discussed.¹

When there are many simple terms in a text, you must consider, whether it would not be more proper to treat of them *comparatively* with each other, than to discuss them separately or each apart; for sometimes it would be very injudicious to discuss them separately, and very agreeable to do it by *comparison*. Take for example St. Luke's words, chap. ii. 8, 9, 10, 11. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* In my opinion it would be very absurd to pretend to treat separately these simple terms, in order to explain what is a *shepherd*, and what is an *angel*, &c. But a *comparison* of these terms with each other would

¹ In this manner simple terms should be discussed. This instructive way of explicitly discussing the *terms* of scripture, well and judiciously executed, is full of edification. But great care must be taken to preserve an *UNITY* in the subject; for, without that, the discourse would be an uninteresting, unedifying rhapsody.

afford very beautiful and agreeable considerations, as will appear by the following analysis of the text. Let it then be divided into two parts: let the first be the *appearance* of the angels to the shepherds, with all the circumstances which the history remarks: and the second, the angels' *message* to them. The first is contained in the eighth and ninth verses, and the second in the tenth and eleventh.

As to the first, you may remark that this meeting of the angel and shepherds was not accidental or by chance, but by the order of the providence of God, who there placed the shepherds, and thither sent his angel. You may amplify this by shewing,

1. That *God causes his grace to descend not only upon the great and powerful of the world, but also on the most simple and most inconsiderable.*

2. That it seems as if he took more pleasure in bestowing his favours on the *most abject*, than in distributing them among persons of elevated rank. Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 26. For while he sent the *wise men* of the East to Herod, he sent an *angel* of heaven to the shepherds, and conducted them to the cradle of the Saviour of the world.

3. That in this meeting of the angels and shepherds there is a *character of the economy* of Jesus Christ, wherein the highest and most sublime things are joined with the meanest and lowest. In his person the eternal Word is united to a creature, the divine nature to the human, the Lord of Glory to mean flesh and blood. In his baptism he is plunged in the water, and the Father speaks to him from heaven; he is under the hand of John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost descends upon him. In his temptation he hungers, yet miraculously supports a fast of forty days; the devil tempts him, and angels obey him. On his cross, naked, crowned with thorns, and exposed to sorrows, yet at the same time shaking the earth and eclipsing the sun. Here in like manner angels are familiar with shepherds: angels to mark his majesty, shepherds his humility: angels, because he is Creator and Master of all things; shepherds, because he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant.

After this you may make a proper reflection on the *time* mentioned by St. Luke, who says, *The shepherds were*

abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. You may observe that while these shepherds were busy in their *calling*, God sent his angel to them; and that however simple and mean the employments of men may be, it is always very pleasing to God when they discharge them with a good conscience.

Remark a second circumstance; *The glory of the Lord* shining around the shepherds. Here you may observe,

That when angels borrow human forms to appear to men (as it is likely this angel did, when he appeared to the shepherds) they have always appeared with some *ensigns of grandeur* and majesty, to shew that they were not men but angels, that is to say, beings of a superior order. Thus the angels who appeared at Christ's resurrection were clothed with *shining garments*; and so were they who appeared to the disciples after his ascension. Here the angel is accompanied with a great *light, shining* around the shepherds.

The third remarkable circumstance in the text is, the great *fear* with which the shepherds were seized.

1. This was an effect of their great *surprise*. When grand objects suddenly present themselves to us, they must needs fill us with astonishment and fear.

2. This fear also arose perhaps from emotions of *conscience*. Man is by nature a sinner, and consequently an object of the justice and vengeance of God; when, therefore, any thing extraordinary and divine appears to him, he necessarily trembles. This may be exemplified by Adam, who, having sinned, fled, and, the moment he heard the voice of God, hid himself; or by the Israelites, who were terrified when God appeared to them upon the mountain: and hence that proverbial saying among them, *We shall die, for we have seen God.*

But, as the thoughts of God are far different from the thoughts of men, these poor shepherds did not long remain in this state: but joy presently succeeded their fear. *Fear not*, said the angel, *behold! I bring you glad tidings.* Agreeable surprise! far different from what will befall sinners at the last day; for when they cry, *Peace, peace! then sudden destruction shall come upon them:* but here, when the shepherds trembled, when they were seized with a dreadful horror, which made them apprehend all danger, forth issues the greatest of all joys, the most affecting of

all consolations, the news of the birth of the Saviour of the world.

Proceed now to the second part of the text, the angel's *discourse* to the shepherds: And observe,

1. The angel says to them, *Fear not*. He uses this preface to gain their *attention*, which fear, no doubt, had almost entirely dissipated.

After this preface, the angel acquits himself of his commission, and announces to the shepherds the great and mysterious news of the Redeemer's birth. *Behold!* says he, *I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*. Remark, in the front of his message, the word *Behold!* which is generally used in Scripture to denote the greatness and importance of the subject in question, and to gain attention. The prophets had often used it. Isaiah on a like account had said, *Behold!* a virgin shall conceive. Zechariah had cried, Daughter of Zion, *Behold!* thy King cometh, just, and having salvation. Malachi had said, *Behold!* the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple. It is easy to remark, that the angel could never more properly use this word than on this occasion. Do you doubt of it? Hear his message: *I bring you,* says he to them, *glad tidings of great joy*.

In order to examine the words properly, you must begin with the angel's description of the *person*, of whom he speaks; *a Saviour, Christ the Lord*. Then pass to *what* he says about him; *He is born unto you*, says he. He marks the *time*; *This day*. He describes the *place*; *In the city of David*. And, in fine, he specifies the *nature* of this important news; *A great joy, which shall be to all people*.

Having considered his titles in general, and each apart, you may proceed to consider them in a *comparative* view. This comparison may be of the words with *each other*, or with the *other parts of the text*, or with the words which *follow* the text.

In the *first* view, you may say, that the angel intended primarily to give the shepherds an idea of the benefits which they might expect of the Messiah, and for this reason began with the title *Saviour*, in order to affect them with their own interest, and indeed with the greatest of all interests. Afterwards, to confirm their hope upon

that point, he rises to the source of this salvation, the mercy of God, who bestowed it on them; therefore he says, the Saviour is *Christ*, that is, the promised Messiah. In fine, in order to convince them with what profound respect men ought to receive him, he adds, that he is sovereign *Lord*. In the title *Saviour*, he shews the *end* of Christ's coming into the world. In that of *Christ*, the *right*, which he had to undertake so great a work, which was the Father's mission, who for that purpose had anointed him. And in that of *Lord*, he marks the sovereign *power*, with which he should happily execute the office that the Father had committed to him.

In comparing these three titles with the *other parts of the text*, you may shew, that the angel calls him a *Saviour*, to justify that *great joy, which*, says he, *I bring you*. That he calls him *Christ*, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, with relation to his *birth in the city of David*. And that he calls him *Lord*, to render, in some sort, a reason for an angel's coming with the glad tidings; as if he had said, *I bring you* the glad tidings; because he is *Lord* of all, both yours and ours.

In comparing the words with what *follows*, you may observe, that the angel calls him a *Saviour, Christ, the Lord*, in order to guard the shepherds against their being offended at what he was about to tell them, that they should *find him a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*. As if he had said, Let not these sad appearances offend you; he whom you will find an infant, in swaddling clothes, and in a manger, is the Redeemer of the world, the true Anointed of God, the Lord of the whole universe.

This Saviour, this Christ, this Lord, says the angel, *is born unto you*.

Here you may commence a lively exhortation to joy, the motives to which may be taken from the terms of the text—that there is a *Saviour*—that he is *Christ*—that he is the *Lord*—that after being so long expected, at length he came—that he was *born for us*—that we have an interest in him above angels—that he has testified his love to us by submitting to sinless infirmities—you may compare his first with his last Advent, and dispose your auditors to feel a still greater joy in expectation of

his coming to raise them from the dead, and putting the last hand to the work of our redemption—Then will he appear a *Saviour* indeed, for he will complete the salvation of the faithful—Then will he appear a *Christ* indeed, for he will finish the design of his unction, and will make us kings and priests to God his Father—Then will he appear *Lord* indeed, for all things shall be subjected to him, he will triumph over all our enemies, he will swallow up death in victory, and he will elevate us to the possession of eternal glory.^m

Having spoken of simple terms, I proceed to add something concerning *expressions peculiar to Scripture*. These deserve a particular explication, and should be discussed and urged with great diligence, as well because they are peculiar modes of speaking, as because they are rich with meaning. In this class I put such forms of speaking as these: *To be in Christ Jesus. To come to Jesus Christ. To come after Jesus Christ. To live in the flesh. To live after the flesh. From faith to faith. From glory to glory. To walk after the flesh. To walk after the spirit. The old man. The new man. Jesus Christ lives in you. To live to Jesus Christ. To live to ourselves. To die to the world. To die to ourselves. To be crucified to the world. The world to be crucified to us. Jesus Christ made sin for us; we made the righteousness of God in him. Christ put to death in the flesh, quickened by the Spirit. Die unto sin. Live unto righteousness. Quench the Spirit. Grieve the Spirit. Resist the Holy Ghost. Sin against the Holy Ghost:* and I know not how many more such expressions, which are found almost no where but in Scripture. Whenever you meet with such forms of speech as these, you must not pass them over lightly, but you must fully explain them, entering well into the spirit and meaning of them. It would be very convenient for a young man to procure for this purpose an exact collection, and endeavour to inform himself of the sense of each.

This subject would require, as it well deserves, a particular treatise; however, I will briefly give an example of the manner in which expressions of this kind should be

^m This discourse was very long and tedious. *All that could elucidate the treating of texts by comparison is retained; but that which tended only to distract the mind, is expunged.*

discussed. Let us take these words; Mark viii. 34. *Who-soever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* Methinks it would not be improper to divide the sermon into two parts. In the first we would treat of the *expressions*, which Jesus uses, *Come after me—deny himself—take up his cross—and follow me.* And in the second we would examine the *entire sense* of our Saviour's *whole preposition.*

To begin then with the explication of these expressions. *To come after Jesus Christ* signifies no other thing than to be his disciples, to take him for the rule and model of our conduct; in a word, to profess an acknowledgment of him as our head and master, our supreme prophet and teacher, our pattern and exemplar.

Deny himself is an expression so singular, that it seems to shock reason and nature, and to suppose a thing difficult, yea, absolutely impossible; or at least extremely criminal. Yet, it is certain, nothing can be more holy, nothing more necessary, nothing more just than this self-renunciation which Jesus Christ here ordains. He does not mean that we should divide ourselves from ourselves, or that we should hate ourselves; but he intends,

1. In general, that we should renounce all that is in us *excessive*, vicious, and irregular: this he calls *self*, because corruption is become, as it were, natural to us, we being *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity.*

2. He commands us particularly to renounce that violent, immoderate, and excessive *love*, which man, in a state of depravity, has for himself, making self-love his chief and only principle of action, in one word, being a god to himself.

3. He enjoins the renunciation of that false and perverse *pretence*, which all sinners have, that they are their own masters, that no one has a right over them, that to themselves only belongs the disposition of words, actions, and thoughts. The Saviour means, that, renouncing this unjust and foolish pretence, we should submit ourselves to the government and direction of God, confiding in the conduct of his wisdom, and receiving him to reign in our hearts by his word and spirit.

Take up his cross, is an expression consecrated by Je-

sus Christ to a sacred purpose, though it does not belong only to Scripture style. Here two things are intended by it; the mystical cross of *conversion*, and the cross of *afflictions*.

1. *Conversion* is called in Scripture a *cross*; because sin and carnal lusts are made to *die* within our hearts: this the Scripture calls *crucifying the old man*.

2. *Afflictions* are very justly called *crosses*, not only because nature suffers, but also because by these means we become the horror and reproach of the world.

Finally, *to follow Jesus Christ*, is, 1. To become his disciple, to *believe* his doctrine, to approve his maxims, to be persuaded of the truth of his mysteries and holiness of his laws.

2. *To follow* is to *imitate* him, to propose him as our exemplar and pattern in the whole conduct of our lives, to walk in the same way as he walked, in order to obtain communion with him in glory.

3. To *profess openly* our subjection to him, as our Master and Lord, to obey his orders, &c. In a word, *to follow* is the same as *to come after him*, which we just now explained.

This is the first part—The second consists in considering the *entire sense* of Jesus Christ's *whole* proposition. He means then, that, if we would be really of the number of his disciples and followers, we must submit to two things, sanctification and affliction.

1. *Sanctification*. Here enter into the subject, and shew how impossible it is to belong to Jesus Christ without forsaking sin and entirely changing the life. *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

These are St. Paul's words to Titus; and three things may be remarked in them, *grace*, *holiness*, and *glory*. And you may easily observe, that *grace* conducts to *glory* only by means of *holiness*: take away *holiness*, and *grace* and *glory* can never be joined together. The apostle therefore does not say, *The grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us to look for the glorious appearing*

of Jesus Christ; but he says, *The grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;* and so to be looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Grace indeed ends in glory; but it can only do so by the intervention of holiness.

You may also allege, to the same purpose, the end of Jesus Christ's coming into the world, which was not only to destroy sin as it subjected us to eternal punishment, but as sin. You may finally shew how much it is for the glory of the Father and of Jesus Christ, and for the reality and plenitude of salvation, that the disciples of Jesus should be sanctified.

2. *Affliction.* Two things here must be discussed:—

1. The truth of the *fact*, that true believers are exposed to afflictions in this world. 2. The *reasons* why the Divine Wisdom subjects believers to these trials.

1. The *truth of the fact* results, 1. From the *examples* of all the great servants of God who have appeared in the world to this day; as Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, St. Paul, and all the other apostles of Jesus Christ. 2. From the *whole history* of the church, which was always nourished and increased in afflictions. This may be illustrated by the burning bush, which appeared to Moses; or by the ship, into which Jesus and his apostles went, tossed with waves, and exposed to the violence of winds and storms.

2. The *reasons* for this dispensation of Divine Providence may be taken from a common-places of afflictions; as, *By means of afflictions God restrains our impetuous passions, exercises our virtues, detaches us from the world, elevates us to the hope of a better life, and displays the glory of that admirable Providence which governs us.* Afflictions also are particular *honours*, which God confers on us, by them enabling us to walk in the steps of Jesus Christ, and conforming us by them to our divine leader. For these reasons, and many more of the same kind, we may fairly conclude, that with profound wisdom Jesus Christ has called us to affliction, and joined the cross to the profession of true Christianity.ⁿ

ⁿ This is somewhat abridged, for the same reason as the foregoing.

We have before observed,* that, beside simple terms, and singular expressions peculiar to Scripture, there are also sometimes in texts, *particles*, that are called *syncategorematica*, which serve either for the augmentation or limitation of the meaning of the proposition: As the word *so* in John iii. 16. "God *so* loved the world." The word *now* in the viiith of Romans; "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:"—and in many more passages of the same kind.

Whenever you meet with these terms, carefully examine them; for sometimes the greatest part, and very often the whole of the explication depends upon them, as we have already remarked on that passage just now mentioned, *God so loved the world*: for the chief article in the doctrine of the love of God is its greatness, expressed by the word *so*. It is the same with that other term *now*, *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*; for the word *now* shews, that it is a conclusion drawn from the doctrine of justification, which the apostle had taught in the preceding chapters; and it is as if he had said, From the principles which I have established, it follows, that *there is now no condemnation*, &c. Having then explained, 1. What it is *to be in Christ Jesus*; 2. What it is *to be no more* subject to *condemnation*; chiefly insist, in the third place, on the word *now*; and shew that it is a doctrine which necessarily follows from what St. Paul had established touching justification, in the foregoing chapters: so that this term makes a real part of the explication, and indeed the most important part.°

Sometimes these terms in question are not of consequence enough to be much dwelt on, but may be more properly passed with a slight remark. The word *Behold*, with which many propositions in Scripture begin, must be treated so; you must not make one part of this, nor insist on it too long. The same may be said of that familiar expression, of Jesus Christ, *Verily, verily*, which is an asseveration, or, if you will, an oath: but neither on this must you insist much. So again, *Amen*, or *so be it*, which closes some texts. *Woe be to you*, which Jesus Christ often

* See ante, page 47.

° See this exemplified in Skel. 45. where the discussion turns entirely upon the word "henceforth." See also Skel. 69. where the word "Amen" serves as the foundation of the whole discourse.

repeats in the Gospel, with many more of the same kind. I know no certain rule to distinguish when they are important; but it must be left to the preacher's taste, and a little attention will make the necessary discernment very easy.

When the matter to be explained in a text consists of a *proposition*, you must, 1. *Give the sense clearly and neatly*, taking care to develop it of all sorts of ambiguity.

2. If it be requisite, shew how *important* in religion it is to be acquainted with the truth in hand; and for this purpose open its connexion with other important truths, and its dependence on them; the inconveniencies that arise from negligence; the advantageous succours which piety derives thence; with other things of the same nature.

3. Having placed it in a clear light, and shewn its importance, if it require confirmation, *confirm* it. In all cases endeavour to *illustrate*, either by *reasons* or *examples*, or *comparisons* of the subjects with each other, or by remarking their *relation* to each other, or by shewing their *conformities* or *differences*, all with a view to illustrate the matter that you are discussing. You may also illustrate a proposition by its *consequences*, by shewing how many important inferences are included in it, and flow from it.

You may beautify a proposition by its *evidence*, by shewing that the truth, of which you speak, is discoverable by the light of nature; or by its *inevidence*, observing that it is not discoverable by the light of nature, but is a pure doctrine of revelation.

In fine, you may illustrate by the *person, who proposes* the subject; by the *state* in which he was when he proposed it; by the *persons to whom* it is proposed; by *circumstances of time and place*, &c. All these may give great openings; but they must be judiciously and discreetly used; for to attempt to make an assemblage of all these in the discussion of one proposition, would be trifling, endless, and pedantic.

Sometimes one single proposition *includes many truths*, which it will be necessary to distinguish: but, in doing this, take care that each truth, on which you intend to insist, be of some importance in religion, not too common,

nor too much known. This your own good sense must discern.

Sometimes one proposition must be discussed in the *different views* in which it may be taken; and in this case you must remark those different relations.

Sometimes the doctrine contained in the proposition has different *degrees*, which it will also be necessary to remark.

Sometimes the proposition is *general*, and this generality seems to make it of little importance. In this case you must examine, whether some of its parts be not more considerable: if they be, you will be obliged to discuss these parts by a particular application. But I will give you examples of each.

First, To give the sense of a proposition neat and clear, and afterwards to confirm and illustrate it, let us take Eph. i. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, may ye know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

This text must be divided into *two* parts. The first is the apostle's *prayer*, *May God enlighten the eyes of your understanding!* The second is the *end* of this illumination, *that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

1. The apostle's wish or prayer contains a proposition, which is, that *it is God who enlightens the eyes of our understanding.* To give clearly the sense, you must first observe, in a few words, that Scripture frequently borrows the names and images of the faculties of the body to represent those of the soul; therefore it gives us *feet* to walk in the way of righteousness, *hands* to work out our salvation, *knees* to bow at the name of Jesus, *ears* to hear the sacred truths of the Gospel, a *mouth* to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, and *eyes* to see the mysteries of his kingdom. All this is founded not only on the natural conformity, or resemblance, which there is between the operations of the soul and the organs of the body, but also on the Scripture-manner of calling the whole of our regeneration and conversion *a new man.* Here, then, *eyes of the understanding* is an expression agreeable to the ordinary style of Scripture, and

signifies simply our *understanding*, the faculty by which we know and judge objects.

2. But, beside this, you must remark, that our eyes have two very different uses. One consists only in viewing objects indifferently, for no other purpose than our diversion; as when in a rural walk we look at the starry heavens, or admire extensive plains and flowing rivers: this may be called a simple view of contemplation. The other goes farther, and consists not barely in seeing objects, but in looking at them so as to conduct and regulate our actions:—so a traveller sees roads in his journey; so a man sees his friend, to open his own heart, and ask his friend's advice; so a prisoner sees his deliverer, to ask his freedom: this may be called a view of action or direction. Thus it is with the understanding: it has two functions; one a simple knowledge of objects, as of physical or metaphysical truths, called in the schools, *speculative knowledge*: the other, a knowledge of objects, in order to act by them, and to use them for a rule and a guide; as when we know the nature of virtue, and the precepts of morality, the rules of arts, and the maxims of jurisprudence: this is what the schools call *practical knowledge*. Now here the understanding is spoken of, not in the former, but latter sense; for the mysteries of the Christian religion are not mysteries of simple contemplation; the Scripture does not propose them for our diversion, nor to gratify our curiosity; but they are mysteries of practice, which we ought to know, in order to act towards them, by embracing them with all the powers of our hearts, by receiving their impression and yielding to their energy; in one word, by making them the rule of our conduct. The apostle's proposition then means, That it is God, who, by the interior light of his spirit, opens the eyes of our understandings, to receive, as we ought, the truths of his word; thereby enabling us to judge of them, to love and follow them, and to make them the rules of our conduct.

The proposition, thus explained, must be proved. This may be done directly, or indirectly; *indirectly*, by producing divers passages of Scripture, which represent the greatness of natural depravity, and the inability of man to convert himself. Such passages are very numerous, as

where the heart is called an *heart of stone*. Where the prophet asks, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil*. A *direct* confirmation consists of passages in which our conversion is formally ascribed to God and to the efficacy of his spirit, which are also very numerous.

While you are confirming this proposition by Scripture, you may mix an *illustration* of it by reasoning, by shewing that our attachments to the world are so many and so strong, that supernatural grace is absolutely necessary to dissolve them; that the obscurities of our minds, arising either from our prejudices, or passions, or old habits, or the colours under which the Gospel first presents itself to us, are such as render it impossible for us to judge rightly. This may be particularly inserted in the *indirect* way.

In the *direct* way you may also mix reasoning, by shewing that the Divine wisdom determines our regeneration should be all heavenly—that neither flesh nor blood, nor natural principles, contribute any thing—that the new man, being the pure work of the Holy Spirit, renders us more conformable to Jesus Christ; for, according to St. Paul, *God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son*. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he came not in the ordinary natural way, but by a law above all laws in the world: he was made of a virgin, formed by the power of the Holy Ghost. God declares, that *Christians are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of himself*; and on this account they are emphatically styled the children of God, and the brethren of Christ.

In confirming this proposition, you may also illustrate it by some *examples*, as by that of the converted thief—that of St. Paul—that of the Jews, converted on the day of Pentecost, at the preaching of St. Peter, &c.—in short, by any examples in which the power of grace remarkably shone in conversion.

The subject may be illustrated by *comparing* conversion with the almighty work of God in creating the universe; and you may remark, in a few words, their conformities and differences.

You may illustrate by its *consequences*, shewing the

greatness and importance of the change wrought in men, when God opens the eyes of their understandings.

The illustration may flow from *inevidence*, by shewing, that Jesus Christ alone has taught men this truth, that conversion is of God. All false religions attribute this work to man himself: Philosophy is not acquainted with this grace from on high.

Finally, you may illustrate the subject by *the person who proposes it*, Who is St. Paul? He had felt all its efficacy; fathomed, as it were, all its depth; and, consequently, could well speak of it. Or by *the persons to whom it was addressed*, the Ephesians, who had been reclaimed from the greatest superstition that was among the Pagans, that is to say, the worship of Diana.

The *manner* in which St. Paul proposes this truth must not be forgotten; it is in the form of a *wish* or *prayer*: *May God give you an illumination of the eyes of your understanding!* which shews the necessity and importance of grace, without which all the other mercies of God would be rather hurtful than profitable.

You may also remark the *circumstances of time and place*; for St. Paul wrote this epistle when he was in prison at Rome, when he was loaded with chains, and when the Gospel was every where persecuted. Under such forbidding circumstances, the Holy Ghost must needs display a mighty power in conversion.^P

Secondly, to give an example of *propositions, including divers truths*, which must be distinguished from each other. We cannot choose a more proper text than the remaining part of the passage which was just now explained: *That you may know*, says St. Paul, *what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.* The apostle's proposition is, that, by the illumination of grace, we understand the innumerable blessings to the enjoyment of which God calls us by his Gospel. Now this proposition includes many truths, which it will be necessary to distinguish.

1. That the Gospel is a *divine vocation*, a loud voice, which cries, *Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead,*

^P Out of these various methods of illustration, Mr. Claude would have the preacher *choose the most proper*, and not attempt to crowd all into one sermon.

and Christ shall give thee light. Therefore it is said in the fiftieth Psalm, *The Lord hath called the earth, from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof.* The church is not a rash tumultuous assembly, produced by hazard, as many societies seem to be. It is not an human society, which reason and natural interests have associated. It is a society that has God for its author; for it is his word which calls, and his command that assembles us.

2. It is a vocation wherein God proposes something to our *hope*; for which reason we are said to be *begotten again to a lively hope*. This may be discussed, either in opposition to a vocation of simple *authority*, where we are called to service without any recompence proposed (thus princes frequently command their subjects;) or in opposition to a *seduction* to sin, which punishes our services with death: *The wages of sin is death*, says St. Paul. (These words represent Sin as a tyrant, who calls us to obey him in order to destroy us.) Or it may be considered in opposition to our *natural birth*, which introduces us to a scene of numberless distresses and miseries. All these vocations are either uncomfortable or hopeless, or dangerous, and tending to despair: but the call of the Gospel is a call to hope; not like Adam's, when God called him to be judged and condemned; *Adam, where art thou?* but like Abraham's, when the Lord said to him, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and I will give thee the land whither thou goest:* not like that which Isaiah addressed to Hezekiah, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die;* but like that which Jesus sounded to Lazarus, *Lazarus come forth!*

3. That this call proposes to our hope an *inheritance*, not a recompence proportioned to our merit; but a good, which God, as a father, bestows on us in virtue of adopting grace; a good which we have by communion with Jesus Christ; for we are *heirs of God* only as we are *joint-heirs of Jesus Christ*. Farther, this is an unalienable inheritance, which we ourselves can never lose, and of which no other can deprive us. The ancient Jewish inheritances could never pass from families into foreign hands. This is an inheritance, in fine, in opposition to that felicity which God gave Adam as an hireling, under

the title of wages; and not as a son, under the title of inheritance.

4. That this is a *heavenly* inheritance, (for so must the last word *saints* be understood—in *sanctis*, in *holy*, or *heavenly places*.) The apostle intends, not only to point out the nature of divine blessings, which are spiritual and heavenly, but to signify the *place* where we shall possess them, heaven, the mansion of the majesty of God.

5. That these are blessings of an *infinite abundance*, of an *inexpressible value*, for this is the meaning of these terms, *The riches of the glory of his inheritance*, a way of speaking proper to the Hebrews, who, to express the grandeur or excellence of a thing, heap many synonymous expressions on each other. Thus the apostle, to represent to the Corinthians this same felicity of which he speaks here, calls it *A weight of glory excellently excellent*. And in this chapter, a little after our text, he speaks of *the exceeding greatness of his power, the working of his mighty power*. Here then the *riches of the glory of his inheritance* signifies the value, the excellence, the abundance, the plenitude of this inheritance.

6. The apostle would have us *know* the admirable greatness of this hope; for all our deviations from virtue, and attachments to the world, arise only from our ignorance of this glory: when we become acquainted with it, it is a chain that fastens, an attractive which allures, an invincible force that renders itself governess of all our affections. An ancient poet tells us of a golden chain which his Jupiter let down from heaven to earth: this thought may be sanctified, and applied to this subject, by saying, that the divine hope of our calling, and the riches of the glory of this inheritance, which God has prepared for us, is a golden chain descending from heaven to us. Similar to this is Christ's saying to his apostles, *I will make you fishers of men*. When they cast their mystical line into the sea, the wide world, they took an infinite number of fishes: but the hook, which alone rendered them successful in their divine fishing, was this great *hope of the calling of God, these riches of the glory of his inheritance in the heavens*.

7. Finally, the apostle means that the knowledge which we have of this matter comes from *divine illumination*.

It can come from no other influence, as we have already seen. It comes also infallibly from this: and when God illuminates us, it is not possible that we should be ignorant of what he designs to inform us of.⁹

There are some propositions which must be considered in *different views*. For example, let us take these words, Psal. lxxix. 21. *They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* This passage must be considered in *four* different views: 1. In regard to David. 2. In regard to Jesus Christ. 3. In regard to the church in general. 4. In regard to every believer in particular.

So again in these words, Psal. cxxix. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet have they not prevailed against me.* These words belong, as to the Jewish, so the Christian church; and must be applied to both. In short, it is the same with all typical prophecies.

Of propositions, which have *degrees* to be remarked, take this example: *And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.* Exod. iii. 7, 8. The propositions contained in this text, one touching the *affliction*, and the other concerning the *deliverance* of the people of God, must be considered according to their different degrees of accomplishment. For,

1. They were accomplished in the servitude and deliverance of Israel from *Egypt*.

2. In the divers servitudes and deliverances which afterward befel Israel, particularly in that of *Babylon*, which was a second *Egypt*.

3. They have been accomplished in a more excellent sense, in the servitude and deliverance of the church at the coming of *Jesus Christ*, and at the preaching of the *Gospel*.

4. In the deliverance of the church from the bondage of *Antichrist*.

⁹ Perhaps these *seven* heads might have been more profitably included in the *three* following: 1. That Christians have a very glorious portion. 2. That it is their privilege to know their title to it. 3. That they must attain this knowledge by spiritual illumination.

5. And, finally, they are yet to be fulfilled in the last and great deliverance at Jesus Christ's *second coming*.

In like manner discuss these words of Isaiah, quoted by St. Paul; *Behold me and the children whom the Lord hath given me*. Heb. ii. 13. The first degree of the accomplishment of these words was in *Isaiah* and his children; the second, in *Jesus Christ* and his disciples at the *first* preaching of the Gospel; and the third, in Jesus and his followers at the *last day*, when he shall present us to his Father to be glorified.

The same may be said of Ezekiel's vision of the bones which rose from the dead, for it has *three* degrees of accomplishment: 1. In the deliverance of the *Jews* from their Babylonian captivity. 2. In the deliverance of the *church* by the ministry of the Gospel. 3. In the last *resurrection*.—There are many passages of Scripture which must be explained in this manner.

In regard to those propositions which seem *inconsiderable* when taken in a general sense, but which are very important in a particular explication, they may be exemplified by these two passages.

Psal. xxvii. 3. *Inhabit the land*. At first sight, it seems as if there was nothing in these words; nevertheless, a particular explanation will discover many excellent truths in them.

So again, Prov. xv. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*. In the general notion of this proposition, which only regards the omniscience of God, there does not seem to be any thing extremely important: but if you descend, as you ought, to particulars, you will perceive,

1. A providential knowledge *regulating* and determining all events, and directing them to their ends.

2. A knowledge of *approbation* in regard to the good and of *condemnation* in regard to the wicked.

3. A knowledge of *protection* and recompence on the one side, and of *chastisement* and punishment on the other. So that this passage contains the whole doctrine of Providence—the punishments of the wicked, and the benedictions which accompany the just.

CHAP. VI.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED BY WAY OF OBSERVATION.

SOME texts require a discussion by way of consideration, or *observation*. The following hints may serve for a general direction.

1. When texts are *clear* of themselves, and the matter well known to the *hearers*, it would be trifling to amuse the people with *explication*. Such texts must be taken as they are, that is, clear, plain, and evident, and only observations should be made on them.

2. Most *historical* texts must be discussed in this way; for, in a way of explication, there would be very little to say. For example, what is there to *explain* in this passage? *Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with him.* John xii. Would it not be a loss of time and labour to attempt to *explain* these words? and are they not clearer than any comments can make them? The way of observation, then, must be taken.

3. There are some texts which require *both* explication and observation, as when some parts may need explaining. For example, Acts i. 10. *And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel.* Here it will be necessary to *explain* in a few words the cause of their *looking stedfastly toward heaven*; for by lifting their eyes after their divine Master, they expressed the inward emotions of their minds. It will be needful also to *explain* this other expression, *As he went up*; and to *observe*, that it must be taken in its plain popular sense; and that it signifies not merely the removal of his visible presence, while he remained invisibly upon earth, but the absolute absence of his humanity. This is the natural sense of the words; and the observation is necessary to guard us against that sense which the church of Rome imposes on them for the sake of transubstantiation. You may also briefly explain this other expression, *Behold! two men*; and shew that they were angels in human shapes. Here you may dis-

cuss the question of angelical appearances under human forms. Notwithstanding these brief explications, this is a text that must be discussed by way of observation.

Observe, in general, when explication and observation meet in one text, you must always explain the part that needs explaining, *before* you make any observations; for observations must not be made till you have established the sense plain and clear.

4. Sometimes an *observation may be made by way of explication*, as when you would infer something important from the meaning of an original term in the text. For example; Acts ii. 1. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

It will be proper here to explain and enforce the Greek word *ὁμοθυμαδον*, which is translated *with one accord*; for it signifies, that they had the same hope, the same opinions, the same judgment; and thus their unanimity is distinguished from an exterior and negative agreement which consists in a mere profession of having no different sentiments, and in not falling out; but this may proceed from negligence, ignorance, or fear of a tyrannical authority. The uniformity of which the church of Rome boasts, is of this kind; for, if they have no disputes and quarrels among them on religious matters (which, however, is not granted), it is owing to the stupidity and ignorance in which the people are kept, or to that indifference and negligence which the greatest part of that community discover towards religion, concerning which they seldom trouble themselves; or to the fear of that tyrannical domination of their prelates, with which the constitution of their church arms them. Now, consider such an uniformity how you will, it will appear a false peace. If ignorance or negligence produce it, it resembles the quiet of dead carcasses in a burying-ground, or the profound silence of night when all are asleep; and if it be owing to fear, it is the stillness of a galley-slave under the strokes of his officer, a mere shadow of acquiescence produced by timidity, and unworthy of the name of unanimity. The disciples of Jesus Christ were not uniform in this sense: but their unanimity was inward and positive; they *were of one heart, and one soul*. This explication, you perceive, is itself a very just observation;

and there are very many passages of scripture which may be treated of in the same manner.

5. Observations, for the most part, ought to be *theological*; that is to say, they should belong to a system of religion. Sometimes, indeed, we may make use of observations historical, philosophical, and critical; but these should be used sparingly and seldom, on necessary occasions, and when they cannot well be avoided; and even then they ought to be pertinent, and not common; that they may be heard with satisfaction. Make it a law to be generally very brief on observations of these kinds, and to inform your audience that you only make them *en-passant*.

There are, I allow, some cases, in which observations remote from theology are necessary to the elucidating of a text. When these happen, make your observations *professedly*, and explain and prove them. But, I repeat it again, in general, observations should be purely theological; either speculative, which regard the mysteries of Christianity; or practical, which regard morality: for the pulpit was erected to instruct the minds of men in religious subjects, and not to gratify curiosity; to inflame the heart, and not to find play for imagination.

6. Observations should not be proposed in scholastic style, nor in common-place guise. They should be seasoned with a sweet urbanity, accommodated to the capacities of the people, and adapted to the manners of good men. One of the best expedients for this purpose is a reduction of obscure matters to a natural, popular, modern air. You can never attain this ability, unless you acquire a habit of conceiving clearly of subjects yourself,^a and of expressing them in a free, familiar, easy manner, remote from every thing forced and far-fetched. All long trains of arguments, all embarrassments of divisions and subdivisions, all metaphysical investigations, which are mostly impertinent, and, like the fields, the cities, and

^a *Acquire a habit of conceiving clearly of subjects.* "1. Conceive of things *clearly* and *distinctly* in their own nature. 2. Conceive of things *completely* in all their *parts*. 3. Conceive of things *comprehensively* in all their *properties* and *relations*. 4. Conceive of things *extensively* in all their *kinds*. 5. Conceive of things *orderly*, or in a proper method." *Dr. Watt's Logic*, chap. vi.

the houses, which we imagine in the clouds, the mere creatures of fancy, all these should be avoided.

7. Care, however, must be taken to avoid the opposite extreme, which consists in making only poor, dry, spiritless observations, frequently said under pretence of avoiding school-divinity, and of speaking only popular things. Endeavour to think clearly, and try also to think nobly. Let your observations be replete with beauty, as well as propriety, the fruits of a fine fancy under the direction of a sober judgment. If you be inattentive to this article, you will pass for a contemptible declaimer, of mean and shallow capacity, exhausting yourself and not edifying your hearers; a very ridiculous character!

To open more particularly some sources of observations, remark every thing that may help you to think and facilitate invention. You may rise from species to genus, or descend from genus to species. You may remark the different characters of a virtue commanded, or of a vice prohibited. You may enquire whether the subject in question be relative to any other, or whether it do not suppose something not expressed. You may reflect on the person speaking or acting, or on the condition of the person speaking or acting. You may observe time, place, persons addressed, and see whether there be any useful considerations arising from either. You may consider the principles of a word or action, or the good or bad consequences that follow. You may attend to the end proposed in a speech or action, and see if there be any thing remarkable in the manner of speaking or acting. You may compare words or actions with others similar, and remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions. You may oppose words and actions to contrary words and actions, either by contrasting speakers or hearers. You may examine the foundations and causes of words, or actions, in order to develop the truth or falsehood, equity or iniquity of them. You may sometimes make suppositions, refute objections, and distinguish characters of grandeur, majesty, meanness, infirmity, necessity, utility, evidence, and so on. You may advert to degrees of more or less, and to different interests. You may distinguish, define, divide, and, in a word, by turn-

ing your text on every side, you may obtain various methods of elucidating it. I will give you examples of all.

I.

RISE FROM SPECIES TO GENUS.^b

Psal. l. 14. *Sacrifice to God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High.* In discussing this text, I would observe first the terms *Sacrifice thanksgiving*, and would elucidate them by going from the species to the genus. The dignity of sacrifice *in general* would lead me to observe—that it is the immediate commerce of a creature with his God; an action, in which it is difficult, to judge whether earth ascend to heaven, or heaven descend to earth—that in almost all the other acts of religion the creature receives of his Creator; but in this the Creator receives of his creature—that the Lord of the universe, who needs nothing, and who eternally lives in a rich abundance, hath such a condescension as to be willing to receive offerings at our hands—that, of all dignities, that of the priesthood was the highest, for which reason the ancient priests dwelt in the tabernacle, or temple of God—that, when God divided Canaan among the children of Israel, each tribe had its portion except that of Levi, to which God assigned nothing. Why? because he loved them less? No, but because he gave them the priesthood, and because he, who had the priesthood, the altar, and the censer, had God for his portion, and, consequently could have no need of temporal things. This is, you see, to rise from species to genus; for the text does not speak of sacrifice *in general*, but of the sacrifice of *praise* in particular: yet, when these general considerations are pertinent, they cannot fail of being well received.

II.

DESCEND FROM GENUS TO SPECIES.

An example may be taken from Psal. cxxiii. 2. *Behold! as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their*

^b This is a topic peculiarly proper in an exordium.

masters, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God. Here you may aptly observe, in masters with regard to servants, and in God with regard to us, three senses of the phrase. There is a hand of *beneficence*, a hand of *protection* or deliverance, and a hand of *correction*. A servant expects favours from the hand of his master, not from that of a stranger. He looks to him for protection and deliverance in threatening dangers, and refuses all help, except that of his master. He expects correction from him when he commits a fault, and, when corrected, humbles himself under his master's frown, in order to disarm him by tears of repentance. The application of these to the servants of God is easy. The word *succour* is general, and may very well be considered by descending from the genus to the species, and by observing the different occasions which we have for divine assistance, and, consequently, the different assistances and succours which God affords us—as the help of his *word*, to remove our ignorance, doubts, or errors—the help of his *providence*, to deliver us out of afflictions—the help of his *grace* and spirit, to guard us from the temptations of the world, and to aid us against the weaknesses of nature—the help of divine *consolations*, to sweeten the bitterness of our exercises under distressing circumstances, and to give us courage to bear afflictions—the help of his *mercy*, to pardon our sins, and to restore to our consciences that tranquillity which they have lost by offending God. You will meet with a great number of texts which may be discussed in this manner: but great care must be taken not to strain the subject; for that would make you look like a school-boy. The best way is, to make only one general observation, and then to apply it to several particular subjects, collecting all at last into one general point of view.

III.

REMARK THE DIVERS CHARACTERS OF A VICE, WHICH IS FORBIDDEN, OR OF A VIRTUE, WHICH IS COMMANDED.

For example, 2 Thess. iii. 5. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* Here I should describe the characters of true

love to God; and, perhaps, it might not be improper to subjoin the characters of expectation of Christ; and, that I might not seem to travel the same road twice, I would call the latter, emotions, which accompany hope in Christ.

To begin with the *characters* of true *love* to God.

1. The seat of it is the *heart*, which it penetrates and possesses. This distinguishes it from the feigned love of hypocrites, which is only in word, or in external actions, while their hearts are full of sinful self-love; so that it may be said of them as God once said of the Israelites, *This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

2. It is a love that possesses the *whole* heart, without allowing a partition among different objects. Thus it is distinguished from that partial love which almost-Christians have, who have sometimes good desires towards zeal and repentance; but they are transient only, and never come to perfection, because the soul is divided, and occupied with various worldly objects; and because the love of God, from which true repentance and zeal proceed, is not rooted in the heart: it is for this reason that Scripture commands us to love God with *all* our hearts, or, as David speaks, *to love him with a cordial affection.*

3. The love of God is not indeed alone in the heart of a good man; he may also love creatures; a father loves his children, a friend his friend, a master his servant, a king his subjects, a wife her husband; but the character of divine love in us is, on the one hand, to suffer no love contrary to itself in the heart, (*for no man can serve two masters, and the love of the world is enmity against God*), and, on the other hand, love of God does not suffer any of the objects, the love of which is compatible with itself, to hold the *chief place* in the heart. This chief place is for God; to put him in a second place is to treat him opprobriously. Even to equal another object with him is to insult him; wherever he is, he must fill the throne himself; and, if a holy heart be an image of heaven, as it is in effect, God must reign there, and all must be submissive to him.

4. The emotions and acts of this love must be *infinite*, without measure as well as without subordination; without bounds as well as without partition. The reason is,

our love must resemble its object; and its object is infinite; and this is one sense of this command, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul.* But how, say you, can we, who are finite creatures, perform infinite acts? I answer, the acts of the creature are, in a manner, infinite. This infinity consists, in my opinion, in two things. First, our emotions go to the utmost extent of our power, without coolness or caution; and, secondly, when we have stretched our souls to the utmost of our power, we cannot be content with ourselves, and we acknowledge our duty goes infinitely beyond our emotions and actions. Thus we ought to love God with all the powers of our hearts, giving up (if I may so speak) our whole souls to him, and at the same time we shall feel a secret dissatisfaction with ourselves for not being able to love him enough.

5. This love, which has no bounds itself, *sets bounds* to every emotion towards other objects: it is, as it were, an immense fire, emitting a few sparks, a few comparatively faint emotions towards inferior objects. So a king collects in **his** own person all the honours of his kingdom, and communicates some lucid titles to inferior subjects: so the sea distributes of its boundless waters to rivers, fountains, and rills. Not only must we refuse to love what God has forbidden, and choose to respect what he allows us to love, but, to speak properly, we ought to love only what he commands us to love. This love should be in our hearts, amidst all our other affections, as a prince is among the officers of his army, or, to speak more strongly, as God himself is amongst all the creatures of the whole universe, giving to all life, motion, and being.

6. The love of God is accompanied with *humility* and *fear*, as a salt to prevent corruption; and by this mean we are kept from degrading liberty into licentiousness. In effect, how great mercy soever God has for us, it is the mercy of a master. How great soever his paternal tenderness is, it is the tenderness of a sovereign judge. His mercy, which is so amiable to us, is never separated from his infinite justice and power; and one of the most essential marks of our love to him is, to tremble and become nothing in his presence. These two things always

go together. To fear him rightly, we must fear him as a father; and to love him rightly, we must love him as a sovereign Lord.

7. This love must in one respect *imitate* the love of God, from which ours proceeds; but in another respect it must *not* imitate his. It must imitate his, by diffusing itself where his diffuses itself; and follow it, even when it is bestowed upon enemies, according to our Lord's precept, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.* But in another respect we must not imitate his love; for God's love to us is a jealous love, which cannot consent to our having any other object of supreme love besides himself: but our love to him can have no greater perfection than that which arises from a multiplicity of objects: our jealousy resembles that of the prophet Elijah, who, being asked, when he was in the cave of Beer-sheba, what he did there, answered, *I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant and thrown down thine altars.* This was St. Paul's jealousy, when he saw the Corinthians turned from the purity of his Gospel; *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* Indeed, one of the most indubitable marks of our love to God is, to lament when his name is dishonoured, his word neglected or despised, and his commands violated.

8. A Christian's love to God principally consists in *obedience.* This, I grant, is not always a certain character; for how many persons are there who abstain from evil and do good, from principles of interest or fear rather than love! but, however, it is a negative character always sure; because it may always be concluded, that they, who do not obey God, do not love him; for all, who do love God, obey his laws. The reason is evident: all, who truly love God, have an ardent desire of being loved by him; and it is essential to love to desire a return of affection from its object. We cannot expect to

be beloved of God, unless we strive to please him; nor can we please him without keeping his commandments. The love of God is always accompanied with an holy diligence to please him, and an awful fear of offending him. A true believer is always afraid lest any thing, through negligence or infirmity, should escape him, and clash with his duty, or provoke his God. This made St. Paul say, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; and elsewhere, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway*; and hence those prayers of holy men, *Teach me thy ways, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy Name. May God make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ!*

9. The love of God is not only continued in a Christian, but it is also inflamed under the rod of *correction*, contrary to that false love which subsists only in prosperity, and is quite extinct in adversity: for false love in religion flows from temporal interest, and is dependent on irregular self-love; but true love to God regards his glory and our salvation, two things which can never be separated, because God has united them so, that they constitute the very essence of religion. Whenever, then it pleases God to chastise us, these two great interests (I mean his glory and our salvation) present themselves before our eyes; and whether we consider chastisements as the fruits of our own sins which have offended God, or as paternal strokes to establish us in holiness, they cannot but inflame our love. Add to these, that when a believer sees his God frown, he cannot help apprehending, in some sense, that his wrath will go further, that the Lord will forsake, and entirely leave him. Hence these expressions of David, *Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* And hence Asaph says, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?*

The Tyrians, it seems, when Alexander besieged them, imagined they saw, by some extraordinary motion, that the image of Apollo, in which all their hopes of protection were placed, intended to quit their city: to prevent this misfortune, they fastened their god with chains of gold. This I own was a foolish superstition: but methinks we may sanctify the thought, and almost learn a believer's conduct from it. When he imagines his God means to forsake him, he holds him (if I may be allowed to say so) with chains of love, he throws around him the tender arms of his piety, he weeps on his bosom, and, to make use of a better example than that of the Tyrians, he *constrains* him, as the disciples did at Emmaus, *Abide with me, for the day is far spent, and it is towards evening.*

10. True love to God is not *superstitious*. Superstition usually springs from one of these *four* principles. Either, first, from *servile fear*, which makes people believe that God is always wrathful, and which invents means to appease him, employing for this purpose, ridiculous practices unworthy of humanity itself; or, 2dly, from a *natural inclination*, which we all have, to *idolatry*, which makes men think they see some ray of the divinity in extraordinary creatures, and, on this account, they transfer a part of their devotion to them; or, 3dly, from *hypocrisy*, which makes men willing to discharge their obligations to God by grimace, and by zeal for external services; for which purpose they can perform a great number of any kind. Finally, from *presumption*, which makes men serve God after their own fancies, and establish such a worship as pleases and flatters themselves, without regarding whether they please God. All these appear in the superstitions of the church of Rome, the greatest part of which sprang from *fear* of the fire of purgatory; as mortifications, masses, jubilees, indulgences, penal satisfactions, and many more of the same kind. It is also evident, that some came from that dreadful *propensity* natural to all mankind to deify creatures; to this may be referred the worshipping of images, the invocations of saints and angels, the custom of swearing by creatures, the adoration of relics, pilgrimages, the adoration of the host, and many such things. Nor is it less true that *hypocrisy* produced others, as beads, chap-

lets, rosaries, prayers by tale, frequent fasts, visiting holy places, &c. And, finally, some came from human vanity and *presumption*, as festivals, processions, the magnificence of churches; and, in general, all pompous, ceremonies in the worship of God. All these are contrary to the love of God, which is free from superstition. It is superior to servile fear, and accompanied with a persuasion that God is good, and that he loves us. It has only God for its object; it acknowledges between God and his creatures, however amiable the latter may be, an infinite distance, and consequently, cannot bestow any part of that worship upon them which is due to him alone. It is sincere and soild, more attentive to the interior than to the outward appearance; for, having its principal seat in the heart, it rectifies a man's sentiments, whence, as from a sacred source, good works flow. In a word, it is humble and submissive to the will of God, which it regards as the only rule of its duty, without paying any respect to the vanity of sense, or the caprice of the human mind.

11. Genuine love to God is tranquil and *peaceable*, acquiescing in the ways of Providence without complaining, happy in itself, without inquietude and without chagrin, flying from quarrels and divisions, easy and gentle in all things, yielding in every thing, except in the service of God and the grand interest of salvation, in which love itself is inflexible, and incapable of compounding.

12. Real love is always *active*. Its tranquillity is not negligence; it is lively and energetical, always in peace, but always in action; like the heavens, whence it came, without noise, in profound silence, perpetually moving, and incessantly shedding benign influences: it is not content to seek God in his temples only, but it pursues him in houses, chambers, and closets; it rises after him to heaven; it enjoys him in the heart, where it entertains and adores him; it goes even to seek him in his members, and chiefly in the poor, whose secret necessities it enquires after, and endeavours to relieve.

Finally, One of the greatest evidences of love to God is, *spontaneous* obedience, not waiting for chastisements to awake us, after we have fallen into sin, but returning immediately to repentance. Indeed, tardy repentances,

which come after we have exhausted the patience of God, and drawn the strokes of his rod upon us, are much more likely to be effects of nature than of love to God. Self-love has so great a share in such a conduct, that, if we do not attribute our repentance wholly to it, we must in great part. Yet it is certain, when repentance does not flow wholly from love to God, it is not wholly heavenly and spiritual; it is a compound of heaven and earth, divine faith and human prudence; and so much as it has of nature and sinful self-interest, so much it loses of its worth and excellence. Genuine love does not then wait for carnal solicitations, nor till afflictions inform us of our state; it freely comes to our aid, and constrains us to return to God, even before we feel the effects of his indignation. So much for the characters of love.*

In regard to the *emotions* included in the words *patient waiting*, you may remark, 1st, That the coming of Jesus Christ being the subject in question, the expectation of a believer is a true and real *hope*, directly opposite to the expectation of the wicked, which is a fear. The latter consider Jesus Christ on this occasion as their Judge, and enemy, who will avenge himself, punish all their sins, and plunge them for ever into perdition. Believers, on the contrary, consider him as their head, their husband, their Saviour, who will come to raise them from dust and misery, and to exalt them to his glorious kingdom. The wicked, in their fore-views, resemble the devils, who, at Christ's first appearance, exclaimed, *Let us alone! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?* but the righteous imitate those who attended his public entry into Jerusalem; *Hosanna!* said they, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

* The multiplying of divisions and subdivisions is, in the Editor's judgment, a great fault in composition. They should consist only of such a number as will fairly embrace the whole subject, and may easily be remembered. All that really belongs to the subject in these *thirteen* heads might have been introduced under the three following. True love to God is, 1. *Supreme*, possessing the heart, the whole heart, &c. 2. *Uniform*, as well under his corrections as under his smiles. 3. *Obediential*, instigating us, not to an observance of superstitious rites, but to an humble and active performance of his revealed will.

2. This expectation is accompanied with an holy and ardent *desire*, as being an expectation of the greatest blessings. *Come, Lord Jesus*, says the church, *Lord Jesus, come!* Such was David's expectation, when he was among the Philistines; *As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* The desire of a believer is not less fervent, or (to speak more properly) it is far more ardent, when he meditates on his entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, where we shall *hunger and thirst no more. for the Lamb shall feed us, and lead us to fountains of living waters.* What the first appearance of Christ in the flesh was to the ancient church, that his second manifestation is to us; with this difference, that then he was to appear in grace, whereas now we expect him in glory—then he was to appear in the *form of a servant*, and in the *likeness of sinful flesh*; but hereafter he will appear in the *form of God*, thinking it *not robbery to be equal with God.* As he was then *the desire of all nations*, how should he not now be the desire of all believers?

3. This desire is accompanied with an *holy inquietude*, almost like what we feel when we expect an intimate friend, of whose coming we are sure, but are uncertain about the time; or, if you will, such as an oppressed and enslaved people feel, while they wait for a deliverer; or such as an affectionate consort feels, while she waits for the return of her lord. On these occasions days and hours move slowly, time is anticipated, futurity is enjoyed, and there is a prelibation of the expected pleasure. This is the holy inquietude which St. Paul attributes to the creatures in general, saying, *They groan and travail in pain together with the earnest expectation of the manifestation of the sons of God.* How much more, then, must believers do so!

4. But this inquietude does not prevent our *possessing our souls in patience*; for it does not proceed to murmuring, but submits to the will of God; knowing that times and seasons are in his own power: *If he tarry, wait for him*, as St. Paul after Habakkuk says, Heb. x. 37. that is, be not impatient, do not murmur, for *he will certainly come, and will not tarry.* They are the profane only who say, *Where is the promise of his coming? for*

ince the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. We feel then an inquietude, but an inquietude blended with submission to the will of God. Why, says the believer, art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

5. This expectation necessarily includes a holy *preparation*, and such a preparation as relates to the majesty of him whom we expect, the greatness of the judgment that he will come to execute, and the eternal benefits of which we hope to partake. We must not imitate that wicked servant in the parable, who said, *My lord delays his coming*, and who, under cover of that delay, beat his fellow-servants. When Esther was to appear before Ahasuerus, she spent many days beforehand in preparing herself, adorning herself with her most costly habits, that she might appear before him in a proper manner. Such is the waiting of a believer; he employs all his lifetime to prepare for that solemn hour when eternity will begin.

You might easily take the characters of *vices* from this pattern of characterizing virtues: however, I will add an example on *avarice*, taking for a text Heb. xiii. 5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.*

1. Avarice is a disposition so gross, that it *obscures* the understanding and *reason* of a man, even so far as to make him think of profit where there is nothing but loss, and imagine that to be *œconomy* which is nothing but ruin. Is it not in this manner that a covetous man, instead of preventing maladies by an honest and frugal expence, draws them upon himself by a sordid and niggardly way of living; and, by this means, brings himself under an unavoidable necessity of consuming one part of his substance to recover a health which, by an excessive parsimony, he has lost? There are even some who bring inevitable death upon themselves, rather than spend any thing to procure necessary relief; and are impertinent enough to imagine, that riches had better be without a possessor, than a possessor without riches; as if man were made for money, and not money for man.

But, 2dly, this would be but little, if avarice affected only the avaricious themselves; it goes much farther, it renders a man *useless to society*. It subverts the idea of our living to assist one another; for a covetous man is useless to the whole world. He resembles that *earth*, of which St. Paul speaks, which *drinketh in the rain that comes often upon it, and beareth only thorns and briars*. He is an unfruitful tree, a gulf which draws in waters from all parts, but from which no stream runs; or, if you will, an avaricious man is like death, that devours all, and restores nothing: whence it comes to pass, that no man is in general so much despised, while he lives, as a miser; and no man's death is so much desired as his. He never opens his treasures till he is leaving the world; he, therefore, can never receive the fruits of gratitude, because his favours are never conferred till his death.

3d. Farther, this vice not only renders a man useless to society, but it even makes him hurtful and *pernicious* to it. There is no right so inviolable, no law so holy, which he will not violate greedily to amass riches, and cautiously to preserve them. How many violent encroachments, how many criminal designs, how many dark and treasonable practices, how many infamies and wickednesses, have proceeded from this perverse inclination! If a covetous man is barren in kindnesses, he is fruitful in sins and iniquities. There are no boundaries which he cannot pass, no barriers which he cannot readily go over, to satisfy his base passion for money.

4th. By this we may already perceive how *incompatible* this vice is with true faith, and *with the genius of Christianity*. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love and charity, always beneficent, always ready to prevent the necessities of our Christian brethren, kind and full of compassion, inquiring into the wants of others, and, without asking, seeking means to prevent them. But avarice, on the contrary, makes a man hard, cruel, pitiless, beyond the reach of complaints and tears, rendering the miser not only jealous of the prosperity of his neighbour, but even making him consider the pittances of the miserable as objects of his covetous desires.

5th. It is not without reason that St. Paul calls avarice

idolatry; for one of the principal characters of this cursed inclination is a making gold and silver one's god. It is money, in effect, which the covetous adores, it is this that he supremely loves, this he prefers above all other things, it is his last end, his life, his confidence, and all his happiness. He who fears God, consecrates to him his first thoughts, and devotes to his glory and service the chief of his cares; to his interests, the whole of his heart; and for the rest, commits himself to the care of his providence. It is the same with a covetous man in regard to his treasures; he thinks only of them, he labours only to increase and preserve them, he feels only for them; he has neither rest nor hope which is not founded on his riches; he would offer incense to them, could he do it without expence.

6th. It is suprising, and sometimes sufficiently diverting, to see in what manner all the other inclinations of a miser, good and bad, virtues and vices, his love and his hatred, his joy and his sorrow, respect and obey his avarice. They move or rest, act or do not act, agreeably to the orders which this criminal passion gives them. If he be naturally civil, mild, and agreeable in his conversation, he will not fail to lay aside all his civilities and good manners when his avarice tells him he may get something by doing so; and, on the contrary, when he has received some injury, when some insult has been offered him, which is a just ground of resentment, you may see, in an instant, his wrath is removed, and all his vehemence abated, in hope of a little money offered to appease him, or in fear of a small expence to gratify his resentment. If an object of public joy or sorrow offer itself to his view, simply considering it in a general view, he will be glad or sorry, according to the nature of the thing in question; but should this occasion of public joy interest him ever so little, or in any manner prejudice his pretensions, all on a sudden you will see all his joy turned into sorrow. In like manner, when a public calamity gives him an opportunity of gaining any thing, all his sorrow is turned into joy. If he ardently loves any one, he will love him no longer if he begin to cost him any thing; avarice will turn all his love into indifference and

coldness. If reason and common honesty oblige him to be of a party who have justice on their side, he will maintain and even exaggerate their rights, and defend the equity of them, while his purse is not engaged: engage his purse, and it is no longer the same thing: what was just is become now unjust to him, he has quickly *whys* and *howevers* in his mouth—but, *however*, we were mistaken in such a point—*why* should we be obstinate in such or such a thing? &c.

In fine, his avarice gives the *colour* and tint to *every subject*, it is the sole rule and measure, it makes things good or bad, just or unjust, reasonable or unreasonable, according to its pleasure: crimes are no longer crimes, if they agree with avarice; virtues are no longer virtues, when they oppose it: she reigns over the ideas of a miser's mind and the emotions of his heart, sole arbitress in the judgments of his mind, sole directress in the consultations of his heart, sole governess of all his passions. Aristotle's definition of nature can be no where better applied,—she is the principle of motion and of rest; for she does all that the centurion in the Gospel did; she says to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh, Do this, and he doeth it: yea, she goes farther than the centurion went; for she says, Pause, and all things pause, Cease, and all things cease to be.*

IV.

OBSERVE THE RELATION OF ONE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER.

For example, always when in Scripture God is called *a Father*, the relation of that term to *children* is evident, and we are obliged not only to remark the paternal inclinations which are in God towards us, and the advantages which we receive from his love, but also the duties to which we are bound as children of such a Father. The same may be said of all these expressions of Scripture, *God is our God*, we are his *people*—he is our *portion*, we are his *heritage*—he is our *master*, we are his *servants*—

* These *seven* heads might, as in the foregoing instance, have been reduced to *three*. Avarice, 1. perverts our judgment; 2. destroys our happiness; 3. is incompatible with true religion.

he is our *king*, we are the *subjects of his kingdom*—he is our *prophet or teacher*, we are his *disciples*—with many more of the same kind. When we meet with such single and separate, they must be discussed in relation to one another, and this relation must be particularly considered. Thus, when the *kingdom of God*, or of *Jesus Christ*, is spoken of, all things relative to this kingdom must be considered—as, its laws—arms—throne—crown—subjects—extent of dominion—palace where the king resides, &c. So when our mystical marriage with *Jesus Christ* is spoken of, whether it be where he is called a bridegroom, or his church a bride, you should, after you have explained these expressions, turn your attention to relative things—as the love of *Jesus Christ* to us, which made him consent to this mystical marriage—the dowry, that we bring him, our sins and miseries—the communication, which he makes to us, both of his name and benefits—the rest, that he grants us in his house, changing our abode—the banquet at his divine nuptials—the inviolable fidelity which he requires of us—the right and power he acquires over us—the defence and protection which he engages to afford us: but when these relative things are discussed, great care must be taken neither to insist on them too much, nor to descend to mean ideas, nor even to treat of them one after another, in form of a parallel; for nothing is more tiresome than treating these apart, and one after another. They must, then, be associated together; a body composed of many images must be formed; and the whole must be always animated with the sensible and the spiritual. I think a preacher ought to content himself with making one single observation, or, at the most, two, in case the relative things are too numerous to be collected into one point of view. In such a case, you must endeavour to reduce them to two classes, but in two different orders; and always make the difference perceptible, so that it may not be said you have made two observations of what was naturally but one.

V.

OBSERVE WHETHER SOME THINGS BE NOT SUPPOSED,
WHICH ARE NOT EXPRESSED.

This is a source of invention different from the former ; for the former is confined to things really relative ; but this speaks in general of things *supposed*. which have no relation to each other. For example, when we speak of a change, what they call the terminus *a quo* necessarily supposes the terminus *ad quem* : and the terminus *ad quem* supposes the terminus *a quo*.

A covenant supposes two contracting parties—a reconciliation effected, or a peace made, supposes war and enmity—a victory supposes enemies, arms, and a combat—life supposes death, and death life—the day supposes night, and the night day : sometimes there are propositions which necessarily suppose others, either because they are consequences depending on their principles, or because they are truths naturally connected with others. It is always very important to understand well what things are supposed in a text ; for sometimes several useful considerations may be drawn from them, and not unfrequently the very expressions in the text include them.

For example, Rom. xii. 17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil*. In discussing this text, you may very properly observe the truths which are *implied* or supposed in the words ; as, 1. The *disorder* into which sin has thrown mankind, so that men are exposed to receive injuries and insults from each other. A society of sinners is only a shadow of society ; they are actually at war with each other, and like the Midianitish army, turning every one his sword against his companion. The spirit of the world is a spirit of dispersion rather than of association. Different interests, diversities of sentiments, varieties of opinions, contrarieties of passions, make a perpetual division : and the fruits of this division are insults and injuries. It may be said of each in such societies, as of Ishmael in the prophecy, *His hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him*.

2. We must not imagine that faith, and the dignity of a Christian calling, raise the *disciple of Christ* above in-

juries : on the contrary, they expose him oftener to evils than others ; as well because God himself will have our faith tried, that we may arrive at heaven *through many tribulations*, as because a Christian profession necessarily divides believers from infidels. The world and sin form a kind of communion between the wicked and worldly, which produces a mutual forbearance and friendship : but there is no communion between a believer and an unbeliever, any more than between light and darkness, Christ and Belial. Thence come all the persecutions of the church, and thence will good men continue to meet with opposition from the wicked, to the end of time. Jesus Christ, when he sent his apostles, did not fail to apprise them of this : he said, *I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves* ; and again, *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

You may make an observation on each of these supposed truths ; and, having established the apostle's precept, by shewing that private revenge is contrary to the laws of Christianity, and incompatible with true piety, you may observe a third supposed truth :

3. That the Gospel not only forbids resentment and revenge ; it even commands us to *pardon* offences ; and, further obligeth us to *do good* to our enemies, and to *pray* for our persecutors, according to the precept of Jesus Christ, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you* : and, according to the doctrine of St. Paul in another place, *If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink.*

It remains that you take care in treating supposed truths,

1st, Not to *fetch* them too *far*, or to bring them about by long circuits of reasoning. Avoid this for two reasons : first, because you would render your discourse *obscure* by it ; for every body is not capable of seeing truths which are very distant from the text : and, secondly, because by this means you might bring in *all* the whole body of divinity into your text ; which attempt would be vicious, and contrary to the rules of good sense. Of supposed truths, you must choose the most *natural*, and those which lie nearest the text.

In the 2d place, do not *enlarge* on implied truths : it is proper, indeed, that hearers should know them ; but they are not principal articles.

And, 3dly, Take care also that these supposed things be *important*, either for instruction in general, or for casting light particularly on the text, or for consolation, or for the correction of vice, or practice of piety, or some useful purpose ; otherwise you would deliver trifling impertinencies under the name of implied truths.

VI.

REFLECT ON THE PERSON SPEAKING OR ACTING.

For an example, let us take the last-mentioned text of St. Paul, *Recompense to no man evil for evil*. Here you may very pertinently remark, 1. That this precept is more beautiful in the mouth of *St. Paul* than it could have been in that of any other man. The reason is this ; he, of all the men in the world, had the greatest reason for resentment upon worldly principles ; for never was there a man more persecuted, never a man more unjustly persecuted than he ; he was persecuted by his own countrymen the Jews, persecuted by the Gentiles, persecuted by false brethren, persecuted by false apostles, persecuted when he preached the Gospel, persecuted even by those for whose salvation he was labouring, persecuted to prison, to banishment, to bonds, to blood ; how amiable, then, is such a precept in the mouth of such a man ! How forcible is such a precept, supported by one of the greatest examples we can conceive ! by the example of a man whose interest seems to dictate a quite contrary practice ! When we give such precepts to the worldly, they never fail to say, to us, Yes, yes ! you talk finely ! you have never been insulted as we have ! had you met with what we have, you would talk otherwise ! But there is no reason to say so to St. Paul, any more than to Jesus Christ, his master, the author of this divine morality ; for who was ever so persecuted as Jesus Christ ? and, after him, who suffered more than his servant St. Paul ?

2. You may also very properly remark, that, to take a different view of the apostle Paul, no man was more obliged to teach and love such a morality than *him-*

self. Why? Because of all those, whom God, in his ineffable mercy, had called to the knowledge of the truth, he had been the most concerned in cruel efforts of rage against God and his church; all inflamed with fury, he went from Jerusalem to Damascus, to ravage the flock of Jesus Christ. In this raging violence of his hatred, God made him feel his love, pardoned his sins, softened his heart, and from heaven cried to him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Who, then, could be more obliged to preach mercy than this man, to whom God had shewed so much mercy? Might he not say, when he gave these rules of morality, what he said on another subject, *I have received of the Lord that which I deliver unto you; I have received the same mercy which I teach you.* Add to this, the apostle had not only met with pardoning love to an enemy on God's part, but he had also experienced it from the church. Far from rendering him evil for evil, far from avenging his persecutions, the disciples of Christ reached out the arms of their love to him, received him into their communion, and numbered him with the apostles of Jesus Christ.

VII.

REFLECT ON THE STATE OF THE PERSONS SPEAKING
OR ACTING.

Thus, in explaining 1 Thess. v. 16. *Rejoice evermore,* you must not fail to consider the state of St. Paul, when he wrote that epistle; for he was at Athens, engaged in that superstitious city, where, as it is said in the xviiith of Acts, his spirit was *stirred in him*, observing *the city wholly given to idolatry*; where he was treated as a *babbler, a setter forth of strange gods*, and where, in short, he was the object of Athenian ridicule and raillery. Yet, amid so many just causes of grief, he exhorts the Thessalonians always to preserve their spiritual joy; not that he meant to render them insensible to the evils which he suffered, nor to the afflictions of the new-born church; but because our spiritual afflictions, I mean those which we suffer for the glory of God and the good of his church, are not incompatible with peace and joy of conscience: on the contrary, it is particularly in these afflictions that God

gives the most lively joys, because then he bestows on his children more abundant measures of his grace, and more intimate communion with himself. Moreover, on these sad occasions we generally become better acquainted with the providence of God, we feel an assurance that nothing happens without his order, and that, happen what will, *all things work together for good to them that love God.* This gives us true rest, a joy which nothing is capable of disturbing.

VIII.

REMARK THE TIME OF A WORD OR ACTION.

For example, St. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, requires, that, in the public services of the church, prayers should be made for *all men*; but *first for kings, and for those that were in authority.* Here it is very natural to remark the time. It was when the church and the apostles were every where persecuted; when the faithful were the objects of the hatred and calumny of all mankind, and, in particular, of the cruelty of these tyrants. Yet none of this rough treatment could stop the course of Christian charity. St. Paul not only requires every believer to pray for all men; but he would have it done in *public*, that all the world might know the maxims of Christianity, always kind, patient, and benevolent. Believers consider themselves as bound in duty to all men, though men do nothing to oblige them to it. He was aware, malicious slanderers would call this worldly policy and human prudence, and would say, Christians only meant to flatter the great, and to court their favour; yet even this calumny does not prevent St. Paul; he orders them to pray *publickly*, and, *first*, for civil governors. We ought always to discharge our duty, and, for the rest, submit to the unjust accounts that men give of our conduct.

IX.

OBSERVE PLACE.

St. Paul says to the Philippians, *Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize*

of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The place where he writes this, furnishes a very beautiful consideration. He was then in *prison*, at Rome, loaded with chains, and deprived of his liberty; yet he speaks as if he were as much at liberty as any man in the world; as able to act as he pleased, and to dispose of himself as ever: he talks of having entered a course, running a race, forgetting things behind, pressing toward those that were before, and, in short, of hoping to gain a prize; all these are actions of a man enjoying full liberty. How could he, who was in a prison, be at the same time on a race-course? how could he run, who was loaded with irons? how could he hope to win a prize, who every day expected a sentence of death? But it is not difficult to reconcile these things: his bonds and imprisonment did not hinder the course of his faith and obedience. His prison was converted into an agreeable stadium, and death for the Gospel might well be considered under the image of a complete victory; for a martyr gains an unfading crown as a reward of his sufferings.

X.

CONSIDER THE PERSONS ADDRESSED.

* Let us again take St. Paul's words for an example: *Recompense to no man evil for evil*, Rom. xii. 17. They, to whom the apostle addressed these words, were *Romans*, whose perpetual maxim was violently to revenge public injuries, and totally to destroy those who intended to destroy them, or had offered them any affronts; witness the Carthagenians and Corinthians. They totally destroyed Carthage, because she had carried her arms into Italy by Hannibal's means, and had been upon the point of ruining Rome. Corinth they sacked and burnt for having affronted their ambassadors. You may also remark this particular circumstance; that, although the Romans had succeeded in avenging their injuries, and the empire owed its grandeur to such excesses, yet their success did not hinder the apostle from saying, *Recompense to no man evil for evil*; because neither examples nor successes ought to be the rules of our conduct, but solely the will of God, and the law of Christianity.

XI.

EXAMINE THE PARTICULAR STATE OF PERSONS
ADDRESSED.

For example, *Recompense to no man evil for evil*. St. Paul writes to Romans; but to Roman *Christians*, who saw themselves hated and persecuted by their fellow-citizens, and, in general, abused by the whole world. Yet, however reasonable resentment might appear at first sight, the apostle would not have them obey such passions as the light of reason, the instinct of nature, and the desire of their own preservation, might seem to excite: he exhorted them to leave vengeance to God, and advised them only to follow the dictates of love. The greatest persecutors of the primitive Christians were the Jews, on whom the Roman Christians could easily have avenged themselves under various pretexts; for the Jews were generally hated and despised by all other nations, and nothing could be easier than to avail themselves of that public hatred to which the religion of the Jews exposed them. Nevertheless, St. Paul not only says in general, *render not evil for evil*; but, in particular, *Recompense to no man evil for evil*. As if he had said, Do not injure those on whom you could most easily avenge yourselves; hurt not the most violent enemies of the name of Jesus Christ, and of the Christian profession; not even those who have crucified your Saviour, and every day strive to destroy his Gospel.

XII.

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES OF A WORD OR ACTION.

For example, John v. 14. *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*. This was the language of Jesus Christ to the man whom he had just before healed of an infirmity of thirty-eight years standing. Him Jesus now found in the temple. It is not imaginable that this meeting was fortuitous, and unforeseen to Jesus Christ: his providence, no doubt, conducted the man that way, directed him to the temple, whither he himself went to seek him. Examine, then, upon what *principles* Jesus Christ went to seek this miser-

able sinner; and you will find, 1. He went in great *love* to the poor man: he went in that same benevolence which inclined him to do good to all who had need, and in every place that he honoured with his presence. Jesus was, as it were, a public source of benefits; his hands every where bestowed beneficent gifts, and he even sought occasions when they did not present themselves. 2. He went by an engagement of *ancient* love, which he had made on behalf of this paralytic: his second favour flowed from his first; nor would he leave his work imperfect. Thus, it is said, in regard to his disciples, *Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end.* The bounty of Jesus Christ resembles that of his eternal Father, who calls, justifies, and, in the end, glorifies those whom he first predestinated: and on this, as on one of the principal foundations, St. Paul establisheth our hope for the future; *God having begun a good work in us, will perform it to the day of Christ:* and elsewhere, *God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son.* 3. It was by a principle of *wisdom* and foreknowledge that Jesus Christ sought this paralytic patient in the temple, in order to teach him his duty, to furnish him with the means of doing it, and to give him a more particular knowledge of the friend who had healed him; for he well knew that a tender faith, such as that of this man was, had need of fresh and continual aid, as a young plant needs a prop to support it against winds and storms.

In like manner, if you had to examine these words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman, *Go and call thy husband,* John iv. You might examine the intention of Jesus Christ in this expression. He did not speak thus because he was ignorant what sort of a life this woman lived: he knew that, to speak properly, she had no husband. It was then, 1. A word of *trial*; for the Lord said this to give her an opportunity of making a free confession, *I have no husband.* 2. It was also a word of *kind reproof*; for he intended to convince her of the sin in which she lived. 3. It was also a word of *grace*; for the censure tended to the woman's consolation. 4. It was, farther, a word of *wisdom*; for our Lord intended to take occasion at this meeting to discover himself to her, and more

clearly to convince her that he had a perfect knowledge of all the secrets of her life ; as he presently proved, by saying, *Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou hast now is not thy husband.*

Were you going to explain the ninth verse of the first of Acts, where it is said, *When Jesus was taken up, his disciples beheld him,* it would be proper to remark the sentiments of the disciples in that moment, and to shew from what principles proceeded that attentive and earnest looking after their divine Master, while he ascended to heaven.

XIII.

CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES.

Thus, when you explain the doctrine of God's mercy, it is expedient (at least sometimes) to remark the *good* and lawful uses which we ought to make of it. These uses are, to renounce ourselves—to be sensible of our infinite obligations to God, who pardons so many sins with so much bounty—to consecrate ourselves entirely to his service, as persons over whom he has acquired a new right—and to labour incessantly for his glory, in gratitude for what he has done for our salvation.

You may also observe the false and *pernicious* consequences which ungrateful and wicked men, who sin that grace may abound, pretend to derive from this doctrine. They say, we are no longer to consider justice now we are under grace ; the more we sin, the more God will be glorified in pardoning us—this mercy will endure all the time of our lives ; and therefore it will be enough to apply to it at the hour of death—with many more such false consequences, which must be both clearly stated, and fully refuted.

It is much the same with the doctrine of the efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost in our conversion, for the just and lawful consequences which are drawn from it, are, 1. That such is the greatness of our depravity, it can be rectified only by Almighty aid—2. That we should be humble, because there is nothing good in us—3. That we should ascribe all the glory of our salvation to God, who is the only author of it—4. That we must adore the

depths of the great mercy of our God, who freely gave his holy Spirit to convert us.

You must remark at the same time the abuses and false consequences which insidious sophisters draw from this doctrine; as, that since the conversion of men is by the almighty power of God, it is needless to preach his word, and to address to them, on God's part, exhortations, promises, and threatenings—that it is in vain to tell a sinner it is his duty to turn to God, as without efficacious grace (which does not depend upon the sinner) he cannot do it—that it has a tendency to make men negligent about their salvation to tell them it does not depend on their power. These, and such like abuses, must be proposed and solidly refuted.

Moreover, this method must be taken when you have occasion to treat of the doctrines of election and reprobation—the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood—and, in general, almost all religious subjects require it; for there is not one of them all which is not subject to use and abuse. Take care, however, when you propose these good and bad consequences, that you do it properly, and when an occasion naturally presents itself; for were they introduced with any kind of affectation and force; it must be disagreeable.

In general, then, this way of good and bad consequences ought to be used when there is reason to fear some may infer bad consequences, and when they seem to flow from the text itself; for in this case they ought to be prevented and refuted, and contrary consequences opposed against them.

XIV.

REFLECT ON THE END PROPOSED IN AN EXPRESSION
OR AN ACTION.

Although this is not very different from the way of principles, of which we have already spoken, yet it may afford a variety in discussing them.

If, for example, you were speaking of justification, in the sense in which St. Paul taught it, you must observe the *ends* which the apostle proposed, as—1. To put a just difference between Jesus Christ and Moses, the Law

and the Gospel, and to shew against those who would blend them together, and so confound both in one body of religion, that they cannot be so united—2. To preserve men from that Pharisaical pride which reigned among the Jews who *sought to establish their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of God*—3. To take away such inadequate remedies as the law, by way of shadow, exhibited for the expiation of sins, as sacrifices and purifications; as well as those which Pagan superstition proposed, such as washing in spring water, offering victims to their gods, &c.—4. To bring men to the true and only atonement for sin, which is the blood of Jesus Christ.

XV.

CONSIDER WHETHER THERE BE ANY THING REMARKABLE IN THE MANNER OF THE SPEECH OR ACTION.

For example. *In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* Rom. viii. 37. You may remark, that there is a more than ordinary force in these words, *More than conquerors*; for they express an heroic triumph. He does not simply say, We bear our trials with patience; he not only says, We shall conquer in this conflict; but he affirms, *We are more than conquerors*. It is much that faith resists trials without being oppressed; it is more to conquer these trials after a rude combat; but to affirm the believer shall be *more than a conqueror*, is as much as to say, he shall conquer without a combat, and triumph without resistance; it is as much as to say, he shall make trials the matter of his joy and glory, as the apostle says, *We glory in tribulation*, considering them not as afflictions and sorrows, but as divine honours and favours. This was also the apostle's mind when he wrote to the Philippians, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him; but also to suffer for his sake*. He considers sufferings as gifts of the liberality of God, for which the faithful are obliged to be thankful. So in this other passage, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

You may here remark the heroism and magnanimity of St. Paul. His faith seems to defy all the powers of nature. He assembles them all—*life—death—angels*, &c. to triumph over them, and to exult in their defeat. This language marks a full persuasion of the favour of God, and an invincible confidence in his love.

Such remarks as these may be made upon many expressions of Jesus Christ, wherein are discovered dignity and majesty, which cannot belong to any mere creature; as when he says, *Before Abraham was, I am—Whilst I am in the world, I am the light of the world—All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them—Ye believe in God, believe also in me—Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.* There are many passages of the same kind.

XVI.

COMPARE WORDS AND ACTIONS WITH SIMILAR WORDS AND ACTIONS.

The Evangelist speaks of *the things that Jesus began to do and to teach*, Acts i. 1. Now he says the same of Moses, *He was mighty in words and in deeds*, Acts vii. 22. Here you may observe, that these two things joined together, *doing and teaching*, are distinguishing characters of a true prophet, who never separates practice from doctrine. You may then make an edifying comparison between Moses and Jesus Christ: both *did and taught*; but there was a great difference between the *teaching* of one and that of the other. One taught justice, the other mercy—one abased, the other exalted—one terrified, the other comforted. There was also a great difference between the *deeds* of the one, and those of the other. Most of the miracles of Moses were miracles of *destruction*; insects, frogs, hail, and others of the same kind, with which he chastised the Egyptians. But the miracles of Jesus Christ were always miracles of *benevolence*, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, &c.

So again, when the infidelity of the Jews, in rejecting the Messiah, is discussed, you may examine their prejudices and their maxims, as they are narrated in the Gospel; and these you may compare with those of the

church of Rome in rejecting the reformation; for they are very much alike.

So again, when you consider St. Paul's answers to the objections of the Jews, who pleaded that they were the people of God, and that his covenant belonged to Abraham and his posterity, you may observe, that these answers are like ours to the Roman church, when they affirm they are the church of God. As the apostle distinguisheth two Israels, one after the flesh, and the other after the Spirit, so we distinguish two churches; one, which is only so in outward profession before men, possessing the pulpits, the churches, and the schools; and the other, which is the church in the sight of God, having a holy doctrine, and a lively faith. These answer precisely to the apostle's *Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the Spirit*. As the apostle applies the promises of God, and their accomplishment, not to Israel after the flesh, but to the Israelites after the Spirit, so we also apply the promises which God has made to his church, not to those who occupy the pulpits, the churches, and the schools, but to them who believe and practise the pure doctrine of the Gospel. As St. Paul defines the true people of God to be those whom God, by his electing love, hath taken from among men, so we define the true church by the same electing grace, maintaining that the Lord has made all the excellent promises, with which Scripture abounds, to his elect only, and that his elect are such as he has chosen according to his good pleasure, without any regard to particular places, conditions, or qualifications among men.

XVII.

REMARK THE DIFFERENCES OF WORDS AND ACTIONS
ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS.

When a weak scrupulosity or a tenderness of conscience was in question, which put some of the faithful upon eating only herbs, St. Paul exhorted the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak; *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him.* Rom. xiv. 3. But when the same St. Paul speaks of false teachers, who

wanted to impose a yoke on conscience, and who, under pretext of meats and days, were attempting to join Moses with Jesus Christ, as if Christians were yet obliged to observe the ceremonial law, then the apostle has no patience with them, but condemns and anathematises them, as people who preached another Gospel, and exhorts the faithful to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* Gal. v. 1.

So again, when you find in the Gospel that Jesus Christ sometimes forbade his disciples to publish the miracles that he wrought and to declare his divinity, and at other times, that he ordered them to publish upon the *house-tops* what they had *heard in private*, and to preach to *all nations* the mysteries of his kingdom, you must remark, that this difference is owing to different occasions. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, the mysteries of his kingdom were covered with the veil of his humiliation, it being necessary in some sense to conceal them; but after his exaltation, it became proper to publish them to the whole earth.

The same diversity may be remarked in what the Lord Jesus said to the Canaanitish woman—that he was *only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*—and that it was *not meet to give the children's bread to dogs*. This seems contrary to an almost infinite number of passages of Scripture, which affirm, Jesus Christ is *the light of the Gentiles*—*to him shall the gathering of the people be*. These, and all other such passages, will perfectly agree, if you distinguish time and occasion. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, he was *the minister of the circumcision*, as St. Paul speaks; that is, his personal ministerial commission was only to the Jews: but when he was exalted to glory, his ministry extended over the whole earth.

XVIII.

CONTRAST WORDS AND ACTIONS.

Thus you may oppose the agonies and terrors which seized Jesus Christ at the approach of death, against the constancy and joy of the martyrs who flew to martyrdom as to a victory. This contrariety of emotions is accounted

for by the difference of the persons. Jesus Christ was the Mediator of men towards God, bearing their sins, and engaging with the eternal justice of his Father : but the martyrs were believers, reconciled to God, fighting under Christ's banner, and, as mystical soldiers, maintaining his righteous claims. One was filled with a sense of God's wrath against men : the others were filled with a sense of his love. Christ met death as an armed enemy, and as one who, till that time, had a right to triumph over mankind : but martyrs approached him as a vanquished enemy, or rather as an enemy reconciled, who, having changed his nature, was become favourable to men. In one word, Jesus Christ was at war with death ; whereas death was at peace and in friendship with the martyrs.

In general, we may affirm, that contrast is one of the most beautiful topics of Christian rhetoric, and that which furnishes the most striking illustrations. Great care, however, must be taken that the oppositions be natural, easy to comprehend, and properly placed in a full clear light.

XIX.

EXAMINE THE GROUNDS, OR CAUSES OF AN ACTION OR AN EXPRESSION; AND SHEW THE TRUTH OR EQUITY OF IT.

For example, When the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ is in question, as in this text, *The word was made flesh*, you may recur to the foundations of this truth, as revealed in Scripture, in order to shew that a divine person did take upon him real true humanity, in opposition to the notions of some ancient heretics, who imagined that the human nature of Christ was only apparent. For this purpose you must look into the ancient prophecies for such passages as attribute two natures, the human and divine, to the one person of the Messiah. To the same purpose you may also apply New Testament texts, which speak of the same subject ; and you may farther observe such reasons of this singular economy as theology furnisheth, and which are taken from the design of our salvation.

In like manner, when you treat of the *resurrection* of Christ, or his *ascension* to heaven, you must take this

topic, and shew the fidelity and credibility of the testimony borne by his apostles. Your argument may be established by observing what followed his resurrection and ascension ; as the effusion of the Spirit, the abolition of the empire of the devil and his idols, the conversion of whole nations to the worship of the one true God, miracles, prophecies, &c.

The same method is proper when some *predictions* are your subjects ; as the destruction of Jerusalem, and the rejection of the Jews : for you may either narrate history to shew the *execution*, or you may reason upon the subject to shew how wonderful the divine *wisdom* was in that dispensation : the whole will evince the truth of the predictions.

I said also, the grounds and causes of an action or expression might be examined, to *shew the equity and truth* of either. This principally takes place when any thing surprising and uncommon is in question, for such things at first seem to shock the minds of auditors ; or when you are pressing home an exhortation to the practice of any duty which cannot be performed without difficulty. For example : The Pharisees complain in the Gospel, that the disciples of Christ did *not keep the traditions of the elders*. In order to justify the disciples, shew the foundations of Christian liberty ; and remark, that the true worship of God does not consist in the observation of external ceremonies, much less in the observation of human traditions and customs : but it consists of true piety, real inward holiness, and actual obedience to the commandments of God.

So again, when Jesus Christ, after he had healed the paralytic man, commanded him to *sin no more, lest a worse thing should come unto him*. You must go to the grounds of the expression to shew its equity. Now these are, that some sins had drawn the wrath of God upon him before—that, if he continued in them, that wrath would certainly return—that the favours which we receive from God engage us to glorify him by good works, &c. This topic is of great use in explaining the commandments of the law, the equity of which must be made to appear ; for it must be proved that they are all founded in nature, and have an inviolable fitness in the order of things.

In short, it is proper to take this method, with all exhortations to piety, charity, &c. which are found in Scripture. In order to persuade people to the practice of them, their fitness must be shewed, by opening the grounds, reasons, and principles of our obligations to the practice of all these virtues.

XX.

REMARK THE GOOD AND BAD IN EXPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS.

This topic is of very great use in explaining the histories recorded in the Gospel, where you will frequently find actions and words which may be called *mixed*; because, in general, they proceed from some good principles, and, in particular, they have a good deal of weakness and infirmity in them, If you would explain Matt. xvi. 22. *Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee*; you may observe what there is good and what bad in this expression of St. Peter. 1. You see herein his *love* to his master; for his not being able to bear the discourse of Jesus Christ concerning his sufferings at Jerusalem could only proceed from his ardent affection to him. 2. Herein appears not that cold and lukewarm regard which most men have for one another, but a most *lively* affection, interesting him for his master, an affection full of tenderness, which could not even bear to hear a word or entertain a thought about the death of Jesus Christ. 3. You may observe an *honest freedom*, which put him upon freely addressing Jesus Christ himself, using that familiar access which his condescension allowed his disciples, without a mixture of mean and despicable timidity. 4. You see, in fine, a strong *faith* in his master's power, as by addressing him he seems persuaded that it depended only on himself to suffer or not to suffer; *Lord, be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee*. Now all these are *good* dispositions. Here follow the *bad* ones. 1. Peter discovers gross *ignorance* of the ways of divine Wisdom in sending Jesus Christ into the world, for he does not seem yet to know that Jesus Christ must needs suffer; and with this ignorance the Lord reproaches him

in the next verse, *Thou savourest not the things which are of God, but those which are of men.* 2. His love to his master had something merely human and *carnal* in it, since he only considered the preservation of his temporal life, and concerned himself only about his body, instead of elevating his mind to that superior glory of Jesus Christ, which was to follow his sufferings, or considering the great work of man's salvation, to perform which he came into the world. 3. You may also remark a troublesome and criminal *boldness*. He means to be wiser than Jesus Christ. *Peter took him, says the Evangelist, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee.* Rash attempt! as if Peter were called into the counsel of God and Jesus Christ his Son, to give his opinion concerning this grand affair. 4. It even seems as if Peter, hearing Christ speak of his sufferings, imagined this discourse proceeded only from his fear of death, and from a mean timidity; for he aims to encourage and comfort him as we do persons whose fears exceed the bounds of reason. *Lord!* says he, *be it far from thee; this shall not be to thee:* as if he had said to him, Do not afflict yourself, your apprehensions of death are groundless, nothing of this is like to happen to you.

XXI.

SUPPOSE THINGS.

This topic is principally used in controversy. For example: When you are speaking of the merit of good works, you may take this way of supposition, and say, Let us suppose that Jesus Christ and his apostles held the doctrines of the church of Rome, and that they believed men merited eternal life by their good works: let us suppose that they intended to teach us this doctrine in the Gospels and Epistles. Tell me, I beseech you, if upon this supposition (which is precisely what our adversaries pretend) they ought to have affirmed what they have. Tell me, pray, do you believe yourself well and sufficiently instructed in the doctrine of the merit of good works, when you are told, *When you have done all these things ye are unprofitable servants?* Again, when the example of a miserable publican is proposed to you, who prays, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* who smites his

breast, and dares not lift his eyes to heaven; when he is placed in opposition to a Pharisee glorying in his works; and when you are informed, the first went down *to his house, justified rather than the other*—when you are told, *If it be by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; if it be by works, it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work*—when you are told, *You are saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*—when you are assured, you are *justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not of works, lest any man should boast*—when you hear, that *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*—when you are taught to believe *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life*—tell me, I once more intreat you, can you persuade yourself that Jesus Christ and his apostles, by all *these* means, intended to teach you, that man acquires justification, and a right to eternal life, by the merit of his works?

You may also make such suppositions in morality as well as in controversy, in order to give greater weight to your exhortations.

XXII.

GUARD AGAINST OBJECTIONS.

There are very few texts of scripture where this topic may not be made use of; and it is needless to mention examples, they will occur to every one without much reflection.

Remark, however, objections must be natural and popular, not far-fetched, nor too philosophical; in a word, they must be such as it is absolutely necessary to observe and refute.

They must be proposed in a clear and simple style, without rhetorical exaggerations; yet not unadorned nor unaffecting.

I think it is never advisable to state objections, and defer the answers to them till another opportunity; answer them directly, forcibly, and fully.

Here it may be asked, whether, in stating objections to be answered, it be proper to propose them altogether at

once, and then come to the answers; or whether they should be proposed and answered one by one? I suppose discretionary good sense must serve for both guide and law upon this subject. If three or four objections regard only *one* part of the text, if each may be proposed and answered in a few words, it would not be amiss to propose these objections all together, distinguishing them, however, by first—second—third;—this may be done agreeably; but if these objections regard *different* parts of the text, or different matters, if they require to be proposed at full length, and if it would also take some time to answer them, it would be impertinence to propose them all together: in such a case they must be proposed and answered apart.

XXIII.

CONSIDER CHARACTERS OF—MAJESTY—MEANNESS
—INFIRMITY—NECESSITY—UTILITY—EVIDENCE,
&c.

MAJESTY AND MAGNANIMITY.

Take an example of this from John xiv. 1. *Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.* These words are characterised by a *majesty*, which exalts Jesus Christ above all ordinary pastors, and above all the prophets; for who beside the Son of God could say, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me?* These words equal Jesus Christ to the eternal Father, and make him the object of our faith and confidence as well as the Father; for they imply that faithful souls may repose an entire confidence in his power, protection, and government, and that the shadow of his wings will dissipate the sorrows of their minds, and leave no more room for fear.

You see also a character of *tenderness* and infinite love towards his disciples, which appears in the assurance with which he inspires them, and in the promise which he tacitly makes them, of always powerfully supporting, and never forsaking them. The same characters, or others like them, may be observed in all this discourse of our Saviour, which goes on to the end of the sixteenth chapter: As in these words, *I am the way, the truth, and the life*:—in these, *He that hath seen me, Philip, hath seen the Father*:—in these, *Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will*

do it:—and again in these, *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.* In general, we see almost in every verse, majesty, tenderness, love of holiness, confidence of victory, and other such characters, which it is important to remark.

MEANNESS AND INFIRMITY.

You will very often observe characters of *meanness* and *infirmity* in the words and actions of the disciples of Jesus Christ: as when they asked him, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* Acts i. 6. You see, even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were full of that *low* and carnal idea which they had entertained of a temporal Messiah.

You also see a *rash curiosity* in their desiring to know the times and seasons of those great events which God thought fit to conceal.

Observe again, Peter's vision. A great sheet was let down from heaven, and filled with all sorts of animals; a voice said to him, *Rise, Peter, kill and eat;* to which he answered, *Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common and unclean.* You see in this answer an *over-scrupulous* conscience, all embarrassed with legal ceremonies; and a very defective imperfect knowledge of gospel liberty.

There is almost an infinite number of texts in the New Testament where such infirmities appear; and you must not fail to remark them in order to prove—1. That grace is compatible with much human weakness;—2. That heavenly light arises by degrees upon the mind, and that it is with the new man as with the natural man, who is born an infant, lisps in his childhood, and arrives at perfection insensibly and by little and little;—3. That the strongest and farthest advanced Christians ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, since God himself does not *break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.* This he was pleased to exemplify in the most ample manner, in the person of Jesus Christ, when he was upon earth.

NECESSITY.

In regard to *necessity*, you may very often remark this in explaining the doctrines of religion; as when you speak of the mission of Jesus Christ into the world—of his

familiar conversation with men—of his death—resurrection—and ascension to heaven, &c.; for you may not only consider the *truth*, but also the *necessity* of each; and by this mean open a most beautiful field of theological argument and elucidation.

The same may be affirmed of sending the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost, into the world; in explaining these words, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter*. John xiv. 16. You may very properly consider the necessity of this *Comforter*; either because without his light and help we can never release ourselves from the bondage of sin and Satan—or because without his assistance all that Jesus Christ has done in the economy of salvation would be entirely useless to us. You may also observe the necessity of his *eternal abode* with us;—because it is not enough to be once converted by his efficacious power; we need his continual presence and efficacy to carry on and finish the work of sanctification; otherwise we should quickly relapse into our first condition.

UTILITY.

Where a thing does not appear absolutely necessary you may remark its *utility*; as, in some particular miracles of Jesus Christ—in some peculiar afflictions of the faithful—in the manner in which St. Paul was converted—and in an infinite number of subjects which present themselves to a preacher to be discussed.

EVIDENCE.

Evidence must be particularly pressed in articles which are disputed, or which are likely to be controverted. For example: Were you to treat of the second commandment, in opposition to the custom and practice of worshipping images in the church of Rome, you should press the *evidence* of the words. As, 1. It has pleased God to place this command not in some obscure part of revelation, but in the *moral law*; in that law, every word of which he caused to proceed from the midst of the flames. 2. He uses not only the term *image*, but *likeness*, and specifies even the likenesses of *all* the things in the world, of those which are *in heaven above*, of those which

are in the earth beneath, and of those which are under the earth. 3. In order to prevent all the frivolous objections of the human mind, he goes yet farther, not only forbidding the *worshipping* of them, but also the making *use* of them in any manner of way; and, which is more, he even forbids the *making* of them: *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Thou shalt not serve them. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c.* 4. Add to all this, that the Lord subjoined the highest *interests* to enforce it. He interested herein his majesty, his covenant, and his infinite power; *for* (says he) *I am Jehovah thy God.* He goes farther, and interests his jealousy, that is, that inexorable justice, which avenges affronts offered to his love. Yea, in order to touch us still more sensibly, he even goes so far as to interest our children, threatening us with that terrible wrath, which does not end with the parents, but passes down to their posterity. What could the Lord say more plainly and evidently, to shew that he would suffer no image in his religious worship? After all this, is it not the most criminal presumption to undertake to distinguish, in order to elude, the force of this commandment?

You may, if you choose, over and above all this, add Moses's explication of this command in the fourth of Deuteronomy.

You may also use the same character of *evidence* when you explain several passages which adversaries abuse; as these words, *This is my body, which is broken for you;* and these in the sixth of John, *Eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood;* and those passages also in St. James, which speak of justification by works: for in treating these passages in opposition to the false senses which the church of Rome gives of them, you must assemble many circumstances, and place each in its proper light, so that all together they may diffuse a great brightness upon the text, and clearly shew its true sense. •

XXIV.

REMARK DECREES.

For example, Gal. i. *If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have*

preached unto you let him be accursed. After you have remarked the extreme force and significancy of the words, observe that the apostle denounced an anathema *twice*, even denouncing it against *himself*, should he ever be guilty of what he condemns, denouncing it even against an *angel* from heaven in the same case.

You must observe the apostle does not always use the same vehemence when he speaks, against error. In the fourteenth of the epistle to the Romans, he contents himself with calling those *weak in the faith* who would eat only herbs, and exhorts the other believers to bear with them. In the third chapter of the first to the Corinthians, he protests to those who build with wood, hay, and stubble, upon Christ the foundation, that their *work* should be burnt, but that *they* should be saved, though it should be as *by fire*. In the seventeenth of Acts, we are told *his spirit was stirred* when he saw the idolatry and superstition of the Athenians. Elsewhere he says, *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.* In all these there is a force; but nothing like what appears in these reiterated words, *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* Why so? because the apostle speaks here of an *essential* corruption of the Gospel, which the false apostles aimed at in the churches of Galatia; they were annihilating the grace of Christ by associating it with the Mosaic economy; they aimed at the entire ruin of the church by debasing the purity of the Gospel. In this case, the conscience of this good man could contain no longer; he stretched his zeal and vehemence as far as possible; he became inexorable, and pronounced anathemas; nothing prevented him, neither the authority of the greatest men, no, nor yet the dignity of the glorious angels: *If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.*

XXV.

OBSERVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

Thus, if you are explaining the miracle which Jesus Christ wrought in the synagogue on a sabbath-day, when he healed the withered hand in the presence of the Herodians and Pharisees, you may remark the different *interests* of the spectators in that act of our Lord Jesus; for, on the one hand, *Moses* and his religion seemed interested therein two ways: 1 This miracle was done on a *day* in which Moses had commanded them to do no manner of work. And, 2. This was done in a *synagogue* consecrated to the Mosaic worship, so that it was in a manner insulting Moses in his own house. Farther, the *Herodians*, who were particularly attached to the person of Herod, either for political reasons, or for some others unknown, were obliged to be offended; for this miracle had a tendency to prove Christ's Messiahship, and thereby (as was commonly thought) his right to the kingdom of Israel; and, consequently, this must blacken the memory of Herod, who endeavoured to kill him in his infancy. The *Pharisees* were no less interested; for they considered Christ as their reprover and enemy, and could not help being very much troubled whenever they saw Jesus Christ work a miracle. Observe the interest of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; his concern was to do good, wherever he had an opportunity, and to glorify God his Father, by confirming the word of his Gospel by acts of infinite power. The *poor afflicted man* had a double interest in it—the healing of his body, and the improvement of his mind.

Thus this action of Jesus Christ, having divers relations, becomes, as it were, a point, whence many lines may be drawn, one on this side, another on that; and hence arise the different remarks which may be made upon it.

XXVI.

DISTINGUISH.—DEFINE.—DIVIDE.

To speak properly, we *distinguish* when we consider a thing in different views. As for example, Faith is con-

siderable, either objectively or subjectively. In the view of its *object*, faith is the work of Jesus Christ; his word and cross produce it; for take away the death of Jesus Christ, and there is no more faith. His resurrection also is the cause of it; *If Jesus Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.* But if you consider faith in regard to its *subject*, or, to speak more properly, in regard to its efficient cause producing it in the subject, it is the work of the Holy Ghost. So again (to use the same example) faith may be considered with a view to justification, or with a view to sanctification. In the first view, it is opposed to works; in the second, it is the principle and cause of good works; it contains them in summary and abridgement.

Thus man may be considered with a view to *civil* society; so he is obliged to such and such duties, and partakes of such and such advantages: or he may be considered with regard to *church-fellowship*; and so he is subject to other laws, and enjoys other privileges. This custom of distinguishing into different views is, very common in preaching.

DEFINITION.

This is sometimes used when an act of God is spoken of, as the pardon of our sins—the justification of our persons, &c.—or when a virtue or a vice is in question; for then it may not be improper to define.

DIVISION.

This either regards different species of the genus, or different parts of a whole; and it may sometimes be used profitably. Thus, in speaking of God's providence in general, you may consider the extent of that providence, to which are subject, 1. Natural causes. 2. Contingent. 3. Independent. 4. Good and bad. 5. Great and small.

XXVII.

COMPARE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER.

This is a very useful topic; and it will often furnish very beautiful considerations, if we know how to make a

proper use of it. For example, in this text of St Paul to the Romans, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* You may make a very edifying comparison between this last part, *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,* with the first part, *There is no condemnation;* and you may remark, that, in the one, the apostle expresses what God does in favour of the faithful, and in the other, what the faithful do for the glory of God. God absolves them; and they live holily, and devote themselves to good works. God imposes holiness upon us in justification; and justification is the parent of holiness: take away justification, and there cannot possibly be any good works; take away good works, and there is no more justification.

You may also compare this last part with the condition in which the believer is here considered; he is *in Christ Jesus;* and remark that these two things perfectly agree together, because Jesus Christ is the true cause of our justification; and sanctification is the principal effect of our communion with Jesus Christ.

So again, in this beautiful passage in the second of Ephesians; *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved.* You may oppose and compare these two subjects in the text, *dead in sin,* and *rich in mercy,* as being two extremes, extreme misery and extreme mercy, one in us, and the other in God. The greatness of our crimes manifest the riches of God's mercy; and the riches of his mercy absorb the greatness of our crimes. Had our sins been less, it must indeed have been mercy to pardon our sins, but not *riches* of mercy. If God had been only lightly inclined to mercy, he might indeed have pardoned smaller sins, but this would never have extended to persons *dead* in their sins; this belongs only to extraordinary and abounding mercy.*

* The Editor has omitted in this place a long discourse upon 1 Thess. iv. 7. which Mr. Claude had subjoined with a view to exemplify the discussion of a text by way of observations. But it was not

CHAP. VII.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED IN A WAY OF CONTINUED APPLICATION.

WE have said there are two general ways of discussing a text, that of explication, and that of observation. These two ways of preaching we call *textuary*, because, in effect, they keep to the text without digression, they regard it as the subject matter of the whole discussion; or, if you please, as the field, which they have to cultivate, or to reap: but, beside these, there is a third way, which is, without explaining or making observations, the making of a *continual application* of it, and the reducing of it immediately to practice.

In this manner we must principally manage texts exhorting to holiness and repentance, as this of Zephaniah, *Examine yourselves diligently, O nation not desirable*; for instead of explaining the terms, or making observations on the necessity of the exhortation—the prophet who spoke it—the Jews to whom it is addressed—the description of the nation *not desirable*—the mercy of God in calling these sinners to repentance, &c. the whole may very usefully be turned into practice, and we may enter upon that serious self-examination which the prophet commands.

altogether calculated to answer the end proposed, because it exemplified very few of the preceding topics, and those without any attention to their order, or any intimation what topics he intended to exemplify. Though, therefore, the discourse contained, as every production of Mr. Claude's must, many striking and useful sentiments, the Reader, who seeks information respecting the Composition of a Sermon, has no occasion to regret the omission of it; more especially as the discourse was at least one-third as long as all the twenty-seven topics taken together. To supply this defect, the Editor, who, from Mr. Claude's failure, supposed at first that the object was unattainable, has been induced to attempt it, and has annexed the composition to his Sermon entitled THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. (See 6th edit. price 1 s.) It should be remembered, however, that these topics are subject both to use and abuse. They are suggested in order to aid invention; but they require judgment and discretion in the use of them. An observation of a learned writer on this subject deserves attention: "Constat scopum et finem hu jusce rei, esse promptitudinem quandam et expeditum usum cognitionis nostræ, potius quam ejusdem amplificationem aut incrementum." *Bacon de Augment. scient. lib. v. c. 3.*

The same may be said of 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;* for, laying aside all theological observations, you may actually enter upon self-examination.

This manner, well and wisely disposed, by choosing proper occasions, will produce (as I have elsewhere said) an excellent effect: but always remember on this rule, that, in using this method, something searching and powerful must be said, or it would be better let alone.

We will exemplify one of the texts, which may be discussed by way of perpetual application. Let us take St. Paul's words to the Philippians, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* Begin with a tender exordium, lamenting the condition of mankind, that so few know the truth; for there is almost an infinite number, to whom it is not preached, who are left in the thickest darkness; almost an infinite number, to whom it is preached, who corrupt it with errors and superstitions, and who almost never hear it but with a confused mixture of falsehoods and human inventions; almost an infinite number of such as know it clearly, but yet neglect it, and, by their negligence, preclude the admirable fruits which it ought to produce. Having expressed astonishment that so *few will be saved*, and, finally, having shewed the true causes why so few apply to it in the manner they ought, the exordium must be finished by an exhortation to profit by this time of our calling, and not when we go out of the world to have to ask ourselves what we have been doing in it, and to reproach ourselves with having abused the patience and mercy of God. *Let us now work out our salvation with fear and trembling, &c.* This exordium must be rendered lively and agreeable, and executed so that it may awaken the hearer, and obtain a particular attention.

This being done, you must observe, that, were you about to treat of these words in the ordinary way, you could not fail to make several reflections on the doctrines; 1. On these terms, *your own salvation*, which are very weighty and of great importance;—2. On St. Paul's command, that we should *work it out*, on which you would have many things to say;—and, finally, on that *fear and trembling* which must accompany our labour; for

many important questions would also arise from that;—but, you may add, that, laying apart all doctrines, which very often serve only for amusement through our levity, your design is to enable your auditors to do what St. Paul commands, and to assist them actually in labouring during this hour devoted to piety, and in *working out their salvation with that fear and trembling*, which so great a work demands.

Here, because the subject is practical, and one would wish to open all avenues to conscience, and effectually to move the hearer, it would not be improper (after making a kind of division into three parts, the first of which should be some considerations on *our own salvation*; secondly, the acts by which we *work it out*; and, lastly, the *fear and trembling* with which these acts are accompanied) to put up a short prayer to God in form of a wish, brief, but lively, that it may please him to bless this sermon, and to give us all necessary power to enable us to set about the work of our salvation, that it may be much forwarded before we go out of the assembly.

After this preparation, the first thing you may say, which I beseech you to meditate on, is, that God has had so much compassion for us as to prepare a *salvation*. We were his enemies, and he has mercifully proposed reconciliation: we were dead, and he has prepared a resurrection for us: we were plunged into an abyss of misery, and he has kindly stretched out his hand from on high to help us. Salvation consists in benefits inexpressible, of immense value, which we cannot sufficiently esteem; for they must be proportioned to the worth of the blood of Jesus Christ who merited them. This blood, which has acquired them for us, is of all things in the world the most sacred and valuable, and yet the most mournful and affecting. Enter then, I entreat you, with me into this meditation. Whence is it we take so little pains about that which is so very important to us? Salvation presents itself every day to us as a rich treasure, coming from the bosom of Eternal Mercy, as the divine and incomparable production of the bloody death of the Son of God. It is a vessel which presents itself to us in this sad shipwreck that we have made, yet we do not think about it: and when we reflect on the little attention that we

have hitherto paid to the voice of God, who hath so often spoken to us, we are astonished to find ourselves under such extreme stupidity.*

That we may the better perceive the importance of this salvation, and the necessity of attaching ourselves to it, methinks we need only turn our eyes a little to the miserable state of those who neglect it during the whole course of their lives, and at length go out of the world without having at all employed themselves about it. Behold, I beseech you, what a great number of unbelieving and profane sinners there are in the world! Would you choose to be of their number? One is a giddy young creature, whose head is full of nothing but follies and mistakes. Another is an old miser, who has filled his house with extortions and iniquities. A third is a proud and cruel wretch, who delights and glories in violence

* Our author discovers great ability in discussing this subject in the applicatory method. It is extremely delicate and difficult.—1. He makes a judicious choice of *topics*, all true, indisputable, and of allowed importance.—2. He selects that *part* of each topic which is best adapted to his purpose, not aiming to say all that could be said, but only what suited his present particular view.—3. He makes each article project into a striking point of view by *contrast*.—4. He softens, as it were, the auditor by a *tender mode of expression*.—In all he appears a *master of assemblies, fastening nails in a sure place*. I allude to Eccl. xii. 11.

First, The topic here is *salvation*, the important wish of every human soul.

Secondly, Salvation is considered as springing from *mercy*—flowing through mediatorial *blood*—and bringing along with it an ocean of rich *benefits*: these are parts only of the topic, but parts highly adapted to touch the heart.

Thirdly, The mercy of God is contrasted with our *misery*—the agonies of Christ set against our *insensibility*—the *benefits* proposed against *damage, danger, and death*. All this is heightened with the beautiful *image* of a shipwrecked mariner inattentive to a friendly vessel coming on purpose to save him, a vessel freighted with treasures for him infinitely exceeding all he had lost.

Fourthly, All is softened with melting phrase—Meditate, I beseech you—God *mercifully* proposes salvation—he *kindly stretcheth out his hand*—Salvation comes from the *bosom* of mercy, &c. &c.

The human passions are sources of eloquence; and no minister can possibly excel in this part of pulpit eloquence, unless his own affections be thoroughly moved. The Christian pastor, of all men in the world, should have an affectionate heart. When he preaches thus, it is the shepherd in search of his strayed sheep, the father in pursuit of his lost child. Is it possible for statues to discharge this part of necessary duty? As well might a marble parent supply the place of a real one.

and blood like a wild beast. A fourth is a sly hypocrite, who never appears in the world unmasked, who never goes out but to set snares, nor ever stirs but to deceive the simple, a notorious impostor, who thinks only how he may impose on the whole world. Another is a filthy epicure, always drowned in wine, or immersed in sensual pleasures; a swine, whose soul is buried in flesh, and who thinks of nothing but how to invent new pleasures.

How many abysses has vice opened to engulf mankind! Into how many shapes does it transform itself to surprise and destroy them! Sometimes it appears under the beautiful veil of riches and grandeur; sometimes under the agreeable charms of sensual pleasures; sometimes under the justice of supporting one's interests and satiating a just revenge; sometimes under the reasons we have to envy another's prosperity; sometimes under the idea of the joy of succeeding in a lawful enterprise, or under an idea of the shame of not succeeding in what we have undertaken. In short, sin is a Proteus, changing itself into a thousand shapes; or, if you will, a serpent, twisting itself a thousand ways to slide into men's hearts, in order to prevent their thinking about their salvation.

Moreover, if you cast your eyes on this part of the world, which appears the most civilized and refined, you will see people so immersed in an almost infinite number of occupations perpetually employing them, that there does not remain a moment to think of the most important matters. Some are wrapt up in the study of human sciences, and others in worldly employments. Each gives himself up entirely, and none remembers that piety and the fear of God ought to be a profession common to them all. Piety does not hinder lawful employments; but it restrains them within proper bounds, that itself may not be hindered by them.

To these considerations you may add another, which more immediately regards good people, that is, the small number of believers, who, in a manner, are separated from the world to serve God. It is certain, that at what distance soever we are removed from the world and its vanities, we have yet too much communication with worldly things, on which account we should look upon our salvation as in perpetual danger of being torn from

us. We are, I grant, separated from the worldly by the profession of the Gospel: but yet do we not live in a commerce with them in civil life? and are we not consequently always exposed to the influence of their bad examples, and to the false shame of seeing ourselves opposite in sentiments, maxims, and customs, to the rest of mankind? are we not exposed to the flattering baits of their promises, the violence of their threatenings, the delusion of their sophisms and artifices, and, in one word, to an infinite number of temptations arising from them?

Were we, through these temptations, prevailed on to lay aside the work of our salvation for a time, or to labour but negligently at it, our loss would be inevitable. You cannot but see how necessary it is never to discontinue the work we have undertaken, never to relax, but rather to *hold fast what we have received, till the Lord comes*. Salvation can never be obtained unless we strive against the stream of the world. We must not only make some efforts, but we must make them perpetually; for if we suspend or diminish our efforts ever so little, it will be impossible for us not to be carried away. Sin will gain ground by the least negligence, and considerably remove us from the end we propose. It is not in this spiritual work as it is in temporal concerns: we may lay aside the latter for a time without suffering any damage; but as to our salvation, it is certain the least interruption is capable of retarding it, and two days of suspension will ruin more than a thousand well-spent days can advance.

After all, say you, what interest have we in this salvation? and why must we quit all things to apply ourselves to this with so much diligence and earnestness? My brethren, to judge rightly of the interest you have in it, I intreat you to consider some few truths, which are not unknown to you, although, perhaps, they have never made all the impression on you which they ought to have made. Remember, then, you must die: this necessity is imposed on us all, in so inviolable a manner, that no man can possibly exempt himself. Remember, God has hid from you, under an impenetrable veil, the hour of your death; and all that you can know is, that your life will be short, and that there does not pass one single moment in which your death may not happen. You are always in

danger, and always liable to some dreadful accident. Remember, immediately after your death you must be obliged to appear and answer for the *deeds done in the body*, before the tribunal of God: for as God is the governor of the universe, and you are not only one of his creatures, but one of his reasonable creatures, for whom he has made laws, and prescribed the bounds and measures of their duty, he must necessarily be your judge.*

As then death is inevitable, so is judgment: but, alas! what judgment! A judgment so terrible, that St. Peter reasons in this manner, *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?* A judgment so dreadful, that sinners will cry to the *mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us; hide us from the face of the Lamb; for the day of his wrath is come!* A judgment so exact, that all our thoughts and all our words, all the principles and emotions of our consciences, all the secrets of our hearts, our connexions, ways, ends, artifices, crimes, in general all that belong to us, shall be discovered before the eyes and under the hands of our Judge, nor can any thing escape the light of his eyes or the trial of his wisdom and equity. Above all, remember this judgment must needs be followed with eternal life or eternal death, with perfect salvation or damnation. There is no medium between these things; heaven and hell will then divide the world; and they who have not the happiness of hearing this comfortable voice, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*, will receive this dreadful sentence, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* This judgment is so certain, that the Lord, not content only to declare it in his word, gives us some forebodings of it in our consciences. What believer does not feel every day a tribunal of God prepared in his heart? who does not hear this secret voice demanding an account of his actions, making

Remember you must die. Our author's transition from death to judgment is natural and beautiful, and his choice of these plain, easy articles in an *applicatory* discourse is agreeable to the nature of it; for here the preacher should select clear, allowed truths, which require little or no exercise of judgment in the auditor. The heart is to be impressed: and to affect the heart, the mind must be relieved from suspense, and engaged by evident truths.

inquiry into the use he has made of benefits received, of the obedience he has rendered to the law, the fruit he has yielded to the Gospel, the improvement of opportunities, and, in one word, of the virtues he has practised, or the sins he has committed? Who is that sinner, however insensible, who does not frequently feel in his heart some presentiments of this judgment? Do not all the fears and terrors, the inquietudes and remorse, which usually agitate wicked men, come from hence? We have every one of us these afflictions throughout life; but they become incomparably stronger at the approach of death. Then man feels the hand, the mighty hand of the omnipotent God drawing him to himself. Then is he seized, and forced, in spite of himself, before the throne of the sovereign Judge of the world. In these last moments of life, as the eyes of the body are darkened, those of the mind are enlightened, and, penetrating into the secrets of the world to come, discover the good or evil consequences which we must expect. What dreadful blindness is it then, that, with so much certain, so many marks, so many outward and inward testimonies of this divine judgment, we should yet neglect to prepare for it, and leave an article so capital, on which eternity depends, to hazard!*

One of the most useful and admirable powers which nature has bestowed upon man, and which follows reason, and distinguishes man from other animals, is prudence, a sagacity respecting future things. Beasts, which have not received this advantage from the hand of nature, only act and display their feeble senses about present things; they walk the way that offers to their eyes, they eat the herb which they see, and only move as they are enticed by the objects at which they look: but as they have no knowledge of futurity, they are at perfect rest. It is quite otherwise with man, his reason anticipates years and ages,

* *Consider judgment.* The force and the beauty of this branch of our author's application lie in the *properties* of the subject.—A judgment so *terrible*—a judgment so *exact*—a judgment so *certain*—a judgment *inevitable*—a judgment that *issues* in eternal happiness or misery; this is the subject, and these the properties of it, which the wisdom of God uses to alarm and affect a sinner. How highly fitted to answer the end!

he sees things long before they arrive, he knows them by a concatenation of their causes and effects, and at the same time provides to forward or to frustrate them. By this prudential foresight, kingdoms and empires support themselves; by this cities and families are preserved; and by this all men endeavour, each as far as it is in his power, to procure a comfortable condition in this life. How then comes it to pass, that, while we employ our prudence so usefully about temporal things, we are all on a sudden deprived of it, when we should be concerned about the most important of all future things, salvation or damnation? Is it not for this reason, that St. Paul, speaking of worldly men, calls them animals? *The animal man*, says he, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*. As if he had said, This man, who for the world testifies that he is truly man, who has so much industry, vivacity, and penetration for futurity, and so much solidity of judgment in the choice of ways and means, is yet a brute beast, a simple animal, without reason and without intelligence, when the affair of his salvation is in question. Let us not be of this number, my brethren, let us not sleep like the foolish virgins, while we wait for the bridegroom. Jesus Christ is *made unto us wisdom*; and this wisdom consists in always having the eyes open, and the mind concerned and active about what must follow this life, and the means by which we may attain eternal felicity.

I cannot help observing here two illusions, to which the greatest part of mankind are subject. First, we almost always imagine our salvation is a very easy thing, which requires but very little time. One moment, say we, is sufficient for conversion; and a true conversion, though wrought in a moment, is sufficient to save us. Besides, the time of calling is long, it endures till death. This is as much as to say, that when we have employed the best part of our days in our pleasures and sinful interests, we shall have time enough to repent and be saved. Never was any thing more false and deceitful than this idea of salvation. I grant there needs only a good and sincere conversion in order to salvation: provided it be good and sincere, it cannot fail of being effectual. I own farther, that a true and sincere conversion at the last hour of life is not altogether unexampled: God shews us now and

then one, to make us admire the marvels of his grace, and the depths of his electing love. But, granting all this, I beg you also to remark the following truths. First, true and sincere conversions in the last moments of life are so rare, that God has left us but one example in all Scripture; and even that example is singular in its circumstances; it is that of the converted thief. But, besides that nothing less than a cross, that is, a most infamous and cruel death, was necessary to affect him, there was needed also, to work this great miracle, the dying presence of the eternal Son of God. It was in that grand action, in which our Redeemer offered his eternal sacrifice for the whole world; in that action in which he caused the smoke of his oblation to ascend, as it were, from earth to heaven, in a sweet-smelling savour to God the Father; in that action in which the sun was eclipsed, the earth trembled, the graves opened, the vail of the temple was rent in twain; it was, I say, very just that the Saviour's blood should work such a miracle, and that the Spirit of grace, to honour the death of the eternal Son of God, should display his power in an extraordinary manner. But let no one imagine, from this example, that it shall be so with him. Jesus Christ does not die every day, his blood was shed but once: and who told you, that what he did in the act of his sacrifice, he will repeat again every day?

2. Conversion in the last hour is the most *difficult* thing in the world: the soul is, as it were, exhausted, without power, without light, without vigour; the heart is bound by a thousand old habits, long ago contracted, and which, like so many chains, prevent a freedom of action. The conscience has long been in a profound lethargy, all the doors of the soul are shut against ideas of piety, and these ideas, like strangers, know none of the avenues to the heart. In short, the whole man is so sunk in stupidity, and so incorporated with the world (if I may venture to say so,) that the world is, as it were, converted into his own substance, and become essential to him. By what means then shall a man be brought out of such a miserable state? By what means then can he be detached from all the relations and connexions which he has formed with the world and its vanities? I know God can do it, for nothing is impossible to him: but for this purpose there must be an extra-

ordinary fund of grace, a singular effort of the omnipotence of God. If the Lord said, it was *easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven*, how much more may we say so of an *old* rich man, of an old sinner, who has added to the obstacle of his riches, thousands of vices and crimes.

3. I am not afraid to say, that the sin of those who defer their repentance is of so *aggravated* a nature, that it renders them altogether unworthy of God's extraordinary aid to convert them. Such people are crafty deceivers, who act fraudulently with God, and pretend to dupe him with their artifices; for they do as much as say, God calls us, and, we acknowledge, repentance is just and necessary, if we mean to be saved; but, in order to this, we must quit our pleasures. What then shall we do to enjoy our delightful sins, and yet avoid damnation? This is the way; we will be wiser than God; we will employ all our best days in debaucheries and sins, and so content ourselves with them; and when we are no longer good for any thing, we will be converted, and so prevent our damnation. Do you think a reasoning so horrible, a procedure so detestable, can be agreeable to God? Do you think it will extremely invite him to bestow extraordinary converting grace on such affronting wretches? No surely! What! because God is free in the dispensation of his grace, is there any likelihood that he will bestow it to establish and reward deceit?

Consider, I intreat you, there cannot be a more foolish and rash design than that of putting off repentance to old age; since it takes for granted the most doubtful and uncertain thing in the world, which is, that we shall *live* to a hoary old age. Is not this the grossest of all illusions? I omit urging what all the world knows, that no one can assure himself of the morrow: I say to you something more striking: make the different orders of men pass before your eyes; count them one by one; and, it is certain, the number of those who die before they are thirty years of age is incomparably greater than of those who come to that age. How many die between thirty and forty! how few arrive at fifty! fewer still live to sixty, and how very small in all ages and countries is the number of old men! In a city which contains a million

of souls you will find two or perhaps three thousand old people, that is, in the proportion of two or three to every thousand souls. Now, allowing this, what foolish security is it to imagine you shall be in the happy number of these two or three, in a multitude of a thousand! Were a man to hazard his fortune on such an uncertainty, he would pass in the world for a madman, and all his relations and friends, his wife and children, would pity and confine him: but thou, miserable wretch! dost thou hazard thy salvation, thy soul, the friendship of thy God, thine eternal happiness, on this frivolous hope? and, to complete thy misery, does thy wife, do thy children, thy friends, thy relations, do all the world let thee go on to do so? or, if they advise thee, dost thou pay no regard to their advice?

The second illusion, which beguiles multitudes, is an imagination that they discharge their duty, when, without concerning themselves about their own salvation, as the Apostle commands, they employ themselves about that of *other* people. There are, in general, two ways of doing this. 1. By *saying* the finest things in the world about religion. Observe what passes in the world: you will hardly find one among many employed about his own conversion: yet every body will tell you, we ought to be good people—the corruption of the age we live in is prodigious—there is hardly any virtue or good faith—there is very little profession of practical religion, and almost no real godliness. These common-place sayings are in the mouths of all: but, with all these fine speeches, you will rarely find one retiring from general views, seriously reflecting on himself, and saying, What am I? Am I not like others? Since I allow every one ought to correct himself, is it not just that I should begin with myself, put the first hand to the work, and set an example to my brethren?

The second way of pretended concern about the salvation of others, without attending to your own, is still more scandalous than the first; it consists in being always on the watch to *censure* and slander the actions of others. If they be really blameworthy, you will hear them exclaim against the crime; they will appear to be extremely offended; they will set them off with the blackest circum-

stances, and exaggerate them in every degree. But if the actions of others be apparently good and virtuous, not being able to condemn them in themselves, they will condemn them in their principles: it is only, say they, the effect of ambition or hypocrisy; they only want to make a parade, to be talked of, and raise their credit and reputation with good people. Certainly all these are very distant from St. Paul's meaning, when he says, *Work out your own salvation*. I will not say we should entirely neglect the salvation of our neighbours; God commands, and charity obliges us to attend to it; and it would be a very unworthy and wicked saying, should any, like Cain, cry out, *Am I my brother's keeper?* However, I do affirm, it is not this only which ought to employ us; it is not our first and principal occupation; we must *begin* by working out our own salvation; to this we must particularly apply ourselves, lest, while we correct others, we become incorrigible ourselves. *I keep under my body*, says the Apostle, *and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

But it is time to pass to the *second* part of this sermon, in which I require less the attention of your minds than the emotions of your hearts. I intreat you both simply to hear and judge of the truth and importance of what I say to you, and to act for yourselves. May your consciences do what my tongue dictates, *work out your own salvation!* let us work at it now, without putting it off to another time; and let a just comment of these divine words be found to-day in the exact obedience which we render to them.

The first act, with which we must begin, is a holy *reconciliation to God*. For this purpose, having cast our eyes on the greatness of the sins which we have committed, and which we are perpetually committing against him, and having considered what favours we have received, and how shamefully we have abused them, having conceived a just grief for our innumerable sins, let us humbly have recourse to his mercy. Let each of us, in particular, recall his wanderings from God, his transgressions of his laws; how often and how variously each has dishonoured his calling; with what negligence

each has violated his natural and religious obligations, and particularly those to which his Christian profession engaged him. Let the passionate remember the injustice of their angry transports. Let the covetous remember the many oblique ways they have taken to amass riches. Let the outrageous, the proud, the slanderous, the revengeful, remember the injuries they have done their neighbours. Let the worldly and voluptuous think of the many vain and rash desires they have had for earthly things. In one word, let each of us review his past conduct; let each weigh his actions in the balances of the sanctuary; and, acknowledging himself a transgressor, a disobedient and rebellious child, unworthy of the love of God, fall at the footstool of his mercy with profound humility. This is the act of repentance so pathetically expressed in the fifty-first psalm: *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin: for I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* This is the repentance which the church, afraid of the anger of God, expresses in the sixty-fourth of Isaiah: *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.* This is the repentance which Jesus Christ proposes to us in the example of the prodigal son, in these tender words of confession, *Father! I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* If our repentance brings us to the foot of God's tribunal, let it bring us there profoundly humbled; for *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* Let it bring us there deeply affected; for a careless repentance is a treacherous repentance, betraying conscience by its fears, which are not only ineffectual, but even pernicious: just as the uncertain crises of diseases weaken instead of relieving nature. As our repentance, however sincere, avails nothing without a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, let us add a holy and fervent

recourse to the blood of Jesus Christ, and to the satisfaction which he presented to God the Father on the cross. This is the faith which is so often recommended to us in Scripture, and to which the Gospel is not afraid of joining the promises of eternal life. *If any man sin (says St. John), we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. We are justified freely (says St. Paul) by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.* Through this Redeemer, God will be reconciled to us; and we shall find grace in his sight, when we present ourselves before him in communion with this great Saviour; for *there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved; his blood alone cleanseth from all sin.* What joy, my brethren! to wash in this mystical Jordan! how happy shall we be, if we can lay our hands on the head of this holy victim, that in charging him we may discharge ourselves of all our crimes. *Come unto me (says he) all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

As this peace with God is not made in a moment, there must be great efforts to bring our hearts into a state proper for such a reconciliation. Having, then, as well as we are able, collected our own sins before our eyes, let us make some reflections on the horrors of them. And, 1. Let us well examine what we are by nature, compared with the *great God*—A little handful of dust and ashes, a little earth kneaded together with blood, miserable little worms, a leaf carried away with the wind, a vapour which the sun exhales and dissipates. Are we not, in comparison of God, infinitely less than a drop of water to the ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole universe? We have a stature of five or six feet, a subsistence in the world of a few years, a life full of infirmities, a death perhaps sudden, but, however, so certain, that neither reason nor observation can have the least doubt about it: and yet, altogether miserable as we are, misery and nothingness itself, we have dared, or rather we have incessantly presumed, to offend and insult the infinite majesty of our Creator and Lord! this vain shadow vaunts itself against the sun! this drop of water contends with the

ocean! and this ridiculous grain of sand proudly elevates itself against the Creator of the universe! Tell me, I intreat you, is there the least spark of reason in all this? Are we not always fools when we offend God? Is it possible to conceive a blindness equal to ours, when such mean vile creatures as we dare to violate the laws of the Lord of all?

2. Does not our blindness appear yet more strange, if to this we add the *power* of the God whom we offend? I affirm, it would be folly and stupidity to rebel against him in consideration only of his infinite Majesty, compared with our nothingness: yet if our offences could pass off with impunity, if our meanness could secure us from the strokes of his vengeance, our folly, however great, would only be considerable in itself, and not in its consequences; we should sin against the general dictates of right reason, but we should do nothing contrary to the particular voice of prudence. But it is far otherwise; for the God we offend is arbiter of the death and life of all mankind, the sole dispenser of adversity and prosperity; all creatures are under the laws of his providence, as a great army, which marches by his orders, and obeys all his commands; he has eternal prisons for the punishment of his adversaries; he has dreadful executioners of his justice, to whom he issues his orders, and into whose hands he delivers his criminals, to suffer such vengeance as he commands. All creatures follow his love and hatred; all love and smile on the objects of his favour; all frown at and destroy those who incur his displeasure. He plants, he plucks up; he builds, he destroys; he kills, he makes alive; he raises, he abases; he comforts, he afflicts: and all the destinies of all creatures, their goods and their evils, from the greatest to the smallest things, from the throne to the dunghill, from the loss of life to the fall of one of our hairs, all depend on his will. What wildness, then, so frequently and cruelly to offend an almighty God, a righteous avenging God, who will *not justify the wicked*, who will not *hold the sinner guiltless*, and who has protested, *the wicked shall not stand in the judgment!*

3. To this reflection another may be added, which will much contribute to discover the enormity of our sins. Consider how much we are indebted to God, not only for

his *patience* hitherto, but for that almost infinite number of *mercies* which he has afforded us, and particularly for calling us to the profession of the *Gospel*. I own, our actions would be very punishable by the law of God; for God has given it to us; he has naturally engraven it on our hearts; and it is our duty to follow and obey it: but must it not be acknowledged, that we are infinitely more worthy of punishment, when to the voice of his law he has added that of his divine patience, waiting long for our repentance? What has prevented the Lord's executing his great vengeance on us? Why were we not destroyed the first moment we offended him? What, then, shall we say, when this patience shall reckon the days, months, and years of its exercise towards us? What shall we have to answer when it shall accuse us, that instead of employing these days, months, and years to our conversion and sanctification, we have made no other use of them than to increase the number of our sins? But what will become of us, when, after the voice of the law, and the complaints of patience, we shall find the favours and mercies of God rise up against us one after another and all together join in a thousand reproaches of our ingratitude? It would be enough for each crime to appear in its own turpitude; it would be enough for all our sins together to appear in that horror which their number gives them: but what must we say when there are a thousand sins in one; I mean, when each sin is infinite in its nature? Besides our rebellions against the supreme authority of God, besides our extreme obstinacy and hardness against his patience, each sin is a particular outrage against all the favours we have received of God: and, as his favours have been infinite, so each of our sins has contained an infinite number of outrages against the Lord.

4. These three reflections may be followed by a fourth, on the indispensable necessity of a lively and profound repentance to reconcile us to God. Let us not flatter ourselves; the God we adore can never renounce his *holiness*: the love of good, and hatred of evil, are as natural and essential as his omnipotence and infinity: yet must God renounce his holiness, if he receive us into his favour without our renouncing sin. He would have communion with sin, if he had communion with impenitent sinners.

It is then as impossible to unite ourselves to God without repentance, as it is to unite life and death, light and darkness; as impossible as for God to deny himself, or to cease to be. Neither let us flatter ourselves about the quality of this repentance; for it is not a cold and careless repentance; it is not that which consists in words only; it is not that which passes lightly through the mind, and which hardly touches the heart; God requires a penitence which pervades all the powers of the soul; which penetrates to the bottom of them all; which produces sighs, tears, and regrets; which is accompanied with a lively grief, a bitter sadness, not only for having exposed ourselves to punishment, but also for having offended the Lord, and so drawn down upon ourselves his just indignation. In one word, an habitual and powerful repentance, which breaks the mind and rends the heart, keeps us a long time in that state, and empowers us sincerely to return to righteousness and holiness.

To incline you more effectually to this repentance, let us (I beseech you) lift up our eyes to the mercy of God, and to the blood of covenant, which Jesus Christ hath shed for us. Let us not imagine, while we feel remorse for sin, that there is *no balm in Gilead*, no consolation in God: doubtless there is; and, were we such as we ought, we might *come with boldness to the throne of grace*, and be assured of *obtaining mercy, and of finding grace to help in time of need*. *Come now*, says God by the prophet, *let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*. And again, *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?* This is the perpetual language of the Gospel; this is the voice of the blood of Christ; these promises declare the remission of our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ purifies our *consciences from dead works*. Let us, then, go with faith and hope to the *propitiatory*, which God in all ages ordained. Let us go with humility to the grace, which calls us. Let us be reconciled to a God, who only seeks to do us good. We have lived long enough under disgrace; let us try to recover his peace, and with his peace the tranquillity and joy which we have lost. Is it any pleasure to those, who

desire to work out their salvation, to live a little longer at war with God? Are not the days of his anger days of desolation and mourning for us? Let us, then, seek his face and his favour, let us ask his blessing. *My heart said of thee, Seek my face. I will seek thy face, O Lord.*

O! how happy should we be, my brethren, could we see this gracious face of God, in which there is a *fulness of joy*, as the prophet speaks! Should we behold it, let us not imagine we are to stop there; the work then would be but half done; we must use all possible means to preserve an advantage so inestimable. In order to work out our own salvation, we must indeed be reconciled to God, and we must also use means to maintain peace; for the one without the other would be nothing. To preserve this advantage, then, three things are necessary. 1st. Our faith must be kept and increased. 2d. We must live a holy, Christian life. 3d. Repentance must be familiarised; for (such is our misery) whatever application we make to holiness, we shall always be committing many sins. I grant these three things are not barely the practice of one day; and they demand much more application than we can make during the few remaining moments of this exercise. Let us, however, understand what we may do now, without deferring it any longer. We may without delay form good and holy resolutions.

1. In regard to the preservation and increase of our *faith*, as both depend on the frequent reading of Holy Scripture and books of piety, on meditating on the divine mysteries, on assiduity in religious exercises, on attachment to prayer, and, in fine, on a holy remoteness from worldly things, as much as the duties of civil life will permit, let us form now this moment the design of carefully performing all these articles: I mean, of reading the book of God, of seriously meditating on its contents, of being assiduous and attentive in public assemblies of worship, of praying to God as often as possible, and of shaking off, as much as ever we can, the thoughts and occupations of this present life. To what can we better apply ourselves than to read the Scripture, that heavenly book, which contains in it treasures of wisdom and knowledge? and to which we may say, as the disciples to the Lord, *Thou hast the words of eternal life*. How can we employ ourselves

better, when alone and free, than in conversing with the doctrines and precepts of religion, and endeavouring to know and comprehend them? We may truly say, when we apply to these things, *We are satisfied with the marrow of God's house, and drink of the river of his delights*. Where can we be happier than in the house of God, when we have opportunity? In hearing his word, in singing his praises, in a participation of the sacraments, and in the rest of the services of his house, we find a harvest of consolation, edification, and joy. What can we do better when in our houses, than to watch against a too strong attachment to worldly things, since the world is an abyss, out of which, when we are once plunged, we cannot easily get. You are not ignorant how difficult it is to take care and manage your worldly affairs with innocence: but, if it were possible to do so, what is the world, after all, but trouble and torment?

To these holy resolutions let us add others, which concern holiness of life. Let us now, this instant, form the design of never doing any thing till we have first consulted conscience, to know what it permits, what it forbids, and what it ordains. I see many people who appear to have the best intentions in the world, who would, as they say, live holily, and who, for that purpose, desire particular rules, precepts, and directions. I approve of these desires: but this we say on this earnest request of theirs for rules and precepts; consult, on every action, the light and precepts of a good conscience; follow them in good faith, without violating, without warping, without entangling them with foreign views, and, be assured, you will find therein the best and most certain of all directions. Let us resolve, my brethren, to acquit ourselves the best that we can of all our duties towards God, by a constant practice of piety; of all duties, of justice and love towards our neighbour; and of all the duties of sobriety and temperance, that we may do nothing dishonourable to our nature or calling, nothing which does not comport with our heavenly original, and tend to the happiness, for which we are reserved.

Finally, as, while we are in this earthly state, we are constantly subject to falls, let us remember to have our eyes open also on this article. Let us not pass one day

without examining what of this kind has happened to us; and, having acknowledged our faults, let us not defer repenting of them till to-morrow. I own, repentance is not an agreeable thing; it is a grace, which is an enemy to depraved nature; she never visits us but to trouble our repose. Her approach makes us tremble, and her looks are fierce and threatening; but (besides that it is a necessary virtue, as we have already said) her first approaches only are hard and disagreeable, her first interviews only are sorrowful; for when she leaves us, or, to speak more properly, when she abides with us, she diffuses in our souls a thousand delights, a thousand consolations. We may apply to her what David says of God; *Clouds and darkness are round about her, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of her throne.* The successive acts of her government are like the prophet's vision, when a burning fire and an impetuous wind were succeeded by a soft and tranquil sound, in which was heard the voice of God.

Let us now pass to the third part. As this peace, which repentance works in us, is not a carnal security, a sinful lethargy, it is not contrary to every kind of fear, or, more properly, it is not only compatible with fear, but it is preserved only by means of fear. St. Paul, therefore, was not content with commanding us to *work out our own salvation*, but he adds, *with fear and trembling*; prescribing, in these words, the manner of our conducting ourselves in the work of our salvation. On this we have a few reflections to make, before we finish this sermon.

First, then, you must refute a false sense of the Apostle's words, that, by *fear and trembling*, he meant we should indulge the fear of a *slave* or an *enemy*, which would make us consider God as a judge always severe, and always angry, or as a hard master, who, let us do what we would, would always be dissatisfied with our services, who would only meditate evil, and seek every occasion of avenging himself on us, and who even set snares to entangle us in perdition. Far from this being a Christian virtue, it is certain, on the contrary, nothing is more pernicious to the creature, nothing more injurious to God, nothing more opposite to true piety. This fear, which is only proper to devils and damned spirits, is a perpetual source of inquietudes and agitations, and it can only in the end drive

to madness and despair. What possibility is there of saving ourselves from the hands of the devil, if God is resolved on our destruction? Or what hope can we have of escaping punishment, if his natural properties incline him to hate and destroy us? Above all, what can be more injurious to God than such a thought? *As I live, saith the Lord himself, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* No, my brethren, God is not naturally an enemy to his own work. I grant he is just; and, because he is just, I conceive, he will not always chastise us for our sins. Moreover, he has so much goodness and tenderness for us, that he freely opens a way for our return to his favour after all our offences, having, for this purpose, offered up his Son a sacrifice for sin, and is now calling us to repentance. Besides all this, he has promised to treat us with the tenderness of a father, and to carry his love so far as to bear with our defects and weaknesses, the deficiencies of our repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. He has commanded us to put our confidence in his mercy, and to be persuaded, that *as a father pitieth his children, so will the Lord pity them that fear him.* Far from us be this servile fear, which is so incompatible with piety! Piety is nothing but a profound esteem, an infinite love for God: but how could we esteem and love him, if we imagined he was jealous of our happiness, and an enemy to our persons?*

In the second place, the fear in question is what is called *filial*, which not only agrees very well with confidence and love, but which is their perpetual associate. This fear inspires us with different emotions, according to the different objects we meet with. 1. It impresses us with a profound respect and veneration always when we

* *Far from us be servile fear!* Mr. Claude reasons against slavish fear from seven topics: 1. From the *nature* of God; from his justice, goodness, &c.—2. From the *testimony* of God; he hath said, he desireth not the death of a sinner.—3. From the *works* of God; he hath given his Son to die.—4. From his *promises*; he hath promised to accept us, &c.—5. From his *command*; he hath commanded us to confide in his mercy.—6. From his *expostulations*; he hath persuaded us, &c. In fine, from the *incompatibility* of servile fear, with piety and human felicity, which religion evidently tends to promote. These are substantial helps against despair, excellent in themselves, and well authenticated to us.

appear before God—a respect which arises from a consideration of his infinite majesty, the rays of which dazzle us; of the ineffable wisdom and glorious power which shine in all his works; of his justice and holiness, and, in one word, of all his perfections; so that we cannot consider them, without diminishing in his presence, and acknowledging, that in comparison with him we are but dust and ashes.

2. When we remember the great privilege which God has granted us by declaring himself our Father in Christ Jesus, is it not possible for us not to be under perpetual apprehensions of offending him, and of drawing upon ourselves, by our misconduct, the just effects of his indignation. The sight only of sin alarms us; and, were we sure we never should commit it, the idea itself would be horrible enough to make us tremble; almost like a man, who from the top of a high tower looks down a precipice; or like seeing on shore the abysses of the sea, the horrors of a tempest; for, however safe we are, these objects will not fail to affright us.

3. When we reflect on ourselves, and consider our natural inclinations prone to evil, and compare them with those good and holy dispositions which grace has formed in us, it is impossible not to acknowledge, that all we have of good comes from God, that of ourselves we are incapable of the least good thing, and that *it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. Now this produces that humility which the Scripture calls sometimes *fear*, as in that famous passage to the Romans, *Be not high minded, but fear*; and in these admirable words of the second Psalm, *Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice before him with trembling*. In both these places *fear* signifies *humility*.

4. When we consider not only that state of natural corruption whence we were taken, but also the infirmities and weaknesses which remain since our regeneration, and when we compare these with the numerous snares which are set for us, with that formidable multitude of enemies which attack our salvation, with the force and address which they display to surprise and ensnare us, however intrepid we may be, it is not possible, if we sincerely intend to be saved, but we must fear making some false

step, and consequently this will awaken all our diligence and caution to endeavour to guard against it; for, after all, there is no art which our adversaries will not try to make us stumble, nor is there any sin which we are not capable of committing. Which of us, however advanced he may be in piety, can answer for his own heart? This made Jesus Christ say to his disciples, *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation; for the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

5. Though the grace of God, which supports us in temptations, be capable of preserving us, yet, should God suspend the influence of his grace, what advantages would not the flesh obtain over the Spirit, as the falls of David and Peter too sufficiently teach us? This consideration should perpetually make us *fear* and *tremble*; for who can assure us that there will be no moments in our lives in which God will leave us a prey to the temptations of the world and the occasions of sin? And, should this happen, it would be the most deplorable and miserable state into which a believer could fall. This is then a just subject of fear, which ought always to make us lift up our eyes and prayers to God, to beg him not to *lead us into temptation*, but to deliver us from the wiles of the enemy, and the evil tempers of our own hearts.

In a word, there are *five* kinds of fear in which we ought continually to be: A fear of *respect*, remembering what we are in the eyes of that infinite Majesty who sees us, and in the hands of the perpetual Providence which governs us—A fear of *horror* in regard to sin, remembering that the greatest of evils is that of offending a good and merciful God, of whom we have received so many favours—A fear of *humility*, remembering that all we are, and all we have by grace, we hold not of ourselves, but God—A fear of *precaution*, remembering that *the just falleth seven times a day*, and that *if we say We have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*—A fear of *attachment* to God, saying to him with the prophet, *Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me.* In this manner let us work out our own salvation; and God, beholding his talents multiply in our hands, will increase their number by adding blessing upon blessing, till at length he will change grace into glory,

and give us the entire and perfect enjoyment of his everlasting inheritance.

CHAP. VIII.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PROPOSITIONS.

TO these three a fourth may be added, which consists in reducing the texts to a number of propositions, two at least, and three or four at most, having mutual dependence and connexion. Thus for example, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* You may, without pretending to explain the terms, *flesh—spirit—death—life*, or the phrases, *live after the flesh—mortify the deeds of the body*—(which is the usual method) you may reduce the whole to two *propositions*; the one, that the damnation of sinners is inevitable—and the other, that a good and holy life is both a principal end of the Gospel, and an inseparable character of Christianity. When this method is taken, there is much more liberty than in the former, and a more extensive field opens. In the former methods you are restrained to your *text*, and you can only explain and apply that; you can make no other observations than such as precisely belong to it; but here your subject is the matter contained in your *propositions*, and you may treat of them thoroughly, and extend them as far as you please, provided you do not violate the general rules of a sermon. Here you must propose not to treat of the text, but of those *subjects* which you have chosen from several contained in the text. The way of explication is most proper to give the meaning of Scripture; and this, of systematical divinity. The way of application rather regards practice than theory: but this, which we call the way of propositions, or points, is more proper to produce an acquaintance with systematical divinity, and it will equally serve theory and practice.

For example, let us take the text just now quoted. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* After saying in a few words, that by those who *live after the flesh*, the Apostle means the worldly and wicked, such as are governed by worldly interests and carnal passions;

and that by the *death*, with which he threatens them, he means eternal damnation; and that, on the contrary, by *life*, he intends that eternal salvation and heavenly glory which the Gospel promises; and that, by the *mortification of the deeds of the body*, of which he speaks, and of which he says the *Holy Spirit* is the author, he intends an holy life, spent in the exercise of virtues and practice of good works: after briefly saying this, reduce the whole discourse to two propositions. First, The damnation of the wicked is inevitable. Secondly, The practice of good works, and an holy and religious life, is the principal end proposed in the Gospel, and a principal character of a true Christian.

You may enter on the first proposition, by observing, that it is deplorable to consider the blindness in which the greatest part of the people in the world live, who seldom think of the punishments of hell, or the consequences of death. You may remark, that from this blindness comes their insensibility to religion, and their extreme attachment to the vanities of this present world; for it would be impossible for them not to endeavour to avoid the eternal torments which await sinners after this life, were they well persuaded of the truth of them, as nature itself would lead them to this, and self-love would reduce knowledge to practice. Yet, you may add, that, however great this blindness is, it is, in a measure, affected, and voluntary, proceeding more from the malice of the heart than the darkness of the understanding; for the passions avoid those objects which are disagreeable to them, and perpetually substitute others to employ the mind. Whence it may be concluded, that it is of the last importance to meditate on this matter, on which depends the justice or injustice of our life, the good or bad state of our death, and our eternal interest in a future world.

Having thus prepared the people's minds, enter into the matter more particularly, and, above all things, take care to establish the truth and evidence of your proposition, by observing, first, that *Man is a creature subject to a law*, that even the light of his conscience discovers an essential difference between vice and virtue, good actions and bad, that thence come the emotions of conscience, and the judgments we make of one another's actions.

approving or condemning them; for this necessarily proves, that there is a common rule by which we acknowledge all men ought to live; and this is a truth so natural to all men, that the most wicked of all, who endeavour to elude its application to themselves, do however acknowledge it, when proposed in general, and applied to other subjects. If there be a law common to all men, there must be a Supreme Judge, before whose tribunal they must appear, to give an account of their actions; and if there be a supreme tribunal to judge them, it necessarily follows that there are punishments ordained for the transgressors of this common law. Law, Judge, Punishment, are three things which reason and nature have joined together in indissoluble bonds. A law is no law if it does not suppose a judgment; and judgment is no judgment if it does not suppose punishment: but if these three things be inseparable from each other, they are also from a fourth, the nature of man, and dignity of his condition as he is a reasonable creature, reason being only a principle of good or evil, or, if you please, a power which renders us capable of good and evil, in opposition to brute beasts, not naturally made capable of either vice or virtue. It must therefore be owned, that we are subject to a law; a law relates to a judge, a judge to a dispensation of punishments; so that these four things, reason, law, judgment, and punishment, are truths of incontestible evidence, nor can any one be denied without destroying them all.

Now from all this it appears how pernicious this wilful blindness is, which makes the wicked deny the pains of hell; for thereby they turn themselves into brute beasts, and, openly professing to deny their own reason, they degrade themselves below that admirable dignity of their nature which places them above all other animals.

Having thus established your proposition by reason, you may establish it by the *consent of all mankind*; for in the thickest darkness of Paganism, when, as the Scripture says, *God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*, even then it was always acknowledged, that as there was a reward proposed to the just and virtuous, so there were also punishments determined for the unjust and impious. I own, when the Pagans philosophised on these punish-

ments, they almost all said chimerical and unreasonable things; yet, allowing this, they were not far from this general idea, that there must necessarily be a punishment annexed to vice.

This may be further proved by the *principles of all religions*. There never was, nor can there ever be any, which is not founded on this principle, that God is our sovereign Judge, who holds in his hands our life and death: this made a profane writer say, Fear made gods; meaning, that from this source all religions generally proceeded.

Finally you may proceed to *revelation* and observe, that revealed religion has carefully placed this truth in full evidence. You may establish this by reciting some principal texts of Scripture, which expressly speak of the damnation of sinners. Such texts are not difficult to find. The *truth* of the punishment being thus proved, go on to the *degree* of it, which is very important, and will make a deep impression. You may say, 1. That this punishment must not be in this life only, but after death: the reason is plain; it is a punishment which must *follow* the judgment; for the judgment cannot be till life is ended, as the course of life we pursue must be finished before the decree can be pronounced to acquit or condemn us. It must not then be imagined, that the punishment of which we speak, consists in the afflictions of this life only. 2. It must be a punishment which involves both soul and body; for as both have joined in the practice of vice, both must also partake of the punishment; whence it follows, that the punishment can neither be temporal death, which does not affect the soul, nor the inquietudes and agitations of conscience, which do not affect the body. 3. It must be a real punishment, that is, something which has truly the essence of pain, and actually relates to the justice of God: whence it follows, that it cannot consist (as some pretend) in the annihilation of body and soul; for divine justice demands an eternal pain, which glorifies it, and, consequently, which does not destroy its subject, but continues its subsistence for a perpetual monument of God's hatred to sin. 4. It must be a punishment proportional in greatness, as well as in duration—to the greatness of the Judge who

ordains it, the tribunal which decrees it, and the Almighty hand which executes it. Here a strong and pathetic description may be made of the greatness of the punishments of the damned.

Having thus established the truth of our proposition, and treated of the degrees of punishments, we may pass on to the vain *subterfuges* which sinners use on the subject.

1st, It is a distressing subject, therefore they do not like to think about it. You may observe the folly of this conduct; for their condemnation is not the less certain for their forgetting it. They resemble prisoners already in irons, and doomed to punishment, who stifle the sense of their misery by plunging into debauchery. They resemble the old world, who were *eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage*, as the Scripture says, and suddenly, when they least of all thought of it, *the flood came and took them all away*. They cry *Peace, peace*, while destruction advances a great pace towards them; and irrecoverably lose the precious moments which yet remain for their escape.

2dly, When worldly men cannot entirely avoid the thought of damnation, which is frequently the case, for God often thunders in their consciences as well as in the air, and these thunder-claps frequently awake the most sleepy; when this is the case, I say, they venture to take refuge in *false notions*.

1. They flee to the mercy of God: "God (say they) is indeed our judge; but he is a gracious judge, he has the compassions of a father," and so on. When a sinner would flatter himself, he will not fail to magnify reigning grace, and to collect all the most tender and soft passages of Scripture on the subject. What a marvellous abuse is this of mercy, to make it an argument against the just punishments their crimes have deserved! True, God is merciful; but he is so only to repenting sinners, and not to those who persevere in their crimes. Mercy, on the contrary, arms itself to pursue the impenitent; for mercy is cruelly abused: nor will mercy allow the impunity of that sinner who persist in sin, and would make compassion itself an accomplice in his crimes.

2. The wicked seldom fail to abuse the evangelical doctrine of the death of Christ: "*The blood of Jesus Christ (say they) cleanseth from all sin.*" But this is to make Jesus Christ the minister of sin, and to entertain

the most horrible of all notions, that he came into the world to leave men in an abyss of corruption, and to make himself a church, a mystical body, composed of infidels and libertines. Harsh as this may appear, it must be so, if there were any room for the illusion of these miserable people, who, to evade the necessity of repentance, oppose the unapplied blood of Christ against the fear of damnation. 5. The greatest part of these people, when they see the sword of divine justice, accustom themselves to hide in a *multitude* like themselves, and to oppose their numbers against the natural fear of punishment: "If God (say they) were as rigorous as you represent him, paradise would be a desert, and all men would be damned; for how few keep his commandments! how few forsake sin by such a repentance as you require of us!" But Jesus Christ has already answered this vain objection; *Many are called*, said he, but *few chosen*. Isaiah and St. Paul have answered it, *Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant only shall be saved*. How great soever the number of those who perish may be, their perdition will be never the less. The death of them who were engulfed in the deluge was not the less painful for being general; nor was the destruction of the five cities by fire from heaven the less terrible to the unhappy sufferers, because Lot and his family only were saved. 4. One of the most common evasions which the wicked use to elude their conversion, is, to consider damnation as a very distant thing, and to oppose to the idea the advantages and sweetnesses which they find in sinful present objects: "Let us enjoy (say they) the present time, and not trouble ourselves about futurity." I grant, when *God is for us*, this maxim, of not troubling ourselves about futurity, is good, and necessary to preserve a tranquillity in the mind: but it is only good because it is wise; and it is only wise because we therein commit the care of futurity to the providence of an all-merciful, an almighty Father, who watches over believers, and will suffer no evil to befall them. But there is no greater folly than to be careless about futurity when *God is against us*. With the help of this negligence, our punishments increase in proportion to our sins: *After thy hardness and impenitent heart* (says the Apostle) *thou treasurest up unto thyself*

wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Sinners, you would have been a thousand times less miserable, if God had shortened your days, if he had done you the favour (if I may speak so) of putting you to death in your cradle; had he subjected you to the pain of natural death, he would at least have saved you from the accumulated torments which the commission of so many actual sins have deserved; and the longer you live, the more terrible will the judgments of divine justice be; for, as your days increase, the number of your sins increases too. Besides all this, who told you that your damnation was at the distance you imagine? The Lord once said to Cain, *If thou doest evil, sin lieth at the door.* This every sinner ought to apply to himself; his crimes are at the door. Death follows sin, step by step, wherever it goes; and who can assure you of twenty-four hours life? "Conversion (you say) is proper for old men; but it is not proper for young people: let us pass our juvenile years without perplexing ourselves about these scrupulous reflections; they will come in their season." No, they will never come; for the insult you offer to the mercy of God, who calls you, by proudly putting him off till a *more convenient season*, will provoke him to withdraw when that season comes. You would fix God your time; you would act like sovereigns to him; you would have him go when you say go, and come when you say come: but you are not masters. Do you think to deceive, and act fraudulently with him? Why, were it only for your hypocrisy, you would render yourself eternally unworthy of conversion. 5. The wicked have moreover used themselves to another illusion, that is, to *extenuate* their sins, and to hide the enormity and number of them: "We are not (say they) so criminal as is imagined; it is the custom of preachers to exaggerate every thing, and to over-act all. We love pleasure, it is true, we labour to acquire riches, we have pride and ambition, we would cut a good figure in the world, and what can be more natural than all this? And where are the saints who are not affected with the same passions?" Foolish souls! I sincerely pity you! I own, were ye to give an account of your actions to me, or, if you please, to the most severe and discerning of all men, yea, were ye to give an account of your

lives to an angel, or to all the angels of heaven together, perhaps you might palliate your crimes; no doubt you would have art and address enough to conceal at least one half of your sins, and to diminish considerably the enormity of the other half: but neither men nor angels are to enquire into your lives; you must appear before the tribunal of an all-seeing God, before whom there is no veil so thick which he does not penetrate, and in comparison of whom *the heavens are unclean*, and the angels unwise. *Whither will ye go from his Spirit, or whither will ye flee from his presence? If you ascend up into heaven, he is there: if you make your bed in hell, he is there; if you take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand lead you, and his right hand hold you. If you say Surely the darkness shall cover me, be assured the night shall be light about you; know that the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him.* It is an easy thing for a man to flatter himself, and to declare himself righteous, by comparing himself with thieves and highway robbers: but when he compares himself with the unspotted purity of God, when God's immortal hand applies the rule of his law to the heart, the holiest must become nothing, and say to him, *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth righteousness; but unto me, shame, and confusion of face. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who can stand? My righteousness before thee is as filthy rags. Now, if this be the language of a holy man,—if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

But, to speak plainly, all these are only vain pretences, the falsehood of which even the wicked acknowledge; the only reason why they avoid conversion is, that ardent love, that obstinate attachment, which they have to vice. This is the true cause, and all the rest, if they would speak honestly, are only vain pretences. The avaricious is not ignorant that an intense furious love to the world is odious to God and men. The ambitious knows that the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to far more noble dignities than any the world can offer; he knows that his ambition is incompatible with that Christian moderation which religion ordains. The voluptuous is not ignorant that his

debaucheries and excesses are directly contrary to the profession of the Gospel. In general, all sinners know very well that they do wrong, and they know also that by such means they draw down upon themselves the wrath and curse of God. Yet, however clear their knowledge of these awful truths may be, when the idea of riches presents itself to the covetous, when that of honours tempts the ambitious, when that of pleasure stares at the debauchee, so powerfully are their passions touched by these objects, that they are insensible to every thing else; all their reason evaporates, and vanishes before these dear objects; the mind is for one thing, the heart for another, and in this combat between judgment and affection the heart always obtains the conquest. Now, I ask, is not this love to sin the greatest folly in the world? when, on the one hand, it renders us incapable of enjoying ourselves, and dishonours us in our own eyes, depriving us of one of the most sweet and valuable of all our blessings, which is, a just esteem of ourselves, the joy of being able to approve our own conduct; and, on the other hand, destroys us; for it draws upon us the condemnation of God, and conducts us a great pace towards those eternal torments which he has prepared for the wicked.

Passing on to the second proposition, (that the practice of good works, and an holy and religious life, is the principal end which the Gospel proposes, and the principal character of a true Christian) you must first establish it by solid Scripture proofs: As—*The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* Tit. ii. 11, 12.—*This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.* Tit. iii.—The same Apostle elsewhere, distinguishing true from false professors, says, *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things: but our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus.* Phil. iii.—

We are his workmanship, says the same Apostle, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. The whole sixth of Romans is written to shew that the true end of the doctrine of grace is to sanctify men. What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, &c. Again, in his epistle to the Galatians, having strongly defended that gospel liberty which Jesus Christ has acquired by his blood for us, he prevents an abuse which might be made of it, by adding, Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh—Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other—Now the works of the flesh are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law: And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. We must here repeat almost all the whole New Testament, if we would particularly mention all the passages which oblige us to good works, for the whole book enforces obedience. It is sufficient to speak of our Lord's divine and admirable words, Let your light so shine before men, that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Indeed, by a general view of the end for which Jesus Christ came into the world, you will see he came to destroy the works of the devil. The works of the devil are principally two, sin and punishment. Let us not imagine that Jesus Christ came into the world to take away the punishment only, and to

leave sin triumphant; he came to destroy both. I will even venture to say, he came to destroy sin rather than sorrow. Suffering concerns only the creature: but sin concerns the Creator as well as the creature; it dishonours the one, and distresses the other. Punishment indeed makes man miserable, but at the same time it glorifies divine justice: but sin is equally contrary to the glory of God and the dignity of man. The principal end of Christ's coming upon earth was to destroy sin. Is it likely, think ye, that Jesus Christ would have quitted his mansion of glory, and descended to this earth, to acquire an impunity for criminals, leaving them immersed in sensuality and sin? Is it likely that he can hold communion with people in rebellion and profaneness? Is it possible for him, the *holy* Jesus, to join his spirit to our flesh, his purity to our profanity, his holiness to our iniquities? This would be saying, he came to unite, things which cannot unite, and which are naturally and necessarily incompatible. One of the most imbittered enemies of our religion reproached the primitive Christians, that their Jesus came into the world to make the most horrible and dreadful societies; for (said he) he calls sinners, and not the righteous; so that the body he came to assemble is a body of profligates, separated from good people, amongst whom they were heretofore mixed; he has rejected all the good, and collected all the bad in the world. False and cruel accusation! Origen, in the name of the whole church, solidly refuted it. "True, (says he) our Jesus *came to call sinners*; but it was *to repentance*: he assembles the wicked; but it is to convert them into new men, or rather to change them into angels. We come to him covetous, he makes us liberal; unjust and extortioners, and he makes us equitable; lascivious, and he makes us chaste; violent and passionate, and he makes us meek; impious and profane, and he makes us religious." This is the true effect of communion with Jesus Christ; it transforms us into his image; and this transformation is so essential, that, if it does not appear in a man, we are obliged to conclude he is not in communion with this great Saviour. But besides that holiness, love, and equity, are inseparable from communion with Jesus Christ considered in himself I add, they are also from communion with our heavenly

Father, to which communion with Jesus Christ leads us. As he came into the world in the quality of a Mediator, he called men to himself only to unite them to God; for which reason he said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me:* and elsewhere, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.* But how is it possible that God should hold communion with people who live in sin? *Thou art not a God* (says the prophet) *that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee: The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* It is evident, then, that the religion of Jesus Christ, which brings us into communion with God, brings us also at the same time into true holiness, without which communion with God is not attainable. It is inconceivable, that while we remain immersed in sensuality and sin, we can be the temples of the Holy Ghost; as the Scripture says of true believers. Can the Holy Ghost dwell in a man without producing effects of his power and grace? Can he dwell idly in a man? Can he possess his heart and affections, and yet leave his affections enslaven to sin? It is with the Holy Spirit as with fire, which cannot be any where without heat; or, if you please, as the sun, which cannot be above the horizon without giving light; *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, says our Saviour, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* With the same view the Apostle tells the Romans, *They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* It is, then, impossible to be a true Christian, or to have communion with Jesus Christ, unless we partake of his Spirit: *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, says St. Paul, he is none of his.* Because ye are sons, he says elsewhere, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.* From all which it clearly follows, that an unsanctified man has not the Spirit of Christ, is not in communion with him, does not belong to his mystical body, is not a true believer, in a word, is not a real Christian. Holiness is an inseparable companion, and a

necessary effect of the Gospel, and it is also an infallible character or mark of a sound convert.

But, if holiness be a necessary consequence of the gospel, it is no less true, that the gospel is an inexhaustible source of motives to holiness. I pass over its precepts, and rules of conduct, which give us an idea of holiness in a manner so lively, so beautiful, and so full of charms, that it alone is a powerful motive to obedience. Nor will I stop to observe, that the nature of vice is represented in the gospel so fully, and the horror of it so well described, that we must needs hold it in abhorrence. It shall be sufficient now to remark to you, and (if I may venture to say so) to make you feel by your own experience, that nothing can be conceived more powerful than the reasons by which the Christian religion enforces the necessary practice of good works. All its mysteries point at this. All the most grand, and most marvellous things it teacheth, regard this. All its doctrines are so many bonds, bonds the strongest, to bind our hearts to the obedience of faith; or, to use the language of St. Paul, they are so many *weapons of war, mighty through God, to cast down imaginations and every high thing, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

The gospel consecrates to holy uses, even what the light of nature teacheth us—as, that God is our *Creator*, who at the beginning called us into existence by his power, and made us what we are—that he is our *preserver*, who, by a perpetual influence, supports us, and prevents our falling back into non-entity—that it is his providence which *governs* the whole universe, particularly watches over us, and furnishes whatever his goodness and wisdom judge needful for us. What can more forcibly incline us to a practice of obedience than these important truths, if well considered? for what obligations have we to God, since he is our Creator, who gave us life and being! Ought not we to devote all to him, from whom we received all? And, if we owe him all, should not we be monsters rather than men to dishonour his creation, to insult his bounty, to rebel against his laws, though we have his glory always before our eyes? But, perhaps, creation may appear to you a distant benefit, which must needs have lost much of its value by the great

number of ages which have expired from the beginning of the world till now; or perhaps by the many years which have passed since your birth. Surely, were this the case, a favour which bestowed on us all we are, and all we have, however long since it was conferred, ought not to be forgotten on that account. But this is not true; for he who created man at the beginning, he who brought us into being, he it is who still preserves us, and whose influence is still necessary to our existence: should he suspend it but one moment, we should be no more. Every day, every moment, then, does God renew the favour; or, to speak more properly, every day, every moment he increases the number of his favours. David, speaking of the Messiah, says, *Thou hast the dew of thy youth, from the womb of the morning:** And in another place, on a different subject, *Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge.* But we may say of God's wonderful preservation of us, that our life, our motion, our being, come every morning, not from the *womb of the morning*, but from the immortal sources of the goodness and power of God. One of his favours uttereth speech to another, since the moments are not more closely joined together than his favours are. Yet, more than all this, he adds his providential care, he watches over us while we sleep, he thinks about us when we forget him, he defends and protects us when we do not see him, he nourishes and clothes our bodies, he furnishes matter for our thoughts and actions, he numbers the very hairs of our heads, and not one of them falls without him. O powerful motives to love and obedience! Shall it be said, that God preserves ungrateful and rebellious creatures, who do nothing but affront him? Shall it be said, his sun cheers us in the same manner as it does serpents and vipers, and that it influences us as it does envenomed dragons? Shall we keep none of his commandments, while he keeps each the least hair of our heads? Alas! shall we be such miserable wretches as to abuse his own benefits to his dishonour?

* "Si quis distinctius habere velit sensum verborum, ita resolvat, ex utero proditura esse innumeram sobolem, sicuti ros ab aurora distillat." *Calv. in loc.*

But all these motives, however great and powerful, are nothing in comparison of those, which the Gospel does not borrow from the light of reason, but takes from its own source; I mean such as come from supernatural revelation. These motives are almost all comprehended in Jesus Christ, and in the mysteries of his economy, and they are such as must affect every soul, which is not, I do not say hard and insensible, but entirely dead in sin, or possessed by the devil; for, in one word, that God, after all our rebellions, and all our crimes, should yet be reconciled to us,—that he should give his Son,—that he should give him to be flesh and blood like us,—that he should give him to be our head, our brother, and our example,—that he should give him to die for us, to die the most bloody, the most ignominious, and the most cruel death that could be conceived,—is not this love and mercy worthy of eternal praise? And what horrible ingratitude must it be, if, after all this, we should be yet capable of wilfully sinning against a God so good, and of counting *the blood of such a covenant an unholy thing?*

After this, some moral consequences may be drawn from the truth you have proved; as, First, that Christianity is dishonoured when the outward profession of it is attended with a bad life; for it proves how little efficacy religion has had upon us, and it gives occasion to the profane to insult the Christian religion, and to impute to it the vices of its professors. *Our conversations, says Tertullian, blush, when compared with our sentiments.* St. Paul speaks stronger still, *The name of God, says he, is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.* 2. You may also shew how they deceive themselves, who, without sanctification and good works, imagine themselves Christians. They are by no means Christians; they scandalously bear a name which they have rashly usurped, but which indeed does not belong to them; they are *bastards, and not sons*, or rather they are *born of flesh and blood*, but not of God: but true Christians, according to St. John, are *born of God, and not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.* 3. The vainest of all hopes is to imagine that we may be saved by the bare profession of Christianity, without any regard to good works. I own, the Christian religion gives life; but it is only to those who are sanctified. *You shall live,*

says the Apostle; but on what condition? *if ye mortify the deeds of the body.* The bare outward profession, far from saving men, will only aggravate their condemnation, according to this inviolable maxim of Jesus Christ; *That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.* In another place, describing the form of the last judgment, he says, Many will come to him in that day, saying, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?* But he will profess unto them, *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Finally, you may add reproofs and exhortations.

It must not be thought that these *four* ways of discussing texts are so heterogeneous that they can never be mixed together; on the contrary, there are a great many texts in which it will be necessary to make use of two, or three, and sometimes even of all the four ways. When a text is *explained*, it will be very often needful to make some *observations* also, and the matter will require as long an *application*. Sometimes, to explain a text well, the matter must be reduced into many *propositions*, as we have observed on these words, *It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.* In like manner, when the method of *observation* is used, it very often happens that some part of the text needs *explaining*, and so of the rest. These four ways must be distinguished, for two reasons: 1st. Because these are very different from one another; to explain, to make observations, to apply, and to reduce to propositions, are four very different ways of treating texts. A composer, then, must not confound them together; but he must observe the difference well, that he may use them properly. 2d. Because it is customary to give the discussion of a text the name of the *prevailing* manner of handling it. We call that the way of explication, in which there is more explication than observation. We not only call that the way of observation which has only observations, but that in which there is more observation than explication, or application; and so of the rest.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE EXORDIUM.

THE Exordium is that part, in which the minds of the hearers are *prepared*, and a natural and easy way opened to the discussion.

But, first, a question presents itself (on which opinions are much divided,) Whether exordiums be necessary? or even whether they be not in all cases quite useless, and in some hurtful? Whether it would not be better entirely to omit them, to begin immediately with the connexion of the text with the preceding verses, pass to the division, and so enter on the discussion? There are many of this opinion, and their reasons are, 1st. That there appears too much *artifice* in an exordium, which is more likely to dissipate, than to conciliate, the attention of your hearers. "It is evident (say they) to the auditors, that you design to come insensibly, and by a kind of artful manœuvre, to your matter, and to lead your hearers almost imperceptibly to it; but this seems a finesse altogether unworthy of the Gospel, and contrary to that sincerity, ingenuousness, gravity, and simplicity, which should reign in the pulpit. Indeed, when a wise hearer perceives you design to deceive him, he conceives a strong prejudice against you, and that prejudice will certainly be hurtful in the following part of the discourse."

They add, in the *second* place, that "exordiums are *extremely difficult to compose*, and justly styled the *crosses of preachers*. Should some small advantage be gained by exordiums, it would not be of consequence enough to induce us to compose them. In so doing we should waste a part of our time and strength, which might be much more usefully employed."

They say, *thirdly*, that "the principal end proposed in an exordium is, either to conciliate the hearer's affection, or to excite his attention, or to prepare the way to the matters to be treated of: but all these are to be *supposed*. As to their affection, pastors, who preach to their own flocks, ought not to doubt that. We speak to Christians, to persons who consider us as the ministers of Jesus Christ, whom, consequently, they respect and love. As

to attention, it ought also to be supposed; not only because pulpit-subjects are divine and salutary to men, but also because such only come to public worship as desire to hear the word of God attentively; and, indeed, if the auditors have not that disposition of themselves, an exordium cannot give it them. Such a disposition is an effect of a man's faith and piety; and it is not to be thought, that an exordium of eight or ten periods can convert the worldly and profane, or give faith and piety to those who have them not. As to what regards the introducing of the matter to be treated of, the bare reading of the text sufficiently does that; for, according to the common way of preaching the text contains the subject to be discussed."

Finally, they add, "delivering an exordium is only mispending *time*, uselessly dissipating a part of the hearers' attention, so that afterwards they frequently sleep very quietly when you enter on the discussion. Would it not be better, then, immediately to engage them in the matter, so that their attachment may afterward serve to maintain their attention, according to the natural inclination which all men have to finish what they have once begun?"

But none of these reasons are weighty enough to persuade us to reject exordiums, or to be careless about them. As to the first; The art which appears in an exordium, so far from being odious in itself, and seeming unnatural to the hearers, is, on the contrary, altogether natural. It is disagreeable to enter abruptly into theological matters without any preparation. It would not be necessary were our minds all exercised about divine things: but as, alas! we are in general too little versed in such exercises, it is good to be conducted to them without violence, and to have emotions excited in us in a soft and insensible manner. It is not finesse and deceit, since in doing it we only accommodate ourselves to the weakness of man's mind, and, indeed, it is what he himself desires. Moreover, it is to be observed, that hearers are now so habituated to an exordium, that if they heard a preacher enter abruptly into his matter, they would be extremely disgusted, and would imagine the man was aiming to do with them what the angel did with Habak-

kuk, when he took him by the hair of his head, and transported him in an instant from Judea to Babylon. Some time, then, ought to be employed gently to lead the mind of the hearer to the subjects of which you are going to treat. You are not to suppose that he already understands them, nor that he is thinking on what you have been meditating, nor that he can apply it instantly without preparation.

The second reason may have some weight with weak and lazy preachers; but it has none with wise and diligent students: and, after all, exordiums are not so difficult as to be impracticable: a little pains-taking is sufficient, as we every day experience.

The third is not more considerable. I grant, preachers ought to suppose the love and affection of their hearers; yet it does not follow, that they ought not to excite it, when they preach to them. Perhaps their affection is not always in exercise; it may be sometimes suspended and even opposed by contrary sentiments, by coolness and indifference, by hatred or envy, arising from the defects of the pastor (for, however able, he is not perfect,) or from the depravity of the hearers. The same may be said of attention, although they ought to have it entirely for the divine truths which the preacher speaks; yet, it is certain, they have it not: and all that a preacher can desire is, that his hearers have a general disposition to hear the Gospel. The preacher must endeavour to give them a peculiar attention to such matters as he has to discuss. As to the rest, it must not be thought that the bare reading of the text, or the connexion, or the division only, can produce that effect; a greater compass must be taken, to move the human mind, and apply the subject. And this also may be said of preparation, for which an exordium is principally designed. The reading of the text may do something; connexion and division may contribute more; but all this, without an exordium, will be useless.

Nor is it difficult to answer the fourth reason; for beside the advantages of an exordium, which are great enough to prevent our calling it lost time, its parts are ordinarily so short, that they cannot justly be accused of dissipating or fatiguing the hearers' minds. To which I

add, that the exordium itself, if well chosen, will always contain agreeable and instructive matter, so that, considered in itself, something good is always to be learned from it.

We cannot approve, then, of the custom of the *English preachers*, who enter immediately into the literal explication of the text, and make it serve for an exordium; after which they divide their discourses into several parts, which they discuss as they go on. Surely the hearer is not suddenly able to comprehend their explications, having yet neither emotions nor preparation. Methinks it would be much better gently to stir them up, and move them by something which gives no pain, than to load them all on a sudden with an explication, which they can neither clearly comprehend, nor perhaps distinctly hear.

Least of all do we approve of the custom of some of our own preachers, who, intending to explain the text, or to make some reflections throughout the whole sermon, enter immediately into the matter without any exordiums at all. I am persuaded they are induced to do thus only for the sake of avoiding the difficulty of composing an exordium, that is, in one word, only for the sake of indulging their idleness and negligence.

Taking it for granted, then, that an exordium must be used, it may be asked, What are the principal benefits we expect to receive from them? and with what general views ought they to be composed? In answer, we say, the principal design of an exordium is, to attract or excite the *affections* of the audience—to stir up their *attention*—and to *prepare* them for the particular matters of which we are about to treat.*

The two first of these must only be proposed *indirectly*. A preacher would render himself ridiculous, if in ordinary discourses, and without cases of extreme necessity, he should *labour* by this mean to acquire the esteem and

* *Introductions are intended to excite affection and attention, and to prepare the auditor for the subject.* “Causa principii nulla alia est, quam ut auditorem, quo sit nobis in cæteris partibus accommodator, præparemus. Id fieri tribus maxime rebus, inter actores plurimos constat, si *benevolum, attentum, docilem* fecerimus: non quia ista per totam actionem non sint custodienda, sed quia in initiis maxime necessaria, per quæ in animum judicis, ut procedere ultra possimus, admittimur.” *Quint. Inst. lib. iv. cap. i.*

affection of his congregation. This method would be more likely to make them rather despise than esteem him.

You must not, then, compliment the people, nor praise yourself, nor indeed speak of yourself in any manner of way. These are affectations, which never succeed; and yet some able preachers slip into this weakness, especially when they preach to strange congregations, and, above all, when they address assemblies of the rich, the learned, or the noble. Then they never fail to interlard their exordiums with some common-place saws—either the pleasure it gives them to be called to that pulpit—or an affectation of self-contempt—a confession of their great weakness—or something of this kind. To speak my opinion freely, I think these are pedantic airs, which have a very bad effect. Sensible auditors do not like to hear such fantastical pretences, which are both contrary to the gravity of the pulpit, and to the decency of a modest man.

How then, you will ask, must the *affections* of the hearers be attracted? I answer, *indirectly*, by an exordium well chosen, and well spoken: and this is the surest way of succeeding.

In regard to *attention*, it is certain it ought to be awakened and fixed in the same manner, that is, by something agreeable and worthy of being heard, a composition of piety and good sense. I do not disapprove of asking sometimes for attention, either on account of the importance of the matter, the solemnity of the day, the state of the church, or, in short, of any other particular occasion; but it must not be done often; for then it would never be minded; and, when it is done, the fewer words the better.

The *principal use* of an exordium is, to *prepare* the hearer's mind for the particular matters you have to treat of, and insensibly to conduct him to it. If this end be not obtained, the exordium cannot but be impertinent; and, on the contrary, if this end be answered, the exordium cannot be improper.

When I say the hearer's mind must be prepared for and conducted to the matter, I mean to say, these are two different things. You *prepare* the hearer for the

matter, when you stir up in him such *dispositions* as he ought to have, to hear well, and to profit much. You insensibly *conduct* your hearer to the matter, when, by the natural connexion of the subjects of which you speak, you lead him from one thing to another, and enable him to enter into the doctrine of your sermon.

Let us advert a moment to each. The *preparation* must be determined by the subject of which you are going to speak; for if it be a sad and afflicting subject, in which you aim to excite the compassion, the grief, and the tears of your audience, you must begin the exordium by imparting such a disposition.

If you have to treat of a profound and difficult mystery, aim to diffuse elevation and admiration among the hearers. If some terrible example of God's justice be the subject, endeavour to stir up fear. If some enormous crime, prepare the mind for horror, by a meditation on the enormity of human corruption. If you have to treat of repentance, and in an extraordinary manner to interest your hearers in it, you must begin to dispose them to it by general ideas of God's wrath, which we have deserved—of the little fruit we have borne to his glory—or something of a like nature. If, on the contrary, the matter you have to treat of be common and tranquil, aim in your exordium to place the mind in its natural state, and only endeavour to excite honest and Christian tempers, which we all ought always to have. In a word, the exordium must always participate the spirit of the subject that you mean to discuss, in order to dispose your hearers for it. Not to use in this manner, is to lose all the benefit of an exordium; and to use it to an opposite purpose, would be to renounce common sense, and to act like an idiot.

The second use of an introduction is, to *conduct* the hearer gradually to the subject of which you are about to treat. This (as I have said) depends on the connexion between the subjects of the exordium with themselves, and with the matter of the discussion. I say first with *themselves*; for they must, as it were, hold each other by the hand, and have a mutual dependence and subordination, otherwise the auditor will be surprised to find himself suddenly transported from one topic to another. I say also

with the *discussion*; for the exordium is principally intended to introduce that.

The first quality of an exordium is *brevity*. This, however, has a proper measure; for as it ought not to be excessively long, so neither should it be too short; the middle way is the best. The longest exordium may have ten or twelve periods, and the shortest six or seven, provided the periods be not too long. The reason is, that, on the one hand, proper time may be given the hearer to prepare himself to hear you with attention, and to follow you in the discussion of the matter; and, on the other, that in giving time sufficient for that, you may prevent his wandering out of the subject, wearying himself, and becoming impatient. If the exordium were too short, it would oblige the hearer to enter too soon into the matter without preparation enough; and excessive length would weary him; for it is with an auditor as with a man who visits a palace, he does not like to stay too long in the court, or first avenues, he would only view them transiently without stopping, and proceed as soon as possible to gratify his principal curiosity.

2. An exordium must be *clear*, and consequently disengaged from all sorts of abstruse and metaphysical thoughts. It should be expressed in natural and popular terms, and not overcharged with matter. Indeed, as the auditors are neither enlivened nor moved yet, you must not expect of them at first a great degree of penetration and elevation, nor even a great attempt towards these, though they may be capable of them when they are animated. You must therefore, in an exordium, avoid all that can give pain to the mind, such as physical questions, long trains of reasoning, and such like. However, do not imagine, that, under pretence of great clearness, an exordium must have only theological matter, or consist rather of words than things. This would be falling into the other extreme. An exordium, then, must contain matter capable of nourishing and satisfying the mind; to do which, it must be clear, easy to comprehend, and expressed in a very natural manner.

3. An exordium must be *cool and grave*.* Consequently

* *An exordium must be cool*. Mr. Claude's rule is undoubtedly good in general, and his reason weighty.

no grand figures may be admitted, as apostrophes, violent exclamations, reiterated interrogations, nor, in a word, any thing that tends to give vehement emotions to the hearers: for as the discourse must be accommodated to the state of the hearer, he, in the beginning, being cool, and free from agitations, the speaker ought to be so too. No wise man will approve exordiums full of enthusiasms and poetical raptures, full of impetuous or angry emotions, or of bold interrogations, or surprising paradoxes to excite admiration. You must, in the beginning, speak gently, remembering that your auditors are neither yet in heaven, nor in the air, nor at all elevated in their way thither, but upon earth, and in a place of worship.

4. An exordium, however, ought not to be so cool and grave, as not to be at the same time *engaging and agreeable*. There are three principal ends which a preacher should propose, namely, to instruct, to please, and to affect; but, of these three, that which should reign in an exordium is, to please. I own you should also aim to instruct and affect; but less to instruct than to please, and less still to affect than to instruct. Indeed, if you can judiciously and properly introduce any thing tender into an exordium (especially on extraordinary occasions) you may to good purpose; but, be that as it may, the agreeable should reign in this part. You easily see by this that you must banish from the exordium all ill-natured censures, terrible threatenings, bitter reproaches, and, in general, all that savours of anger, contempt, hatred, or indifference, and, in short, every thing that has the air of quarrelling with the hearers. Their attention must not only be excited (you may sufficiently do so by censures and reproaches) but you must softly insinuate yourself into their esteem, so that they may not only not oppose what you say, but be well satisfied you are an honest and well-meaning man.*

This, however, is a rule sometimes dispensed with. Cicero begins an oration thus: "Quousque tandem abutere, Catalina, patientia nostra? Quamdiu etiam furor iste tuus nos illudet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia?" &c. Perhaps an exordium somewhat more animated than usual may be proper on such occasions as the first and twelfth of the Skeletons published by the Editor.

* *Satisfy your hearers that you are a well-meaning man.* Hence Quintilian so much insists on his orator's being a *good* man. The

5. *The whole of the exordium must be naturally connected with all the matter of the text.* I say first the *whole* of the *exordium*; for great care must be taken to put nothing there foreign to your subject: therefore the best exordiums are those which are composed of two propositions, the first of which is naturally and immediately connected with the second, and the second naturally and immediately with the text. Each of these propositions may be either proved or amplified; but the last must always conduct you with ease to the subject in question, nor must the first be very distant. According to this maxim, all exordiums must be condemned, which, instead of leading you into the text, make you, as it were, tumble from a precipice into it, which is intolerable. Those also are to be condemned which conduct to the text by many long circuits, that is, by many propositions chained together, which is certainly vicious, and can only fatigue the hearer. I add, in the second place, the exordium must be connected with the *whole* matter of the *text*. It ought not merely to relate to one of its parts, (or to one view only, if you intend to consider it in different views) but to all. One of the principal uses of an exordium is to prepare the mind of the hearer for the matter to be discussed. If, therefore, the exordium refer only to one of its parts, or to one view only, it will prepare the mind of the hearer for that one part, for that one view only, and not for the rest.

6. *An exordium must be simple.* We would not entirely banish figures: on the contrary, we would always employ such as may render the discourse pleasant and agreeable: but pompous and magnificent expressions must be avoided, as far as the things spoken will permit. Do not use a style too elevated, bordering on bombast—nor periods too harmonious—nor overstrained allegories—nor even metaphors too common or too bold; for indeed the hearer's mind, yet cool and in its natural state, can bear nothing of this kind.

whole first chapter of his twelfth book is spent in proving the necessity of this; and, if this be so needful at the bar, how much more so is it in the pulpit! His conclusion is enough to make a Christian minister blush. "*Men had better be born dumb, and even destitute of reason, than pervert those gifts of Providence to pernicious purposes.* Mutos enim nasci, et egere omni ratione satius fuisset, quam providentiæ munera in mutuum perniciem convertere." *Quint.* lib. xii. c. 7.

7. An exordium must *not be common*. As this is a rule much abused, it will be needful to explain it. By a common exordium, I do not mean an exordium which will suit many texts, for if the texts are parallel, and the subject be managed with the same views, and in the same circumstances, what occasion is there to compose different exordiums? By a common exordium, I mean, in the first place; one taken from trivial things, and which have been said over and over again; these the people already know, and your labour will be infallibly thrown away. Such are exordiums taken from comparisons of the sun—of kings—of conquerors—of the ancient Romans, &c.—or from some histories of the Old Testament, which have been often repeated—or of some well-known types, as the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea—and many more of the same kind. In the second place, I mean, by a common or general exordium, one which may be alike applied to two texts of different matter, or to two contrary interpretations of the same text. It is in this sense that common exordiums are vicious and distasteful.

8. Even in metaphorical or figurative texts it is quite puerile to make an exordium join the text by a metaphor; for, whatever ingenuity there may seem to be in it, it is certain, there is no taste, no judgment discovered in the practice; and, however it may pass in college declamations, it would appear too trifling in the pulpit. The exordium, then, must be connected with the text by the matter itself, that is, not by the figure, but by the *subject* intended to be conveyed by the figure. I would not, however, forbid the joining of the exordium to the text sometimes by the figure, provided it be done in a chaste and prudent manner.

Let us give one example. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.* John vi. 54. An exordium to a sermon from this text may be taken from the idea which Holy Scripture teaches us to form of our conversion, as if it were a *new birth*, which begins a new life—that, for this purpose, it speaks of a new *man*, a new *heaven*, which illuminates, and a new *earth*, which supports him—that, attributing to this new man the same *senses*, which nature has formed in us, as sight, hearing,

feeling, smelling, tasting, it attributes also to him *objects* proportioned to each of these mystical senses, and ascribes to them *effects* like those which our senses produce by their natural operations. It tells us, that our *eyes* contemplate the celestial *light*, which illuminates and guides us in the ways of righteousness—that our *ears* hear the *voice* of God, who calls us, and who, by these means, makes us obey our vocation. It tells us that the Gospel is a *savour* of life, which communicates salvation to us. And, finally, it attributes to us a *mouth* to eat the *flesh*, and drink the *blood* of the Son of God, in order to nourish us to life eternal. It is this last expression which Jesus Christ has made use of in the sixth of John, and which says in my text, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.*

This exordium joins itself to the text by the figure made use of in the text, but in such a manner as not to be chargeable with affectation or witticism; for it is by a serious reflection on the *Scripture use* of the figure, acknowledging it to be a figure, and *preparing* the hearer to attend to the explication.

To these rules I subjoin a word or two on the *vices* of exordiums. 1. There are some preachers who imagine it a fine thing to take exordiums from the persons of their hearers, or the circumstances of times, places, general affairs, or news of the world: but I believe this is altogether a vicious method, and should never be used but on extraordinary occasions. First, there is too much *affectation* in it. Is it not a vain parade to begin a discourse with things which have no relation to the matter? it is certainly contrary to the chastity and modesty of a Christian pulpit. Secondly, exordiums of this sort are usually pulled in by the head and shoulders. How should it be otherwise, when the articles of which they are composed, have, if any, only, a very distant relation to the text? By such means you defeat the principal design of an exordium, which is to prepare the hearers' minds, and to conduct them insensibly to the subject. And, finally, it is very difficult in such exordiums to avoid saying impertinencies; for what, in a public discourse, can be more indelicate, than to speak of yourself, or hearers, or times, or news? In my opinion, such exordiums ought to be entirely rejected.

2. You must also, for the most part, reject exordiums taken from profane history, or what they call the apophthegms of illustrious men. This method savours too much of the college, and is by no means in the taste of pious, well-bred men. Alexander, Cæsar, Pompey, all the great names of antiquity, have no business to ascend the pulpit; and if they are not suffered now-a-days, either in orations in the senate, or in pleas of the bar, much less ought they to be allowed in Christian sermons. It may not be amiss if they appear now and then in the discussion, or in the application; but even there we ought to see them but seldom, not oftener than once a year at most: but to introduce them at the beginning of a sermon is intolerable. I say much the same of citations from profane authors; they must be forborne, unless it be something so particular, so agreeable, and so apt to the text, as to carry its own recommendation along with it. Of this kind, I think, was the exordium of a sermon on this text: *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* It was taken from Plutarch, who relates, that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the Republic: to which he immediately replied, Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all. It was added, that this is the notion of almost all wicked men, who, being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to the Master of all creatures—that if only one man, or two men, were in question, the attempt of Alcibiades might succeed; but as it was God with whom they had to do, it must be worse than foolish to imagine his tribunal could be avoided—that there was no other way to take, than to prepare to give an account to God; nor any advice more reasonable, than to labour continually to do it well—and that, for this purpose, even self-interest should oblige us to have recourse to God to assist us by his grace—this is what the church aims to teach us in the words of the prophet,—*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

In general, the best exordiums are taken from *theology*; for as, on the one hand, they have always more relation to the matter of the text, so, on the other, they much better prepare the hearers' minds, being more grave, and free from the puerile pedantries of the college.

In order to compose an exordium, after you have well considered the senses of the text, and observed what are the principal matters which ought to enter into the discussion, and after you have made the division, endeavour to reduce the whole to one common idea, and then choose some other idea naturally connected with that common idea, either immediately, or by means of another. If it be immediately connected with the subject, endeavour to reduce it to one proposition, which may be cleared and proved as you go on; or if it have parts, which require separate explications and proofs, it must be managed so as to include them; and, finally, by the natural connexion of that proposition with the discussion, enter into the text. If the proposition be connected with the text only remotely, then establish the first, pass on to the second, and so proceed from the second to the text.*

Exordiums may be *taken from* almost all the same topics as observations, that is, from *genus, species, contraries, &c.* for there are but few good exordiums which might not go into the discussion, under the title of general observations. Of such observations, that must be chosen for an exordium which is least essential, or least necessary to the discussion, and which, besides, is clear, agreeable, and entertaining. A *comparison* may sometimes be employed in an exordium, but not often; nor must trivial comparisons be used, which all the world know, or which

* *Connect the parts of the exordium with the subject of the discourse.* "Quoties autem præmio fuerimus usi, tum sive ad expositionem transibimus, sive protinus ad probationem, id debet in principio postremum esse, cui commodissimè jungi initium sequenti poterit. Ut non abruptè cadere in narrationem, ita non obscure transcendere est optimum. Si verò longior, sequetur, ac perplexa magis expositio, ad eam ipsam præparandus judex erit: ut *Cicero* sæpius, sed hoc præcipuè loco secit: *Paulo longius exordium rei demonstrandæ petam; quod quæso, judices, ne molestè futuri amini. Principiis enim cognitis, multo facilius extrema intellige-*is."—*Pro Cluent. Quint. Inst. lib. iv. de Exordio.*

are taken from any thing mean; nor must they be embarrassing, taken from things unknown to the people, as those are which are borrowed from mechanics, astronomy, &c. of which the people know nothing at all.

Bible history may be used, but sparingly; and the application must be always just, agreeable, and, in some sort, new and remarkable.

Types may also be employed, but with the same precautions, always consulting good sense and taste.

The best method is, to compose several *exordiums* for the same text, by turning your imagination divers ways, by taking it in all its different relations; for by such means you may choose the most proper. But after all these general precepts, which indeed ought to be known, and by which exordiums must be regulated, it is certain, *the invention and composition of an exordium can only become easy by practice.* A young preacher ought not to complain of trouble, nor to be any way negligent in the matter, for he may be sure of succeeding by attention and application.

CHAP. X.

OF THE CONCLUSION*.

THE conclusion ought to be lively and animating, full of great and beautiful figures, aiming to move Christian affections—as the love of God—hope—zeal—repentance—self-condemnation—a desire of self-correction—consolation—admiration of eternal benefits—hope of felicity—courage and constancy in afflictions—steadiness in temptations—gratitude to God—recourse to him by prayer—and other such dispositions. †

* *Conclusion.* This in a sermon answers to what in an oration is called the *peroration*. “It recapitulates, or sums up the strongest and chief arguments, and, by moving the passions, endeavours to persuade the hearers to *yield* to the force of them.” *Arist. Rhet.*

The fire of the preacher should blaze here; he should collect the ideas of his whole sermon into this part, as rays are collected in the focus of a burning-glass, and inflame the hearts of his auditors.

† *A conclusion should excite Christian dispositions.* If the Reader attend to these observations of Mr. Claude, he will see more clearly the use that is to be made of the APPLICATIONS and INFERENCES that are contained in the Skeletons published by the Editor of this Essay.

There are three sorts of dispositions, or emotions; the violent—the tender—and the elevated. The *violent* are, for example, indignation, fear, zeal, courage, firmness against temptations, repentance, self-loathing, &c.

The *tender* emotions are, joy, consolation, gratitude; tender subjects are, pardon, pity, prayer, &c. The *elevated* are, admiration of the majesty of God, the ways of Providence, the glory of Paradise, the expectation of benefits, &c.

There are some Christian passions which may be excited either by a tender or violent method. Repentance is of this kind; for which extremely tender motives may be employed, as the love and bounty of God, which we have so unworthily treated. Violent motives may also be used, as censure, an enumeration and description of the enormity of the sins reigning amongst us, the horror of our ingratitude, the fear of God's judgments, the justice of his scourges and chastisements, &c.

In like manner, firmness against temptations may be discussed; for tender motives may be used, as—the vanity of the promises and hopes of this world, which are only false and delusive appearances—the consideration of the miserable state of backsliders and appostates—the dignity to which God calls his children—the eternal rewards which attend perseverance—the joy of a good man when he has gained a signal virtue over temptations. Violent methods may also be employed, as—inspiring an holy ambition to defeat the designs of the world—a contempt of the plots and powers against us—the hope, or rather the inviolable assurance we have, that all the powers of earth joined together cannot shake us. St. Paul uses mixed motives at the end of the eighth of Romans: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I*

Bishop Burnet says, "A sermon, the conclusion whereof makes the auditory look pleased, and sets them all talking with one another, was certainly either not rightly spoken, or not rightly heard; it has been fine, and has probably delighted the congregation rather than edified it: but that sermon that makes every one go away silent, and grave, and hastening to be alone to meditate, and pray the matter over in secret, has had a true effect."—*Past. Care*, chap. ix.

am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A conclusion should be *diversified*. I mean, we should not be content to move one single Christian passion; many must be touched, and a proper length of discourse assigned to each, in order to stir up the passion. Too long time, however, must not be spent; but when the effect is evidently produced, pass to another passion. As the conclusion ought to be composed at least of four or five* reflections (naturally arising from the text, either general, from the whole text, or particular, from some of the parts into which it is divided;) so, if possible, these reflections must be placed in prudent order, so that the weakest and least powerful may be the first, and the strongest last; and so that the discourse may become more rapid as it runs.

I think, however, it would be vicious to finish with motives too violent, as subjects tending to horror—indignation—or heavy censure. It would be much better, in general, to close with a tender, or even with an elevating motive. Different motives may be (and indeed they ought to be) mixed in the same conclusion, that is, violent, tender, and elevated, in order to stir up many passions of different kinds.

Conclusion sometimes delights in examples, similitudes, short and weighty sentences, the inventions of a fine imagination, and, in one word, it need not be either so chaste or so regular as the body of the sermon, where more accuracy must be observed. There is no danger when a preacher, in a conclusion, gives himself up to the fire of his genius, provided he say nothing extravagant or capricious, nothing that savours of enthusiasm or declamation.†

* Perhaps two or three would be preferable.

† To this purpose Bishop Burnet observes, “Artificial eloquence, without a flame within, is like artificial poetry; all its productions are forced, and unnatural, and in a great measure ridiculous. Art helps, and guides nature; but if one was not born with this flame, art will only spoil and make him redundant. A man must have in himself a deep sense of the truth and power of religion. He must

have a life and flame in his thoughts with relation to these subjects. He must have felt in himself those things, which he intends to explain, and recommends to others. There is an authority in the simplest things that can be said, when they carry visible characters of genuineness in them." *Past. Care*, chap. ix.

Bishop Wilkin speaks to the same effect: "As the milder affections, τὰ ἡσθη, do best suit with the introduction, which insinuates into the love and attention of the hearers, so τὰ παύθη, the more eager, and vehement affections, will best become the conclusions." "But (adds he from Luther) bene orasse, est bene studuisse." And this indeed is the soul of all. *Wilk. Ecclesiastes*.

Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. Paul to Tim.

A SERMON

ON THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

Mark. xvi. 15, 16. *He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

IT is to be lamented that an unhappy prejudice subsists in the Christian world against the peculiar and most essential doctrines of our holy religion; and that, while ministers defend with zeal and ability the outworks of Christianity, they are at little pains to lead their hearers within the vail, and to unfold to them those blessed truths whereon their salvation depends. Under the idea that moral discourses are more accommodated to the comprehensions of men, and more influential on their practice, they wave all mention of the sublime mysteries of the Gospel, and inculcate little more than system of heathen ethics.* They would be ashamed, and almost afraid to make such a passage as this the ground-work of their discourse, lest they should be thought to be contending for some uncertain, unimportant tenets, instead of promoting the interests of piety and virtue. But can any one read such a solemn declaration as that in the text, and account it unworthy of his notice? Can any one consider the circumstances under which it was uttered, or the authoritative manner in which the Apostles were commanded to publish it to the world, and yet think himself at liberty to disregard it? Shall the very recital of it beget suspicion, as though nothing were desired but to establish the Shibboleth of a party? Let us put away such unbecoming jealousies, and enter in a fair and candid manner into the investigation of the words before us: let us consider that they were among the last words of our blessed Lord while he sojourned upon earth; that they contain his final commission to his Apostles, and, in them, to all succeeding pastors of his church; that they are distinguished by our Lord himself by that honourable appellation, "The Gospel," or Glad Tidings; and that

* See this exposed with great perspicuity and strength of argument in Bishop Horsley's First Charge.

they were delivered by him not only as the rule of our faith, but as the rule of our procedure in the day of judgment: let us, I say, consider the words in this view, and, with hearts duly impressed and open to conviction, attend to what shall be spoken, while we endeavour to explain the import—vindicate the reasonableness—and display the excellency—of this divine message: And the Lord grant, that, while we are attending to these things, the “word may come, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”

I. In explaining the import of our text, we shall have little more to do than to ascertain the meaning of the different terms; for the sense of them being once fixed, the import of the whole will be clear and obvious.

Salvation can mean nothing less than the everlasting happiness of the soul. To limit the term to any temporal deliverance would be to destroy utterly the truth as well as the importance of our Lord’s declaration: for though it is true, that they, who believed his prophecies relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, escaped to Pella, and were rescued from the misery in which the Jewish nation was involved, yet the followers of our Lord in that and every age have been subjected to incessant persecutions and cruel deaths; nor was that deliverance either of so great or so general concern that the Apostles needed to go forth “into all the world, or to preach it to “every creature.” Our Lord “came to seek and to save that which was lost;” he came to open a way for the recovery of our fallen race, and to restore men to the happiness which they had forfeited by their iniquities: this is the salvation spoken of in the text, and justly termed, a “salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

This salvation is to be obtained by faith; “He that believeth shall be saved.” By the term “believing” we are not to understand a mere assent given to any particular doctrine; for there is not any particular doctrine to which the most abandoned sinner, or even the devils themselves may not assent: in this sense of the word, St. James says “the devils believe and tremble.” The faith intended in the text is far more than an acknowledgment of the truth of the Gospel; it is an approbation of it as excellent, and an acceptance of it as suitable. Assent is an act of the understanding only: but

true faith is a consent of the will also, with the full concurrence of our warmest affections: it is called in one place a "believing with the heart;" and in another a "believing with all the heart." In few words, faith is a new and living principle, whereby we are enabled to rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for all the ends and purposes for which he came into the world; a principle, which, at the same time that it takes us off from all self-dependence, leads us to purify our hearts from the love and practice of all sin. To such faith as this our Lord frequently annexes a promise of eternal salvation: in his discourse with Nicodemus he says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that *believeth on him* is not condemned; but he that *believeth not* is condemned already, *because he hath not believed* in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." And in the close of that chapter it is added, "He that *believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life; but he that *believeth not the Son*, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Not that there is any thing meritorious in this grace more than in any other; for, as a grace, it is inferior to love; but salvation is annexed to this rather than to any other, because this alone unites us to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are accepted, and by whose merits we are saved.

To the term Salvation is opposed another of a most awful import, namely, Damnation: as the former cannot be limited to any temporal deliverance, so neither can this be limited to any temporal judgment: for, not to mention the express and repeated declarations that the punishment of the wicked will be as "a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched," our Lord, in the very words before us, contrasts the consequences of unbelief with the consequences of faith; thereby manifesting, that they were to be considered by us as of equal magnitude and duration: and, in his account of the final sentence which he will pass upon the righteous and the wicked in the day of judgment, he describes the happiness of the one and the misery of the other by the very

same epithet, in order to cut off all occasion of doubt respecting the continuance of either: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." We are constrained, therefore, to acknowledge, that the threatening in the text includes nothing less than the everlasting misery of the soul, under the wrath and indignation of God.

This, tremendous as it is, will be the fruit of unbelief; "He that believeth not shall be damned." We must not suppose that the unbelief here spoken of characterizes only professed infidels, who openly avow their contempt of Christianity; for then it would by no means afford a sufficient line of distinction between those that shall be saved, and those that shall perish; seeing that there are many who profess to reverence the Christian revelation, while they live in a constant violation of every duty it enjoins. If the receiving of Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel, be the faith that saves, then the not receiving of Christ in that manner must be the unbelief that condemns. This observation is of great importance: for the generality seem to have no idea that they can be unbelievers, unless they have formally renounced the Christian faith: their consciences are quite clear on this subject: the guilt of unbelief never caused them one moment's uneasiness. But can any thing be more plain, than that the same faith, which is necessary to bring us to salvation, must be also necessary to keep us from condemnation? Indeed it is so self-evident a truth, that the very mention of it appears almost absurd; and yet it will be well if we admit its full force in the point before us: for, however zealous many are to comprehend holy actions and affections in their definitions of saving faith, they are backward enough to acknowledge that a want of those qualities must evidence them to be in a state of unbelief: yet, till this truth be felt and acknowledged, there is little hope that the Gospel will ever profit them at all.

There is a qualifying clause in the text which we must not leave unnoticed; and the rather, because it is added in the former, but omitted in the latter part; "He that believeth, *and is baptized*, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Our Lord had appointed baptism as that rite whereby his disciples should be introduced into the Christian covenant, as the Jews had

been by circumcision into the Mosaic covenant: and men's submission to this rite served as a test of their sincerity, and a public badge of their profession. If any were inwardly convinced that the religion of Christ was indeed of divine authority, and were not prevented by insurmountable obstacles from conforming to this rite, they must cheerfully enlist themselves under his banners, and honour him in his appointed way; they must "follow the Lord fully," if they would be partakers of his benefits. But, on the other hand, if they should submit to this ordinance, and yet be destitute of true faith, their baptism should not save them; they should perish for their unbelief: baptized or unbaptized, they should surely perish.

The parts of the text being thus explained, there remains no difficulty in the meaning of the whole as it stands connected together. No words can be found that can more forcibly express the solemn truth, which our Lord intended to convey: the import of his declaration is so obvious, that we shall not attempt to elucidate it any farther, but will proceed

II. To vindicate its reasonableness.

That men should be saved for their good works, or condemned for their gross iniquities, would be thought reasonable enough; but that they should be saved by faith, or condemned for unbelief, seems to many to be utterly unreasonable and absurd. But, to a candid inquirer, the equity and reasonableness of both these points may be easily and plainly evinced.

If faith were, as some imagine it to be, a mere assent to certain propositions, it must be confessed, that, to expect salvation by it were preposterous in the extreme: but it has already been shown that this is not saving faith. The man who truly believes, invariably comes to Christ in *this* way; he confesses with humility and contrition his past offences—he acknowledges, from his inmost soul, that he deserves the everlasting displeasure of God—he renounces every hope that might arise from his comparative goodness, his penitential sorrows, his future purposes, his actual amendment—he embraces Christ as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour—and relies simply and entirely upon the promises which God has made to us in the Son of his love. This, I say, is the believer's experience at the first moment he truly believes in Christ. To

this we might add, that, from that moment, he lives in a state of communion with his Saviour, and exerts himself to the utmost to adorn his profession by a holy life and conversation: but we intentionally omit all the fruits of faith which he afterwards produces, lest any one should be led to confound faith with its fruits, or to ascribe *that* to faith and works conjointly, which properly belongs to faith alone. Consider then a person coming in this penitent manner to Christ, and trusting in the promises of his God; is it unreasonable that such a person should be saved? Who in all the world should be saved so soon as he, who implores deliverance from his lost estate? Who should reap the benefits of Christ's death, but he, who makes *that* his only plea and dependence? Who may so justly hope to experience God's fidelity, as he who rests upon his promises? Who, in short, should enjoy all the blessings of redemption, but he who seeks redemption in God's appointed way? Surely, if it be reasonable that Christ should "see of the travail of his soul," and that God should fulfil his own word, then is it most reasonable that he who believes in Christ should be saved.

With respect to the condemnation of unbelievers, we readily acknowledge that *that* also would be unreasonable, on a supposition that unbelief were nothing more than a dissent from certain propositions, through a want of sufficient evidence to establish their divine authority. But unbelief is a sin of the deepest dye; and the person who is under its dominion is in a state as offensive to God as can well be conceived. For, in the first place, he rejects that which has been established by every kind of evidence which a revelation from heaven can admit of: and, in rejecting it, he shews that he is lifted up with pride and presumption: for he not only takes upon him to sit in judgment upon God, but denies his own state to be so dangerous and depraved as God has represented it. If he acknowledges himself to be a sinner, he still feels neither his guilt nor his helplessness as he ought, but "goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God." That wonderful method which the infinite *wisdom* of God has contrived for the restoration of our fallen race, he accounts "foolishness;" and substitutes what he esteems a safer and better method of his own. The most stupendous display of divine *love* and

mercy that ever was or can be exhibited, he disregards; and thus, both “tramples under foot the Son of God, and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace:” yea, to use the language of an inspired apostle, he “makes the only true God a liar;” for whereas God has said, that “there is no other name whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus, or any other foundation than that which he himself has laid,” the unbeliever directly contradicts him, and unequivocally declares his expectation, that there is and shall be some other way of acceptance with him. Now is it unreasonable that such a person should be punished? that such a despiser of God should be left without any part in the believer’s portion? Let us only apply the case to ourselves—If a child should pour contempt upon the wisest counsels of his parents, and question the truth of their most solemn protestations, should we not think him worthy of his parents’ displeasure? would not we ourselves, in such a case, manifest our disapprobation of his conduct? Who then are we, that we should insult GOD thus, and do it with impunity? Who are we, I say, that, when we are at liberty to withhold a blessing from an ungrateful fellow-creature, or to inflict a punishment on him adequate to his offence, *we* should not be in like manner amenable to God? If any say, “We acknowledge the sinfulness of unbelief, but think the punishment of it too severe;” I answer, God ‘himself is the best judge of the malignity of sin; and he has denounced death, eternal death, as the wages due to every sin: much more therefore may it be inflicted for unbelief; since there is no sin so complicated, nor any that so effectually precludes even a possibility of salvation: we may purge away any other sin by a believing application to the blood of Christ; but by unbelief we reject the only remedy provided for us.’

Hoping that the reasonableness of our Saviour’s declaration has been satisfactorily proved, we come

III. To display its excellency.

While the Gospel of Christ is misrepresented and opposed by man, the angels, who are incomparably less interested in its provisions, are ever contemplating it with admiration and joy. And, if it were better understood amongst us, it could not but meet with a more favourable reception; for it has innumerable excellencies, which

render it worthy of universal acceptance. Let us examine a few of its leading features.—In the first place, *it clearly defines the way of salvation.* Take any other way of salvation that ever was devised, by repentance for instance, or by sincere obedience; what inexplicable difficulties occur to our view! for, who can tell what degree of repentance will satisfy God for our breaches of his law, and be a sufficient price for heaven? Who can mark out the line which shall be drawn between those that shall be saved and those that shall perish? Who can tell what sincere obedience means? It cannot mean the doing what we *will*, for that would put a murderer on the same footing with an Apostle: and if it mean the doing what we *can*, where is the man that can be saved by it? Where is the man who has not violated it in ten thousand instances, or who does not violate it every day of his life? Who can truly say that for any one day he has mortified every sinful habit as much as he could, exercised every holy affection as much as he could, and practised every species of duty as much as he could? And if we cannot but acknowledge that we might have done more, who shall say what degree of insincerity may be indulged without violating the law of sincere obedience? On all such plans as these we are utterly at a loss; we are at sea without a compass. But take the doctrine laid down in the text, and the way of salvation is so plain, that “he who runs may read it.” Let any man ask himself this question, Do I believe in Christ? Let him pursue the enquiry somewhat farther, Do I feel myself a guilty, helpless, condemned sinner? Do I renounce all dependence on my own wisdom, strength, and righteousness? Do I see that there is in Christ a fulness suited to my necessities? And do I daily, with humility and earnestness, beg of God that “Christ may be made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?” These questions are easy enough to be resolved; and by the answer which conscience gives to them we may know assuredly whether we be in the way to heaven or to hell. And who does not see how great an excellency this is in the Gospel-salvation? Who does not see how strongly this circumstance recommends the doctrine in our text?

Another excellency in the Gospel is, that it is *equally suited to all persons in all conditions.* Had any self-righteous

methods of acceptance been proposed to the dying thief, what consolation could he have found? How little could he do in his few remaining hours! However he might have admired the goodness of God to others, he must have utterly despaired of mercy himself. But through faith in Christ he was enabled to depart in peace and joy. As to the murderers of our Lord, how long must it have been before they could have entertained any comfortable hope of acceptance! But the Gospel affords a prospect of salvation to the very chief of sinners, and *that*, even at the eleventh hour. Nor is there any situation whatever, in which the Gospel is not calculated to comfort and support the soul. *Under first convictions* of sin, what so delightful as to hear of a Saviour? *Under subsequent trials and temptations*, how would our difficulties be increased, if we did not know that "God had laid help upon One that was mighty!" The people of God, notwithstanding the hope which they have in Christ, feel great and heavy discouragement on account of the power of in-dwelling corruption: they seem oftentimes to be rolling a stone up the hill, which rushes impetuously down again, and necessitates them to repeat their ineffectual labours. And what would they do if their dependence were not placed on the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God? Surely they would lie down in despair, and say like those of old, "There is no hope; I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." *Under the various calamities of life*, also, believers find consolation in the thought that the salvation of their souls is secured by Christ. Hence they are enabled to bear their trials with firmness: they "know how both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." And shall not this recommend the Gospel? that there is no situation, no circumstance whatever wherein it is not suited to us? that while every other method of salvation increases our anxiety, and, in many instances, drives us utterly to despair, the Gospel always mitigates our sorrows, and often turns them into joy and triumph?

A farther excellency of the Gospel is, that it *refers all the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ*. Every other plan of salvation leaves room for man to boast: but, on the plan of the Gospel, the most moral person upon earth must subscribe to the declaration of the Apostle, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of

God." None, who have obtained an interest in Christ, will take the glory to themselves; the voice of all without exception is, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be the praise." There is not any thing that distinguishes true believers more than this, That they desire to glorify Christ as the ONE source of all their blessings. In this their hearts are in perfect unison with the glorified saints, who sing continually, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever." And is not this another excellency of the Gospel? Is it at all desirable that while some in heaven are ascribing salvation to God and to the Lamb, others should ascribe salvation to God and to themselves? Surely the felicity of heaven is much increased by the obligation which they feel to Jesus, and the consideration that every particle of that bliss was "purchased for them by the blood of God" himself; nor is there so much as one amongst all the hosts of heaven who would consent for an instant to rob the Saviour of his glory.

Lastly—The last excellency which I shall mention as belonging to the Gospel, is, that it *most of all secures the practice of good works*. Here is the chief ground of jealousy with the world: and if the Gospel were indeed liable to the imputations cast on it, if it gave licence to men to continue in sin, we should not hesitate to discard it as a fiction, seeing that it could never be the production of an holy God. But, as the Apostle says, "The grace of God which bringeth salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." If we appeal to antiquity, who was ever so strenuous as St. Paul in asserting the doctrine of justification by faith alone? and yet, who was ever so abundant in labours of every kind? or who ever inculcated with greater energy and minuteness the necessity of good works? If we come to modern times, we must observe that they, who now preach justification by faith, are with the very same breath accused of opening heaven to all, however they may act, and yet of shutting the door against all by their unnecessary strictness: and they who receive the Gospel are condemned as licentious, while they are at the same time blamed as too rigid and precise: nor is this by any means a slight proof of the efficacy of the Gospel on the hearts and lives of its professors; for if

their *sentiments* expose them to the former censure, it is their holy *conduct* that subjects them to the latter. We grant, and acknowledge it with sorrow, that there are some who name the name of Christ without departing from iniquity: but must all therefore be represented as of the same stamp, and the Gospel itself be considered as unfavourable to morality? Is it just, that, while ten thousand glaring sins pass unnoticed in an unbeliever, the misconduct of a few, or perhaps one single fault in "a person professing godliness" should excite a clamour against all the religious world as hypocrites? But, thanks be to God! we can appeal to experience, that faith "does work by love," and "overcome the world," and "purify the heart:" we are therefore emboldened primarily and principally to recommend the Gospel from this consideration, that while the zealous advocates for self-righteousness are miserably defective in all spiritual duties, the Gospel of Christ invariably stimulates us to an holy, spiritual, and unreserved obedience.

Many more excellencies of the Gospel might be mentioned: but if those that have been stated will not endear it to us, it is in vain to hope that any thing which could be added would procure it a favourable reception.

And now, as there are many in this Assembly who are already engaged in the service of the sanctuary, and many others who are destined in due time to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, and as the words of my text are in a more especial manner applicable to persons so circumstanced, suffer me, with humility, yet with freedom and faithfulness, to address myself in a more especial manner to them; and let me intreat you to bear with me if I "use great boldness of speech."

I would beseech You then, my Brethren, to consider, that as the eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures is suspended on their reception or rejection of the Gospel, so their acquaintance with the Gospel must depend, in a great measure, on those who are authorised to teach it: for "Faith cometh by hearing; and how shall they hear without a Preacher?" Be not offended then if I ask, whether you yourselves have "received the truth in the love of it?" If you have not, how can you properly commend it to others? How can it be expected that you should "contend earnestly for that faith" which you yourselves have never embraced; or that you should

labour with becoming zeal to convert your hearers, when you yourselves are unconverted? O let it be a matter of deep and serious enquiry amongst us, whether we have felt the force and influence of the Gospel? Have we ever been convinced of unbelief? Have we seen the equity and reasonableness of the judgments denounced against us while in that state? Have we under a deep conviction of our guilt and helplessness, “fled to Christ for refuge?” Have we discovered the transcendent excellency of this salvation; and do we feel in our inmost souls its perfect suitableness to our own necessities, and its tendency to promote the interests of holiness? Can we say with the Apostle, that “what our eyes have seen, our ears have heard, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that, and that only, we declare” unto our people? In short, while we profess that “the ministry of reconciliation has been committed unto us,” do we experience this reconciliation ourselves? The salvation of our own souls, no less than that of our fellow-sinners, depends on this: indeed we are more interested in the Gospel than any; for if we continue ignorant of it, we perish under the aggravated guilt of rejecting it ourselves, and of betraying the souls of others into irretrievable ruin. We, of all people under heaven, are most bound to divest ourselves of prejudice, and to labour with our whole hearts both to enjoy the blessings of the Gospel, and to shew ourselves patterns of its sanctifying influence. Let us then, in compliance with the divine command, “take heed to ourselves, and to our doctrine, that, in so doing, we may both save ourselves, and them that hear us.”

But let others also be aware, that though they may have no responsibility attaching to them as ministers, they have as Christians. I must beg leave therefore to say unto *all*, that as “baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,” so the faith which they profess cannot save them, unless it be accompanied with a renovation of heart and life. Do not then be hasty to conclude that you are true believers: “examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;—prove your own selves.” Be assured, it is no easy matter to believe: it is by no means pleasing to flesh and blood: there is not any thing to which we are naturally more averse: what our Lord said to the Jews of old may be addressed with equal propriety to

the greater part of nominal Christians, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." But let it be remembered, that, however humiliating it may appear to our proud nature to renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependence, and to look for acceptance through the merits of Christ alone, it must be done: it will profit us little to have received the outward seal of his covenant, unless we possess also "the faith of God's elect." Our "lofty looks must be humbled, our haughtiness must be brought down, and the Lord alone must be exalted:" we must bow before the sceptre of his grace, or we shall be "broken in pieces with a rod of iron." If we truly and cordially "receive Him, we shall have the privilege of becoming the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." But "what shall our end be, if we obey not the gospel?" What prospect have we, but to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?" Behold then, life and death are this day set before you. Bearing, as we do, a commission from the Lord Jesus to preach his Gospel, "we are debtors both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." In his sacred Name, therefore, we deliver our message; we are constrained to deliver it with all faithfulness, "whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear." He, who with a penitent and contrite heart believeth in the Son of God, and, by virtue of that faith, is enabled to confess him before men, and to honour him by an holy life, he shall "receive the remission of his sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ." But he, who believeth not on the Son of God, however moral he may have been in his external conduct, and whatever pleas he may urge in extenuation of his guilt, he, I say, "shall not see life, but the wrath of God shall abide upon him:" he hath practically said, "I will not have this man to reign over me;" and the despised Saviour will, ere long issue this vindictive sentence,—"Bring him hither, and slay him before me." The decree is gone forth, nor shall all the powers of heaven or hell reverse it, "He who believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

DISCUSSION BY EXPLICATION.

Mark xvi. 15, 16. *He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

MANY are prejudiced against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity—

Hence, while its authority is maintained, its mysteries are suppressed—

But the declaration before us is of infinite importance—

I. Explain its import

The meaning of the terms being fixed, the whole will be clear—

Salvation comprehends the everlasting happiness of the soul

[It cannot be limited to any temporal deliverance—

Believers have been often subjected to persecutions and cruel deaths—

Nor was the deliverance of the saints in Jerusalem a matter of universal concern—

Its import is properly expressed by St. Paul^a—]

This is to be obtained by “believing” in Christ

[The faith here spoken of is not a mere assent to the gospel—

The devils themselves assent to truths at which they tremble^b—

To believe aright, is to receive Christ in all his offices^c—

And such faith has the promise of eternal life^d—

Not that it is more meritorious than other graces; but it unites the soul to Christ—]

Damnation on the contrary, imports everlasting misery

[The punishment of the wicked is elsewhere said to be eternal^e—

And the contrast in the the text fully expresses its duration—

Our Lord himself puts this point beyond a doubt^f—]

This will be our portion if we “believe not” in Christ

[It is not reserved only for avowed infidels and scoffers—

They are in unbelief, who are destitute of saving faith—

And therefore must want that salvation that is annexed to faith^g—]

^a 2 Tim. ii. 10.

^c John i. 12. 1 Cor. i. 3.

^e Mark ix. 43—48.

^b Acts viii. 13, 23. James ii. 19.

^d John iii. 14, 15, 16, 18, 36.

^f Matt. xxv. 46. ^g 2 Thess. i. 8.

To faith, baptism, when practicable, must be added

[The believer must openly profess his allegiance to Christ—
But no observance of outward ordinances will profit an unbeliever^h—]

The objections ignorantly urged against this gospel lead us to

II. Vindicate its reasonableness

To ascribe salvation to good works, and damnation to evil works, would be thought reasonable enough—

But to connect the former with faith, and the latter with unbelief, is deemed absurd and delusive—

Nevertheless the reasonableness of the gospel in both these points may be clearly evinced—

It is not unreasonable that a man should be saved by faith

[If faith were a mere assent to any doctrines, it would indeed be unreasonable to ascribe salvation to it—

But it is an humble reliance on the promises of God in Christ Jesusⁱ—

Is it unreasonable then that he who trusts in the death of Christ should feel its saving efficacy?—

Or that he who relies on God's promise, should experience his fidelity?—]

Nor is it unreasonable that a man should be damned for unbelief

[If unbelief were a mere dissent from any doctrine on account of its wanting sufficient evidence, *such unbelief* would be *comparatively* innocent—

But the unbeliever rejects what has been established by the strongest evidence—

Through pride he denies God's representation of his fallen state^k—

He accounts the wisdom of God to be foolishness,^l and his truth a lie^m—

He pours contempt on the richest displays of love and mercyⁿ—

Such treatment *we* could not endure from a fellow-creature—

How then can we expect to treat GOD thus with impunity?—

Surely, if the wages of every sin is death, much more may it be the reward of so complicated a sin as unbelief—]

^h This is intimated by the omission of baptism in the latter clause of the text.

ⁱ Heb. xi. 13.

^k Rev. iii. 17.

^l 1 Cor. i. 18. 23.

^m 1 John v. 10.

ⁿ Eph. ii. 7.

This point satisfactorily established, we shall

III. Display its excellency

Angels admire the gospel, as we also should, if we understood its excellencies—

1. It clearly defines the way of salvation

[All other ways of salvation are indefinite—

Who can say what portion of repentance will expiate sin and purchase heaven?—

Or what sincere obedience is? or by whom performed?—

Or what degrees of insincerity will consist with it?—

But every one may know whether he believe in Christ—

Hence every one may form a judgment of his state before God—

Surely this may well recommend the gospel to our acceptance—]

2. It is equally suited to all persons in all conditions

[How ill suited would any other way have been to the dying thief!—

How long must it have been before the murderers of our Lord could have entertained a comfortable hope of acceptance!—

But the gospel affords a prospect of salvation to all, however vile^o—

And is calculated to comfort us under every affliction—

What excellency can it possess that should more endear it to us?—]

3. It refers all the glory of our salvation to Christ alone

[Every other way of salvation leaves room for man to boast?^p—

But, on the plan of the gospel, all are equally indebted to Christ^q—

All on earth and in heaven ascribe salvation to him alone^r—

Their happiness is the more dear to them as being the purchase of his blood—

Nor would any consent for an instant to rob him of his glory^s—]

4. It most secures the practice of good works

[If the gospel really gave a licence to sin it might well be rejected—

But it teaches us to mortify all sin, and to delight in good works^t—

^o John vi. 37. Matt. xx. 9.

^q 1 Tim. iv. 10.

^s Comp. Gal. vi. 14. with Rev. iv. 10.

^p Rom. iii. 27.

^r Rev. i. 5. and v. 12, 13.

^t Tit. ii. 11, 12.

This effect has, in every age, been manifested in the lives of God's people—

St. Paul, the great champion of the faith, was inferior to none in holiness^u—

And the contradictory objections, now urged against the preachers and professors of the gospel, afford a strong testimony in their favour—]

APPLICATION. 1. To ministers

[They who preach the gospel, ought, above all, to experience its power—

If they do not, their condemnation will be greatly aggravated—

Let us then examine whether we have truly, and indeed believed—

And let us comply with that solemn, but encouraging injunction^x—]

APPLICATION. 2. To Christians in general

[Baptism does not supercede, but increase our obligation to believe^y—

However humiliating it be to seek salvation in another, we must submit^z—

The decree in the text is irreversible, and shall be executed in its season—]

^u 2 Cor. xii. 11.

^x 1 Tim. iv. 16.

^y 1 Pet. iii. 21. and Rom. vi. 4.

^z Rom. x. 3.

Mark xvi. 15, 16.

DISCUSSION BY WAY OF OBSERVATION.

*Observations on the Gospel Message.**

I. JESUS CHRIST has plainly revealed to us the terms of salvation

[God has sent *various messages* to our guilty world—

Sometimes he has used the ministry of men, and sometimes of angels—

But *in the text he speaks* to us by his only Son^a—]

I.

* M. CLAUDE'S TOPICS, which are here illustrated and referred to, are subjoined for the convenience of the Reader: See page 241. The words in *Italics* mark the precise idea that illustrates the particular Topic referred to.

^a Heb. i. 1.

His words contain <i>a command, a promise, and a threatening</i> —	II.
The duty he enjoins <i>imports a simple reliance upon Christ</i> —	XXVI.
Yet ^{is} it such a reliance as <i>includes a penitent obediential frame</i> —	III.
To faith thus exercised is annexed a promise of <i>eternal life</i> ^b —	XIII.
To the want of it, a threatening of <i>eternal death</i> ^c —	
Not that this was a new method of salvation—	XIX.
It had been <i>made known in types and prophecies</i> from the beginning—	
But it was revealed by Christ with more abundant light and evidence—]	
II. Those he prescribed are honourable to God and suitable to man	
[Any other method of salvation would have set the divine perfections, as it were, at variance—	XXIII.
Justice required satisfaction for our breaches of God's law—	
Truth demanded the execution of the penalty which the law denounced—	
Holiness forbad any things unclean to enter into heaven—	
But Christ has borne the penalty, and satisfied divine justice—	
And by faith we are interested in all that he has done and suffered ^d —	
Thus mercy may be exercised in consistency with truth and justice—	
And every perfection of the Deity be glorified in our salvation—	
Surely such a <i>plan</i> was <i>worthy of an all-wise God</i> —	
Nor could any other have been so suitable for fallen man—	
<i>What could we have hoped for from our obedience to the law?</i> —	
We are utterly incapable of fulfilling its strict demands—	
Yet, if we could do this in future, it would avail us nothing, unless we could also expiate the guilt of our past transgressions—	
But by <i>believing in Christ</i> we obtain a perfect righteousness ^e —	
And are made spotless in the sight of God himself ^f —	

^b Acts ii. 38.
^c Rom. iii. 22.

^e John viii. 24.
^f Eph. v. 27.

^d Acts xiii. 39.

Nor are there any so *good* but they need this }
 remedy— } X.
 Nor any so *vile* but they may be saved by it—]

III. All attempts to substitute any other will be
 vain

[Many are the refuges to which men flee, in
 a season of conviction—

They substitute their own repentance, reformation,
 &c. in the place of faith—

But Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's
 hope^g—

The very *offer of a Saviour* supposes that *we are*
lost— IV.

Nor need this gospel have been published, *if men*
could have saved themselves— V.

Can we *suppose* that Christ would have purchased
 this salvation at the price of his own blood, if men
 could have been saved without him?—

Or that, when he delivered so peremptory a mes-
 sage, he intended to leave men at liberty to substi-
 tute any plans of their own devising?— XXI.

Or that he will violate his own declarations to
 favour us?—

We may be sure that, whether we approve it or
 not, his counsel shall stand—

What he delivered *with such authority* he will
 certainly fulfil— VII.

What he so solemnly pronounced *at the very hour*
of his ascension, he will infallably execute at his
 second coming— VIII.

What *he had then authority* to publish *he will*
hereafter have power to enforce—] VI.

IV. To embrace them will be to secure ever-
 lasting happiness

[The promise of eternal life is unequivocally
 made to faith^h—

As soon as we believe in Christ, all our sins are
 forgivenⁱ—

And we have a title to a heavenly inheritance^k—

Nor shall we be deprived of the blessing on account
 either of the weakness of our faith or the greatness
 of our conflicts—

^g 1 Cor. iii. 11.

ⁱ Acts x. 43.

^h Acts xvi. 31.

^k Rom. viii. 17.

<p>The person who is most <i>strong in faith</i> will have most comfort in his way—</p>	} XI.
<p>But the <i>weakest believer</i> shall not lose his reward^l—</p>	
<p>His faith indeed will be tried by many conflicts^m—</p>	
<p>But he who has been the author of it will also be the finisherⁿ—</p>	
<p>V. To reject them will be to involve ourselves in everlasting misery</p>	
<p>[<i>The gospel</i> is the brightest <i>display of God's wisdom and goodness</i>^o—</p>	} XII.
<p>And <i>his intention in it is, to deliver men from destruction</i>—</p>	} XIV.
<p>But while it is a <i>mean of life</i> to some, it will prove an <i>occasion of death</i> to others^p—</p>	} XXVII.
<p>We <i>may err</i>, and that materially, in <i>some things</i>, and yet be saved at last^q—</p>	} XXIV.
<p>But if we reject or <i>adulterate the gospel</i>, we must <i>perish</i>^r—</p>	
<p>Nor should this be thought “an <i>hard saying</i>”—</p>	} XXII.
<p>We have ruined ourselves by manifold transgressions—</p>	
<p>Nor can we possibly restore ourselves to the divine favour—</p>	} XXII.
<p>But God has provided an adequate remedy for us—</p>	
<p>The rejection of that cannot but aggravate our guilt—</p>	} XXVII.
<p>Well therefore may it aggravate our condemnation also—</p>	
<p>He <i>never offered such mercy to the fallen angels</i>—</p>	} XXVII.
<p>Nor had he been unjust if he had withheld it from us—</p>	
<p>But it pleased him <i>to deliver up his Son for us</i>—</p>	} XXVII.
<p>Shall he not then punish the despisers of his mercy?—</p>	
<p>Surely his <i>patience</i> shall at last give way to <i>wrath</i>^s—</p>	} XXVII.
<p>And <i>compassionate invitations</i> be turned into <i>indignant reproofs</i>^t—</p>	
<p>Nor shall the damned themselves deny the equity of his procedure^u—</p>	

^l In the text, respect is had, not to the strength but to the reality of our faith.

^m 1 Tim. vi. 12.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 2.

^o 1 Cor. ii. 7.

^p 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

^q 1 Cor. iii. 15.

^r Gal. i. 8, 9.

^s Heb. iii. 9, 11.

^t Compare John vii. 37. with Matt. xxv.

^u Matt. xxii. 12.

26, 30, 41.

VI. To spread the knowledge of them should be the labour and ambition of all Christians

[The *benevolence and dignity* of our Saviour, while giving this last commission, are equally worthy our notice and admiration— XX.

In obedience to his command the apostles went forth into *all the world*— IX.

And delivered their message at the peril of their lives—

To them are we indebted for all the light we enjoy—
And is not their *message* still as *interesting* as ever?—

It is not still the Christian *minister's warrant and directory*?— } XXV.

Is it not the *believer's chief solace and support*?—

Yes, the Saviour's voice is *still sounding* in our ears— } XV.

Should we then regard it with indifference?—

Should we imitate those who *took away the key* of knowledge?^x—

Or those who *forbade* the apostles to *speak* to the gentiles?^y— } XVIII.

Let us rather labour to *spread the joyful sound*—

And to *diffuse the blessings* of salvation through heathen lands—

Nor ever rest till that glorious promise be accomplished^z—]

^x Luke xi. 52.

^y 1 Thess. ii. 16.

^z Isai. xi. 9.

Mark xvi. 15, 16.

DISCUSSION BY PROPOSITIONS.

I. THERE will be an awful difference between the states of different men in the day of judgment

It cannot be that the same portion should be reserved for all

[God, as our Lawgiver, must manifest a regard to his own law—

And, as our King, must distinguish between his faithful and rebellious subjects—

But there is no sufficient difference put between them in this world^a—

^a Eccl. ix. 2.

The wicked have no certain punishment, nor the righteous any adequate reward—

On the contrary, *they* often riot in ease, affluence, and honour, while *these* languish in pain, want, and infamy^b—

The notices also, which are on the consciences of men, afford reason to expect a future day of retribution^c—]

Some will be exalted to a state of unspeakable felicity

[They will be delivered from the corruption which here cleaved to them—

They will be admitted to the blissful regions of paradise—

The capacity of comprehension and enjoyment will be greatly enlarged—

They will join an assembly of most pure and blessed spirits—

Above all, they will behold their God and Saviour^d—

They will receive public testimonies of his approbation^e—

An unfading crown of righteousness will be given to them^f—

They will be seated with him on his throne of glory^g—

They will praise and adore him with all their powers—

Nor shall their happiness know either intermission or end^h—]

Others will be cast down to a state of inconceivable misery

[They will not be permitted to stand in the congregation of the righteousⁱ—

The Judge will banish them with indignation from his presence^k—

Shame and contempt shall be poured upon them before all^l—

They will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone^m—

God himself will pour out upon them the vials of his wrathⁿ—

Their own consciences also will bitterly reproach them^o—

They will have a distant view of the happiness they have lost^p—

And an enlarged capacity to endure the torment inflicted on them—

Nor shall they have any thing to assuage their anguish^q—

Not one moment's intermission of pain will be granted them—

Nor shall millions of ages terminate their misery^r—

^b Ps. lxxiii. 3—14.

^c Matt. xxv. 21.

^d Rev. iv. 8. & iii. 12.

^e Dan. xii. 2.

^f Wisd. v. 4.

^g Rev. xiv. 11.

^h Rom. i. 32. & ii. 15.

ⁱ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^j Ps. i. 5.

^k Rev. xx. 10.

^l Luke xvi. 23.

^m 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ⁿ Rev. iii. 21.

^o Matt. xxv. 41.

^p Ps. xi. 6.

^q Luke xvi. 24, 25.

There will be no intermediate state between these

[The idea of a purgatory is an absurd fiction--

Punishment, in this world does not change the nature of man--

Pharaoh was more and more hardened under ten successive plagues^s--

And in hell, so far from repenting, they blaspheme God^t--

The Scripture assures us that no change shall take place after death^u--

If Judas ever were brought to heaven, our Lord's assertion would be false^x--

Nor have the dead any prospect of annihilation^y--

Not the remotest period shall determine the existence of one single soul--]

II. These states will be fixed according to men's acceptance or rejection of the gospel

It is certainly true that our works will be the criterion whereby we shall be judged in the last day

[This is frequently asserted in the Holy Scriptures^z--

Our Lord has declared it in his account of the judicial process^a--

Nor can the smallest doubt be entertained respecting it--]

But a due reception of the gospel is a very important work

[God has given it as his special command that we believe on his Son^b--

And this command is as important as any in the decalogue--

Cognizance therefore will be taken of our violations of this, as well as of any other, duty--]

Indeed this work must be performed before we can do any other with acceptance

[Without faith in Christ we cannot do any thing that is good^c--

Nor can we derive any thing from him unless we be united to him^d--

But faith is the only bond by which that union can be effected^e--

Till we believe therefore, we can be only as withered branches^f--

^s Exod. viii. 32. ^t Rev. xvi. 9. ^u Eccl. ix. 10. Rev. xxii. 11.

^x Mark xiv. 21. ^y Luke xx. 36. 38. ^z Eccl. xii. 14. 2 Cor. v. 10.

^a Matt. xxv. 34--45.

^b 1 John iii. 23.

^c John xv. 5.

^d Ver. 4.

^e John. vi.: compare ver. 35, and 56.

^f John xv. 6.

Hence that striking and positive declaration of the apostle^g—]

There is an inseparable connection between our faith and our works

[We may distinguish between them as between the cause and effect—

But we cannot possibly separate them in our practice—

Our works are the fruits and evidences of our faith^h—

God, who searcheth the heart, might indeed decide upon our faith as it is seated there—

But man can judge of it only by the fruit it produces—

The day of judgment is for the purpose of displaying to the whole creation the equity of the divine procedureⁱ—

On this account our works will be brought forth as the ground of God's decision—

But, as he who judges of the fruit of a tree, judges of the tree itself, so God, in deciding in the fruits of our faith, decides eventually on the faith that produced them—]

Nor shall this connection be forgotten in the day of judgment

[Our Lord will surely not forget his own repeated declarations^k—

In enquiring into our works he will never overlook that which is the root and principle of all other works—

In considering how we acted towards each other, he will not be indifferent about our conduct towards himself—

We may be sure, therefore, that the text shall be fulfilled in that day—

And that while the rejecters of his gospel shall perish, the true believer alone shall be saved—]

INFER 1. The folly of neglecting the gospel

[Men usually respect the sanctions of human laws—

What effect then should not the sanctions of the gospel have upon us?—

When the sentence shall be passed, can we reverse it?^l—

If not, it must be madness to neglect this warning—

Such folly degrades us below the beasts that perish^m—

Let the past time suffice for such base and fatal conduct—]

INFER 2. The wisdom of embracing it with our whole hearts

[It is wisdom to regard things in proportion to their importance—

But what so important as the declarations of the gospel?—

^g Heb. xi. 6.

^h Jam. ii. 18.

ⁱ Rom. ii. 5.

^k John iii. 18. 36.

^l Isai. x. 3. 1 Cor. x. 22.

^m Isai. i. 5.

Temporal things are nothing in comparison of heaven and hell—

Every temporal consideration therefore should be as nothing in our eyesⁿ—

We should “buy the truth, and not part with it” at any price^o—

This is true wisdom, however it may be accounted folly—

And “wisdom ere long, shall be justified of all her children”—]

ⁿ Luke ix. 25. and xii. 4.

^o Prov. xxiii. 23.

Mark xvi. 15, 16.

DISCUSSION BY PERPETUAL APPLICATION.

INCESSANT was our Lord's attention to the welfare of his church—

Regardless both of his own sufferings and glory, he was ever occupied in that one concern—

On the very eve of his crucifixion he instituted the memorials of his dying love—

And, at the moment of his ascension, provided for the instruction of the world to the remotest period of time—

He had an eye to us, no less than to those of his own age and nation—

Shall we not then pay attention to his parting words?—

Shall we not consider them in reference to ourselves?—

The most important truths contained in them are obvious and acknowledged—

Let us then consider them in a way of practical enquiry

I. What knowledge have we of the gospel?

The gospel is a most stupendous display of the divine mercy

[It reveals salvation to a ruined world^a—

It discovers God himself as manifest in the flesh, and dying for sin^b—

^a 1 Tim. i. 15.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 16. Acts xx. 28.

It offers, and intreats us to accept, redemption through his blood^c—

It requires nothing to be done on our part to *merit* his favour^d—

But teaches us to improve carefully what we receive freely^e—]

But its true nature and design are not generally understood

[*Some* take up prejudices against it as a licentious system—

Nor will they be at any pains to acquire just views of its doctrines—

Others adulterate it with a mixture of human inventions^f—

Or destroy its efficacy by a self-righteous dependence^g—]

Let us however enquire what are our views respecting it

[Do we indeed see it to be “worthy of all acceptance?”—

Does the remedy it proposes appear suited to our necessities?—

Is it considered by us as “the power of God and the wisdom of God?”^h—

Do we “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it?”ⁱ—

Has God shined in our hearts to give us these views?^k—

Or does Satan yet blind our eyes that we cannot see them?^l—

Let us search whether the veil be yet taken from our hearts^m—]

II. What effect have its sanctions produced upon us?

We are astonished to see how little the sanctions of the gospel are regarded

[We can form very little idea of the felicity of heaven—

Nor have we any adequate conceptions of the torments of hell—

But there is nothing grand which is not used to represent the one—

Or terrible which does not serve to describe the other—

Yet, awful as they are, few are suitably affected with them—

Motives taken from temporal and visible things have weight—

But eternal things, because invisible, engage no attention—

^c 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

^d Isai. iv. 1.

^e Tit. ii. 11, 12.

^f 2 Cor. ii. 17.

^g Gal. v. 2. 4.

^h 1 Cor. i. 24. Rom. i. 16.

ⁱ Phil. iii. 8.

^k 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^l Ib. ver. 4.

^m 2 Cor. iii. 14.

They are esteemed, in great measure, as “cunningly devised fables”ⁿ—]

We ask then what effect they have produced on us?

[Are we stimulated to diligence by a prospect of heaven?— — —]

Does the thought of hell impress us with holy fear?—

Does a dread of the destroying angel induce us to keep our hearts sprinkled with the blood of Jesus?^o—

How obdurate must we be if we be not thus influenced!—]

II. What evidence have we that our faith is scriptural and saving?

We are apt to mistake the nature of saving faith

[Some suppose it to mean no more than an assent to the gospel—

Others imagine it to consist in an assurance of our interest in Christ—

But both of these are equally remote from the truth—

The former may accord with the indulgence of every sin—

The latter is no where declared necessary to salvation—

It is indeed an high privilege to know our sins forgiven^p—

But we must be pardoned before we can know that we are pardoned—]

But the scripture account of faith is clear and precise

[Faith, with respect to *its nature*, is a simple reliance on Christ^q—

In *its origin*, it is a free unmerited gift of God^r—

And in *its effects*, it is invariably productive of good works^s—

Such was the faith of the first converts and the Jailor^t—]

Let us then enquire whether we be really possessed of it

[Have we ever found the difficulty of believing?—

And under a sense of our weakness cried to God for faith?^u—

Has God in answer to our prayer wrought faith in our hearts?^x—

Are we enabled by it to overcome the maxims and habits of the world?^y—

Are we filled by means of it with love to the brethren?^z—

And are we purified by it from earthly, sensual, devilish affections?^a—

Let us thus examine ourselves whether we be in the faith^b—

ⁿ 2 Pet. i. 16.

^o Heb ix. 14. xi. 28.

^p 1 John v. 13.

^q 1 Pet. ii. 6.

^r Phil. i. 29.

^s Jam. ii. 26. Col. i. 6.

^t Acts ii. 37—47. and xvi. 30—34.

^u Mark ix. 24.

^x Eph. i. 19.

^y 1 John v. 4.

^z Gal. v. 6. 1. Pet. i. 22.

^a Acts xv. 9.

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

We may deceive ourselves; but we cannot deceive God^c—]

ADDRESS 1. To those that are in unbelief

[The gospel was to be “preached to every creature in the world”—

And a woe is denounced against the ministers who preach it not^d—

What it is their duty to preach, it must be our duty to hear^e—

Know then that to you is the word of this salvation sent^f—

Put it not from you, nor adjudge yourselves unworthy of eternal life^g—

A time will come when you will wish that you had received it—

“Consider this; and the Lord give you understanding in all things”^h—]

ADDRESS 2. To those who are weak in faith

[You greatly dishonour God by your doubts and fears—

What could the Saviour have done more for you than he has done?ⁱ—

What reason can you have to doubt his power or willingness to save?^j—

Does the guilt of sin dismay, or its power oppress your soul?^k—

Christ will both expiate its guilt,^k and subdue its power^l—

Plead the promise in the text, and it shall be fulfilled to you—]

ADDRESS 3. To those who are strong in faith

[How glorious is the prospect opened to you by the Lord Jesus!—

Let it fill you with holy gratitude and joy—

And now shew a concern for the honour of your Lord and Saviour—

Shew what is the genuine scope and tendency of the gospel^m—

Silence by your lives the calumnies of the ungodly—

Let the efficacy of faith be seen in the excellence of your works—

And the Lord grant that you may ever be able to say with the apostleⁿ—

^c Gal. vi. 7.

^e Matt. x. 14, 15. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

^h 2 Tim. ii. 7. ⁱ Isai. v. 4.

^l Mic. vii. 19. Rom. vi. 14.

^a Heb. x. 39.

^d 1 Cor. ix. 16. Ezek. xxxiv. 2.

^f Acts xiii. 26. ^g Ib. ver. 46.

^k 1 John ii. 1, 2.

^m Tit. iii. 8. as connected with the foregoing verses 4—7.

MR. CLAUDE'S

TOPICS,

Referred to in the Skeleton, p. 229—233.

-
- I. Rise from species to genus.
 - II. Descend from genus to species.
 - III. Remark the divers characters of a vice, which is forbidden, or of a virtue which is commanded.
 - IV. Observe the relation of one subject to another.
 - V. Observe whether some things be not supposed, which are not expressed.
 - VI. Reflect on the person speaking or acting.
 - VII. Reflect on the state of the person speaking or acting.
 - VIII. Remark the time of a word or action.
 - IX. Observe place.
 - X. Consider the persons addressed.
 - XI. Examine the particular state of persons addressed.
 - XII. Consider the principles of a word or action.
 - XIII. Consider consequences.
 - XIV. Reflect on the end proposed in an expression or an action.
 - XV. Consider whether there be any thing remarkable in the manner of the speech or action.
 - XVI. Compare words and actions with similar words and actions.
 - XVII. Remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions.
 - XVIII. Contrast words and actions.
 - XIX. Examine the grounds, or causes of an action or expression; and shew the truth or equity of it.
 - XX. Remark the good and bad in expressions and actions.
 - XXI. Suppose things.
 - XXII. Guard against objections.
 - XXIII. Consider Characters of—Majesty—Meanness—Infirmity—Necessity—Utility—Evidence, &c.
 - XXIV. Remark degrees.
 - XXV. Observe different interests.
 - XXVI. Distinguish—define—divide—
 - XXVII. Compare the different parts of the text together.

SKELETONS.

(I. THE ONLY TRUE AND SUFFICIENT GROUND OF GLORYING.

Jer. ix. 23, 24. *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.*

WE need no other introduction to our subject than that of the Prophet^a—

Bearing in mind therefore the Saviour's repeated admonitions,^b we shall

I. Remove the false and insufficient grounds of glorying
Wisdom, Power, and Riches, are highly esteemed amongst men—

And, if rightly improved, they certainly are valuable talents

[*Wisdom* enables a man to conduct his own affairs with discretion—

It qualifies him also for instructing his fellow-creatures—

It may lead a person to make many valuable discoveries—

Thus it may profit individuals and the community at large—

Might also is useful for the preserving of order in society—

And it may be improved to suppress vice, and encourage virtue—

Riches too may serve for the rewarding of industry—

Or they may be employed in relieving the necessitous—

None of these things therefore ought to be depreciated—]

But they are by no means proper objects of glorying

To glory in any thing, is, to value it highly, pursue it eagerly, and seek our happiness in it—

^a Isai. i. 2.

Mark iv. 9. 23.

But we must not thus glory in *Wisdom*

[The wisest know that they know but little—

Their best concerted plans they often want power to accomplish—

Disease or accident may soon reduce them to a level with the beasts—]

Nor should we glory thus in *Might*

[Power is a source of temptation to those who are invested with it—

It indisposes a man to comply with reasonable restraints—

It generally excites opposition in those who are subjected to it—]

Nor are *Riches* at all more worthy objects of our glorying

[Wealth is very apt to produce covetous and sordid tempers—

It frequently renders its possessors proud and oppressive—

At best it can furnish us with little more than food and raiment—

And we are liable to be deprived of it in a thousand ways^c—]

To glory therefore in any of these things would be absurd^d—

Having removed these common but insufficient grounds of glorying, we shall

II. Propose such as are true and sufficient

The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus is the only object of glorying

[The knowledge that there is a God is not the knowledge here spoken of—

Nor is it the knowledge of God as He is seen in the works of creation—

But the knowledge spoken of in the text is a view of him in redemption—

^c Prov. xxiii. 5.

^d Who that considers what *Wisdom* is, would ever glory in it; so limited as it is in its extent—so defective in its operations—and so uncertain in its continuance? Or who in *Might*, the possession of which is so dangerous—and the exercise of which is so vexatious to themselves and others? Or who in *Riches*, which are so defiling in their influence—so contracted in their benefits—and so precarious in their tenure? If to this we add, that all these things perish and depart at death, and are utterly useless in the day of judgment, we can have no doubt but that the prohibition in the text is as reasonable as it is decisive.

It is in the Gospel only that God's loving-kindness to his friends appears—

In that too especially He denounces his judgments on his enemies^e—

And in both He displays equally his unspotted righteousness^f—

Not that a speculative knowledge even of this will suffice—

The words “understand and know” imply a practical knowledge—]

This is a just ground of glorying to all who possess it

1. It is *free from all the defects* which are found in the foregoing grounds

[*They* render the mind low and groveling; *This* elevates and ennobles it—

They never satisfy the soul; *This* affords it perfect satisfaction^g—

They may become sources of craft, tyranny and avarice; *This* always changes us into God's image^h—

They end with our present existence; *This* is perfected at death—]

2. It *transcends all the excellencies* that are in the foregoing grounds

It imparts *more excellent wisdom*

[It rectifies our judgments about more important objects—

It teaches us to seek the ends by the fittest means—]

It endues us with *more excellent might*

[It renders us mighty to mortify our lusts and passionsⁱ—

It qualifies us to conflict with all the powers of darkness^k—]

It conveys to us *more excellent riches*

[It puts into our hands “the unsearchable riches of Christ”—

It makes us rich in possession, and in reversion too^l—]

3. It *comprehends all the foregoing grounds in the highest degree*

Wisdom

[This knowledge of God unfolds the deepest mysteries^m—

It shews how sin may be punished, and yet the sinner saved—

It shews how *mercy* is exalted *in punishing*, and *justice* in *rewarding*—]

^e Mark xvi. 16.

^f Ps, lxxv. 10.

^g Isai. lv. 2.

^h 2 Cor. iii. 18.

ⁱ 2 Cor. x. 3—5.

^k Eph. vi. 11, 12.

^l Eccl. vii. 12.

^m Col. ii. 2, 3.

Might

[The salvation of a ruined world is a marvellous display of power—

Hence Christ is called “the *Wisdom* of God, and the *Power* of God”—

We have no idea of almighty power, ’till we know a redeeming God—]

Riches

[Infinite are the riches of divine grace—

In the glorious mystery of redemption they are all contained—

The knowledge of God exhibits them all to our viewⁿ—]

In this we cannot possibly glory too much

[We cannot possibly set too high a value on this knowledge^o—

We cannot pursue it with too much earnestness—

We cannot delight in it with too exalted joy—

Let us therefore seek to know God as He is revealed in the Gospel—

Let us take encouragement from that declaration of our Lord^p—

Let the fixed purpose of our hearts resemble that of the apostle^q—]

ⁿ Eph. ii. 7. ^o 1 Cor. ii. 2. ^p John xvii. 3. ^q Gal. vi. 14.

II. OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE PENITENT THIEF.

— Luke xxiii. 42, 43. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

THE history of Christ in every view is replete with wonders—

In every part of it we trace a mixture of dignity and debasement—

When he lay in a manger, the wise men were conducted to him by a star—

When he was tempted by the devil, an angel ministered unto him—

He was now dying as a malefactor, and “crucified through weakness”—

Yet did he, in answer to the Thief's petition, assert his power to save—

I. The Thief's petition first requires our attention

This petition, if duly considered, will appear very remarkable—

It implied *an acknowledgment of our Lord's dignity.*

[Our Lord had often asserted himself to be a king^a—

For this he was accused,^b mocked,^c condemned,^d crucified^e—

Yet *then* did the malefactor acknowledge him as a king—

He beheld him on the cross as though he had seen him upon his throne—

He proclaimed him Sovereign of the *invisible* world—

His petition in this view was stronger than any assertion could be—]

It implied further *an affiance in his mercy*

[Often had our Lord been intreated to heal disorders of the body^f—

But rarely had any made application to him on behalf of their souls—

The Thief however offered his petition only for spiritual blessings^g—

And for the obtaining of mercy he relied simply on the grace of Christ—

Nor did he express a doubt of Christ's power or willingness to save^h—

Yet was his affiance tempered with the deepest humilityⁱ—]

What acceptance he met with will appear from considering

II. Our Lord's answer

Our Lord had never refused those who came to him for bodily cures—

He now testified the same readiness to relieve spiritual wants—

In his answer he displayed *the freeness* of his grace

^a John xviii. 37. in reference to which St. Paul speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 13.

^b Luke xxiii. 2. ^c Matt. xxvii. 28, 29. ^d John xix. 12, 14, 15.

^e Mark xv. 26.

^f Mark iii. 10. & ii. 4.

^g He did not ask to have his life prolonged, or his pains mitigated, but that his soul might be saved.

^h He did not say, "If thou wilt," or "If thou canst," as others had done on less important occasions. Mark viii. 2. Mark ix. 22.

ⁱ He did not presume to offer such a request as the ambitious disciples had done, Mark x. 37. but like the Canaanitess, Matt. xv. 27. was contented with the smallest expression of his mercy, "Remember me."

[He granted the Thief's petition *without* a moment's *hesitation*^k—

He conferred the desired blessing "*without upbraiding*"^l—

He bestowed his mercy *without* prescribing any *conditions*^m—

Thus did he exemplify what he had commanded his prophet to proclaimⁿ—]

He also manifested *the fulness* of his grace

[Often has God bestowed more than this people have desired^o—

Here our Lord infinitely exceeds the Thief's request—

He promises, not a remembrance merely, but converse "with himself"^p—

This converse too shall be enjoyed, not on earth, but "in paradise"^p—

It shall moreover be enjoyed, by him "that very day"^q

Of all this he assures the Thief in the most solemn manner—

What must now have been the feelings of the pardoned Criminal!^r—

What a comment does this afford us on God's gracious declaration!^s—]

To guard this subject against abuse we must suggest a

CAUTION

[Some may take occasion from it to defer their repentance—

But it does not afford any just ground for such conduct—

^k When the innocent Joseph intreated Pharaoh's butler to remember him after his restoration to his place at court, the ungrateful butler forgot him two long years; nor would have thought of him then, but from absolute necessity. What different treatment did this guilty Thief receive from his offended Lord!

^l How justly might our Lord have upbraided him for his whole course of life, his late repentance, and especially his behaviour even upon the cross! Matt. xxvii. 44. But he was God, and acted like God. Jam. i. 5. and Luke xv. 20. 23.

^m He did not require the Thief to do any thing in order to *merit* his mercy.

ⁿ Isai. lv. 1. ^o 1 Kin. iii. 11—13. or Matt. xviii. 26, 27.

^p This is sometimes called Hades or Hell as in Acts ii. 27. and in the creed; but it means the place where departed saints dwell in the presence of God, 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4. and Rev. ii. 7.

^q Neither our Lord nor his apostles ever countenanced the idea of the soul sleeping till the resurrection. See 2 Cor. v. 8.

^r Had the executioners now offered to release him, surely he would have said like St. Paul, Phil. i. 23.

^s Isai. lv. 8, 9.

The case was singular *as it respects both Christ,^t and the Thief^u*—

It is extreme folly therefore to reject the present overtures of mercy in expectation of a such a miraculous conversion at the last—]

Nevertheless we may derive from this history much

ENCOURAGEMENT

[It forbids any, however long or heinously they may have sinned, to despair—

It points out the simple way in which we may attain salvation—

The substance of our Lord's answer is applicable to every penitent—

Such joy is offered to all^s—Let all seek it in the same way^y—]

^t Christ was now in the lowest state of humiliation; divine wisdom judged it necessary therefore to give to the world some signal display of his dignity and glory. Hence the whole creation was constrained to bear testimony to him; Matt. xxvii. 45. 51. and the Thief was chosen from among men to be a monument of his power and grace. But such an occasion never will occur again; and therefore no similar interposition is to be expected.

^u The Thief, like other malefactors, had most probably disregarded the means of grace, and never heard Christ before. Yet now he confessed his sin, rebuked his companion, vindicated Christ, and committed himself entirely to his mercy. But how different was this exercise of grace from what we generally see on a death-bed! And what little reason have we to expect that such grace shall be given us in our last hours, when we are despising the offers of Grace and Mercy which are made to us continually!

^s Rom. x. 12, 13.

^y Ps. cvi. 4.

III. THE DIFFICULTY OF KNOWING OUR OWN STATE.

Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

THE perfections of God are all infinitely glorious—

But, like the cloud of fire, they have a different aspect towards the friends, and the enemies of God—

To the ungodly they are dark and terrible; but to the godly they are full of light and comfort^a—

^a Exod. xv. 11.

His omniscience in particular is a ground both of joy and terror—

In this light David speaks of it in the psalm before us—

He represents this attribute in striking colours^b—

He declares that the consideration of it was delightful to him^c—

But the prospect it afforded him with respect to the wicked was extremely melancholy^d—

Returning however to his own immediate concerns, he improves this attribute to his own spiritual advantage, v. 23, 24.

From these words we may observe

I. That the allowing of any sin is incompatible with a state of salvation

There is no man who is perfectly free from sin^e—

But no real Christian will knowingly harbour sin—

The indulging of it could not consist with his salvation—

This is strongly intimated in the text^f—

It is also expressly declared in other parts of scripture

[A regenerate person it is said cannot indulge sin^g—

Allowed sin characterizes those who are of the devil^h—

It entirely prevents the acceptance of our prayersⁱ—

It entails on a person everlasting destruction^k—

Our Lord repeatedly urges this as a reason for mortifying every sin, how pleasant or profitable soever it be^l—]

Nor ought it to be esteemed “an hard saying”

[The harbouring of any sin is a contempt of God’s authority^m—

It defeats the end of Christ’s incarnation and deathⁿ—

It argues an entire want of sincerity^o—

It therefore justly brings the curse of God upon us^p—]

There is one thing indeed which renders the consideration of this extremely awful

^b Ver. 1—12. ^c Ver. 17, 18. ^d Ver. 19. ^e 1 Kin. viii. 46.

^f He intimates that if there were *any* wicked way in him, he could not be walking in the way everlasting.

^g 1 John iii. 9.

^h 1 John iii. 8.

ⁱ Ps. lxvi. 18.

^k Matt. v. 19.

^l Matt. v. 29, 30.

^m Jam. ii. 10, 11.

ⁿ 1 John iii. 8.

^o John i. 47.

^p Jer. xlviii. 10.

II. That it is very difficult to know whether we have any allowed sin in us or not

The rule of our duty is clear enough—

But it is by no means easy to determine how far our experience corresponds with it—

This is evidently implied in the solicitude which David expresses for divine aid and direction—

It may be confirmed also by many scripture-examples

[What ignorance of his own heart did Hazael discover!^q—

James and John little thought by what spirit they were actuated^r—

Nor was Peter aware of his own instability^s—

Paul himself could not venture positively to determine the extent of his own innocence^t—

God has declared that no one can attain a perfect knowledge of his own heart^v—]

Many reasons might be assigned for this difficulty

[The very best of our actions are blended with sin—

Self-love tempts us to view them in too favourable a light—

We put specious names on our bosom-sins—

Hence it is hard to discern the exact qualities of our actions—]

To evince however that there is one way of judging aright, we shall proceed to shew

III. What method the Christian adopts for determining this point

Self-examination is a duty inculcated in scripture^u—

It is necessary for the attaining of self-knowledge—

The Christian therefore can adopt the words of Asaph^x—

But he does not rest satisfied with his own exertions

[He is aware of “the deceitfulness of sin,” the treachery of his own heart, and “the devices of Satan”—

Though he rejoices in the testimony of his own conscience, he dares not confide in it too much^y—

He cries to God to “search and try him”

[He remembers whose prerogative it is to search the heart^z—

He reads the word that God may search him with it^a—

^q 2 Kin. viii. 13.

^t 1 Cor. iv. 4.

^x Ps. lxxviii. 6.

^a Heb. iv. 12.

^r Luke ix. 55.

^v Jer. xvii. 9.

^y Prob. xxviii. 26.

^s Matt. xxvi. 35.

^u 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^z Jer. xvii. 10.

He regards conscience as God's vicegerent^b—

He looks up for the Spirit's aid and influence^c—

In this way he prays, like David, *frequently and with fervour*—]

He commits himself to the divine guidance and direction

[He knows he shall err if God do not "lead" him—

He trusts in the promises which God has given him in his word^d—]

In this way he attains abiding peace and confidence^e—

APPLICATION

[Let us all begin the work of self-examination—

Let us call in the divine aid with importunate supplications—

Let us inquire whether there be not some sin which we indulge, or some duty which we neglect?^g—

Let us not think that inadvertence can excuse our sins, while we neglect the means of discovering them^f—

Let us tremble lest, through the indulgence of one sin, our religion prove vain at last^g—

Let us not walk in a way which shall serve merely for a *present shew*, but a way that shall be of "everlasting" benefit—]

^b Prov. xx. 27.

^c Rom. viii. 26.

^d Ps. xxv. 9. Prov. iii. 6.

^e Phil. iv. 6, 7.

^f Lev. v. 17.

^g Jam. i. 26.

IV. MEN'S CONTEMPT OF GOD.

[Ps. x. 13. *Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.*

THE thoughts of God respecting the nature and malignity of sin, are widely different from those which are entertained in the breasts of natural men—

Men consider themselves as innocent if their outward conduct be not grossly reprehensible—

And what they cannot justify in their actions they extenuate under lenient expressions—

But God notices the very frame and dispositions of the heart—

He clearly and infallibly interprets the language of men's thoughts—

He declares that the wickedness of their actions proceeds from atheism in their hearts^a—

^a Ps. xiv. 1.

Thus in the psalm before us he reveals the secret motives by which the wicked are actuated (v. 2, 4, 6, 11.) and puts the right construction on their thoughts, v. 13.—

We shall consider

I. In what respects men contemn God

Where all the lineaments of our contempt of God to be drawn, we should scarce ever finish the dreadful portrait

[We make light of the *Father's* authority, the *Son's* sacrifice, the *Spirit's* influence—

Every *office* they sustain, every *attribute* they possess, every *relation* they bear to us, we disregard and dishonour—

We overlook God's *providence*, are unmindful of his *word*, neglect his *ordinances*, profane his *sabbaths*, despise his *people*—]

But, waving all other points, we fix our attention on that mentioned in the text, viz. *Our virtual denial of God's punitive justice*—

Men evidence by their lives that they think God will not require sin at their hands—

1. Their impenitence for their past sins shews it

[They do not humble themselves for sin, or seek after a Saviour—

The language of this is, “God does not regard, nor will require my sin”—]

2. Their unconcern about the prevention of sin in future shews it

[They indulge all their evil habits, rush carelessly into temptations, listen to no admonitions, seek not God's aid, and even stifle their convictions—

The language of this is, “Sin may be indulged with impunity, God will not require it”—]

This thought, or language of their hearts, is a contempt of God himself

Of his holiness

[God is represented as an infinitely Holy Being^b—

But this supposes him to be such an one as ourselves^c—]

Of his justice

[The scripture speaks of God as just^d—

But this intimates that he is indifferent about the execution of his laws^e—]

^b Isa. vi. 3. Hab. i. 13.

^e Ps. l. 21.

^d Deut. xxxii. 4.

^c Zeph. i. 12.

Of his wisdom

[The devising of the plan of redemption was the greatest effort of divine wisdom—

But this declares that the devising of it was superfluous, and that an attention to it is unnecessary—]

Of his mercy

[God in infinite mercy offers us salvation through his Son^f—

But this is a determinate refusal of his gracious offers—]

Such is the construction which God himself puts upon it^g—

II. Wherefore they do so

This contempt of God is in the highest degree unreasonable—

The question therefore must be considered in a way of expostulation

1. What assurance has any man that God will *not* require sin?

[Supposing it possible or even probable, who can be certain of it?—

What folly then must it be to continue in sin through hopes of impunity, when the mistake, if it be one, will be irrevocable, and the consequences of it irremediable?—

We are bound, in common prudence, to chuse the safe side—]

2. Has not God said that he *will* require sin?

[The testimonies to this effect are most indubitable^h—

Can we suppose that God will falsify his word?ⁱ—]

3. Has not God *already* in many instances *required* sin?

[Have not individuals, companies, cities, the whole world, yea, man in Paradise, and angels in Heaven, been made monuments of divine vengeance:^k—

Why may he not manifest his indignation against US also?—]

4. Will not the account be dreadful if he *should* require sin?

[No heart can conceive the terrors of the final judgment—

Who, in his right mind, would risk the loss of Heaven, and the suffering of Hell?—]

^f Isai. lv. 1, 2.

^g 1 Sam. ii. 30. Rom. ii. 4.

^h 1 Cor. vi. 9. John iii. 3.

ⁱ Numb. xxiii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

^k Jude vi. 7.

5. Can any power or policy of men *prevent* his requiring sin?

[Let us first avert death from our bodies, or provide an answer to Job's question¹—

Not earth and hell combined can prevent the punishment of one sinner^m—]

APPLICATION

[Let us see how deeply we have been involved in this guilt—

Let us consider to what an extent we may commit sin even by our thoughts—

Let us flee for refuge to the hope set before us—

If we believe in Christ, God will never require sin at our handsⁿ—

A believer may not only think this in his heart, but express it with his lips—

Such expressions so far from pouring contempt on God will greatly honour him—

God is not more honoured by any thing than by the humble confidence of a believer^o—

Let us all therefore lay our sins on the head of the true scape-goat—

So shall they never be required of us in the day of judgment^p—

¹ Job ix. 4.

^m Prov. xi. 21.

ⁿ Acts xiii. 39.

^o Rom. iv. 20.

^p Mic. vii. 19.

V. MAN'S ABUSE OF GOD'S PATIENCE.

Eccl. viii. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

SIN is in itself an evil of a crimson dye—

Nevertheless its malignity may be greatly increased by the aggravations with which it is attended—

One can scarcely conceive any thing that can enhance its guilt so much, as the committing of it in hopes that God's mercy will pardon it—

Yet this is the very ground on which the world indulge themselves in the commission of it—"Because," &c.

I. The extent of man's wickedness

That sin exists in the world is visible to all—

But the degree in which it prevails is very little known—
Men sin

1. Habitually

[All are not equally vicious in their lives—
But all forget God and neglect their own souls—
Successive years serve only to confirm this habit—
We may all adopt the confession of the church of old^a—]

2. Deliberately

[It were well if we never sinned, but through ignorance
or inadvertence—

But what schemes have we formed for the accomplishment
of sinful purposes!—

How often have we seen the sinfulness of our desires, and
yet gratified them!^b—

The very bent and inclination of our souls has been towards
wickedness^c—]

3. Without restraint.

[A regard to our reputation or interest may impose some
restraint—

A fear of hell may also prevent the gratification of some
desires—

But few are kept from evil like Joseph, by the fear of
God^d—

That is the only restraint which proves uniformly effec-
tual^e—]

4. Without remorse

[We must at times have felt some convictions of con-
science—

But we, for the most part, stifle them by company, amuse-
ments, &c.—

Many attain to dreadful hardness of heart and impeni-
tence^f—

The prophets description may well be applied to each of
us^g—]

Thus are “men’s hearts fully set in them to do evil”

[They walk after the imagination of their own hearts—

Neither mercies nor judgments can prevail with them to do
otherwise—]

If their sins were followed by a visible and immediate
punishment, men would not dare to live in this manner—

But God defers the execution of his judgments

^a Jer. iii. 25.

^b Rom. i. 32.

^c Job xv. 16.

^d Gen. xxxix. 9.

^e Jam. ii. 11.

^f 1 Tim. iv. 2.

^g Jer. viii. 5, 6.

II. The occasion of it

God is not an unconcerned spectator of sin

He has appointed a day for the revelation of his righteous judgment—

At present he forbears to inflict vengeance—

This very forbearance emboldens men to sin—"because," "therefore"

From the delay of punishment men think

1. That there is but little "evil" in sin

[God indeed calls sin "an evil work"—

But his forbearance towards sinners is thought to indicate indifference—

This however is a fatal delusion—

He has marked the evil of sin in many awful instances^h—

He will soon undeceive this blind infatuated worldⁱ—]

2. That there is no "sentence" gone forth against it

[Men would gladly persuade themselves that they have no cause to fear—

The temptation whereby the serpent beguiled Eve, is cherished by them^k—

But the wrath of God is indeed denounced against sin^l—

Every species and degree of sin renders us obnoxious to his displeasure^m—]

3. That the sentence (if there be any) will never be "executed"

[Since God defers punishing, it seems possible that he may decline it altogether—

The apparent disproportion between the offence and the punishment seems to countenance this idea—

To confirm our hope we are apt to compare God with ourselvesⁿ—

But, however long God delay, he will surely strike at last^o—]

Thus they take occasion from God's forbearance to persist in their evil ways

[David mentions this effect as arising from it in his day^p—

St. Peter foretells the prevalence of this iniquity in the last days^q—

Experience proves how universally it obtains at present—]

INFER

1. How great the folly, as well as wickedness, of unregenerate men!

^h 2 Pet. ii. 4—6.

ⁱ Eph. v. 6.

^k Gen. iii. 4.

^l Rom. ii. 8, 9.

^m Rom. i. 18.

ⁿ Ps. i. 21.

^o Eccl. viii. 12, 13.

^p Ps. lv. 19.

^q 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

[If there were a bare possibility of eternal punishment, how mad were it to continue in sin!—

But God has pledged himself that he will inflict it on the impenitent^r—

Every moment's continuance in sin increases the condemnation^s—

What extreme folly then is it so to abuse the forbearance of God!—

May we be ashamed of ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes—]

2. What need have we to be cleansed by the blood and spirit of Christ!

[What but the blood of Christ can ever expiate the guilt we have contracted?—

What but the spirit of Christ can ever deliver us from such habits?—

That we can never renew our own souls is certain^t—

Let us therefore wash in the fountain opened for us^u—

And let us apply to God for his almighty aid^v—]

3. How dreadful must be the state of those who continue impenitent!

[There is a certain measure of iniquity which sinners are left to fill up^y—

When this is full, nothing can avert the divine vengeance^z—

Already are the arrows of divine Justice pointed at them^a—

Eternity itself will be the duration of the punishment^b—

The time is coming when Jerusalem's state will be ours^c—

Let us then tremble lest we exhaust the divine patience^d—

Let us diligently improve this day of salvation^e—]

^r Matt. xxv. 46.

^s Rom. ii. 4, 5.

^t Jer. xiii. 23.

^u Zech. xiii. 1.

^x Lam. v. 21.

^y Gen. xv. 16.

^z 1 Thess. ii. 16.

^a Ps. vii. 11—13.

^b Mark ix. 43—48.

^c Luke xix. 42.

^d Zeph. ii. 2, 3.

^e 2 Cor. vi. 2.

—VI. THE IMPROVEMENT TO BE MADE OF THE DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

2 Cor. v. 10, 11. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.*

TIME is generally thought to be of little use, except as it may be employed in amusements or in the prosecution of worldly business—

But its value, as it stands connected with eternity exceeds all calculation—

The manner in which every hour is spent is recorded in heaven—

Every moment, as it were, increases our eternal happiness or misery—

This consideration made the apostle solicitous to redeem time himself, and to improve it for the good of others: “ We knowing *therefore*,” &c.

I. The apostle’s account of the day of Judgment

“ Christ” is the person who shall judge the world

[He who stood at Pilate’s bar is exalted for this purpose^a—
Our Lord himself plainly and repeatedly affirmed it^b—]

He will erect his “ tribunal” in a solemn and public manner

[Daniel spake of this in very exalted terms^c—
Our Lord also has declared it^d—]

Before this “ we must all appear”

[All who have ever existed from the beginning to the end of the world shall stand at his bar^e—]

None shall be able to elude or to withstand the summons^f—]

All that we have done in the body will then be made manifest

[The secrets of every heart shall be disclosed^g—

The mask will be taken from the face of the hypocrite—

The tears and sighings of the contrite will be declared before all^h—]

Then shall every one receive according to his doings, “ whether they be good or bad”

[The seeming inequalities of the divine government will then be rectified—

The godly will not then be any more condemned, or the wicked be justified—

They who from faith and love have obeyed God shall be rewarded—

They who have been disobedient and unbelieving shall be punishedⁱ—]

The rewards and punishments shall be respectively proportioned to the good or evil that has been done

^a Acts xvii. 31.

^d Matt. xxv. 31.

^g Eccl. xii. 14.

^b John v. 22, 27.

^e Rev. xx. 12, 13.

^h 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^c Dan. vii. 9, 10.

^f John v. 28.

ⁱ Rom. ii. 5—11.

[They who have greatly improved their talents will be greatly rewarded^k—

They whose sins have been peculiarly aggravated will be more severely punished^l—]

A more important consideration than this cannot enter into the mind of man

II. The improvement which he made of it

This subject is extremely awful even to the best of men

[The most eminently pious are conscious of many defects—

They know also the deceitfulness of their hearts—

Hence not even St. Paul himself could fully rely on the verdict of his own conscience^m—]

But it is full of “terror” to the ungodly

[To see him as their Judge, whose dying love they despised!—

To be confronted with all their accomplices in wickedness—

To have the books of God’s remembrance opened!—

To have all their secret thoughts and desires exposed!—

To know that their doom is irrevocably fixed!—

To wait the dreadful sentence from the mouth of their Judge!—

To have nothing but an eternity of unmingled misery before them!—

What can be more terrible?ⁿ—]

Paul well “knew” this terror of the Lord

He therefore laboured “to persuade men”

[He persuaded men to “flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life”—

He *spared no pains* to attain this object of his wishes^o—

He *regarded no sufferings* if he might but prevail on some^p—

APPLICATION

[*We would improve this subject as the apostle did—*

We know most assuredly these terrors of the Lord—

We, on account of our office, are peculiarly interested in the events of that day^q—

We therefore would persuade you to repent and believe the gospel^r—

^k Luke xix. 17, 24.

^l Luke xii. 47.

^m 1 Cor. iv. 4.

^a Rev. vi. 14—17.

^o Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. ix. 19—22.

^p 2 Tim. ii. 10. Acts xx. 24.

^q Heb. xiii. 17. If this subject

were addressed to *the Clergy*, this thought should be amplified.

^r Mark i. 15.

We would persuade you by every alarming or encouraging consideration—

Consider the certainty of that day—the nearness of it—the greatness of the preparation necessary—and the consequence of dying unprepared—

Consider free remission, and the almighty assistance now offered you, and the blessedness of being prepared to meet your God—

May we all lay these considerations to heart!—

May we at the last be found, not only almost, but altogether Christians!—]

VII. CHRIST'S ADVICE TO THE SELF-DECEIVING PROFESSORS OF RELIGION.

Rev. iii. 17, 18. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

GOD is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—

Nevertheless he exercises wonderful patience and long-suffering towards sinners—

This was evident in all his conduct towards the Antediluvians, the Canaanites, the Jews—

But most of all is his forbearance manifested towards his church and people—

He sees thousands who name the name of Christ without departing from iniquity—

Such there were even in the earliest ages of Christianity—

Our Lord therefore, in an epistle to the Laodicean church, denounced his judgments against them, v. 16.—

But before he inflicted his judgments he gave them this affectionate advice—

I. The state of self-deceiving Christians

Experience proves that in spiritual as well as temporal concerns, pride and ignorance go together—

This was remarkably verified at Laodicea; “Thou sayest, &c. but knowest not, &c.”

The same habit of mind obtains almost universally at the present day—

1. Pride

[Almost every one esteems himself “rich” in good works—
They, who cannot justify their actions, give themselves credit for good intentions—

The longer we live, the more we “increase” in this persuasion—

We imagine that we “need little or no help” from above—

We think that we have a sufficiency of wisdom and strength in ourselves—

What pride and arrogance does this betray!—

It argues too a deplorable arrogance of our real state—]

2. Ignorance

[The scripture gives a most humiliating view of man's depravity—

It represents us also as destitute of any help in ourselves; “wretched,” &c.—

But the generality have not the least idea that they are in such a state—

They would be ready to consider such a representation of their state as a libel on human nature—

Such was the ignorance of many when the profession of Christianity was attended with much difficulty and danger—

We must not wonder therefore if it be so now—]

It is extremely awful to be under such a delusion—

Our Lord however is full of mercy and compassion towards such persons

II. The advice which our Lord gives them

The person who gives the counsel is the Lord Jesus Christ^a—

What he advises cannot but be worthy of the deepest attention—

His counsel in the text is exactly suited to our condition—

He exhorts us to come to him for a supply of our several wants—

1. For gold tried in the fire

[By “gold” he means divine grace, which is the richest treasure—

^a It is he who appeared to St. John, Rev. i. 17, 18. and who is described at the beginning of every one of the epistles to the seven churches: in this to Laodicea he is called “the Amen, the faithful and true witness.”

This alone will stand the “fiery trial” of temptation—

Of this He is the only source and fountain—

But though we are to “buy” it of him, we must “buy it without money and without price”^b—

Without this, we must of necessity be poor, whatever else we may possess—

With this, we cannot but “be truly rich”—]

2. For white raiment

[By white raiment is meant a justifying righteousness—

It is that which is “unto all and upon all them that believe”—

It is the same as that with which the glorified saints are clothed^c—

Every man has needed this since the fall—

It seems to have been typified from the beginning, by the skins of the sacrifices with which God taught our first parents to clothe themselves—

None but Christ can furnish us with this^d—

No “filthy rags of our righteousness” will supersede it^e—

Clad with this we shall stand before God without spot or blemish^f—]

3. For spiritual eye-salve

[The influences of the Spirit are here compared to “eye-salve”—

We all need the illumination of God’s Spirit^g—

It is Christ’s office and prerogative to send the Spirit to us^h—

Without receiving the Spirit from him we must for ever continue blind—

But by means of it the weakest will be made wise unto salvationⁱ—]

INFER

1. What a glorious fulness must there be in Christ!

[The whole Christian world are in a state of extreme indigence—

Yet Christ counsels all of them to come and buy of him—

Wherever they be, and whatever they want, he can furnish them all at the same instant^k—

How inexhaustible then must his fulness be!—

Let us endeavour to obtain just views of his greatness—

Let us seek to “receive out of his fulness grace for grace”^l—]

2. What an unspeakable blessing is the preached gospel!

^b Isa. lv. 1.

^c Rev. xix. 8.

^d Jer. xxiii. 6.

^e Isa. lxiv. 6.

^f Jude 24.

^g John vi. 45.

^h John xvi. 7.

ⁱ 1 John ii. 27.

^k Col. i. 19. and ii. 9.

^l John i. 16.

[It is the gospel which holds forth Christ in all his characters—

It is by the gospel that he communicates out of his fulness—

Thousands in all ages of the church have experienced its illuminating, sanctifying, and saving efficacy—

Let us then attend with diligence and constancy to the word preached—

Let us improve it to the obtaining of a deeper sense of our own indigence—

Let us be led by it to Christ, that we may participate his blessings—]

VIII. THE DOXOLOGY OF THE REDEEMER.

Rev. v. 11—13. *I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

WE know at present but very little of the blessedness of heaven—

Yet the word of God enables us to form some faint conception of it—

St. John draws aside the veil, and reveals to us

i. The assembly which he saw

The inhabitants of heaven are composed of angels, and glorified saints

[The angels are those who, “kept their first estate” from which others fell—

The saints are spoken of under two characters, “the beasts, or living creatures,” and “the elders”—

The former are *supposed* to represent the ministers of Christ^a and the latter, the members of the church^b—

^a In the peculiar qualities of the four living creatures an allusion is *probably* made to the talents requisite for the ministerial function. The preacher of the gospel ought to be bold, patient, compassionate, and discerning. Rev. iv. 7.

^b They are 24, probably in allusion to the 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles, who were the heads of the Jewish and Christian, i. e. of the universal church.

They all together compose one body in number under Christ^c—]

Their number exceeds all computation

[The way to heaven has always been a “strait and narrow way”—

Yet from the death of Abel their number has been continually increasing—

Their collective number is inconceivably great^d—]

The saints take the lead in the worship

[They are represented as standing nearest to the throne^e—

They begin the song, v. 5, 9, 10. and the angels join in chorus, v. 11-13.]

There is perfect harmony throughout the whole assembly

II. The object they adored

Many deny that Christ is a proper object of worship—

But he has ever been worshipped in the church—

[Paul prayed to him, and received an answer from him^f—

Stephen addressed him, as Christ himself had before addressed the Father^g—

The offering of prayer to him characterizes every true Christian^h—]

And he is the object of universal adoration in heaven

[He is the person described in the text and context, v. 6, 8, 9, 12.

The description given is applicable to him aloneⁱ—]

He is expressly joined with the Father as an equal object of worship

[The terms used are the same, and they are addressed alike to both—]

The worship they offer him is such as is proper to God only

III. The adoration they offered him

The heavenly hosts do not offer blind and ignorant devotions—

They proclaim the Redeemer's worthiness of divine honour

[Stronger expressions of adoration are no where offered to the Father—

^c Eph. i. 10.

^d Dan. vii. 10. Rev. vii. 9.

^e Rev. vii. 11.

^f 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

^g Acts vii. 59.

^h 1 Cor. i. 2.

ⁱ John i. 29.

The accumulation of words expresses the fervour of their hearts^k—

Their view of his essential glory must convince them of his worthiness—

But they most admire him in his mediatorial character—

The angels, though not interested as we, gladly unite their praises—]

They all join in this *unitedly*, and with *a loud voice*

[Those from earth, and sea, &c. are the spirits of departed saints—

All seem to vie with each other without one discordant voice—]

INFER

1. How great is the privilege of the saints!

[The saints are even now joined to this blessed assembly^l—

They have the same views of Christ's worthiness and glory—

They are engaged in offering the same praises and adorations—

They are daily growing in a meetness to join the saints above—

How glorious, how desirable is this privilege!—

Let all seek it by faith in the Lamb that was slain—]

2. How astonishing is the folly of the unregenerate!

[This blessedness is offered to all who will believe in Christ—

Yet the unregenerate "make light of it"—

But would they think it so contemptible if they had such a vision of it as St. John had?—

Would they despise it if they could see the state of the damned as contrasted with it?—

May God convince them of their guilt and folly!—]

3. How inconceivably glorious must Heaven be!

[*Here* the felicity of the saints is often great^m—

But *hereafter* it will transcend our utmost conceptionsⁿ—

Let us frequently rehearse here, that we may be more fit to perform our part on the theatre of Heaven—]

^k To explain each word would destroy the energy of the whole.

^l Heb. xii. 22, 23.

^m Gen. xxviii. 17.

ⁿ *Here* our views are dim ("by faith,") our company few, our associates polluted, our capacity small, our difficulties great, our alloy inseparable, our intermissions frequent, our declensions lamentable: but *there* we shall see Christ as he is, together with innumerable hosts, each of them shining as the sun; our powers will be wonderfully enlarged; we shall serve him with perfect ease and readiness; and our bliss will be pure and unmixed, without intermission or end, yea, continually, eternally progressive.

IX. THE REFLECTIONS OF A PENITENT, &c.

— Jer. xxxi. 18—20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.*

THERE is a wide difference between ostentatious sanctity and true piety—

Hypocrites always endeavour to attract the attention of the world—

The true penitent, on the contrary, affects privacy and retirement—

Though cheerful before men, his sorrows are deep before God—

Were his groanings overheard by the world, he would probably be made an object of pity or derision—

But God beholds him with pleasure and complacency^a—

Ephraim, or the ten tribes, are represented in the text as penitent—

The secret working of their minds is here opened to our view

This accords with the experience of every repenting sinner—

God declares how acceptable such repentance is in his sight—

The passage naturally leads us to consider

I. The reflections of a true penitent

We first see the state of his mind *in the beginning of his repentance*—

He reflects on his incorrigibleness in the ways of sin

[Men seldom turn to God, till subdued by heavy afflictions—

^a Isa. lxvi. 2.

Nor does the rod at first produce any thing but impatience—

The penitent calls to mind his perverseness under such a state—

He compares his conduct with an untamed heifer^b—

He laments that there is such enmity in his heart against God—]

He pleads with God to turn and convert his soul .

[He feels the necessity of divine grace to change his heart^c—

He therefore cries to God, “ Turn thou me ”—

He ventures like the prodigal to address God as *his* God—

He urges this relation as a plea to enforce his request—]

We next see the state of his mind *in the progress of his repentance*—

He reflects upon the progress he has made

[He has felt very pungent grief on account of his iniquities^d—

Through the remonstrances of his conscience he has been “ ashamed ”—

He has been “ even confounded ” by discoveries of his own corruptions—

His constitutional propensities, which were the reproach of his youth, are still his burthen, and his grief^e—]

But he gives the glory of his advancement to God alone

[He had cried to God for the gift of converting grace—

He now acknowledges that grace to have come from God—

He ascribes his deeper insight into the corruptions of his own heart to the illuminating operations of God’s spirit—

Thus he adopts from his heart the confessions of Job,^f and of Paul^g—]

^b The bullock, while unaccustomed to the yoke, rebels against the will of his master: though nourished and supported by him, it will not subserve his interests: when chastised, it rebels the more; yea, repeated strokes serve only to inflame its rage, and to call forth its more strenuous resistance: nor will it ever submit, until it be wearied out, and unable to maintain its opposition. Thus the sinner generally fights against God. ^c John vi. 44.

^d This is the import of that significant action of “ smiting upon the thigh:” see Ezek. xxi. 12.

^e The expressions of his grief rise in a climax; he repents, he smites on his thigh; he is filled with shame; he is confounded before God. This, though an afflictive progress, is a salutary and blessed experience; as it argues deeper self-knowledge, and an increasing view of the purity of God’s law.

^f Job xl. 4.

^g 1 Cor. xv. 10.

How acceptable to God such a penitent is, appears from

II. The reflections of God over him

The penitent can scarcely find terms whereby to express his own vileness—

But God accounts no honours too great for such a person—

He owns the penitent as a “dear and pleasant child”

[The lower thoughts we have of ourselves, the higher God has of us—

While we are confounded before him, he “rejoices over us with joy”—

While we are saying “surely such an one as I cannot be a child of God,” he delights in testifying that we are his children^h—

God appeals, as it were, to our contrition, in proof that we are his—]

He further expresses his compassionate regard for him

[The chidings and rebukes of God are all in loveⁱ—

But the afflicted penitent is apt to complain with Zion of old^k—

God however never feels for us more than when he hides his face from us—

Like a tender parent, he longs to renew to us the tokens of his love^l—

The contrite soul may apply to itself those gracious declarations^m—]

He promises to manifest his mercy towards him

[God never will despise the broken in heartⁿ—

No past sins, however heinous, shall be remembered against them^o—

For such God has prepared a glorious inheritance in heaven^p—]

He grants to him all that he himself could possibly desire

[What more could the penitent ask of God than an assurance of his adoption into God’s family, a declaration of God’s love towards him, and a promise that he shall find mercy at the last day?

^h The force of these positive interrogations is the same as if they had been expressed negatively: they import a strong affirmation: see 1 Sam. ii. 27, 28.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 6.

^k Isai. xlix. 14.

^l Isai. xlix. 15, 16.

^m Isai. liv. 7, 8.

ⁿ Ps. li. 17.

^o Isai. i. 18.

^p Matt. xxv. 34.

Yet these are all expressed in God's reflections over Ephraim—

What inexpressible comfort should this administer to drooping penitents!—]

APPLICATION

[Can God testify of *us* as of Ephraim in the text?—

If he cannot, we must expect shame, confusion, and agony at the last day^q—

If he can, we are assured of happiness both in this world and the next^r—]

^q Dan. xii. 2. and Matt. xiii. 49, 50.

^r Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

X. THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

Matt. xvi. 26. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

THE precepts of the gospel oppose our natural inclination—

They are also in many respects adverse to our worldly interests—

The whole of Christianity is a system of self-denial—

Hence none cordially embrace it till they have learned to take eternity into their estimate of present things—

Our Lord therefore, having prescribed the line of duty to be regarded by all his followers (v. 24.) and having urged the observance of it from the consideration of eternity, enforces it yet further by these pointed interrogatories; “What shall it profit,” &c.

In order to elucidate the meaning of the text, we shall

I. Institute a comparison between the things which are here sent in competition with each other

By “the world” we are to understand pleasure, riches, and honour^a

This if considered *in itself*, is vile

[It is altogether earthly in its nature—

It is utterly unsatisfying in its use—

^a 1 John ii. 15, 16.

It is short and transitory in its continuance—]

If it be considered *as it has been estimated by the best judges*, it is worthless

[Abraham, though opulent, left all, to sojourn in a strange land^b—

Moses relinquished the splendor of a court, to participate the lot of God's people^c—

Solomon, after much experience, declared the world to be mere vanity^d—

St. Paul counted those things as dung, which he once thought his gain^e—

Christ himself despised the proffered titles of royalty^f—

All true christians resemble their master in their contempt of the world^g—]

The "soul" on the contrary, if considered *in itself*, is noble

[It is exalted in its origin^h—capacious in its powers—eternal in its duration—

And it is doomed to everlasting happiness or misery—

Already therefore its superior importance abundantly appears—]

Moreover, *as estimated by the best judges*, it is invaluable

[Many have thought nothing too much to do or suffer for its welfareⁱ—

But that which most stamps its value beyond all possible calculation, is, the gift of God's Son to die for it—

Surely God would never have redeemed it at such a price, if it had not been of infinite value in his sight——]

Such being the disparity between the value of the world and that of the soul, we are prepared to

II. See the result of the comparison

We suppose for argument sake, that a man may possess the whole world—

We suppose also that, after having possessed it for a while he loses his own soul—

What in the issue "would he be profited?"

Let us enquire concerning this *in general*

^b Heb. xi. 8, 9.

^c Heb. xi. 24—26.

^d Eccl. i. 14.

^e Phil. iii. 8.

^f John vi. 15.

^g John xvii. 16.

^h Heb. xii. 9. God himself is "the Father of our Spirits," without the intervention of any second cause.

ⁱ Acts xx. 24. Heb. xi. 35.

[Would *carnal* enjoyments compensate for the loss of *Heaven*?

Would *transient* pleasures counterbalance an *eternity* of glory?

Would he have any thing remaining to mitigate his pain?^k—

Would a momentary possession of the whole world be so high a gratification, that any reasonable man would be content to lose even his “animal life” for it?^l—

How much less could it be a sufficient price for the “soul?”—]

Let us enquire also *more particularly*

[The questions in the text are strong appeals to our hearts and consciences—

They bid defiance, as it were, to all the arts of sophistry—

Let the “lover of pleasure” then ask, what sensual gratifications, or vain amusements, will profit him?—

Let the “lover of this present evil world” ask, what will his honours and preferments profit him?^m—

Let the learned ask, what even learning itself, the most excellent of all human attainments, will profit them?ⁿ—]

We conclude with suggesting some interesting subjects of self-examination

[Which have I more regarded hitherto, the world, or my own soul?——

Which do I intend in future to prefer?——

What will be my thoughts respecting them in the day of judgment?—

What answer shall I make to Christ, when he shall call me to account for despising that, for which he paid so great a price!——

What would I not gladly give in exchange for my soul, if ever it should be lost through my present neglect?——

And, if ever my soul should be saved, shall I not then account as dung all which I had lost in order to promote its salvation?——

If these questions be duly weighed, we shall soon be like-minded with the great apostle^o—]

^k Luke xvi. 24. ^l ἄλλοθεν—comp. ver. 25. and 26, in the Greek.
^m Prov. xi. 4. ⁿ Eccl. ii. 16. ^o Phil. iii. 13, 14.

—XI. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE. —

Isaiah xliii. 2, 3. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be*

burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.

GOD'S goodness to his people never appears more wonderful than when contrasted with their conduct towards him

The history of the church in all ages attests the truth of the apostle's assertion^a—

We have a remarkable instance of this in the passage before us—

The Israelites were utterly incorrigible^b—

Yet God forebore to “make a full end of them”—

On the contrary, to display the riches of his grace, he promised them his continued care and protection, ver. 1, 2.—

The text suggests to our consideration

I. God's care for his people

God's people are subjected to many and great troubles

[“Fire and water” are emblems of heavy calamities—

God's people are often brought into them—

All are taught to expect them in their way to heaven—

The most eminent saints have usually the greatest share^c—]

But God takes peculiar care of them in that state

[He represents himself as watching them in the furnace like a refiner^d—

He has promised they shall not be overwhelmed by temptation^e—

He vouchsafes his special presence at those seasons—

Even when he has withdrawn himself apparently from his people, he secretly and imperceptibly upholds them—

The burning bush was intended to teach us this^f—

It has been experienced by the saints in all ages—

David bears testimony to this fact^g—

The history of the Hebrew youths also attests it^h—

The passage of the Jews through the Red Sea, and through Jordan, confirms itⁱ—

There are also many living witnesses for the truth of it—]

^a Rom. v. 20.

^c Job—Asaph—Heman—David—Paul—

^e 1 Cor. x. 13.

^g Ps. lxxvi. 10—12. “*We went through fire and through water.*”

^h Dan. iii. 25, 27.

^b Isai. xlii. 24, 25.

^d Mal. iii. 3.

^f Exod. iii. 2.

ⁱ Isai. li. 10.

However great this mercy is, we are at no loss to assign

II. The reason of it

God is the Covenant God and Saviour of his people

[God has given himself to his people by covenant^k--

Hence he assumes the titles "the God of Israel," "the Holy One of Israel"--

This implies that all his perfections shall be employed for their good--]

This is the reason of his peculiar care for them

On account of this relation he *feels* for them

[God represents himself as tenderly feeling for his people--

His compassion towards them is like that of a parent!--

He bears them, like a nursing mother, in his arms^m--

He considers every injury done to them, as done to himselfⁿ--

He sympathizes thus on account of his relation to them^o--]

On this account also he is *interested* in them

[He has purchased and redeemed them by the blood of his Son--

Hence he calls them his "purchased possession"--

He regards them as his "peculiar treasure," the "lot of his inheritance"--

He promises to take care of them as *his* vineyard^p--

Hence Moses made God's interest in his people a plea for his forbearing to destroy them^q--

Hence David also urged this plea on his own behalf^r--]

On this account also he is *bound* to them

[God has pledged himself that "he will not forsake his people"--

He has assured them, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper--

He never will break the covenant he has entered into^s--

This affords a sure ground of hope to his people--

The church of old urged it as a reason for his return to them^t--

And every believer may adopt the patriarch's plea^u--]

INFER

1. Of what importance is it to know that we are interested in Christ!

^k Jer. xxxi. 33.

^l Ps. ciii. 13.

^m Isai. lxiii. 9.

ⁿ Zech. ii. 8.

^o Jer. xxxi. 20.

^p Isai. xxvii. 3.

^q Exod. xxxii. 11.

^r Ps. cxix. 94.

^s Ps. lxxxix. 34, 35.

^t Is. lxiii. 15--19. *This is remarkably strong.* ^u Gen. xxxii. 12.

[We cannot claim God for our God unless we have believed in Christ—

If therefore we have not an evidence that we have indeed believed, we can derive no comfort from these promises—

Yea, rather, we have reason to fear that we shall be overwhelmed with God's wrath, and be made to "dwell with everlasting burnings"—

Let us then not leave this matter in doubt and suspense—

Let us "flee to Christ for refuge, as to the hope set before us"—

We may then assuredly expect these promises to be fulfilled to us—]

2. What consolation does the gospel of Christ afford!

[Every man must expect to "pass through fire and through water"—

It is our appointed way to the kingdom of heaven^x—

In the hour of death, if not before, we shall feel need of support—

But God has provided in the text abundant consolation—

We need not fear any thing whilst we can rest on this promise—

Let us then adopt the triumphant language of the Psalmist^y—]

^x Acts xiv. 22.

^y Ps. xxiii. 1, 4.

XII. THE RICHES OF DIVINE GRACE DISPLAYED.

Eph. ii. 4—7. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

WHAT an accumulation of sublime ideas is here presented to our view!—

Well might the Psalmist say that the meditation of God was sweet to him—

We scarcely know whether to admire more the grace of the benefactor, or the felicity of those who participate his blessings—

But the text requires us to fix our attention on that most delightful of all subjects, the riches of divine grace—

The apostle has in the preceding verses described the state of the unregenerate world—

He now displays the grace of God towards the regenerate

I. In its source

God is “rich in mercy,” and “abundant in love”

[Mercy and love are, as it were, the favourite attributes of the Deity^a—

The exercise of these perfections is peculiarly grateful to him^b—

There is an inexhaustible fountain of them in the heart of God^c—

They have flowed down upon the most unworthy of the human race—

They will flow undiminished to all eternity—

While he retains his nature he cannot but exercise these perfections^d—]

These are the true sources of all the grace displayed towards fallen man

[Man had nothing in him whereby he could merit the attention of his Maker—

He was fallen into the lowest state of guilt and misery—

But the bowels of his Creator yearned over him^e—

God felt (if we may so speak) an irresistible impulse of compassion towards him^f—

Hence was it that the Son of God was sent into the world^g—

Hence also were so many offers of mercy made to man—

And to this alone is it owing that so much as one has ever found acceptance with God—]

But, to judge how great the love was wherewith he loved us, we must trace it

II. In its operations

The grace of God has been displayed towards us in ten thousand ways—

But we must confine our attention to its operations, as they are set forth in the text—

^a Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

^b Mic. vii. 18.

^c Rom. x. 12.

^d 1 John iv. 8.

^e In this view, God's solicitude to find Adam, and his affectionate (perhaps plaintive) enquiry after him, Gen. iii. 9. are very striking.

^f We may conceive of God as expressing himself in the language of the prophet; Hos. xi. 8, 9.

^g John iii. 16.

God has “quicken’d us even when we were dead in sins”

[What is meant by “dead in sins,” appears from the preceding verses—

We were walking according to the course of this world—

We were the willing servants of Satan—

We were indulging all kinds of “filthiness, both of flesh and spirit”—

We were demonstrating ourselves to be, “by nature” as well as practice, “children of wrath”—

And we were utterly destitute of all power to help and save ourselves^h—

Yet *even then* did God look upon us in tender compassionⁱ—

He quicken’d us by that same Spirit whereby he raised Christ from the dead^k—

In so doing, he united us “together with Christ,” and rendered us conformable to him as our head—

What an astonishing instance of divine grace was this!—]

He has also “rais’d us up, and enthroned us together with Christ in Heaven”

[The apostle had before expatiated on what God had wrought for Christ^l—

He now draws a parallel between believers and Christ—

What was done for Christ our head and representative, may be considered as done for all the members of his mystical body—

In this view Christians may be considered *figuratively* as risen with Christ, and as already seated on his throne— their hearts, their conversation, their *rest*, is in Heaven^m—

How has he thus verified the declaration of Hannah!ⁿ—

How has he thus discovered “the exceeding riches of his grace!”—]

How worthy of God such a stupendous display of grace is, we shall see if we consider it

III. In its end

God is not only the author, but also the end of all things^o—

Nor would it become him to do any thing but with a view to his own glory—

^h Rom. v. 6.

ⁱ This may be illustrated by Ezek. xvi. 4—6.

^k Compare 1 Pet. iii. 18. with Rom. viii. 11. ^l Eph. i. 19. 20.

^m Col. iii. 1, 2. Phil. iii. 20. ⁿ 1 Sam. ii. 8. ^o Rom. xi. 36.

The manifestation of his own glory was the express end for which he revealed his grace^p—

And this end is already in some measure attained

[All ages, to the end of time, must admire the grace of God towards both the Jewish and Gentile world—

Every one, who partakes of that grace, must of necessity admire it—

The “exceeding riches of it” are unsearchable—

God’s kindness” too is infinitely enhanced by flowing to us “through Christ Jesus”—

The price paid by Christ will to eternity endear to us the blessings purchased—

At present, however, the design of God in revealing his grace is not fully answered—]

But it will be completely answered in the day of judgment

[Then, how exceeding rich and glorious will this grace appear!

Then the depth of misery, into which we were fallen, will be more fully known—

The spring and source of that grace will be more clearly discovered—

And all the operations will be seen in one view—

Then Christ, the one channel in which it flows, will be more intimately revealed to us—

How will every eye then admire, and every tongue then adore!—

Surely nothing but such an end could account for such operations of the divine grace—

Let every one therefore seek to experience these operations in his own soul—

Let those who have been favoured with them glorify God with their whole hearts—]

^p Eph. i. 6.

XIII. THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING OUR SALVATION.

Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

MANY suppose that morality is sufficient for our acceptance before God—

Morality, indeed, if it proceed from faith in Christ, shall be amply rewarded—

Nevertheless the death of Christ is the only foundation of our hope—

This is fully declared in the^g gospel, and must therefore be received—

If they, who despised Moses's law, died without mercy, much more must we perish if we neglect the gospel^a—

To this effect the apostle speaks in the passage before us, ver. 2, 3.

I. What is the salvation here spoken of?

We shall confine ourselves to that view of it which the apostle gives in the context

It is that salvation, which was first spoken by our Lord, and afterwards confirmed by the apostles, ver. 3.

[Our Lord invariably declared himself to be the only Saviour^b—

He commissioned his disciples to declare the same^c—

They accordingly proclaimed these glad tidings; Peter in his first sermon to the Gentiles;^d and Paul, in answer to the jailor's question^e—]

This salvation, in whatever view it be considered, is truly “great”

1. As wrought out for us

[That “Jehovah's fellow” should become our surety!—

That he should yield up himself to such a death!—

That he should do this even for the chief of sinners!—

Surely, if angels exulted so at the first disclosing of this mystery,^f much more should we at its consummation—]

2. As imparted to us

[On our first believing in Christ, we receive pardon of sin—peace of conscience—strength against temptation—&c.

On our dismissal from the body, we enter into the full and everlasting fruition of the divine presence—

What language can express the greatness of this salvation?—]

We may well expect therefore that all should eagerly embrace it—

But it is almost universally neglected—

II. Who they are that neglect it?

^a Heb. x. 28, 29.

^c Mark xvi. 15, 16.

^e Acts xvi. 30, 31.

^b John xiv. 6. and iii. 14, 36.

^d Acts x. 43.

^f Luke ii. 14.

It may appear superfluous to insist on this—

But our proneness to deceive ourselves renders it necessary—

They then are guilty of this neglect

1. Who live in any known sin^r

[Salvation includes deliverance from sin as well as from guilt—

All, who truly seek after salvation, do obtain deliverance from sin—

They therefore, who live in any known sin, manifest thereby that they neglect this salvation—]

2. Who trust in their own righteousness

[Self-righteousness is most opposite to the gospel of Christ—

It excludes Christ himself from the office of a Saviour—

Therefore it argues an utter rejection of this salvation^s—]

3. Who do not seek this salvation more than other objects

[They are considered as neglecting their temporal concerns who are not diligent in their attention to them—

Much more should we think thus with respect to spiritual concerns—

If we be not more earnest in pursuing, and more fearful of losing this salvation than any other object whatever, we may be truly said to neglect it—

Hence we see the propriety of our Lord's admonition^h—]

How many then are there of this character!

To those who persist in their neglect, the consequences will be dreadful—

III. The danger of neglecting it

The interrogatory in the text is the strongest possible negation—

The wrath of God must come upon those who continue guilty of this neglect—

1. To hope for an escape is absurd

[The guilt implied in such neglect is beyond measure great—

It cannot be that persons so guilty should be treated as good and faithful servants—]

2. To effect it is impossible

^r Rom. x. 3.

^h Luke xiii. 24.

It would be contrary to the established order of things—

[We can never attain the end without using the means——]

Nor can any means of escape ever be devised—

[Is there any other way of salvation?ⁱ—

Shall any one escape the notice of the Judge?^k—

Shall any one be able to ward off the vengeance?^l—

Will God forbear to inflict punishment?^m—]

Let all therefore seek this salvation with their whole hearts.

ⁱ Acts iv. 12.

^k Rev. vi. 15, 16.

^l Ezek. xxii. 14.

^m Numb. xxiii. 19. Ezek. xxiv. 14.

XIV. THE DUTY OF DEVOTING OURSELVES TO GOD.

1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. *What, know ye not that ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

THE word of God reveals to us many things which unenlightened reason could never have discovered—

This is particularly manifest with respect to the offices of Christ and of the Holy Spirit—

These were “mysteries hid in God from the foundation of the world”—

But they are supposed to be well known to every true Christian—

Indeed they form the basis of the Christian's hope—

They at the same time afford him his strongest motives to obedience—

St. Paul was dissuading the Corinthians from the sin of fornication—

He reminded them therefore of the principles which they professed—

We waive what he says respecting the Spirit dwelling in them, and shall confine ourselves to the words of our text

We shall consider

I. The principle which the apostle assumes

All men naturally think they are “their own”

[Men employ their time and faculties nearly as they please^a—

They think themselves at liberty to do so^b—

Hence the language of their hearts is declared by the Psalmist^c—

Their conduct, if not their speech, resembles that of Pharaoh^d—]

But no man is or can be his own

[Men may be free from any human yoke—

But no man is or can be independent of God—

This is a principle even of natural religion—]

This every Christian is supposed to know

[The manner in which the apostle assumes this principle is remarkable—

His question is a direct appeal to our consciences—

He takes it for granted that no one can be ignorant of that truth—

He expresses surprise that such a truth should be forgotten—]

Indeed this principle cannot admit a doubt

This appears from considering

II. The argument he urges in support of it

God, as our *Creator*, has an unalienable right over us

[We possess not a faculty of body or mind but from him^e—

We cannot exercise one faculty but by virtue derived from him^f—

We therefore can be no other than his property—]

But he has also *redeemed* us

[We were in bondage to the curse of the law^g—

But God has redeemed us from the miserable state^h—

He paid no less a price for us than the blood of his own Sonⁱ—]

By this he has acquired a further right over us

[The great end of redemption was “that we might live unto God”—

The Scriptures speak of redemption in this light^k—

Thus our obligation to devote ourselves unreservedly to God is greatly increased and confirmed by it—

^a Isai. liiii. 6.

^b Jer. xxiii. 17.

^c Ps. xii. 4.

^d Exod. v. 2.

^e 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^f 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^g Gal. iii. 10.

^h Gal. iii. 13.

ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

^k 1 Pet. iii. 18. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. John xvii. 19.

If God complain of us for requiting with neglect his paternal care, Isai. i. 2, 3. how much more may he, for our contempt of redeeming love!—]

The principle being thus established, we proceed to consider

III. The exhortation he founds upon it

“Our body and our spirit are entirely God’s” property—

We are bound therefore to glorify him with both to the uttermost

[We cannot indeed add any thing to God’s glory^l—

God however esteems himself glorified by our services^m—

There are many ways in which we may glorify him daily—

A devotedness to him is justly called “our reasonable service”ⁿ—]

Let the exhortation then have its due effect

[God claims every one of us as his own—

Let us not then live as though we were at our own disposal—

Let us adopt the resolution of Joshua, xxiv. 15.—

Let us yield to him all the members of our bodies^o—

Let us glorify him with every faculty of our souls^p—

Let us never disjoin what was so connected in Paul’s experience^q—

Let us seek to have that inspired declaration fulfilled in us^r—]

INFERENCES—We may see from hence

1. What lamentable ignorance prevails in the Christian world!—

[Many are daily violating their baptismal vows without remorse—

Though educated in the faith of Christ, they give not themselves to him—

This may well be a matter of surprise to thoughtful minds—

It may justly excite the feelings of David^s—

Let us beg of God to convince us of the evil of such conduct—

Let us turn from it with self-loathing and self-abhorrence^t—]

2. How reasonable and delightful is the Christian’s duty!

^l Ps. xvi. 2.

^m Ps. l. 23.

ⁿ Rom. xii. 1.

^o Rom. vi. 13.

^p Ps. ciii. 1.

^q Acts xxvii. 23.

^r Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

^s Ps. cxix. 53.

^t Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

[What more reasonable than that we should be his who bought us?—

And what so delightful as to be ever glorifying God?—

This constitutes the felicity of the perfected saints and angels—

We should never be unhappy *here* if we abounded more in this duty—

Let us know, then, and enjoy our inestimable privilege—

To have honoured God here, will be our crown hereafter—]

XV. OUR LORD'S CONDESCENSION TO SINNERS.

Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*

THE ways of man are often made a standard whereby to judge of God—

Hence many foolishly “think him to be such an one as themselves”—

But “his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours”—

This is remarkably manifest in the passage before us—

It is usual for inferiors to wait on their superiors—

The greater their inferiority, the more patience is expected of them—

But here the God of Heaven waits upon his sinful creatures—

The declaration is made even to the lukewarm Laodiceans—

It unfolds to our view

I. The wonderful condescension of Christ to sinners

He represents himself as coming to them to be their guest—

But we must understand his words in a spiritual sense—

The hearts of natural men are shut against Christ

[Mankind have their hearts full of vile lusts and passions—

They utterly exclude Christ from his rightful habitation—

They bar the door against him by prejudice and unbelief—]

He however condescends to seek admittance into them

[He “knocks” in various ways “at the door” of their hearts—

He intreats, promises, threatens, and expostulates by his *word*—

He awakens attention by the secret energy of his *Spirit*—

He calls also by alarming dispensations of his *providence*—]

But the generality disregard his voice

[They are asleep, and even “dead in trespasses and sins”—

If awakened, they endeavour to lull themselves asleep again—

If they cannot do this, they rest in frivolous excuses^a—

Thus do they studiously and determinately resist his will—]

Nevertheless he “stands” patiently waiting their leisure

[He might well depart at their first refusal—

But he knows how dreadful their state would then be—

He therefore “waiteth to be gracious” unto them—

On many he has waited a long series of years^b—

Of most it may be said as of Israel of old^c—]

This is a fact worthy of our highest admiration

[Well might he call us to “behold” it with wonder—

How wonderful, that the Creator should so condescend to a creature!—

How wonderful, that the Judge should become suitor to the criminal!—

How wonderful, that the self-sufficient God should seek in such a way to bless those who are inexpressibly vile and helpless!—

This must excite our admiration to all eternity—]

The adorable goodness expressed in it will appear further by considering

II. The mercies he desires to impart to them

He requires nothing of sinners but what he will enable them to perform

[He looks for no worthiness or merit in them—

He only desires that they “hear his voice, and open to him”—

He will himself “unstop their ears,” and “incline their hearts”—

If indeed they obstinately persist in rejecting him, they cut themselves off from any hope in his mercy—]

Upon their yielding to his solicitations, he will bless them

[The metaphor of a guest is still kept up—

It is a common metaphor in scripture^d—

^a Cant. v. 2, 3. ^b Acts xiii. 18. ^c Rom. x. 21. ^d John xiv. 23.

The "supping" implies the most familiar intercourse with the soul—

This our Lord will vouchsafe to those who open their hearts to him—

He will delight himself in the exercise of their graces^c—

He will communicate to them his richest consolations—

He will cause them to exclaim with the prophet^f—]

Nor will he withhold these mercies on account of their past conduct

[He will with equal readiness become the guest of all—

No unworthiness or past obduracy shall hinder him—

He has declared this in the most express terms^g—

He has proved it in the most remarkable instances^h—

There is a cloud of living witnesses ready to attest it—]

We shall conclude with an ADDRESS TO

1. Those who are living in a careless state

[You are yet strangers to the heavenly guest—

But this arises only from your own negligence and supineness—

Christ has been long knocking at the door of your hearts—

Every vile lust has been admitted, whilst HE has stood without—

May you never have that threatening fulfilled to you!ⁱ—

Let every one obey the prophet's exhortation^k—]

2. Those who are awakened from it

[What a mercy is it that you have heard the Saviour's voice!—

Let it be your daily endeavour to open your hearts to him—

Guard against unbelief, which above all bars the door against him—

Let the sins which are offensive to him be put away—

Then shall the fact which so offended the Jews be realized in you!^l—

Thus shall you enjoy the most endearing fellowship with Jesus—

And you shall ere long "sup with him" in a better place^m—]

^c Cant. iv. 16.

^f Zech. ix. 17.

^g "If any man." See also Isai. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.

^h 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9, 12, 13. 1 Tim. i. 13. 16. ⁱ Prov. i. 24—31.

^k Isai. lv. 6.

^l Luke xix. 7.

^m Rev. xix. 9.

XVI. THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS
GIVEN TO US.

Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

THE promises of the Old Testament frequently refer to different and distant periods—

In these periods they receive different degrees of accomplishment—

The promise before us was partly fulfilled in the deliverance of the Jews from idolatry after their return from captivity in Babylon—

It had a further accomplishment on the day of Pentecost—

Its final completion will take place at the millennium—

This appears by its connexion with the foregoing verse—

In the mean time it is daily fulfilled to the Church of God—

It may lead us to consider the ends for which God gives us his Spirit—

He sends down his Spirit

I. To cleanse from sin

The heart of man is full of “filthiness and of idols”

[There is nothing so worthless, but it is idolized by us; nothing so filthy, but it is harboured and indulged—

The idols indeed are not set up in our houses, but in our hearts^a—

And if the filthiness appear not in open enormities, yet are our flesh and our spirit contaminated with it throughout—

Hence God pronounces the whole race of man to be “filthy and abominable”—

Nor indeed can any words sufficiently represent our deformity^b—]

^a Ezek. xiv. 3.

^b Jer. xvii. 9.

To cleanse us from these God imparts his Holy Spirit

[The Spirit of God is here compared to "clean water"—

He is often spoken of in Scripture under this metaphor^c—

His sprinkling of this water on us is in allusion to the sprinklings of the ceremonial law—

It was by sprinkling, that holy persons and vessels were sanctified—

It is for the same end that God sends his Holy Spirit upon us—

The blood of Christ alone can cleanse from the guilt of sin^d—

But the Spirit cleanses from the love and power of it—

Nor does the operation of the Spirit supercede the atonement—

It rather presupposes an affiance in the blood of Christ^e—

Though the operations of Christ's blood and spirit are distinct, yet they are never divided^f—

The one is as necessary in its place, and as effectual, as the other—]

By his Spirit he cleanses the soul "from all its filthiness and all its idols"

[The corruption of the heart is not indeed utterly extinguished—

But the love of sin is taken away, and its power is broken—

St. Paul ascribes this effect to the Spirit in the strongest terms^g—]

In order to effect this permanently, God sends his Spirit

II. To renew the heart

A change must be radical, in order to be effectual^h—

The heart, by nature, is hard and insensible as a "stone"—

[The soul is altogether "dead in trespasses and sins"—

The understanding is blind, the will obstinate, the conscience seared—

A dead body is insensible of its own corruption—

So is the soul insensible of its state, because it is spiritually dead—]'

God therefore takes away this "stony heart out of the flesh"—

^c John vii. 38, 39.

^d 1 John i. 7.

^e The purifying of the Levites well illustrates this. They were cleansed by the sprinkling of water on them; yet not so cleansed but that they needed to offer an atonement. The atonement and the sprinkling *jointly* produced the *full* effect. See Numb. viii. 6, 7, 8, 12.

^f 1 John v. 6.

^g Eph. v. 25—27.

^h Matt. xii. 33.

[He does not really alter the powers of the soul—
The faculties remain the same as they were before—
But a new direction is given to them—
They are also assisted by him in their respective functions—
Hence they appear to be altogether new—]

He gives in exchange “an heart of flesh”

[It is characteristic of the new heart that it is tender—
It is deeply affected with its own sin and misery—
It is melted with a sense of God’s unbounded mercies—
Thus in fact the Christian is made “a new creature”—]

In this way God prevails by the Spirit

III. To sanctify the life

What was before metaphorically, is here plainly expressed—

God, by renewing the soul, changes also the lifeⁱ

[The unregenerate man accounts the commandments grievous—

The renewed person longs for a perfect conformity to them^k—

He henceforth “walks as Christ himself walked”—]

By the indwelling of his Spirit he “causes” his people to obey him

[We cannot explain^l the mode of the Spirit’s operations—

We are sure, however, that he does not act on men as mere machines—

He draws them in a rational manner as free agents—

He constrains them by enlightening their understanding and inclining their will—

He makes them delight in receiving and obeying his influences—

Their language is invariably like that of the church of old^l—]

In order to IMPROVE this promise, we would lead you to contemplate

1. Its freeness

[To whom is this promise made, but to those who are filthy and idolatrous, insensible and obdurate?—

Let none put it away from them as not belonging to them—

But rather let all lay hold on it, and plead it before God—]

ⁱ The salt being cast into the fountain, the streams are henceforth salubrious: See 2 Kings ii. 21. ^k Rom. vii. 22. ^l Cant. i. 4.

2. Its suitability

[What would any one, who knew his wants, ask of God?—

Can any thing be conceived more suitable than the things here promised?—

Let those who feel their need of cleansing, and renovation, rejoice that God has promised them the desire of their hearts—]

3. Its preciousness

[Well does the apostle say, that the “promises are precious”—

What can he want, that has this promise fulfilled to him?—

Such an one may defy either men or devils to make him miserable—

In the purification and renewal of his soul he has all that man can desire—]

XVII. OUR IMPOTENCY WITHOUT CHRIST.

(John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing.*

THE systems of heathen philosophers were well calculated to confirm the pride of man—

The tendency of the gospel is to humble and abase the soul—

Its sublimest doctrines are by far the most humiliating—

The sovereignty of God annihilates, as it were, our fancied greatness; and the atonement of Christ brings to nought our boasted goodness—

Thus the mysterious doctrine of union with Christ proclaims our insufficiency for any thing that is good—

Our Lord declares this by a comparison,^a and in plain terms^b—

We will consider

I. When we may be said to be without Christ

To be “without Christ” is to be in a state of separation from him, as branches severed from a vine—

Now this may be said to be our state

1. If we have never been cut off from our old stock

[The first and second Adam may be considered as the two flocks, on one or other of which we all grow—

^a Ver. 4.

^b The text.

To the former we are united by nature; to the latter by grace—

While we adhere to our natural stock, we are full of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency—

But these must be renounced before we can be truly engrafted into Christ—

We cannot confide in ourselves without renouncing Christ; nor in Christ, without renouncing self—

An union of both confidences is as impossible, as for a branch to be growing on two different stocks at the same time^c—

We must therefore have been cut off from the stock of Adam, or we must at this moment be in a state of separation from Christ—]

2. If we have never given up ourselves wholly to Christ

[A Cion is passive when it is engrafted into another stem—

But we must be active in forming an union between Christ and our souls—

God moves us, not as mere machines, but as rational creatures^d—

We cannot therefore be in Christ unless we have deliberately given ourselves to him^e—]

3. If we be not daily living upon his fulness

[A branch is continually receiving nourishment from the root—

So believers “abide in Christ,” and are constantly living upon him^f—

This is declared to be the experience of all that are “of God in Christ Jesus”^g—]

What can be expected from us in such a state but barrenness?

II. Our impotency in that state

A Christian’s duty comprises repentance, faith, and obedience—

Without Christ we are unable to perform any one of these—

We cannot repent

[We may have the semblance of repentance^h—

^c Rom. xi. 6. ^d “The grace of God by Christ prevents us that we may have a good will, and works with us when we have that good will.” 10th. Article. ^e Rom. xii. 1.

^f Gal. ii. 20. with ver. 4—7, where the word “*abiding*” occurs seven times. ^g 1 Cor. i. 30.

^h We may manifest the feigned humiliation of Ahab, the temporary convictions of Felix, the desponding terrors of Judas, or the

But true repentance flows only from Christⁱ—

Hence the church of old confessed their inability to produce it in themselves^k—]

We cannot believe

[St. Paul compares the production of faith in the heart to the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead^l—

We can no more create it in ourselves than a withered branch can give itself the powers of vegetation^m—

Christ is the only true source of itⁿ—

It is so his gift, as not to be in any measure of ourselves^o—]

We cannot obey

In act

[This is positively affirmed in the scriptures^p—

Hence the pious acts of the godly are ascribed to God as their author^q—]

In word

[A word cannot be called obedient, unless it be uttered out of respect to God's command, and agreeably to his will—

But no natural man can utter a word in this manner^r—]

In thought

[God asserts that we do not think a good thought^s—

It is certain also that of ourselves we cannot^t—]

We are not all at a loss to account for this

III. The reasons of this impotency

The reason of the barrenness of a branch that is severed from the stem, is obvious

[It has no fructifying virtue in itself, nor any means of deriving it from the root—]

The reasons of our impotency without Christ are exactly similar—

We have no life in ourselves

[Christ is to the soul what the soul is to the body^u—

The body has members, but exercises none without the soul—

partial reform of Herod; but no natural man ever experiences real contrition and self-abhorrence.

ⁱ Acts v. 31.

^l Eph. i. 19, 20.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 2.

^p Jer. xiii. 23. and the text.

^r 1 Cor. xii. 3. Matt. xii. 34.

^k Lam. v. 21.

^m John vi. 44.

^o Eph. ii. 8.

^q 2 Cor. viii. 16.

^s Gen. vi. 5.

^t 2 Cor. iii. 5. This is confirmed by our liturgy: "O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Second collect for evening service.

^u Col. iii. 4.

So the soul has faculties, but exercises none spiritually without Christ—]

We have no means of deriving virtue from any other

[A soul not united to Christ resembles a branch cut off from its stem; it has no means of fructification—

Christ is the only fountain of all good^x—

None but He can help^y—

How then is it possible for us to do any thing without him?—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who are without Christ

[Seek an union with Christ, but not in a way of hasty resolutions or self-righteous endeavours—

Be sensible of your weakness, and pray for faith—]

2. Those who are united to Christ

[Unbelievers have an universal impotence in respect of what is good; but you can do all things through Christ^z—

Be thankful and study to live more simply on Christ, as the branch on the vine—]

^x Col. i. 19.

^y Ps. lxii. 9, 11.

^z Phil. iv. 13.

XVIII. THE EXTENT OF MAN'S DEPRAVITY.

Gen. vi. 5. *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

NOTHING is more destructive to vital godliness than needless intimacy with the wicked—

An Heathen confessed the truth of this^a—

Hence it is strongly discouraged and forbidden in the scriptures^b—

Solomon was a lamentable instance of the evils attending it^c—

By means of it, God was almost forgotten in the world^d—

We shall shew

^a 1 Cor. xv. 33. is an Iambic verse quoted from Menander.

^b Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

^c Neh. xiii. 26.

^d Comp. Gen. vi. 2, 3, 4, 6.

I. To whom the words are applicable

Though primarily applicable to the Antediluvians, they must not be confined to them—

Similar passages are applicable to us^c—

[Ps. xiv. 2—4. appears from the context to relate only to the wicked Jews of that age—

But St. Paul applies it to the whole human race^f—]

Human nature is the same now that it ever was—

[Civilization may alter the outward deportment—

But men are born with the same inherent corruption^g—

The piety of parents does not flow in the blood, ex. gr. Cain, Ham, Esau—]

God expressly repeats them in reference to men after the flood^h

[Here, as in the text, “man” comprehends the whole human race—

It is further declared, that the corruption is not the effect of habit merely, but connatural with us from the earliest period of our existence—]

These proofs confirm the declaration itself as well as the application of the words

II. The declaration contained in them

In general terms, “the wickedness of man is great”—

But more particularly “his heart, the thoughts of his heart, the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart, are evil”

[Thoughts are evil when not conformed to the law of God—

The law of God is the only standard of good and evil—

Every thought therefore, which through defect deviates from what the law requires, is evil—]

The disposition of “his heart” is evil;

1. Without exception; “*every* imagination” is evil

[There is not one thought, even of the most eminent saints, that will stand the test of God’s law—

But the natural man has not one thought that is not altogether contrary to God’s law—]

2. Without mixture; “*only* evil”

[There is some good where the grace of God operates—

^c Ps. li. 5. Jer. xvii. 9. John iii. 6. Rom. viii. 7, 8.

^f Rom. iii. 9—12, 19.

^g Job xiv. 4. Prov. xx. 9.

^h Gen. viii. 21.

But there is no mixture of good in the heart of a natural manⁱ—

Whenever he does any thing which appears good, self will be found both the principle and end of this action—]

3. Without intermission “*continually*”

[There is no interval when good finds admittance—]

This is an hard saying, but true—

III. The ground upon which the declaration rests

If it stood on man's testimony, it might be rejected—

[Man is incompetent to determine such things^h—]

But it stands on the testimony of God, “God saw,”ⁱ
&c.—

[He knows the heart and every thought of it^j—

He can determine the qualities of our thoughts^m—

He will make them manifest at the last dayⁿ—]

His judgment is always according to truth^o—

INFERENCES

1. What reason have we all for the deepest humiliation!

[Our words and actions have involved us in much guilt—

But how innumerable have been the imaginations of our thoughts!—

Yet all these have been only evil continually—

Shall such persons boast of their good hearts?—

Let us all say with the prophet, “Woe is me,”^p &c.—

Let us loathe ourselves as Job^q—

Let us pray that the thoughts of our hearts may be forgiven us^r—]

2. What reason have we to love and value the Lord Jesus Christ!

[He knew what an aggregate of evil there would be in the world—

Yet he came to bear it all—

He is willing, too, to give us new hearts—

How then should we all love and value him!—

Let us henceforth have our conversation in Heaven, and pray with David^s—]

ⁱ Rom. vii. 18.

^m Prov. xvi. 2.

^p Isaiah vi. 5.

^r Ps. xix. 14.

^k 1 Cor. ii. 11.

ⁿ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^q Job xlii. 6.

^l Ezek. xi. 5.

^o Rom. iii. 3, 4.

^s Acts viii. 22.

XIX. CONVERSION A GROUND OF THANKFULNESS.

Rom. vi. 17. *God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

EXEMPTION from the punishment of sin is doubtless an inestimable blessing—

But deliverance from its power is equally precious—

The most advanced Christians greatly delight in this part of salvation—

Hence St. Paul thanks God for bestowing this mercy on the church at Rome—

We shall consider from the text

I. The character of all while in an unconverted state

All are “servants of sin” till they receive converting grace

[All indeed are not slaves to the same sin—

Some are led captive by their lusts and passions—

Others are drawn away by the pleasures and vanities of the world—

Others are under the dominion of pride and self-righteousness—

But all without exception are alienated from the life of God^a—

All are full of unbelief and self-sufficiency—]

This, however humiliating, is an indisputable truth

[The scriptures every where assert this respecting fallen man^b—

The most eminent saints confess it to have been their own case^c—

Experience proves it with respect to ourselves—

The very excuse which men offer in extenuation of their sins, viz. “that they *cannot* live as God requires,” establishes this truth—]

But it does not remain so in regenerate persons; as appears from

II. The change they experience in conversion

God instructs them in “the form of sound doctrine”

^a Eph. iv. 18.

^b John viii. 34. Rom. vi. 16. with the text.

^c Tit. iii. 3.

[They hear the declarations of God in his word—
They are enlightened by the Spirit to understand them—
They have the word applied with divine efficacy to their
souls—]

This form of doctrine they “obey from the heart”

[They yet indeed feel a law of sin in their members—
But “they no more serve sin” willingly as before—
On the contrary, “they now delight in the law of God”—
They obey it, not in appearance only or by constraint, but
willingly and without reserve—]

They are now cast, as it were, into the mould of the
gospel

[This is the force of the original; and is the marginal
version^d—

This is also the case, wherever the gospel takes effect^e—”

The wax has every lineament of the seal, and the coin of the
die—

So do they resemble God, who are renewed by the
gospel^f—]

The blessedness of this change will appear if we con-
sider

III. How great a cause of thankfulness such a conver-
sion is

The apostle thanks God that they were no longer slaves
of sin

[Sin is at all times a ground of shame and sorrow^g—

Paul esteemed it so in his own particular case^h—

Every saint of God views it in the same light—

St. Paul therefore did not mean that their subjection to it
was a ground of thankfulness—

But the subject of his thanksgiving is, that the Romans,
who once were slaves of sin, were now entirely devoted to
God—]

This is a ground of unspeakable thankfulness on many
accounts

1. On account of *the moral change* in the persons
themselves

[What can be more deplorable than to be a slave of sin?—

What can be more amiable than to have all our actions and
affections corresponding with the word of God?—

Surely this is a ground of thankfulness—]

^d Εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασχης.

^g Rom. vi. 21.

^e Col. i. 6.

^h 1 Tim. i. 13.

^f 2 Cor. iii. 18.

2. On account of *the effects* of this change *on society*

[How much better member of society must a child of God be than a slave of sin!—

How much happier would the world be, if such a change were general!—

On this account therefore it became the apostle to be thankful—]

3. On account of *the eternal consequences* that must follow this change

[They who die slaves of sin must suffer its punishment—

They are now the children of the devil, and must soon be his companions in miseryⁱ—

But the regenerate are children and heirs of God—

Surely eternity will scarcely suffice to thank God for this—]

We shall conclude with a suitable ADDRESS

1. To the unregenerate

[All who have not been freed from sin are of this number—

Alas! the friends of such have little cause to thank God for them—

They have rather reason to weep and mourn^k—

They may indeed bless God that the stroke of vengeance has been delayed—

O that all such persons might know the day of their visitation!—

Let all cry to God for his converting grace—

Nor let any rest in an external or partial change—

Nothing but a cordial compliance with the gospel, and a real conformity to it, will avail us in the day of judgment—]

2. To the regenerate

[The foregoing marks have sufficiently characterized these persons—

Such persons will do well to reflect on the mercy they have received—

The recollection of their past guilt will serve to keep them *humble*—

A consciousness of their remaining infirmities will make them *watchful*—

A view of the change wrought in them will make them *thankful*—

Let the regenerate then adopt the words of the Psalmist^l—

Let them beware of ever returning to their former ways^m—

Let them press forward for higher degrees of holiness and gloryⁿ—]

ⁱ John viii. 44.

^k Jer. xiii. 17.

^l Ps. ciii. 1—3.

^m 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

ⁿ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

3. To those who doubt to which class they belong

[Many, from what has been wrought in them, have reason to hope—

Yet, from what still remains to be done, they find reason to fear—

Hence they are long in painful suspense—

But let such remember, that sin, if truly lamented and resisted, does not prove them unregenerate^o—

On the contrary, their hatred of it, and opposition to it, are hopeful signs that they are in part renewed—

Nevertheless, let them endeavour to put this matter beyond a doubt^p—

Let them look to Christ as their almighty deliverer^q—

Let them pray for, and depend upon, his promised aid^r—]

^o Jam. iii. 2.

^q John viii. 36.

^p 2 Pet. i. 10.

^r 2 Cor. xii. 9.

XX. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE GODLY.

(Ps. iv. 3. *Know that God hath set apart him that is godly for himself.*

SIN has been in all ages an object of the world's regard—

But religion has been always hated and derided—

There never have been wanting those who resembled Cain and Ishmael^a—

God however has far other thoughts of those who serve him—

The recollection of this is a comfort to the godly under their persecutions—

The consideration of it too might be of great advantage to the ungodly—

The Psalmist seems to be reproving the wicked, for their contempt of God, and their injurious treatment of his people—

He therefore, in a way of triumphant exultation, suggests the thought in the text—

We shall

^a Gal. iv. 29.

I. Shew who are the objects of the divine favour

The world is divided into two descriptions of men, godly, and ungodly—

The godly are to be distinguished by a great variety of marks—

They fear God

[The generality sin without any shame or remorse^b—

But the godly can no longer proceed in such an evil course^c—

They humble themselves before God for their past offences—

They guard against offending him even in thought^d—]

They love God

[They are not actuated by a merely slavish fear—

They have the spirit of adoption given to them^e—

They unfeignedly delight to do their Father's will^f—

They account the enjoyment of his favour to be their highest happiness^g—]

They serve God

[Their religion does not consist in mere inefficacious feelings—

They make it appear to the world that they are God's servants—

They perform even their civil and social duties with a reference to him—

They do every thing with a view to his glory^h—

They are despised indeed by the world, but approved by their God—

This will appear while we

II. Declare the peculiar honour conferred upon them

God has testified, in the strongest terms, his approbation of the godly—

He has moreover “set them apart,” as distinct from those that perish—

This he did secretly in his eternal purpose

[His regard for them did not commence *after* they became godly—

Their godliness is the *fruit* and not the *cause* of his loveⁱ—

^b Eph. iv. 18, 19.

^c 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3.

^d 2 Cor. x. 5.

^e Gal. iv. 6.

^f Rom. vii. 22.

^g Ps. iv. 6, 7.

^h 1 Cor. x. 31.

ⁱ Jer. xxxi. 3. See also 2 Tim. i. 9. and Rom. viii. 29, 30.

He loved them, and set his heart upon them, from eternity^k—]

He did it also openly, when he called them by his grace

[These two periods of their separation are mentioned by St. Paul^l—

In conversion, God sets apart sinners for himself—

He inclines and enables them to come out from the world^m—

He causes them to devote themselves entirely to his serviceⁿ—]

He has set them apart too “for himself”

[He makes their souls his own habitation^o—

He sheds abroad his love in their hearts by his holy Spirit—

He preserves them as living monuments of his power and grace—

He regards them as his own peculiar treasure^p—]

Thus being a point wherein all are deeply interested, we shall

III. Commend the subject to your solemn attention

This is not a matter of doubtful disputation

[In every period of the world, God has had a peculiar people—

These have been distinguished with special tokens of his love^q—

And though they were not set apart for their holiness, they have invariably been made holy—

Moreover, when they were holy, God delighted in them as holy^r—]

Nor is it a matter of trifling concern

[The Psalmist evidently speaks of it as deserving deep attention—

And if it related only to this present state, it were worthy of notice—

But the present separation of God's people for himself is a pledge and earnest of a future separation—

In the day of judgment, God will complete what he here began^s—

What distinguished honour will he then confer upon the godly!^t—

^k Eph. i. 4.

^l Gal. i. 15.

^m 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

ⁿ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

^o 2 Cor. vi. 16.

^p Ps. cxxxv. 4.

^q Abel, Gen. iv. 4. Enoch, Noah, &c. Heb. xi. 5, 7. Paul, Acts ix. 15.

^r 1 Pet. iii. 4.

^s Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

^t Mal. iii. 17.

Then he will be their joy, and they his glory for ever^u—]

Let *the ungodly* therefore know this to their shame

[The Psalmist suggests the thought peculiarly in this view—

And well may they be ashamed who despise what God loves—

In vain do any hope to be God's hereafter, who are not his now—

Let the ungodly therefore be ashamed of their false confidences—

Let them set themselves apart for God, if they would have God set them apart for himself—

Let them learn to live the life of the righteous, if they would die his death—]

But let *the godly* know it, to their unspeakable consolation

[They, who are beloved of God, have little reason to regard the contempt of men—

God would have them assured of his superintending care—

He would have them know their security, who take him for their God^x—

Let the godly then rejoice in the honour conferred upon them—

Let them look forward with joy to the final completion of God's gracious purposes towards them—

And let them devote themselves more than ever to his service—]

^u Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

^x Rom. viii. 31.

XXI. THE DUTY AND OFFICE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

1 Pet. iv. 8. *Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

THE divine authority of our religion is fully established—

Its external evidences demonstrate God to be its author—

Nor are its internal evidences less convincing—

The tendency of Christianity is to assimilate us to God—

All other religions have countenanced a vindictive spirit—

But the religion of Jesus inculcates universal love—
The New Testament lays the greatest stress upon this duty—

The injunction in the text proposes to our view

I. The duty inculcated

The term “charity” is to be understood of Christian love

[Many confine the sense of this term to almsgiving—

But almsgiving is a very small part of what is implied in it—

Charity includes the whole of our duty towards our neighbours^a—]

This charity or love is our indispensable duty

[Though an old commandment, it is enjoined as a new one^b—

Obedience to it is a sure test of our conversion^c—

It is a good evidence of conversion to ourselves^d—

It is a satisfactory proof to others also^e—

A want of love manifests us to be in an unregenerate state^f—]

It ought to be cordial and “fervent”

[Worldly courtesy is but a faint image of Christian love—
Love, if pure, and subordinate to God, cannot be too fervent—

Our love of ourselves is the rule of love to others—

Our Lord’s love to us is the pattern also of this duty^g—]

We should “above all things” cultivate this disposition

[Love is the greatest of all Christian graces^h—

If we attain to it, we fulfil the law of Christⁱ—

But if we be destitute of it, nothing else will profit us^k—]

The children of God should maintain it “among themselves”

[Benevolence is due even to our enemies—

But there is an especial obligation in the saints to love each other^l—

Their union with Christ, and with each other, demands it^m—]

^a Rom. xiii. 9.

^b 1 John ii. 7, 8.

^c 1 John iv. 7, 8.

^d 1 John iii. 14. former part.

^e John xiii. 35.

^f 1 John. iii. 14. latter part.

^g 1 John iii. 16.

^h 1 Cor. xiii. 14.

ⁱ Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

^k 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

^l Gal. vi. 10.

^m 1 Cor. xii. 25.

To promote a more uniform attention to this duty, we will consider

II. The argument with which it is enforced

The Apostle's words may be considered as relating to

1. The sins of others

[To "cover the sins" of others (extenuating what we cannot approve; concealing what we cannot but condemn; and throwing a veil over, not errors only, but "sins," yea, even "a multitude" of sins;) is the proper office of loveⁿ—

From this office we should not depart, unless (as in the exercise of the ministerial or magisterial office) the honour of God, and the good of society, require it—

A just regard to the great duty of love is of incalculable importance; First, *to ourselves*; for how can we expect to have forbearance exercised towards us, if we refuse it to others? Next, *to the church*; for how can the church be edified, if its members do not walk together in love? And lastly, *to the enemies of the church*, who will not fail to harden themselves in their iniquities, if evil reports in the church, and consequent dissensions and animosities, afford them any occasion—

But mutual forbearance will never be exercised as it ought, without a deeply-rooted principle of love^o—

Therefore we should cultivate this principle, in order to maintain a becoming conduct^p—]

2. Our own sins

[We must not, for one moment, think that our love, however fervent, can *merit* the pardon of our sins—

Yet our pardon *may be*, and certainly *is*, suspended on the exercise of this divine principle—

ⁿ 1 Cor. xiii. 7. The duty of love does not, however, preclude ministers from censuring, or magistrates from punishing, the sins of men: they perform those acts *officially*; and in performing them, they obey, instead of violating, the law of love. But to men in their *individual capacity*, the text prescribes an invariable rule of duty. See Matt. xviii. 22.

^o When we hate a person, we are ready on all occasions to speak of his faults: but this is not the way in which we treat those whom we tenderly love.

^p Prov. x. 12. *in our translation* seems to countenance, and almost to establish, this sense of the text; because it appears to have been cited by St. Peter. But the Apostles generally cited rather the Septuagint translation of the scriptures: and *in that* the two passages do not at all correspond. The LXX translate it thus; Μῖσος ἐγείρει νεῖκος πάντας δὲ τοὺς μὴ φιλονεικούντας καλύψει φιλία. So that the *apparent* parallelism will not enable us to determine, with certainty, the sense of the text.

To this the whole scriptures bear witness^q—

And the words in the original most naturally bear this sense^r—

This sense of them also exactly accords with our Lord's description of the day of judgment^s—

Moreover, in this view the Apostle's argument is far stronger than on the other construction of his words—

Let it then operate as a strong incentive to mutual love; for "with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again"^t—]

INFER

1. How justly reprehensible are the generality of Christians!

[There is a proneness in all to receive and propagate reports—

But none are willing to have their own reputation blasted—

Yet there are few who do not scatter defamation—

Let us all be ashamed of and resist this sinful propensity—

Let us watch against every temptation or desire to indulge it—

Let us regulate our conduct by the law of love—

Let us study the Apostle's description of charity^u—

And let us attend to the exhortation of St. John^v—]

2. How worthy of acceptance is the gospel of Christ!

[A sense of Christ's love to us produces love to him—

When we love Christ aright, we shall love all his members^y—

This is the invariable effect wherever the gospel prevails—

The knowledge of our own sins will make us tender towards others—

The forgiveness we have received will incline us to forgive others—

^q Matt v. 7. and vi. 14, 15. and Prov. xvi. 6. See also Gal. vi. 7, 8. and 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. contrasted with Jam. ii. 13. Daniel even goes so far as to counsel Nebuchadnezzar *λυτρώσαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἐν ἐλεημοσύναις.*

^r Καλύψει ἀμαρτίαν means to cover sins from the sight of God, so that they shall not be noticed in the final judgment. See Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. and Neh. iv. 5. In Jam. v. 20, they will also bear that sense: and if we could divest ourselves of prejudice, we should more readily put that construction upon them in that passage; since it is not the converting of souls merely, but the love exercised in seeking to convert them, that entails this blessing on us. If we put a different construction upon them, we make them a mere tautology: but in the sense here affixed to them, they afford a strong additional motive for exertion.

^s Matt. xxv. 34—46. "Come, &c. For"—"Depart, &c. For, &c."

^t Matt. vii. 2.

^u 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.

^v 1 John iii. 18.

^y 1 John v, 1

The extent of Christ's love to us will be the ground of our love to our fellow-sinners²—

Let the gospel then bring¹ forth this fruit in our hearts and lives—

We shall then experience the truth of David's assertion^a—
In the exercise of love is the foretaste of heaven itself—]

² John xiii. 34.

^a Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

XXII. THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

Ezek. xi. 5. *I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.*

THERE is much practical atheism in the heart of man—

It shews itself particularly in a denial of God's omniscience—

Hence David lays this sin to the charge of the wicked in his day^a—

It prevailed also among the Jewish chiefs in after-ages—

God therefore sent Ezekiel to counteract its influence among them—

The prophet was ordered to declare what had passed in their hearts—

In confirmation of his word he was to assert the divine omniscience—

This perfection of the Deity is a profitable subject of consideration at all times—

We shall endeavour

I. To establish the assertion in the text

To know all that passes in men's minds is equivalent to omniscience—

Now this attribute of God might be inferred in some measure from the apprehensions which subsist in the minds of all with respect to it

[All, who acknowledge a God, believe that he sees the heart—

They feel a consciousness that he is privy to their secret sins—

A consciousness of integrity gives them confidence towards him—

An inspired apostle confirms this sentiment^b—

^a Ps. xciv. 7.

^b 1 John iii. 20, 21.

This general conviction of God's omniscience is a strong presumption that the conviction itself is well founded—]

The law also, which God has given, supposes him to be omniscient

[The law of God extends to the inmost thoughts and inclinations^c—

It is as truly violated by a secret desire, as by an overt act^d—

But how futile would such a law be, if God did not see the heart!—]

Moreover, if any thing were hid from him, he could not judge the world

[Good and evil consist as much in motives as in actions—

Besides, good is sometimes mistaken in the world for evil^e—

Evil also is often done under the semblance of good^f—

And even the best actions have some mixture of sin in them—

Now the precise quality of every action must be appreciated, in order that the world may be judged in righteousness—

But how shall God distinguish, if he do not know our thoughts?]

But God himself has claimed omniscience as his own prerogative^g—

It is ascribed to him also by all the inspired writers

[They have expressed themselves respecting it in *positive declarations*^h—

They have stated it as the ground of their *solemn addresses*ⁱ—

They have made it the subject of their *devoutest acknowledgments*^k—]

He has given abundant proofs of his omniscience to the world

[He has revealed the evil which men intended to commit^l—

He has testified of the good which none but himself could know^m—]

^c Ps. li. 6.

^d Rom. vii. 7. Matt. v. 28.

^e Isai. v. 20.

^f Luke xvi. 15.

^g Jer. xvii. 9, 10. and xxiii. 23, 24.

^h Prov. xv. 11. Ps. xi. 4. Heb. iv. 13.

ⁱ In their private and personal concerns, Ps. xxxviii. 9. and in matters relating to the church at large, Acts i. 24.

^k David writes almost a whole Psalm upon it, Ps. cxxxix. 1—12. and Job had learned it from deep experience, Job xlii. 2.

^l Matt. ii. 13.

^m John i. 47.

The declaration in the text being thus established, we proceed

II. To make some reflections upon it

The truth before us may be made exceedingly profitable to our souls—

Among the many reflections which might arise from it, we shall select a few

1. How astonishing must be the patience of God!

[There is a great deal of evil visible in the world—

But there is far more which is known to God only—

He observes all which is conceived in the hearts of men—

What a mass of iniquity then must he behold!—

And how wonderful is it that he exercises such forbearance towards us!—

Let us admire and adore this long-suffering of God—

Let us be stimulated by it to unfeigned repentanceⁿ—]

2. How erroneous is the judgment which many form of themselves!

[Men judge of themselves too often by their external deportment—

Hence they indulge a spirit of pride and self-complacency^o—

Of such persons Solomon gives a just description^p—

But who is there that has not harboured many evil thoughts?^q—

Who that looks into his own heart has not a sight like Ezekiel's vision?^r—

Who that knows himself, does not feel his need of the publican's spirit?^s—

Let every one know that his works will ere long "be tried by fire"^t—

Then will our Lord's declaration be awfully exemplified^u—

Then also shall our doom be fixed according to the rule prescribed^s—]

3. What need have all to watch over their own hearts!

[Our hearts are ever prone to indulge vain and sinful thoughts—

But God will "bring every secret thing into judgment"^y—

ⁿ Rom. ii. 4.

^o Luke xviii. 9.

^p Prov. xxx. 12.

^q Who can number the motions of pride, envy, malice, impurity, &c. which have arisen in his heart?

^r Ezek. viii. 6, 13, 15.

^s Luke xviii. 13.

^t 1 Cor. iii. 13.

^u Matt. xix. 30.

^v Luke xviii. 14.

^y 1 Cor. iv. 5.

How watchful should this make us against the first risings of evil!—

Let us then carefully attend to that instructive admonition'—

Let us often think of God under the title which Hagar gave him^a—

Let us remember the woe denounced by the prophet^b—

Let us seek mercy not only for our actions, but our thoughts^c—

Let every one apply to himself the advice of David to Solomon^d—]

^z Prov. iv. 23.

^a Gen. xvi. 13.

^b Isai. xxix. 15.

^c Acts viii. 22.

^d 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

(XXIII.) THE END FOR WHICH GOD SUFFERS HIS PEOPLE TO BE AFFLICTED.

1 Pet. i. 6, 7. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

THE enlightening and converting of souls are the first objects of a minister's attention—

Nevertheless the comforting of God's people is also an essential part of his duty—

This was the special direction which God gave to the prophet of old^a—

It is a conformity to the divine exemplar^b—

It is the fruit of the comforts they themselves receive^c—

St. Peter is a striking pattern of a sympathizing and affectionate pastor

He writes to the Christians who were scattered through divers countries—

And begins with setting before them the richest topics of consolation^d—

He shews them the blessed end for which their present troubles are suffered to come upon them—

^a Isai. xlii. 1.

^b 2 Cor. vii. 6.

^c 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

^d Ver. 3—5.

I. The state and condition of God's people

Believers have at all times within themselves a ground of joy—

Yet are they also frequently oppressed with deep and pungent sorrow—

They experience a peculiar and united exercise of these opposite affections—

They “greatly rejoice” in the mercy which has been vouchsafed unto them

[They have been begotten of God to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance—

They see that inheritance reserved for them, and themselves kept for it—

This cannot but be matter of exceeding joy to them at all times—]

But they are at the same time encompassed with manifold temptations

[They are hated, reviled, and persecuted by the world—

They are assailed with “the fiery darts of the devil”—

They are harassed with innumerable corruptions in their own hearts—]

Through these temptations they are sometimes ‘in great heaviness’

[Grace does not destroy, but only moderates our natural feelings—

Christians therefore may be deeply oppressed with grief—

Not that God will suffer them to continue always in heaviness—

Nevertheless he permits them to be in this state occasionally, and “for a season”—]

There is “a necessity” that they should undergo trials of this kind

[God could save them without leaving them to endure any trial—

But he “perfected his own Son by sufferings”—

He has ordained that the members shall in this respect be conformed to their head—]

Their temptations, however afflictive at the time, are permitted for their good

II. The end for which they are suffered to be in that state

Temptations, of whatever kind they be, are justly called “trials of our faith”

[No man can exercise the grace of patience, or of contentment, unless he be in a situation that may give rise to impatience or discontent—

Nor can faith be known to exist in the heart, unless there be some circumstances that give scope for the manifestation of it—

But temptations, especially such as produce much grief, can be surmounted only by strong faith—

Hence God himself speaks as though he discovered Abraham's grace by means of the difficulties into which he was brought^f—]

In this view they are “much more precious than the trial of gold”

[Gold, though it stand the trial of the fire, will perish at last—

But faith, in its effects at least, will endure for ever—

The value and the brightness given to gold by the furnace are not so estimable, as the purity and brightness which our faith derives from affliction—]

Their real worth will not be discerned till the day of judgment

[They will have a different aspect in “the day of Christ's appearing” from what they have now—

The benefit resulting from them will be then fully discovered—]

They will then “be found to the praise and honour of those who endured them” —

[Every thing we have done or suffered for Christ will be brought to light—

A reward proportioned to our faithfulness will then be given us—

Great sufferings will issue in “an eternal weight of glory”—]

They will be declared also to the praise and honour of Christ himself

[Christ is “the author and finisher of our faith”—

He will have the glory of carrying his people through their trials—

Thus they will issue in the good of the sufferers, and the glory of Christ—]

This is the end for which God permits his people to endure them

INFER

1. How little cause have any persons to question their interest in God's favour on account of their trials, or their grief under them

[Satan takes advantage of the afflictions of the saints to impress their minds with desponding thoughts—

Their natural turn of mind, too, sometimes favours such impressions—

Even bodily disorder also may concur to deject their souls—

But the being in heaviness through temptations is no just ground of doubting our acceptance with God—

The persons of whom the apostle speaks in the text, were most undoubtedly in a converted state^g—

Let not any tempted soul then be desponding or dejected^h—]

2. What abundant reason have we to be reconciled to afflictions!

[Afflictions are trying to our frail nature—

But they are salutary to our soulsⁱ—

We shall ere long see the necessity and benefit of each of our sorrows—

The praise and honour in which they will issue will make amends for all—

Let us then even now account them “precious”^k—

Let us consider how light they are, when compared with the glory of heaven^l—

Let us only be concerned to possess our souls in patience^m—]

^g They were “begotten again,” had “a lively hope,” “believed in Christ,” “loved him,” “rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable,” and had “received the salvation of their souls.” Ver. 3, 8, 9.

^h Isai. xl. 27—31.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 11.

^k Jam. i. 2, 3.

^l Rom. viii. 18.

^m Jam. i. 4.

XXIV. ENCOURAGEMENT TO STEDFASTNESS IN RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

Gal. vi. 9. *Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

THE way of duty is difficult, while that of sin is easy^a—

^a A learned prelate speaks admirably to this purpose:—“Vice is first pleasing; then easy; then delightful; then frequent; then habi-

After we have received grace, we are still prone to depart from God—

But the prospect of an happy issue of our labours is a strong support—

The gospel encourages us to expect a certain and seasonable recompence

I. When we may be said to be weary in well-doing

Well-doing respects every part of a Christian's duty—

We may apprehend ourselves weary in it, when we are not really so—

We are not *necessarily* so, because our affections are not so lively as they once were

[Age and infirmity may occasion a stupor of the mind—

A more enlarged view of our own depravity may cast us down—

Love itself may grow in some respects even while its ardour *seems* to abate^b—]

We are not *necessarily* so, because our corruptions *appear* to have increased—

[When we are first awakened, we know but little of our own hearts—

As we proceed, the Lord discovers to us more of our hidden abominations^c—

The discovery of them; as of objects in a dark place, argues only more light from heaven—]

We are not *necessarily* so, because we do not find enlargement in prayer—

[Excess of trouble may, for a time, distract and overwhelm the soul—

Our Lord himself seems to have experienced somewhat of this^d—

Our prayers, perhaps, are never more acceptable than when they are offered in broken accents, in sighs, and groans^e—]

But we have reason to apprehend that we are weary in well-doing

1. When we do not make a progress in our religious course

tual; then confirmed: then the man is impenitent; then he is obstinate; then he resolves never to repent; and then he is damned." Jer. Taylor's Serm. p. 260.

^b Phil. i. 9. ^c This may be illustrated by Ezek. viii. 6, 13, 15.

^d John xii. 27. ^e Rom. viii. 26.

[We cannot stand still in religion; we must advance or decline—

There are seasons when we grow rather in humility than in the more lively graces—

But if we neither shoot our branches upward, nor our roots downward, it must be ill with us^f—]

When we are habitually formal in religious duties

[The best of men find cause to lament an *occasional* deadness—

But no true Christian can be satisfied in such a state^g—

Habitual formality therefore proves, either that we have never been truly in earnest, or that we are in a state of miserable declension^h—]

3. When we do not carry religionⁱ into our worldly business

[As long as we are in the world, we must perform the duties of our station—

But if our souls be prospering, we shall maintain a sense of religion even when we are not actually engaged in the offices of itⁱ—]

4. When our consciences are not tender

[It is essential to a christian to hate evil^k—

He strives to “avoid even the appearance of evil”—

He will in no wise allow one sinful temper or inclination^l—]

We cannot be too much on our guard against such a state

II. Why we should never give way to weariness

If we persevere in our exertions, we shall reap the fruit of our labour

[There will be a harvest to all who labour in God’s field—

It may not come so soon as we would desire; but it shall come, as the earthly harvests, “in due season”—

We must, however, wait God’s appointed time—

If we faint, we shall lose all that we have before wrought^m—

But if we continue patiently in well-doing, we shall succeed at lastⁿ—]

Our prospects of the harvest may well encourage us to persevere, since it will be

^f 2 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. vi. 7, 8.

^g Nine times in the 119th Psalm does David cry, “Quicken me, O Lord”—

^h Phil. iii. 3.

ⁱ Prov. xxiii. 17.

^k Rom. xii. 9.

^l Acts xxiv. 16.

^m 2 John viii. Heb. x. 38. ⁿ Rom. ii. 7.

1. Certain

[The husbandman endures many toils for an uncertain harvest—

His hopes may be blasted in a variety of ways—

But God has pledged himself, that his faithful servants shall be rewarded^o—

Nor shall either men or devils prevent the accomplishment of his promise^p—]

2. Glorious

[What are all the harvests that ever were gathered since the creation of the world, in comparison of that which the Christian will reap?—

Shall we faint then with *such* a prospect in view?—]

3. Everlasting

[However abundant our harvests here may be, we must renew the same process, in order to supply our returning wants—

But when once we have reaped the heavenly harvest, we shall “rest from our labours” for evermore—

If then a year of toil be considered as compensated by a transient supply, shall not an eternity of happiness be thought worth our care, during the short period of human life?—

Do any, that are now in glory, regret the pains they bestowed to get there?—

Let us “be followers of them,” and we shall soon participate their bliss^q—]

^o Heb. vi. 10.

^p Prov. xi. 18.

^q Heb. vi. 12.

XXV. THE EFFECT WHICH A SIGHT OF GOD PRODUCES.

Job xlii. 5, 6. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I repent, and abhor myself in dust and ashes.*

THE deepest lessons of religion are usually taught us in the school of affliction—

Affliction draws forth and discovers to us our latent corruptions—

These drive us with more abundant earnestness to God—

God takes these occasions to manifest his power and grace—

Thus we attain to a more enlarged and experimental knowledge of God—

This advances and improves us in every part of the divine life—

The history of Job remarkably exemplifies this observation—

He was a good man before his affliction^a—but too confident of his own integrity—

But in his trouble God revealed himself to him more fully, and thus brought him to a better spirit—“I have,” &c.

I. The difference between “hearing of God, and seeing him”

Job had doubtless heard of God attentively, and attained some conformity to the divine image^b—

It would be unseasonable therefore to speak of a careless inattentive hearing—

But now he enjoyed a much clearer discovery of God than ever he had before^c—

[He saw not any *visible representation* of the Deity—

But he had a revelation of God to the eye of his mind—

It was also accompanied with a correspondent impression on his soul—

This, however, though granted eminently to Job, was not peculiar to him—

Paul experienced it, Gal. i. 16. and every Christian may expect the same^d—

Similar manifestations are vouchsafed to the church in all ages^e—

Nor can any one be a true Christian, who has not experienced them in a measure^f—]

Such a difference between “hearing of God,” and “seeing him” still exists

[Many hear the truths of the gospel with approbation—

Yet for want of a more simple faith, they receive but little profit^g—

^a Job i. 8.

^b This is the plain import of the figurative expressions in the text.

^c Job xxxviii. 1.

^d John xiv. 22, 23.

^e The people of God are said to be anointed, to be sealed, and to have an earnest of their future inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. Eph. i. 13, 14. Which metaphors imply a peculiar participation of the Spirit's influence.

^f 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^g Heb. iv. 2.

From the report of the gospel they discover the perfections of God—

But, from the weakness of their faith, they see not the brightness and glory of them—

They behold God as under a veil, but cannot see him as with open face^b—

Whoever has known what it is to apprehend by faith the truths of which his reason was before convinced, will attest the truth of this positionⁱ—]

The hearing, of which we have spoken, will inform the mind, and regulate the life—

But the seeing of God will operate in a still more excellent manner

II. The effect which a sight of God will produce

We behold in Job the effects which will invariably follow from such a sight of the Deity—

It will discover to us our utter sinfulness

[Job was high in his own esteem before he saw God^k—

But after he had seen God, his sentiments were wholly changed^l—

Job expressly declares that his repentance was the result of the discovery afforded him—“wherefore,” &c.—

Thus Peter’s mind was affected with a discovery of Christ’s power^m—

We have a yet more remarkable instance of this effect in the prophetⁿ—

The experience of every Christian accords with this—

Nothing shews us the aggravations of our sins so much as a view of him against whom they have been committed—

Our contrition will ever be proportioned to our views of Christ^o—]

It will cause us to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes

[While we know but little of God, we see but little of our own corruptions—

But as we become more enlightened, we learn to lothe and abhor ourselves—

Even Job, holy as he was, found this effect from his views of God—

Paul also, notwithstanding all his probity, was brought to this by a sight of Christ^p—

The same cause will produce the same effect in all^q—]

^b 2 Cor. iii. 18. ⁱ This difference may, perhaps, be illustrated by the experience of the Samaritan converts, John iv. 41, 42.

^k Job xxvii. 5, 6. and xxxi. 6.

^l Job xl. 4, 5.

^m Luke v. 8.

ⁿ Isai. vi. 5.

^o Zech. xii. 10.

^p 1 Tim. i. 15.

^q Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 31.

INFER

1. How do they err who decry all manifestations of God to the soul!

[Many think that divine manifestations are only the offspring of enthusiasm, and the parent of pride—

But God does surely manifest himself to some as he does not to others^r—

Nor will such manifestations be suffered to puff us up—

The more exalted a Christian is, the lower thoughts will he have of himself^s—

Let the saints then be careful to cut off occasion for such calumnies^t—

Let them seek clearer views of Christ, as the means of abasing themselves more and more—]

2. In what a wretched state are they, who hear only in a customary manner!

[Many there are of this description^u—

They discover themselves by their self-righteousness and self-complacency—

But every living soul must be brought low before God^x—

God has established an invariable rule of procedure towards them^y—

We cannot address them better than in the pathetic language of Jeremiah^z—]

3. How unspeakable a mercy do many find it to have been afflicted!

[The generality even of real Christians are prone to rest in low attainments—

But God quickens them by means of temporal or spiritual afflictions—

Through their troubles, they are brought to much humility and heavenly-mindedness—

Hence the most eminent saints have esteemed their troubles a ground of thankfulness—

Let all therefore justify God in their troubles, and glorify him by submission—

Let the afflicted be solicitous to have their trials sanctified, rather than removed—]

4. What views shall we have of God in the eternal world!

[The views with which the godly are sometimes favoured in this world are inexpressibly bright and glorious—

^r See Note d.

^s Eph. iii. 8.

^t 1 Pet. iii. 16.

^u Matt. xiii. 14, 15.

^x Isai. ii. 11.

^y Jam. iv. 6.

^z Jer. xlii. 15—17.

But what a sight of God will that be, when we shall behold him face to face!—

Surely all that we have heard or seen of God in this earthly state will be, in comparison of that, no more than a taper compared with the meridian sun—

Let us willingly then endure the tribulations that are preparing us for heaven—]

XXVI. ADVICE TO PERSONS UNDER PERSECUTION OR TEMPTATION.

1 Pet. iv. 19. *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

GOD has mercifully engaged to save his people at the last—

They may however meet with many severe conflicts in their way—

Nor are they to expect to be saved but with great difficulty—

Nevertheless they may safely commit themselves to God, in hope of an happy issue out of all their trials—

Hence the apostle suggests, in a way of inference, the advice in the text—

We propose to shew

I. What Christians must expect to suffer

Though all are not called to bear the cross in the same degree, yet all should be prepared to suffer

1. In their reputation

[That “fear of God” which the Scriptures represent to be “the beginning of wisdom,” the world considers as the summit of folly—

However wise, learned, or discreet any man may be, he cannot escape the imputation of weakness or enthusiasm, if he will “follow the Lord fully”—

If our Lord and Master was called Beelzebub, his servants can expect no better name—]

2. In their property

[In former times the saints have frequently “suffered the loss of all things”—

Nor is it uncommon now for friends, and even parents, to withdraw their kindness from godly persons on account of their religion—

Who does not know that eminent piety is a bar, rather than a help, to promotion?—

“They then who would be Christ’s disciples, must forsake all, and follow him”—]

3. In their liberty and life

[Through the tender mercy of our God we are protected by the laws of the land—

But none can tell what changes may yet arise—

Multitudes even in this kingdom have suffered death for Christ’s sake—

And, whether called to this trial or not, we should be prepared for it—]

To reconcile us to these dispensations, We proceed to shew

II. Why it is the will of God that we should suffer

God is pleased to permit it

1. For the trial of our faith

[God can discern our graces, though we should have no opportunity to exercise them—

But, if they be not called forth into act, neither have we the comfort of them, nor he the glory—

Hence God permits “the fiery trial to try us,” that he may discover both to ourselves and others “what great things he has done for us”—]

2. For the advancement of our graces

[Our graces almost invariably languish when our outward circumstances are easy—

But in seasons of difficulty they put forth themselves with strength—

Though Jesus needed no such stimulus, yet even he was “made perfect through sufferings”—

And it is for the accomplishment of the same end, that God has made our road to lie “through much tribulation”—]

3. For the manifestation of his own glory

[The patience of the saints is a ground of astonishment to the unbelieving world—

And the supports which God administers to them fills their hearts with gratitude towards him—

But what bursts of praise will resound from the myriads of his redeemed, when all the wonders of his love shall be universally and completely known!—]

Satisfied with these appointments of the Deity, let us enquire

III. What our conduct should be when called to suffer

The best of men may be brought, as it were, “to their wit’s end”—

But the advice in the text is the most proper that can be given—

1. Let us “commit our souls to God’s care and keeping”

[We must not attempt to stand in our own strength—

Nothing less than God’s wisdom and power can defeat the conspiracy that is formed against us—

We should make him therefore the manager of our cause, and “the keeper” of our souls—]

2. Let us at the same time persist “in well-doing”

[We must neither be irritated to do evil, nor deterred from doing good—

The more we are persecuted for the sake of Christ, the more studious we should be “to put our enemies to silence by well-doing”—

The very efforts of the enemy to extinguish our light should cause it to shine the brighter—]

3. Let us, above all, confide in God “as a faithful Creator”

[God has promised to “keep the feet of his saints;” and he will perform it—

We should suffer nothing to rob us of this confidence—

If we “trust firmly in him, we shall be like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved”—]

XXVII. THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS EXPERIENCED BY GOD’S PEOPLE.

Is. xl. 29—31. *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.*

THE Christian’s life is a continual warfare—

Nor has he any strength but in his God—

He is prone also to reflect more on his own weakness than on God's power—

Hence he is often filled with fears respecting the issue of his conflicts—

But God has provided an antidote against them—

The Jews are here addressed as though they were already in Babylon—

Their desponding fears are represented and reprov'd, ver. 27, 28.—

They are reminded of the many displays their nation had formerly seen of God's almighty power and unsearchable wisdom—

They are taught to expect deliverance if they will wait on God—

The words of the text are applicable to the church in all ages—

We shall consider from them

I. The discouragements which God's people labour under

None but they who have experienced the Christian's conflicts can form any adequate conception of them—

Many are bowed down under a load of *temporal* afflictions

[Christians are as much exposed to temporal afflictions as others—

They are sometimes oppressed with many troubles at once—

Nor are these so easy to be borne as men generally imagine—

Job himself sank for a time under the pressure of them^b—

No wonder then if men of less attainments be discouraged—]

Spiritual troubles are the lot of all Christians

[The corruptions of the heart are extremely painful to a renewed person—

The many unsuccessful conflicts which the Christian maintains with them is a source of much grief—

The temptations of Satan also are often as "fiery darts" in his soul—

Nor can he see the desolations of Zion without much anguish of mind^c—]

^a Pain and sickness, losses and poverty, are sometimes rendered more afflictive by the unkindness of friends, and the invectives of calumny.

^b Job iii. 1. & xxvii. 2.

^c Ezek. ix. 4.

Even the strongest of the saints are ready sometimes to faint under their trials

[By "youths" we may understand, not inexperienced, but strong believers—

Even they may both "faint and utterly fall" in their affliction—

David affords an example of disquietude and despondency^d—

The whole Jewish church in Babylon seemed possessed with this spirit^e—

And even in this day too many exclaim like those in Isaiah^f—]

Still however none need despair, if they consider

II. The supports which God will bestow

God is never at a loss for means to succour his people^g—

Nor does he want tenderness and compassion towards them—

[He has given them a sympathizing high priest^h—

He has promised his acceptance of their weak endeavoursⁱ—

Nor shall their infirmities be any bar to his favours^k—

He will even "perfect his own strength in their weakness"—]

He expects however that they "wait upon" him

[Prayer is necessary in order to obtain divine blessings^l—

Nor must we be discouraged because we receive not an immediate answer—

We must "wait the Lord's leisure"—]

By waiting on him they will obtain effectual aid

[God will never turn away his ear from an humble suppliant—

He will give all needful and seasonable help^m—

They who were drooping shall "mount up with wings as eagles"—

They that had "utterly fallen" shall "run" as in a race—

They shall "march" onward, in spite of all opposition—

They shall never "faint" through want of strength or courage—]

^d Ps. lxxvii. 7—9.

^e Ezek. xxxvii. 11.

^f Isaiah xl. 27.

^g Ver. 28.

^h Heb. iv. 15.

ⁱ Isaiah xl. 31.

^k Matt. xii. 20.

^l Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

^m Deut. xxxiii. 25.

ⁿ See Bishop Lowth's Translation.

Nor will any one be disappointed in his hope
 [David experienced success in the use of these means^o—
 Every believing soul shall experience the same^p—]

ADDRESS

1. To those who bless themselves on account of never having felt such discouragements

[An ignorance respecting spiritual conflicts is far from being a matter of rejoicing—

It argues an utter ignorance of true religion—

He who floats with the stream neither makes nor feels any opposition—

But the Christian has to stem the torrent of the world and of his own corruptions^q—

And under his conflicts he will be often ready to faint^r—

Let all therefore begin to “run their race,” and “to fight a good fight”—]

2. To those who are now discouraged

[Many are the sources from whence difficulties arise—

But God is an all-sufficient helper to those who trust in him—

He is pleased to leave his people for a season, only that they may be made to feel their own weakness and to rely on him—

Let none therefore despond like those of old^s—

Let them rather wait on God in the use of his appointed means—

Let them remember the encouraging declarations of St Paul^t—

They shall soon be able to attest the truth of the prophet's assertion^u—]

^o Ps. xl. 1, 2.

^p Zech. x. 12.

^q Gal. v. 17.

^r Rom. vii. 24.

^s Jer. ii. 25.

^t 2 Cor. xii. 10. last clause, and Phil. iv. 13.

^u Isa. xxx. 18. last clause.

XXVIII. THE INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS.

1 John iii. 2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

OUR Lord was hated, reviled, and persecuted unto death—

But we see how glorious was his person, and how exalted his character—

In the same manner his followers are treated with contempt—

But God declares their state to be the most honourable upon earth—

To this effect St. John represents them as slighted by man and honoured by God—

I. The present state of believers

The Scripture speaks of believers in the most exalted terms—

They are not merely servants, but “sons of God”^a—

This they are

1. By adoption

[Every believer was once a child of wrath^b—

But God takes whom he will into his own family^c—

He adopts them as his sons, and makes them heirs of his glory^d—]

2. By regeneration

[Once they had only a carnal mind that is enmity against God^e—

But they have been born again of the Holy Spirit^f—

They are renewed after the image of their heavenly Father^g—]

They enjoy this state “*now*”

[Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, partake alike of this honour—

Nor does God withhold it from any on account of their remaining infirmities—

Even now, while the world despises them, does God own his relation to them—]

What an unspeakably blessed state is this!

[How different is it from the state they were once in!—

How great the privileges which they enjoy by means of this relation!—

How sweet the sense of this relation often is to their souls!—^g

To what a glorious state does it lead them in a better world—

Well might the apostle break forth in wonder and admiration^h—]

^a 2 Cor. vi. 18.

^b Eph. ii. 3.

^c Eph. ii. 19.

^d Rom. viii. 15, 17.

^e Rom. viii. 7.

^f John i. 13.

^g Col. iii. 10.

^h 1 John iii. 1.

Yet, blessed as it is, it falls infinitely short of what it will be

II. Their future state

Very little is known respecting this

[We can form no idea of spiritual and glorified bodies—

We cannot imagine how extensive will be the capacities of the soul—

We have very faint conceptions of perfect holiness and perfect happiness—

Even one who had seen Christ transfigured, says, “It doth not appear,” &c.—]

Yet there are some things revealed to us

[We shall see Christ, not merely by faith, but with our bodily eyesⁱ—

Not veiled as formerly, but in all his glory—

We shall resemble him in all his imitable perfections—

This resemblance will result from our sight of him—

Even “our bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body”²—

This shall be fully accomplished at the great day of his appearing—]

These things we may be said to “know”

[We have already experienced the earnest of them in our hearts—

When we believe in him we have views of him, which we had not before—

These transform the soul into his image³—

Our Lord has given us the fullest assurance of these things⁴—

St. Paul also leaves us no room to doubt^m—]

INTER

1. How wonderfully different the lot of believers and unbelievers!

[Believers are the children of God—

Unbelievers are the children of the wicked oneⁿ—

Believers can form no adequate conception of the happiness that awaits them—

Unbelievers have no idea of the misery to which they are hastening—

How different will be the appearance of each in that day!—

How different their sentiments on seeing Christ upon his judgment-seat!—

ⁱ Job xix. 25—27.

^k 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^l John xvii. 24.

^m 1 Cor. xv. 49. Col. iii. 4.

ⁿ John viii. 38. 44.

For what different ends will their capacities of soul and body be enlarged!—

What a different state will they experience to all eternity!—

Let none defer calling upon God for mercy—

Let all seek his regenerating grace, and an admission into his family—

If we will believe in Christ these blessings shall be ours^o—]

2. How bright the prospects of the true Christian!

[The Christian's warfare will soon be over—

Then will come a blessedness which he cannot now conceive—

Another day may bring him to the full possession of it—

Let these prospects animate every pious soul—

Let none suffer their minds to be drawn away by the things of time—

Let every one stand ready to take his flight^p—

Let the beloved apostle be our example^q—]

^o John i. 12.

^p 2 Pet. iii. 12.

^q Rev. xxii. 20.

XXIX. THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING BY FAITH ON CHRIST.

—John vi. 53—55. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

THE natural man neither does nor can understand spiritual truths^a—

This inspired declaration has been verified in all ages—

The Samaritan woman shewed how unapt we are to receive spiritual instruction^b—

Even Nicodemus formed the most absurd conceptions of our Lord's meaning^c—

Such also was the blindness of the Jews to whom our Lord addressed this discourse^d—

He however, in compassion to them, proceeded to confirm his gracious declarations—

^a 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^b John iv. 14, 15.

^c John iii. 3, 4.

^d Ver. 41, 52.

May we experience the illuminating and constraining influences of divine grace (ver. 44, 45.) while we consider

I. What is meant by eating the flesh of Christ, and drinking his blood

Great caution is necessary in explaining the figurative expressions of Scripture—

We shall endeavour to exhibit the full scope of the metaphor, without pressing it too far—

It is sufficiently obvious that the text is not to be understood in a *literal* sense—

Nor does it relate to the *sacrament*, that being not yet instituted—

Nor does it signify the giving a *mere assent* to our Lord's doctrines—

[The doctrines of the gospel are sometimes represented as bread and wine—

And our Lord may be considered as speaking of his doctrines when he speaks of himself as the bread of life—

But he could not intend a *mere assent* to those doctrines by the metaphor of eating—

If this were all that he meant, Judas and Simon Magus were truly possessed of eternal life^e—]

Our Lord explains the eating of him as synonymous with believing on him^f—

But, to speak more particularly, the metaphor of eating the flesh of Christ, &c. implies

1. An union with his person

[The doctrine of our union with Christ is set forth by a great variety of images in Scripture—

It naturally arises from the metaphor in the text^g—

It is particularly mentioned by our Lord in the two verses following^h—]

2. A trust in his sacrifice

[Our Lord speaks of his flesh expressly in reference to his sacrificeⁱ—

^e Acts viii. 23. Mark xiv. 21.

^f Ver. 35.

^g Eph. iii. 17. Col. i. 27.

^h From hence it appears, that as our bodily life is upheld by the invisible operation of our food within us, and as the spiritual life of Jesus was maintained by the indwelling of the Deity within him; so the eating of him is, in fact, an union with him, and shall ever be accompanied by the invisible supports of his Spirit and grace.

ⁱ Ver. 51.

The words which he used at the institution of his last supper confirm this idea—

The *eating* of his flesh therefore can mean no less than a *trust* in that sacrifice—]

3. A dependence on his grace

[What animal food is to the body, *that* the grace of Christ is to the soul—

Unless we have recourse to Christ continually, we must fall and perish^k—]

According to this view of the metaphor, it is worthy of the deepest attention

II. The importance of the doctrine

This is abundantly manifest, from the words before us—

There is nothing so important as a life of faith on Christ: nothing

1. So necessary

[The greatest of all concerns is the salvation of the soul—

But that cannot be effected by any other means—

The person who does not live on Christ, has no spiritual life—

He may have wealth, and honour, learning, and even morality (in some sense,) but he has no life^l—

He may even “have a name to live, but he is really dead”^m—

And his spiritual death will issue in death eternalⁿ—

What then can be so necessary as to believe in Christ?—]

2. So beneficial

[The possession of the whole world is not to be compared with eternal life—

Yet life eternal is secured by eating the flesh of Christ—

As for past sins, they shall be no bar to our obtaining of this blessing^o—

Indeed the believer “has already eternal life” in his soul—

He has *a title to it*, confirmed by the promise and oath of Jehovah^p—

He has also *the earnest of it*, since this communion with Christ is heaven begun on earth^q—

And the Saviour in whom he trusts, “will raise him up at the last day” to the complete and everlasting enjoyment of it—]

^k John xv. 5.

^l 1 John v. 11, 12.

^m Rev. iii. 1.

ⁿ Rev. xxi. 8.

^o Heb. viii. 12.

^p Heb. vi. 17, 18.

^q Eph. i. 14.

3. So excellent

[They may be said to “feed on ashes,” who have no higher gratifications than those which are derived from carnal indulgences—

But “the body and blood of Christ are meat indeed, and drink indeed” —

Nothing affords such unspeakable delight as the exercise of faith on Christ—

Nor has any thing such a transforming efficacy on the soul^s—

Surely if the manna was “angels’ food,”^t much more is the body and blood of Christ—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who are disregarding this heavenly banquet

[Would to God that you would consider *Who* it is that utters the declaration in the text!—

And that you would mark *the energetic manner* in which he utters them!—

Think you that his words are false, or that they shall ever be reversed?—

Ah! cast away the husks on which you are feeding; and live, as the Apostle did, by faith on the Son of God^u—]

Those who doubt whether they may partake of it

[The whole of our Lord’s discourse to the Jews shews that all were, not only at liberty, but bound, to feed on him—

And we are commanded to invite, yea, to compel, you to come to this glorious feast^v—

Indeed, to whom else will ye go? and on what else will ye feed?—

Come then, and “eat and drink abundantly, O beloved”^y—

And rest assured, that they who come hungry, shall never be sent empty away—]

^r 1 Pet. i. 8.

^t Ps. lxxviii. 25.

^{*} Isa. xxv. 6. with Luke xiv. 23.

^s 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^u Gal. ii. 20.

^v Cant. v. 1.

XXX. GOD’S TREATMENT OF US AS BRANCHES OF THE TRUE VINE.

John xv. 1, 2. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

THE union which subsists between Christ and his church is mysterious—

The Scripture sets it forth both in figurative and plain expressions—

It is spoken of not as a speculative or doubtful point, but as well known^a—

It is declared in the text under a beautiful similitude—
Christ is the true vine

If this was a continuation of our Lord's discourse, the idea of a vine might arise from what he had just before said respecting the fruit of the vine^b—

If it was spoken in his way to the mount of olives, it might be suggested by his passing through a vineyard—

The representation respects Christ not personally, but as united to his church—

In this view it fitly exhibits *our union with him*

[This union is not natural to any—

We are, by nature, plants of a degenerate vine^c—

We are, however, separated from it by Almighty power^d—

And are made willing to be united to Christ^e—

We are then engrafted into Christ by the Spirit on God's part, and by faith on ours^f—

Thus we become branches of the true vine—

And the union, when formed, is intimate and inseparable^g—]

It expresses, moreover, *our dependence on him*

[A branch derives all its fructifying power from the root—

So believers receive all their grace out of Christ's fulness^h—

Hence it is that Christ is so precious to themⁱ—

Hence, too, they determine to live entirely by faith on him^k—]

The Father is the husbandman

The husbandman has many offices to perform—

[He engrafts the cions, digs about them and dungs them, guards them from the weather, prunes the luxuriant branches, &c.—]

The Father performs these offices

[He chooses (but not for their superior goodness) what cions he will—

^a John xiv. 20.

^c Jer. ii. 21.

^e Ps. cx. 3.

^g 1 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. viii. 35. 39.

ⁱ 1 Pet. ii. 7.

^b Luke xxii. 18.

^d Eph. i. 19, 20.

^f Eph. iii. 16, 17.

^h John i. 16.

^k Gal. ii. 20.

He separates them from their stock by the means he judges best—

He engrafts them, in his own time and manner, into the new stock—

He continues to promote their good by his word, his Spirit, and his providence—

He separates or combines, renews or changes, the various means of culture, as he sees occasion—]

His treatment of the branches is suited to their state—

There are “branches in Christ,” which are so only in appearance

[They have never been thoroughly separated from their old stock—

They have never been truly engrafted into Christ—

The change wrought in them has been only partial—

They bring not forth such fruit as the living branches do—]

These the Father “taketh away”—

[They are a disgrace to the vine, and to the husbandman himself—

He, however, exercises forbearance towards them^l—

His culture of them, in the mean time, shews their unfruitfulness to be of themselves^m—

But he will ere long separate them from the others—

He will take them away, in order to burn them, ver. 6.—

How fearful should we be lest we be found such branches at last!—

And how carefully should we examine our fruit, in order that we may not be self-deceived!ⁿ—]

There are other branches, which are vitally united to Christ

[They manifest that they are so, by the fruits which they produce—]

These the husbandman purges and prunes

[Notwithstanding their fruitfulness, they need the pruning-knife—

Afflictions have a tendency to make them more fruitful!—

God therefore sends them afflictions of various kinds—

This he does to “every one of them”^o—

He even promises affliction to them as a blessing^p—]

Let us then enquire whether we be living branches of the true vine—

Let us study to answer the ends of all his care—

^l Luke xiii. 8, 9.

^m Isa. v. 4.

ⁿ Matt. vii. 17—20.

^o Heb. xii. 6—8.

^p Jer. xxx. 11. with Heb. xii. 10, 11.

If we be indeed fruitful branches, let us welcome affliction as a blessing in disguise—

Let us, above all, seek to be confirmed in our *union to Christ*, and *our dependence on him*^a—

^a Col. ii. 6, 7.

XXXI. THE CHRISTIAN CONGRATULATED ON HIS RELIANCE ON CHRIST.

(Cant. viii. 5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?*)

THERE is an intimate and mysterious union between Christ and his church—

This is often compared in Scripture to a marriage union^a—

The Song of Solomon is a figurative representation of the delightful intercourse which Christ maintains with his spouse, the church—

A third description of persons called “the daughters of Jerusalem” occasionally enliven the dialogue with pertinent questions or remarks—

The words of the text seem to be uttered by *them*—

The church had expressed her desire after more familiar and permanent fellowship with her divine husband, ver. 1—4.—

The by-standers, admiring and felicitating her state, exclaim, “Who is this?” &c.

I. Explain the import of the words

There does not appear to be any considerable difficulty in them—

But the explication of them will open a way for the fuller improvement of them—

The “wilderness” seems to be a figurative expression for the world

[The world may be fitly represented by this term—

It accords with the description given of the wilderness, through which the Israelites passed in their way to Canaan^b—

It abounds with deadly enemies—

^a Eph. v. 32.

^b Jer. ii. 6. Deut. viii. 15. and xxxii. 10.

It affords nothing that can nourish or refresh the weary soul—]

The true Christian “comes up from the wilderness”

[Religion does not make us sour asceticks—

But it requires us to “renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world”^c—

Every true Christian cheerfully practices this duty^d—

He resembles Christ in this particular^e—

He considers himself only as a pilgrim and sojourner here^f—

While he performs his duties in the world, he sets not his heart upon it^g—]

In his passage through it he leans upon Christ

[The Christian accounts Christ the beloved of his soul^h—

On him he rests for support and strengthⁱ—

He has been made to feel his own weakness^k—

He has been taught by experience to renounce every other prop^l—

He commits himself simply, and habitually to Christ^m—

In this affiance he attains a holy familiarity—]

This is both the import of the passage, and the Christian’s experience—

But there is a peculiar significancy in the question “Who is this?”

II. Point out the force of the interrogation

Perhaps the interrogation principally expresses admiration—

But we may consider it as expressing

1. Enquiry

[We are frequently commanded to examine our own stateⁿ—

The point which the text enquires into is most important—

Let every one ask himself, as in the sight of the heart-searching God,

“Do I, instead of loving the world, account it a dreary wilderness?”

“Do I renounce its cares, its pleasures, its maxims, its company, &c.?”

“Do I daily depend on Christ alone for wisdom, righteousness, and strength?”

^c 2 Cor. vi. 17.

^d Gal. vi. 14.

^e John xvii. 16.

^f Heb. xi. 13. 16.

^g Col. iii. 2.

^h Cant. v. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 7.

ⁱ Isa. xlv. 24.

^k 1 Cor. iii. 5.

^l Hos. xiv. 3.

^m 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Ps. xvii. 5.

ⁿ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Let every one distrust himself, and, like the disciples on another occasion, beg of Christ to resolve the doubt, "Lord, is it I?"

May every one enjoy the testimony of God's Spirit, and his own conscience!—]

2. Admiration

[What can be more wonderful than the experience which is set forth in the text?—

That such an earthly and sensual creature should so renounce the world!—

That such a polluted creature should enjoy such intimacy with the Lord of glory!—

That such a weak creature should persevere, in spite of so many obstacles both within and without!—

Every one must admire the condescension of God towards man^p—

But the Christian has not less cause for admiration within himself—

Hence he may justly adopt the words of David^q—]

3. Congratulation

[Earthly acquisitions are often the subject of congratulation—

But he who dies to the world, is far more to be congratulated—

From what imminent danger has such an one escaped!—

The world lies in wickedness, even like Sodom of old^r—

If he had continued in it he must have perished^s—

To what a glorious place is such an one hastening!—

He is already joined to a most glorious company^t—

An inconceivably blessed inheritance is reserved for him^u—

He is daily approaching nearer to the full enjoyment of it^x—

What an all-sufficient support has he in his way thither!—

There is nothing impossible to his divine helper^y—

Christ will never fail those who trust in him^z—

The weakest shall through him surmount every obstacle^a—

Surely these are grounds for the warmest congratulation—]

ADDRESS

1. The weak believer

[Do not faint—But lean more on Christ— — —If you cannot go at all, he will carry you^b—]

o Rom. viii. 16.

r 1 John v. 19.

u 1 Pet. i. 4.

z Isa. xlv. 17.

p Ps. viii. 4.

* John viii. 23, 24.

x Rom. xiii. 11.

a Phil. iv. 13.

q Ps. lxxi. 7.

t Heb. xii. 22—24.

y Jude 24.

b Isa. xl. 11. & xlv. 4.

2. The backslider

[What has the world ever done to deserve your regard?—
And has Jesus ever “been a wilderness to you,” that he should forfeit it?^c—

If you return to the world, and forsake Christ, your state will be worse than ever^d— — —]

^c Jer. ii. 31.

^d Heb. x. 38. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

XXXII. THE EXTENT AND GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

Rom. xiv. 7—9. *None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

TO exercise Christian forbearance is no small attainment—

There is continual need of it in the Christian world—

There are many things of an indifferent nature, which we are at liberty either to do or forbear—

But all do not see their Christian liberty with equal clearness—

Hence the weak are apt to judge the strong, and the strong to despise the weak—

Thus the Jews and Gentiles at Rome disputed respecting the use of certain meats, and the observance of certain days—

The apostle shews, that, though the two parties differed in their conduct, they were equally accepted of God—

He grounds his assertion on the idea that both of them acted from a conscientious desire to please and honour God—

I. The extent of Christian obedience

If we were to judge from the practice of mankind, we should think that very little was required of us—

But we must judge by the unerring standard of God's word—

Both the law and the gospel require the obedience of the heart—

And in this the Christian labours to approve himself to God—

1. He renounces self

[Self is the idol of the unregenerate world—

They study only to please and exalt self in every part of their *life*—

They have no higher view in courting or shunning *death*—

But the Christian sees the sinfulness of thus idolizing self—

He therefore endeavours to suppress its workings, and mortify its desires—

He determines never to make the indulgence of self his chief aim—]

2. He devotes himself to the Lord

[He studies to do his will, and gain his approbation—

He seeks to glorify his name in every action of life—

He considers that he is the Lord's property, both by creation and redemption—

He strives therefore to honour him with every faculty of body and soul—]

This is not a mere theory, but a living picture of Christianity

[The apostle lays down an universal rule to this effect^a—

He himself conformed to it in an eminent degree^b—

Every true Christian, according to his measure, conforms to it; "*none of us,*" &c.—]

Such obedience, however, will not spring from any but evangelical principles—

II. The grounds of it

All possible obedience is due from us to God by creation—

But God has acquired a new right over us by redemption—

Christ has died, risen, and revived

[He died to make atonement for our guilt—

He rose for our justification before God—

He revived, and lives to carry on the work—]

He has done this with an express view to reduce us to allegiance

^a 1 Cor. x. 31.

^b Phil. i. 20.

[He undertook to save men *from* their sins, and not *in* them—

Paul repeatedly declares this to have been the end of our Lord's *death*^c—

Peter speaks to the same effect,^d and our Lord himself also confirms this truth^e—

The same was also the end of his *resurrection* and *ascension*^f—

And in all that he is now doing, he keeps the same object in view—]

What he has done is therefore the proper ground of our obedience

[We are still as much as ever bound by the laws of our creation—

But we should be particularly affected with redeeming love—

This should stir us up to the most unreserved obedience—

The apostle requires such obedience, on this very ground^g—

We shall surely render it, if we have any interest in redemption^h—]

INFER

1. How few real Christians are there in the world !

[If living to ourselves were Christianity, there would be Christians without number—

But nothing less than an entire devotedness to God can entitle us to the name—

How few then are there to be found!—

The text might be reversed in almost every assembly of professing Christiansⁱ—

Let us judge ourselves by this criterion—

Let us rest in no partial or hypocritical services—

Let us cry to God for his Spirit to renew us in our inward man—]

2. How reasonable is the Christian life !

[Christian obedience is often ridiculed as preciseness, and needless scrupulosity—

It is deemed a mark of a weak and enthusiastic mind—

But it is justly called a reasonable service^k—

Who can ever estimate the obligation arising from the death of Christ?—

Who can sufficiently praise him for what he is now doing for us in heaven?—

^c 2 Cor. v. 15. Tit. ii. 14.

^e John xvii. 19.

^h 2 Cor. v. 14.

^f Phil. ii. 9—11.

ⁱ Phil. ii. 21.

^d 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^g 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

^k Rom. xii. 1.

Is it reasonable that we should defeat the ends of all his love?—

Ought we not rather to requite it to the utmost of our power?—

Should we account any thing too much to do for him?—

Let all then confess the reasonableness of being devoted to Christ—

Let every Christian exert himself more and more, disregarding ridicule and contempt¹—]

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

XXXIII. THE GREATNESS AND PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PROMISES.

2 Pet. i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

COMMENTATORS are not agreed with respect to the connexion of these words^a—

Nor is it of any great importance for us to enter into the difficulties of it—

The words themselves, whatever the precise connexion of them may be, are replete with instruction and comfort—

We shall take occasion from them to consider

I. The exceeding greatness and preciousness of the promises

God, in infinite mercy, has given us many “promises”

[Fallen man could not claim any thing at God’s hands^b—

We were deserving of nothing but his wrath and indignation^c—

But he was pleased to send his own Son to die for us—

^a Some connect δι’ ὧν with “glory and virtue” in the preceding verse, and understands it thus; “by which glorious energy of the gospel are given to us,” &c. Others, understanding the third verse parenthetically, connect δι’ ὧν with “God and Christ” in ver. 2, and translate the words “by whom,” &c.

^b Ps. cxliii. 2.

^c Ps. cxxx. 3.

And for the sake of Christ has promised us many blessings—]

These promises are “exceeding great”

[They offer the pardon of all our sins^d—

They warrant us to expect strength for the performance of all our duties^e—

They call us to enjoy the most intimate fellowship with God^f—

They assure us of everlasting happiness and glory^g—

Neither are the wants of the body, or the conveniencies of life overlooked^h—]

No wonder then that they should be “precious”

[We cannot ascertain their full value—

But every true Christian can adopt the language of Davidⁱ—]

But the preciousness of them will further appear, if we consider

II. The end for which they are given

God would have us to be partakers of the divine nature

[The divine nature does not import the divine essence—

Nor does it mean a personal union with God—

To partake of the divine nature in these respects was the peculiar honour of Jesus Christ—

But the divine nature has respect to the moral perfections of the Deity^k—

Of these God would have us to partake abundantly—]

It is for this end that he has given the promises

[He does not intend merely to save us from destruction—

He has laid a plan for our everlasting happiness—

But holiness is essential to happiness—

We could not enjoy his presence, if we did not bear his image—

He has therefore given us promises, in order to make us holy—

And the promises, if ^lduly applied, always operate in this manner—]

Their suitableness to this end will be manifest, while we contemplate

III. The effects they invariably produce

^d Isai. i. 18.

^g John x. 28.

ⁱ Ps. cxix. 111.

^e 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^h Matt. vi. 33. 2 Pet. i. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

^k Col. iii. 10.

^f 2 Cor. vi. 16.

There is a dreadful "corruption in the world through lust"

[The desires of men are altogether vitiated—

The indulgence of them produces much corruption in the world—]

But God's people "escape" this corruption

[They are not free from all sin—

But they do not live under the allowed dominion of any—

They flee from temptation with fear and trembling—

This is the description given of the saints at Sardis^l—

And this is the universal operation of true religion^m—]

They escape it through the operation of the promises

[They have not in themselves a power to keep themselves pure—

But God promises "grace sufficient"—

They therefore trust in his promises, and plead them in prayer—

In so doing, they experience their cleansing efficacy—

Hence St. Paul urges the promises not merely as a motive to holiness, but as the means of attaining itⁿ—]

INFER

1. How foolish are they who neglect Christ!

[Christ is the person in whom all the promises are ratified and confirmed^o—

Nor can we be interested in one promise, unless we be united to Christ—

What madness then is it to neglect that blessed Saviour!—

What unspeakable blessings do the thoughtless world despise!—

Let us "awake from our sleep, and arise from the dead"—

Let us seek Christ with our whole hearts—

All things are ours, if we be his^p—]

2. How mistaken are they who seek for holiness merely in a way of mortification, or in the exercise of their own powers!

[Many seek long after holiness without attaining it—

The reason of this is, that they do not seek it in God's appointed way—

God has given them promises by which they may be made holy—

But they are afraid to embrace them till they can see themselves holy—

^l Rev. iii. 4.

^m Jam. i. 27.

ⁿ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^o 2 Cor. i. 20.

^p 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

Thus do they, in fact, reverse the appointment of God himself—

Let such, however, submit to God's method of imparting a divine nature—

Let them embrace the promises as sinners, that they may become saints—]

3. How highly privileged are the people of God!

[Whatever is needful for them, in time or eternity, is secured—

For their consolation God has confirmed his promises with an oath^a—

And all of them can, like Solomon, attest his fidelity^r—

Let them therefore treasure up his promises in their hearts—

Let them do this for advancement in holiness as well as comfort^s—

Thus shall they be enabled to say with David^t—

And in due season shall that most precious of all the promises be fulfilled^u—]

^a Heb. vi. 17, 18.

^r 1 Kings viii. 56.

^s Ps. cxix. 11.

^t Ps. xvii. 4.

^u John xii. 26.

XXXIV. AN EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS.

1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

THE privileges of a sincere Christian are exceeding great—

And the possession of them is secured to him by God himself^a—

His security however does not supersede the need of watchfulness—

On the contrary he is called to a continual warfare—

He needs therefore to be frequently reminded of his duty—

^a 1 Pet. i. 5.

Hence Peter, having set forth the honours and privileges of God's people, proceeds to press upon them the practice of holiness—

We propose to explain and enforce the apostle's exhortation

I. Explain

The manner in which it is introduced is worthy of notice

[A concern for the souls of men is characteristic of a pious minister—

Paul and John were eminent patterns in this respect^b—

Peter exemplifies it in the passage before us—

He unites the tenderness of a father with the fidelity of an apostle—]

The first part of it respects their "abstinence from flesh'y lusts"

[Impurity, intemperance, sloth, &c. are fleshly lusts—

Nor can any abstain from them without much prayer and vigilance—]

This is enforced by two very important considerations

[Christians are "strangers and pilgrims" in the world^c—

This consideration strongly enforces abstinence from sin^d—

Moreover fleshly lusts "war against the soul"—

They destroy its dignity, its peace, its liberty, its salvation—

This should make us extremely careful to abstain from them—]

The latter part of the exhortation respects positive holiness

[The Christians were scattered through the Gentile world—

Their conduct therefore would be watched with a jealous eye—

On this account the apostle cautions them with respect to the whole of their deportment—

He exhorts them to maintain an honourable conduct in all things—]

A very powerful motive is suggested to confirm this also—

[Christians were universally represented as the worst of men^e—

^b 1 Thess. iii. 8. 3 John 4.

^c Ps. xxxix. 12. Heb. xi. 13.

^d It shews the folly of the Epicurean system, 1 Cor. xv. 32.

^e 1 Cor. iv. 13.

An unbecoming conduct in them would have confirmed this prejudice—

But a blameless conversation might conciliate esteem—

It might even be the means of converting their persecutors—

It would do so if God at the same time should visit them with his mercy^f—

In this case it would cause them to glorify God—

This consideration might well operate as a motive to holiness—

St. Peter elsewhere urges it in this very light^g—]

II. Enforce

Christians, however advanced, have need of this exhortation—

We therefore would address it to you with all earnestness—

We would not however forget the affection and tenderness due to you—

First then we beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts

[Who amongst you is free from their baneful influence?

Who does not see that abstinence from them is necessary?—

Guard then against their first risings in the heart—

Beg of God that you may have grace to mortify them all—]

We intreat you to consider

1. Your present state and condition in the world

[You are here only as “strangers and pilgrims”—

You profess to be seeking “a city that hath foundations”—

You do not take up your rest in an inn, when on a journey—

Do not then retard your progress heaven-wards by sensual gratifications—]

2. The dreadful tendency of fleshly lusts

[Who has not experienced the misery they bring upon us?—

Who does not know the consequence of indulging them?—

Let this thought make you flee from them with abhorrence—]

We further beseech you to maintain an honourable conversation

[A few holy actions or dispositions will not suffice—

Religion must operate uniformly and universally—

^f This seems to be meant by “the day of visitation:” See Luke i. 68, 78.

^g 1 Pet. iii. 1.

Let the whole of your conversation therefore be blameless^h—

Nor need you despair of walking thus if you depend on Christⁱ—]

For consider

The tendency of such a life to remove prejudice

[The world is as ready to speak evil of Christians as ever—

Nor will they regard your conduct in the church or closet—

They will enquire how you fill up your relative duties—

The sight of your blameless conduct will silence them^k—]

The possibility that others may be converted by means of it

[Certainly many would be hardened by misconduct on your part—

On the contrary, some may be won by your good conversation—

At all events God will be glorified by means of your good works—

Let this stimulate you to unwearied watchfulness and care—]

^h Phil. ii. 15. ⁱ Phil. iv. 13. ^k 1 Pet. ii. 15. & iii. 16.

XXXV. DIRECTIONS HOW TO HEAR SERMONS.

Luke viii. 18. *Take heed how ye hear.*

THE office of a Christian minister is arduous—

He is to explain and enforce every part of man's duty—

He is to search out and censure every sin—

After all his labours, he will see but little fruits—

However faithfully he preach, there are but few who will hear aright—

This our Lord had just declared in the parable of the sower—

He then enforced his declaration with this most important caution—

In discoursing upon which, we shall

I. Assign some reasons for the caution

Our Lord elsewhere cautions his people to take heed *what* they hear—

Nor can any thing be more necessary than to be on our guard against error—

But the caution *how* we hear was also necessary—

1. Because many hear in an unbecoming manner

The generality are *careless* hearers

[They attend God's house merely in conformity with the customs of the country—

They suffer their thoughts to rove after earthly and carnal things—

They discern very little difference in the doctrines which they hear—

They, like Gallio, seem to “care for none of these things”—]

Many are *critical* hearers

[They can attend to nothing which is not composed with elegance—

Or they affect only what accords with their own views of religion—

They judge of all they hear by a standard of their own—

Hence they form parties, and set up one minister against another^a—]

Many also are *captious* hearers

[They will not hear any thing which militates against their prejudices—

They cannot bear to have their favourite habits condemned^b—

They are offended if their bosom lusts be faithfully reformed^c—

They too much resemble the Scribes and Pharisees of old^d—

While there continue such hearers, the caution will be necessary—]

2. Because God himself speaks to us by the preacher—

[Ministers are ambassadors for God, and speak in Christ's stead^e—

If they preach what is founded on the Scriptures, their word, *as far as it is agreeable to the mind of God*, is to be considered as God's^f—

This is asserted by our Lord and his apostles^g—

^a 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

^b Luke xi. 45.

^c Mark vi. 17, 18.

^d Luke xi. 54.

^e 2 Cor. v. 20.

^f Heb xiii. 7.

^g John xiii. 20. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

We ought therefore to receive the preacher's word as the word of God himself^h—

With what humility then ought we to attend to it!—

What judgments may we not expect if we slight it!—

Surely therefore on this account also we need the caution in the text—]

3. Because every discourse increases either our salvation or condemnation

[The word delivered is either a savour of life or of death^k—

Our Lord himself intimates this reason for the caution^l—

Hence our Lord's preaching eventually enhanced the guilt of the Jews^m—

The same awful effects will be felt by those who slight his ministersⁿ—

What stronger reasons for such a caution can possibly be imagined?—]

The necessity of such an admonition being evinced, we

II. Give some directions for obeying it

An humble mind will naturally receive instruction in a proper manner—

We should hear

With candour

[We cannot too carefully divest ourselves of prejudice—

We should not "call any man master upon earth"^o—

We should rather weigh what we hear, in the balance of the sanctuary^p—

But we ought to have our minds open to conviction—

We should "receive the seed in an *honest* and good heart"^q—

We should "receive with *meekestness* the engrafted word"^r—

Nor can we hope to profit if we do not cultivate this disposition—]

With a desire to profit

[The word of God is profitable for many blessed purposes^s—

Yet it cannot be serviceable to us, if it be not received in faith^t—

But when applied to the soul, its operation is very powerful—

^h 1 Thess. ii. 13.

ⁱ Heb. ii. 1—3.

^k 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

^l Luke viii. 18.

^m John xv. 22.

ⁿ Heb. vi. 7, 8.

^o 1 Thess. v. 21.

^p 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

^q Heb. iv. 2.

^r Heb. iv. 12.

We should therefore at all times apply it to ourselves—

We should go to the ordinances, as the sick to Bethesda's pool—

Nor do we ever hear aright, except when we attend in this spirit^s—

It is the practical hearer only that derives benefit to his soul^t—]

With an humble dependence on God's Spirit

[It is God alone who "teacheth us to profit"—

Human labours, without his blessing, will be vain^u—

It is his work to open the understanding,^x and the heart^y—

To him therefore should we look for the teaching of his Spirit^z—

We should plead the promise which God has given us^a—

In this way we shall experience much benefit from the word^b—

No obstacles whatever shall be able to withstand its power^c—

It shall be a rich source of Grace and wisdom to us^d—

Let us then offer in sincerity that petition in the litany^e—]

^s 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^t Jam. i. 22—25.

^u 1 Cor. iii. 7.

^x Luke xxiv. 45.

^y Acts xvi. 14.

^z Eph. i. 17, 18.

^a Isai. lv. 10, 11.

^b Mic. ii. 7.

^c 2 Cor. x. 4.

^d Col. iii. 16.

^e That it may please thee to give to all thy

people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

XXXVI. THE EXCELLENCY AND EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL.

2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

THE Jews, when compared with the heathen world, were highly privileged—

But the dispensation under which they lived was in every respect inferior to that of the gospel—

The apostle, in vindicating his own character, incidentally mentions the blessings which the Corinthians had experienced by means of his ministry—

Hence he takes occasion to set forth the superior excellency of the gospel above the law—

In confirmation of this point we will consider

I. The excellency of the Gospel

In the context the law is spoken of as a ministration of condemnation—

Whereas the gospel is a ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness—

It is a revelation of the “glory of the Lord”

[The law was in some degree a manifestation of the divine glory—

It displayed, however, chiefly the majesty and holiness of the Deity—

But the gospel displays the love and mercy of God—

It exhibits all the perfections of God harmonizing and glorified in the work of redemption—

Thus it is a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ^a—]

It manifests this glory to the soul

[Moses veiled the divine lustre which shined in his face—

This was an intimation to the Jews that they could not comprehend the full scope of the law which he published, ver. 13.—

But this veil is taken away by Christ, ver. 14.—

The gospel reflects Christ’s glory as a mirror reflects the sun—

We behold that glory “with open, i. e. *unveiled* face”—

This is the common privilege of “all” who believe—]

Nor is it more excellent in its discoveries than in its effects

II. The efficacy of it

The apostle ascribes a wonderful efficacy to the gospel—

Experience attests the truth of his declarations—

It transforms the soul into the divine image

[A view of Jehovah’s glory caused the face of Moses to shine—

So a view of Christ’s glory in the gospel changes our hearts—

It renews us after the very image of our Lord and Saviour—

It does this, notwithstanding we may have been hitherto most abandoned—]

Every fresh discovery which it makes to us of Christ’s glory increases that effect

[The first exercise of faith in Christ makes a great change—

But subsequent views of his glory advance the work of sanctification—

In this way is our progress in holiness carried on to perfection—]

This power, however, it derives wholly from “the Spirit of the Lord”

[The gospel has not that power in itself—

Were its power inherent, it would operate uniformly on all—

But its operation is dependent on the will of God^b—

The word is called “the sword of the Spirit”—

It is the Spirit’s instrument whereby he subdues souls to the obedience of faith—

Every fresh effect produced by it arises from the concurring operation of the Spirit—

Yet, as it is the great instrument whereby the Spirit works, the effects are properly ascribed to it—]

INFER

1. How great a blessing it is to have the gospel preached to us!

[Nothing else will produce the effects here ascribed to the gospel—

The terrors of the law may alarm, but will not sanctify the heart—

But the mild accents of the gospel win the soul—

A manifestation of Christ’s glory constrains us to obedience—

Let all rejoice therefore in hearing the glad tidings—

Let all endeavour to experience these glorious effects—]

2. Whence it is that many make so small a proficiency in holiness

[Many truly desire to advance in holiness—

But they seek it in dependence on their own strength—

Hence they make a small proficiency in the divine life—

They should rather use the means prescribed in the text—

They should be often occupied in surveying the glory of Christ—

The discoveries of his glory would do more than all their legal exertions—

Let every eye therefore be fixed on him, till the effects appear both in our hearts and lives—

Our views of him ere long shall be incomparably brighter^c—

Then the effects also shall be proportionably increased^d—]

^b 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^c 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^d 1 John iii. 2.

XXXVII. THE DUTY OF CONSIDERING THE NAMES
AND OFFICES OF JESUS CHRIST.

Heb. iii. 1. *Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*

OUR Lord possessed, from all eternity, a nature infinitely superior to that of Angels^a—

Yet did he submit to the lowest humiliation for us^b—

And it is by the knowledge of him, as humbled, we attain salvation^c—

The apostle having spoken much on this subject in the foregoing chapter, enforces it with this affectionate exhortation—

I. Explain the exhortation

The first thing that calls for our attention is *the description which he gives of all true Christians*

[Wishing to persuade, he strove by tenderness to conciliate their esteem—

He calls them brethren; which they are both by relation^d and affection^e—

They are “holy;” set apart for the service and enjoyment of God—washed in the fountain of Christ’s blood—and renewed after the divine image—

They are “partakers of an heavenly calling;” called to heavenly exercises and enjoyments—obedient to that call—and suitably influenced by it in their hearts and lives—

How amiable is such a character! “brethren!” “holy!” “called!” &c.—

Who would not wish to be found of their number?—]

The next thing which demands our notice is *the object he sets before them*

[When he speaks of Christ in common, he places the name “Jesus” first; but when with more than ordinary solemnity, the name “Christ” is first—

He here describes the Saviour both by his *names* and *offices*—

^a Heb. i. 3, 8, 10

^b Phil. ii. 6, 7.

^c John xvii. 3.

^d Matt. xxiii. 9.

^e 1 John iii. 14.

His names, "Christ,^f Jesus,"^g are peculiarly significant in this connexion—

His offices are such as Moses and Aaron sustained under the law—

Christ is "the Apostle of our profession," as being *sent*, like Moses, to publish that religion which we profess—

He is also "the High Priest of it," because, like Aaron, he performs all that is necessary for our reconciliation with God^h—]

The last thing to explain is *the duty which he presses upon them*

[The word which we translate "consider," implies an attentive regardⁱ—

It might easily be shewn how important this duty is; but that our observations on this subject will occur more properly in another place—]

Having spoken what was necessary to unfold the meaning of the exhortation, we proceed to

II. Enforce it

To those who answer the foregoing character we address the exhortation—

1. Consider the object set before you

His names

[As "Jesus," divine Saviour, he is able to save to the uttermost—

As "Christ," he was anointed of God for this very purpose—

Had he not been appointed of God, or had he been less than God, you might have been afraid to trust in him—

But his names attest his right and ability to save—

Think how these words would sound in hell; and let them be as sweet to you as they would be to the damned spirits—]

^f It is of the same import as *Messias*, John i. 41. and means. Anointed.

^g Jesus is the same with Joshua, Heb. iv. 8.; and Joshua is a contraction for Jah Oseah, the former of which signifies God, and the latter, Saviour. This name was given by God to Hoseah the son of Nun, who, as a type of Christ, led the Israelites into the land of Canaan: and the giving of this name to the virgin's son may be justly considered as an accomplishment of that prophecy which said he should be called *Emanuel*, God with us. Its import therefore is, Divine Saviour. Vid. Matt. i. 21—23. and Bishop Pearson, p. 69, 70.

^h Jesus, as our High Priest, offered himself a sacrifice for us—is gone into the holy of holies to present his blood before the mercy-seat—liveth to make intercession for us—presents our offerings unto the Father—bears us on his breast-plate—and makes known to us the will of God.

ⁱ Κατανοεῖσθαι.

His offices

[As the Apostle or Prophet of the church, he will instruct all ^k—]

As the High Priest, he will open a way for us into the holy place^l—

O reflect on these, till your hearts burn within you with gratitude and love!—]

2. Consider more particularly the view given of him in the preceding and following context—

His compassion as an High Priest

[He himself has endured persecution from men, temptation from Satan, desertion from God, &c.^m—

He will sympathize with you under your trialsⁿ—

Let this be a source of comfort to you under every affliction—]

His faithfulness as a Prophet

[He extends his care to all his people^o—

He never suffered the weakest believer to err finally^p—

Nor will he fail to guide us aright^q—

Go to him then for teaching in every doubt and every difficulty—]

Those who do not answer to the character may reap benefit from the exhortation—

[Ye who are unholy, and strangers to the heavenly calling, consider this description of our blessed Lord—

Consider it—with attention, that you may understand it—

Consider it—with faith, that you may have an interest in it—

Consider it—with affection, that you may delight in it—

Consider it—with gratitude, that you may display its influence on your heart—]

^k Matt. xi. 29.

^l Heb. x. 19, 20.

^m Heb. ii. 17, 18.

ⁿ Heb. iv. 15. This may be further illustrated by the care of a refiner, whom Christ is said to resemble, Mal. iii. 3.

^o Heb. iii. 2.

^p Isai. xxxv. 8.

^q Isai. xxx. 21. Ps. lxxiii. 24.

XXXVIII. PAUL'S DISCOURSE BEFORE FELIX.

Acts xxiv. 25. *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

MEN usually persist in sin without duly reflecting on its consequences—

Hence the peace which they enjoy, notwithstanding they are exposed to the displeasure of the Almighty—

Yet the voice of warning and reproof will sometimes alarm them—

Too often, however, the alarm is only of short duration—

This was the case of Felix, when awakened by the preaching of Paul

I. The subjects of the apostle's discourse

He was sent for to explain the principles he professed—

But he was not satisfied with gratifying the curiosity of his hearers—

He endeavoured to reach their consciences, and convince them of their sins—

On this occasion he spoke of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”

[These subjects were well adapted to his audience—

Felix and Drusilla were both of an abandoned character^a—

They needed to be “persuaded by the terrors of the Lord”—

Nor was it probable they would regard the tidings of salvation, unless they were first made sensible that they were lost sinners^b—

Hence the apostle endeavoured to prepare their minds for the gospel—]

On these subjects he “reasoned”

[He shewed the nature and extent of the duties—

He shewed the evil and danger of transgressing them—

He shewed the certainty and strictness of the future judgment—

A suitable lesson for avarice, iniquity, and oppression!—

And suitable, too, to every child of man!—]

What degree of success attended this effort will appear from

II. The effects it produced

We read not of Drusilla being at all affected with the word—

But we are told of Felix, that he “trembled”

^a Felix had induced Drusilla to forsake her own husband, and to marry him: he was moreover remarkably avaricious and oppressive.

^b Matt. ix. 12, 13.

[What a wonderful sight! the judge trembling before his prisoner!—

He had sinned in unnumbered instances, and was obnoxious to God's wrath—

He now heard of the day of retribution, and of the sentence of condemnation under which he lay—

And now, though he feared no earthly tribunal, he was shaken with terror and with guilt—

And was not there cause for trembling?—]

He was not, however, faithful to his convictions

[One might have hoped that he would have cried out like those of old^c—

But he sought to efface the impression made upon his mind—]

He put off his attention to his soul to a more “convenient season”

[What madness was here, to depend on the morrow in a concern of such importance!—

What season could be so convenient as *that* he then enjoyed?—

His conscience was then affected, and the Spirit was striving with him—

Moreover, he had then a faithful and inspired instructor before him—

Was he more likely to repent when he had seared his conscience, quenched the Spirit, yielded to Satan, and confirmed his evil habits?—

But his future interviews with the apostle were of no avail—

One of the last acts of his government was marked with oppression and avarice—

Nor did he spare the innocence which he confessed, and admired^d—

A melancholy instance of judicial blindness!—]

APPLICATION

Let this history serve as a CAUTION TO US

[All of us have known, in some measure, the motions of God's Spirit—

All of us have felt, at times, some general apprehensions respecting the account which we must give at the day of judgment—

But how many have silenced their convictions, in hopes of finding some more convenient season for attending to them!—

And how many have died before the hoped-for opportunity arrived!—

^c Acts ii. 37.

^d Ver. 26, 27.

Let us beware of this device of Satan, whereby he upholds his kingdom in the world^e—

Let us remember, that the same temptations will recur, and the same motives influence us at future periods—

Let us attend to that salutary advice of the apostle^f—

And let us seek, without delay, that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation^g—]

^e He does not tempt any to resolve that they will never repent; but takes the more plausible method of insinuating that they will have a more convenient season for repenting.

^f Heb. iii. 13, 15.

^g 2 Cor. vii. 10.

(XXXIX. THE REMEDY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR SEASONS OF GRACE.

Jer. viii. 20—22. *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

EVERY one acknowledges that it is his duty to trust in God—

But we are prone to creature-confidence—

Hence we are often left to faint under difficulties from which we might easily have been extricated—

Thus the Jews increased their distress by relying on the Egyptians for succour, when, if they would have trusted in God, they might have been delivered—

The prophet therefore takes up this affectionate lamentation over them—

I. Who are they of whom it may be said “their harvest is past, their summer is ended, and they are not saved?”

In its primary sense this passage is applicable only to the Jews, when they were attacked by the Babylonians—

But it may be applied to those who have lost seasons of spiritual relief—

The “summer and harvest” may be considered as seasons afforded us by God for providing for the necessities of our souls—

Many of these we have suffered to pass unimproved and unnoticed—

They therefore may be said to have lost their summer, &c. who have neglected to improve the seasons afforded

1. By nature

[*Youth* is well fitted by nature for the work of conversion—

The mind is then more flexible, the passions more governable, and the conscience more tender—

But many have lost that favourable season—]

2. By Providence

[*Mercies* are sent by God to invite, *judgments*, to alarm—

But many who should have been drawn by them to seek after God, have remained impenitent—

The sabbath also was instituted by God for the promoting of man's spiritual welfare—

On that day more especially God calls and converts sinners to himself—

But many have let those seasons pass, without obtaining the knowledge of salvation—]

3. By grace

[There are times when all experience *the strivings of God's Spirit*—

If they improved those seasons, God would "give them more grace"

But many stifle their convictions, and "resist the Holy Ghost"—]

They who are in this predicament would do well to reflect on

II. The misery of their state

The distress of the prophet's mind on account of the calamities that were coming on the Jews is most pathetically expressed—

But a view of the miseries impending over those who have lost their seasons of Grace might well excite yet more painful apprehensions—

Their seasons lost are irrecoverable

[Present time is often wasted, as though it were of no value—

But many would be glad on a death-bed to recal the seasons in which they had heard the tidings of salvation, or felt the motions of God's Spirit—

Such wishes, however, are all in vain—]

Their seasons lost may never be renewed

[We are apt to promise ourselves days and years to come^a—

But how often does death disappoint our expectations!—]

Every lost season has greatly aggravated their guilt

[The means of grace are most important and valuable talents—

The neglecting to improve them will be severely punished^b—]

Every season they have lost has hardened their hearts

[The word that does not quicken and save will stupify and condemn^c—]

Every lost season has grieved the Holy Spirit more and more

[God will not alway strive with those who resist his motions^d—

If he cease to strive with us, our destruction is inevitable^e—]

How should we compassionate those who are in such a state!—

How should every one adopt the words following my text^f!—

But their condition is not desperate

III. The remedy that yet remains for them

We might be ready to suppose that such persons were incurable—

But the animated interrogatories in the text shew the contrary

[Christ is a “physician” *able* and *willing* to save those who come unto him— — —

His blood is a “balm” that heals the most deadly wounds^g— — —

The true reason that so many die in their sins is, that they will not come to Christ for salvation^h— — —

Let every one then acknowledge that it is his own fault if he be not saved—]

^a Acts xxiv. 25.

^b Matt. xxv. 26, 30.

^c Matt. xliii. 14, 15. 2 Cor. ii. 16.

^d Gen. vi. 3.

^e Hos. ix. 12.

^f Jer. ix. 1.

^g Isai. i. 18. 1 John i. 7.

^h John v. 40.

XL. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE OPENED.

Isai. xlii. 16. *I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*

GOD has fore-ordained every thing which he himself will do^a—

And he has been gradually unfolding his designs from the beginning

The restoration of the Jews from Babylon, and the calling of the Gentiles into the church, were very wonderful events—

But in them the prediction before us was fulfilled—

It receives a further accomplishment yet daily—

We may take occasion from it to observe

I. God's dealings are mysterious

The dispensations of his *providence* have been at all times dark

[How ill-judged (according to human estimate) was the direction given to the Israelites at their departure from Egypt!^b—

Yet it eventually led to their more complete deliverance^c—

How strange do their long wanderings in the wilderness appear!^d—

Yet God conducted them by the right way^e—

The present dispersion of the Jews shall enhance the mercy and the glory of their restoration—

Their degradation shall be their fulness^f—]

The dispensations of his *grace* are equally inscrutable

This is seen in the *first quickening* of men from their spiritual death

[God sets their sins in array before them—

He charges home their guilt upon their consciences—

He threatens them with his eternal wrath and indignation—

Who would conceive that these were tokens of his love?^g—

How little did the three thousand, when pricked to the heart, imagine that joy was so nigh at hand!^h—

How little could the jailer, when about to commit suicide, have supposed that his terror was the first dawn of mercy to his soul!ⁱ—

Thus are many still brought to Christ “in a way which they knew not”^j—]

It further appears in their *subsequent spiritual life*

[Men usually expect to be led on in a way of peace and joy—

^a Acts xv. 18.

^b Exod. xiv. 2, 3.

^c Exod. xiv. 17, 23, 28.

^d Ps. cvii. 7. Deut. viii. 2.

^e Rom. xi. 12, 31.

^f Acts ii. 37.

^g Acts xvi. 27—29.

But God often leaves them to feel the depravity of their own hearts—

He sometimes permits them to be “in heaviness through manifold temptations”—

He suffers also many heavy calamities to fall upon them—

They seem, at times, as though they should be overwhelmed—

They not unfrequently are brought to the borders of despair—

Yet these are ways which God takes to humble and to prove them—

Who could have thought that Peter's fall should be overruled for good?—

Yet perhaps nothing else would have purged out his self-confidence—

The buffetings of Satan were earnestly deprecated by Paul^h—

Yet were they necessary to prevent the workings of prideⁱ—

How true is that observation of the Psalmist^k—

How may we all exclaim with the apostle!^l—]

In every dispensation, especially as it respects his people, we may say

II. His intentions are merciful

The perplexities of his people are often very great—

But God has gracious designs in all^m—

We may see this remark exemplified in the case of Job

[How heavy and accumulated were the trials that came on him!—

He himself, in his haste, accused God of crueltyⁿ—

But the end shewed that God sent those trials in love^o—]

The case of Joseph also deserves attention in this view

[God intended to make him lord over his brethren^p—

But, instead of being advanced, he was sold as a slave^q—

Afterwards he was imprisoned as guilty of a capital offence^r—

He was many years without ever hearing of his brethren—

Yet we see at last the designs of God accomplished by the very means which appeared most calculated to defeat them—]

The same mercy is discoverable in God's dealings with all his afflicted people

[He suffers their paths to be for a time dark and intricate—

^h 2 Cor. xii. 8.

ⁱ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

^k Ps. lxxvii. 19.

^l Rom. xi. 33.

^m Jer. xxix. 11.

ⁿ Job x. 3, 16.

^o Job xlii. 12, 13. with Jam. v. 11.

^p Gen. xxxvii. 6—10.

^q Gen. xxxvii. 28.

^r Gen. xxxix. 17—20.

But he invisibly directs and manages their concerns—

He gradually removes their difficulties, and clears up their doubts—

If he shut them up under the law, it is that they may embrace the offers of his gospel^s— — —

If he prune them as a vine, it is to make them more fruitful—

If he refine them as with fire, it is that they may be more pure^u—

Thus he constrains them to acknowledge with the Psalmist^x—]

They indeed are often ready to doubt his love—But

III. His regards are permanent

God did not forget his people when they were in Babylon—

Neither will he now “forsake” those who trust in him

[He may appear for a season to have forsaken them^y—

They may be left to complain as though he had quite forgotten them^z—

But his having made them his people is a reason why he will not recede from his gracious purposes²—

The Apostle was confident that God would complete his works of grace^b—]

He will continue firm and unchangeable in his regards to them

[The prophets declare this in the strongest terms^c—

St. Paul abundantly confirms their testimony^d—

He commends this truth to us as a ground of cheerful confidence in the most trying seasons^e—]

INFER

1. How careful should we be not to pass a hasty judgment on the Lord's dealings!

[We are too ready under trials to exclaim with Jacob^f—

Yet the trials we complain of may be, as in his case, the necessary means of our preservation—

It is the part of a believer to wait with patience for the issue^g—]

2. How safely may we commit ourselves to God's disposal!

^s Gal. iii. 23, 24.

^t John xv. 2.

^u Mal. iii. 3.

^x Ps. xcvii. 2.

^y Isai. lii. 7, 8.

^z Isai. xlix. 14—16.

^a 1 Sam. xii. 22.

^b Phil. i. 6.

^c Isai. liv. 9, 10. Jer. xxxi. 37. & xxxii. 40.

^d Rom. xi. 29.

^e Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

^f Gen. xlii. 35.

^g Isai. xxviii. 16.

[God alone knows what is best for us—
He knows, too, how to accomplish his designs in the best manner—

Let us therefore commit all our concerns to him^h—

Let us lie as clay in the potter's handⁱ—

In whatever distress we be, let us follow the prophet's direction^k—]

^h Ps. xxxvii. 5.

ⁱ Jer. xviii. 6.

^k Isai. l. 10.

XLI. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16. *Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

EVERY man naturally seeks his own happiness—

But few seek it in the way that David did^a—

Nevertheless, experience proves that the world cannot make us happy—

Nor can any thing but the knowledge and enjoyment of God—

That cannot fail to render us truly blessed—

I. The character of God's people

“The joyful sound,” in general terms, means the gospel

[The gospel reveals salvation to a lost world—

To those that understand it, therefore, it must be a joyful sound—

The very term gospel imports glad tidings—]

But the precise idea, which we are to affix to it here, is not easily ascertained—

It may be understood in reference to

1. The sound of victory

[In the instant of victory the joy is exceeding great^b—

Such joy does the gospel convey to God's people—

It reveals to them the Saviour's triumphs over his^c and our enemies^d—]

^a Ps. iv. 6.

^c Col. ii. 15.

^b Isai. ix. 3.

^d Rom. xvi. 20.

2. The sound of the trumpets at the appointed feasts

[At the returning feasts the trumpets were to be sounded^c—

The godly felt strong emotions of joy on these occasions^f—
Such joy does the gospel inspire when inviting us to God—
It calls us to approach him with filial love and confidence—
In this view it may properly be called the joyful sound—]

3. The sound of the trumpet in the year of jubilee

[Every fiftieth year was a year of jubilee—

In that year, all who had sold themselves or their inheritance had their liberty or their possessions restored—

This joyous change was proclaimed by the sound of a trumpet^g—

Such a change does the gospel offer—

It proclaims liberty to the bond-slaves of sin and Satan—

It offers heaven to those who have forfeited all title to it—

Thus is the gospel eminently worthy to be called “the joyful sound”—]

It is the character of God's people that they “know” this gospel

[They have not merely an head-knowledge, but a sweet experience of it—

Their feelings are such, as are awakened by the proclamation of liberty, by the call to a banquet, by the shout of a triumph—]

The felicity of such people exceeds all earthly joy

II. Their blessedness

We cannot have a more delightful view of their blessedness than David has given us in the text—

They are happy *here*

[“They walk in the light,” &c.—in a sense of the divine favour — — —

They derive unspeakable comfort from the “name” and perfections of God — — —

The name of Jesus is peculiarly precious to them^h — — —

They rejoice in it “all the day”ⁱ—]

They will be incomparably more so *hereafter*

[They will stand before God clothed in the Redeemer's “righteousness”—

They will be “exalted” to thrones of glory^k—

They will be perfect both in purity and bliss for ever—

What astonishing exaltation will this be, when compared with their former state!—]

^c Numb. x. 10.

^f Ps. lxxxvi. 1—3.

^g Lev. xxv. 8—10.

^h 1 Pet. ii. 7.

ⁱ Phil. iv. 4.

^k Rev. iii. 21.

This subject is of USE

1. For conviction

[We need not go further than the text to learn whether we have a saving knowledge of the gospel—

We know it not aright, if we do not know it as “a joyful sound”—

Let us then examine whether we have felt our own personal interest in it—

The theory of it in our heads, without the experience of it in our hearts, will be of little avail—]

2. For reproof

[Many, who profess the gospel, enjoy but in a very low degree the blessedness which it is their privilege to possess—

If this arise from the temptations of Satan, God forbid that we should “break a bruised reed”—

But, too generally, this proceeds from the mind being distracted by the cares and pleasures of the world—

No wonder that we do not enjoy God, if he be not the sole object of our affections—]

3. For instruction in righteousness

[In our privilege we may read our duty—

Let us live nigh to our God in the exercises of devotion—

Let us contemplate his perfections, till our hearts are inflamed with love and joy—

Let us live in a daily anticipation of the glory that shall be revealed—

This is the sure way to attain both present and everlasting happiness—]

XLII. REGENERATION CONSIDERED IN ITS CAUSES AND BENEFITS.

1 Pet. i. 3—5. *Blessed 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. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.*

THE ungodly may be patient, but are seldom joyful, in affliction—

Their happiness almost entirely depends on outward circumstances—

But the regenerate have sources of joy peculiar to themselves—

Nor can they be in any state wherein they have not abundant cause to bless God—

The persons to whom St. Peter wrote, were scattered abroad, and in a state of persecution—

Yet he begins his epistle to them, not in terms of pity and condolence, but of praise and thanksgiving

1. The causes of regeneration

Regeneration is a spiritual and supernatural change of heart—

But the text requires us to consider it not so much in its nature, as in its causes—

The *efficient* cause of it is God

[God, under the Old Testament dispensation, was the God of Abraham—

Under the Gospel, he appears under the more endearing title, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”—

He is our God and Father also in and through Christ Jesus—

In this relation he is considered as begetting us again—

And he certainly is the Father of our spirits, both in their first formation, and in their subsequent renovation^a—]

The *final* cause or end is our present and eternal happiness

[God begets his people to “a lively hope” *here*—

Their hope is widely different from the cold and carnal hope of the unregenerate—

He has prepared for them also an “inheritance” *hereafter*—

And this inheritance is unspeakably glorious—

Not corruptible, as earthly “treasures, which moth and rust will corrupt”—

Not defiled, like the earthly Canaan, by wicked inhabitants—

Not fading, by use, age, or enjoyment, like the pleasures of sense—]

The *instrumental* cause is the Lord Jesus Christ

[Christ is the medium of every blessing, whether of grace or glory—

Our blessings are generally represented as imparted through his death—

^a Compare Heb. xii. 9. with Eph. ii. 10.

But here, as in many other places, they are ascribed to his resurrection—

His resurrection assured to us the acceptance of his sacrifice—

It is also a pledge and earnest of the resurrection of all his members—

Besides, it enables him both to intercede for us, and to send the Spirit to us—

His Word and Spirit are, indeed, the more immediate instruments which God uses—

Yet more remotely may the Resurrection of Christ be considered as the instrumental cause of our regeneration—]

The *moving* cause of it is his mercy

[God has not respect to any goodness or merit in the creature—

He is actuated only by his own grace and “mercy”—

Of this the conversion of a soul is a marvellous display—

If the state of a converted person be compared with that of one unconverted, or of one that has perished, he will appear to have experienced “abundant mercy”—]

They who have experienced this change are sure to possess at last the benefits connected with it

II. The security of the regenerate

Some even of the regenerate are ready to doubt whether God will bestow on them the inheritance they hope for—

Others fear they shall fall short of it through their own frailty—

But God has secured to them the full and everlasting enjoyment of it—

The inheritance is “reserved for them”

[Earthly inheritances may be taken away by fraud and violence—

Not even crowns or kingdoms can boast of any stability—

But the saints’ inheritance is in heaven—

There it is out of the reach of all enemies—

God himself keeps it for his people, as their unalienable right—]

They also are kept for it

[They are weak and helpless in themselves—

They are surrounded also with hosts of enemies—

But they commit themselves to God “by faith”—

In so doing they interest the power of God on their behalf—

God keeps them according to his promise^b—

^b Isai. xxvi. 3. Jer. xxxii. 40.

God keeps them as in an impregnable garrison^c—
 God keeps them unto their full and final salvation—]

INFER

1. How happy are God's people here!

[The change they have experienced in regeneration is truly blessed—

The prospects they enjoy are bright and glorious—

Their security enhances these blessings—

What then need they regard in this world?—

Surely they should rejoice, though in the midst of tribulations—

Let every one then, when encompassed with troubles of whatever kind, say, "Blessed be God, who hath begotten me again"—]

2. How happy will God's people soon be!

[Their inheritance, though at a distance, is a consolation to them—

The very hope of it fills them with joy unspeakable—

It will do this, even under the heaviest afflictions—

What sensations then will the full enjoyment of this inheritance excite!—

What joy will that be when it is without any alloy of sin or sorrow!—

But let us remember, that "we must be born again" in order to have any title to this inheritance^d—

If we continue unregenerate, we shall inherit a far different portion—

But if we have really experienced the new birth, we are heirs of glory—

And the salvation reserved for us is "ready to be revealed"—

Let us then labour to secure this glorious inheritance—

And look for it with holy ardour and eager expectation—]

^c This seems to be the import of the word *οχυρωμένους*.

^d John iii. 3.

XLIII. THE GROUND OF GOD'S FINAL DECISION.

Gal. vi. 7, 8. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also 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.*

SIN and misery are often found to be nearly connected in this life—

Yet rewards and punishments are not always distributed according to man's actions—

The necessity therefore of a future state of retribution is obvious and undeniable—

This was discoverable in a measure by the light of reason—

But revelation establishes the certainty of such a state—

The inspired writers often urge the consideration of it as a motive to virtue—

St. Paul is stating to the Galatians the duty of providing liberally for their pastors—

He is aware that some might offer pleas and excuses for their neglect of this duty—

He knew that some might even pretend a prior and more sacred obligation^a—

He therefore cautions them against self-deception, and reminds them that God will hereafter pass sentence on us according to the real quality of our actions—

I. It is in vain to hope for salvation while we live in a neglect of religious duties

It is common for men to offer pleas and excuses for their disregard of religion—

1. That a life of religion is *needless*

[They see the world in a state of wickedness—

They cannot believe that so many can be in danger of perishing—

They forget that the course of this world is just such as Satan would have it^b—

They recollect not our Lord's declaration respecting the broad and narrow way^c—

They consider not that the care of the soul is the "one thing needful"—]

2. That a life of religion is *impracticable*

[They hear what holiness of heart and life God requires of us—

They feel how unable they are of themselves to fulfil their duty—

They therefore conclude, that it is impossible to serve God aright—

^a Mark vii. 11.

^b Eph. ii. 2.

^c Matt. vii. 13, 14.

At least they think that a religious life cannot consist with social duties—

But they forget that the grace of Christ is all-sufficient^d—

Nor are they aware that that grace will stimulate us to every duty, whether civil or religious, social or personal—]

Besides these, they substitute other things in the place of religion

1. Their good intentions

[They purpose to amend their lives at some future period—

They expect to find some “more convenient season” for repentance—

They hope that their good designs, though never executed, will be accepted—]

2. Their moral lives

[They are guilty of no very enormous crimes—

They perform many commendable actions—

They hope that such a life, though they know nothing of contrition, of faith in Christ, of delight in God, &c. will procure them admission to heaven—]

3. Their profession of certain truths

[Many receive the doctrines of Christianity as a system of truth—

They trust to the mere profession of these doctrines without experiencing their transforming efficacy—

Thus they substitute “the form of godliness for the power of it”—]

But no pleas or pretences can deceive God—

[To attempt to deceive God is, in fact, to “mock” him—

It is to insult him, as though he were too ignorant to discern, too indifferent to regard, or too weak to punish, hypocrisy—

But God cannot be deceived; nor will he be mocked—]

Let none then deceive themselves with vain expectations

II. Our final state will be exactly answerable to our present conduct

Under the metaphor of a sower the text affords a striking discrimination of character

Some “sow to the flesh”

[To sow to the flesh, is to seek in the first place our carnal ease and interests—

^d Phil. iv. 13.

This we may do notwithstanding we are free from gross sins—

Every one comes under this description who “sets his affections on things below”—]

They whose life is so occupied will “reap corruption”

[The *present* enjoyments they will have are both corruptible and defiling—

The *future* recompence will be everlasting destruction^e—

This is elsewhere affirmed in the plainest terms^f—]

Others “sow to the Spirit”

[The Holy Spirit invariably inclines men to the love of God, and of holiness—

The new nature of the regenerate affects also spiritual objects and employments—

To sow to the Spirit therefore is to seek and delight in spiritual things—]

They who do this will reap everlasting life

[A life of devotedness to God can never issue in misery—

God has promised that it shall terminate in glory^g—]

Thus, not our pleas and pretences, but our life and conduct, will determine our eternal state

[Our harvest will accord with the seed we sow—

These different ends are inseparable from the different means^h—

The punishment, however, will be as wages earned; the reward, as a gift bestowedⁱ—]

INFER

1. What extreme folly is it to live regardless of God and our own souls!

[No husbandman expects to reap wheat when he has sown only tares—

How absurd then to hope for heaven while we seek not after it!—

Let us be convinced of our folly, and learn wisdom even from the children of this world—]

2. How absurd would it be to be diverted from our duty by any difficulties we may meet with in the discharge of it!

^e This is evidently the import of *corruption* in this place; because it is opposed to *everlasting life*. It implies that state of soul which most corresponds with the corruption of the body.

^f Rom. viii. 13.

^g Rom. vi. 22. & viii. 13.

^h Rom. ii. 6—10.

ⁱ Rom. vi. 23.

[The husbandman does not regard inclemencies of weather—

Much less would he be deterred from his work by the advice or ridicule of the ignorant and supine—

Shall *we* then be discouraged, whose seed-time is so precarious, and whose harvest is so important?—

Let all go forward, “sowing in tears that they may reap in joy”—]

XLIV. THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND CONTRASTED.

Rom. viii. 6. *To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.*

THE world in general are much mistaken with respect to the means of solid happiness—

They seek the vanities of time and sense in hopes of finding satisfaction—

And they shun religion under the idea that it would make them melancholy—

But the “way of transgressors is hard”^a—

On the contrary, the ways of religion afford both peace and pleasure^b—

The testimony of St. Paul respecting this is clear and decisive—

His words naturally lead us to consider the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind

I. In their operations

By “the carnal mind” we understand that principle of our fallen nature which affects and idolizes carnal things—

The spiritual mind imports that principle which leads the soul to spiritual objects, and is implanted by the holy Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate—

The difference between these two principles is discoverable *in our thoughts*—

^a Prov. xiii. 15.

^b Prov. iii. 17.

[The thoughts will naturally be fixed on the objects that are best suited to the reigning principle^c—

To these objects they will recur with frequency, fervour, and complacency—

If we be under the dominion of a carnal principle, we shall be thinking of some pleasure, profit, honour, or other worldly vanity—

If we be led by a spiritual principle, God, and Christ, and the concerns of the soul, will occupy the mind—]

The principles will also operate on *the affections*

[Whatever we most esteem, we *desire* it when absent, *hope* for it if it be attainable, *love* the means of attaining it, and *rejoice* in it when secured—

If there be danger of losing it, we *fear*; we *hate* the means that would deprive us of it; and if it be lost, we *grieve*—

The carnal mind is thus exercised about carnal objects—

The spiritual mind is thus exercised about spiritual objects—

Hence that caution given us with respect to the affections^d—]

The principles will yet further influence our *aims and ends* of action

[A carnal man can only act from carnal motives—

He will have carnal aims even in spiritual employments^e—

A spiritual man, on the contrary, will act from spiritual motives—

He will act with spiritual views even in his temporal concerns—

The one will seek his own interest or honour, and the other God's glory^f—]

This difference in the operation of the two principles, causes a corresponding difference

II. In their effects

The effect of the carnal principle is beyond measure awful

[This principle reigning in us *proves* us destitute of life—

Yea, rather, the reign of it is itself *a state* of spiritual "death"—

It must moreover terminate in everlasting death—

^c Our occupations in life indeed will give a direction to our minds: a carnal mind may from necessity be conversant about spiritual things, and a spiritual mind about carnal things. Particular occasions also may fix the attention much either on spiritual or carnal objects. But we speak of those seasons only, when the mind is free from pressing engagements, and can fix on the things which it most affects.

^d Col. iii. 2.

^e Zech. vii. 5, 6.

^f 1 Cor. x. 31.

This is irreversibly decreed by God^s—

And it must be so in the very nature of things^h—]

The effect of the spiritual principle is inexpressibly glorious

[Wherever it prevails, it is a proof of spiritual “life”—

It is also invariably the means of filling the soul with “peace”—

Nor can it issue otherwise than in eternal life and peace—

This also is according to the express constitution of Godⁱ—

And it must be so in the very nature of things^k—]

ADDRESS

1. The carnal-minded

[In what a lamentable state are they whose consciences testify that their thoughts, affections, and aims, are altogether carnal!—

Let it be remembered that it is God who declares this—

Who would dare to continue in such a state another day?—

Let those who feel their misery plead that promise^l—

There is the same grace for them as has been effectual for others—]

2. The spiritual-minded

[Happy they who are of this description!—

Let such adore the grace that has caused them to differ from others—

Let them endeavour to improve in spirituality of mind—

Let them guard against relapses, which will destroy their peace—

And let their eyes be fixed upon the eternal state, where their present bliss shall be consummated in glory—]

^s Gal. vi. 7.

^h What comfort could a carnal person have in heaven? there are no objects there suited to his inclination; nor has he any delight in the employments of the celestial spirits. ⁱ Gal. vi. 8.

^k Spiritual-mindedness constitutes our meetness for heaven, while it is also an anticipation and foretaste of heaven.

^l Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

XLV. THE LIGHT IN WHICH CHRIST REGARDS HIS FOLLOWERS.

John xv. 15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you*

friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

KNOWLEDGE of every kind is excellent and useful—
But that of religion far transcends all other—

Hence we are commanded to pay a peculiar respect to those who labour in the word and doctrine^a—

Hence also our Lord himself, having revealed to his disciples the whole will of God, adduces his fidelity in this respect as one of the strongest tokens of his affection for them

I. In what light Christ regards his followers

The state of believers under the gospel differs widely from that of those under the Mosaic dispensation—

They were in the condition of servants, but *we* of friends—

Christ assures us that from “henceforth” his people should be regarded by him in that light—

He has taken away from us the yoke of the ceremonial law

[This was an exceedingly heavy burthen^b—

But Christ has delivered his people from it^c—

He has imposed only two rites, and those easy and instructive^d—

His service is perfect freedom^e—]

He has delivered us from a sense of guilt

[The offerings of a Jew afforded no assurance that God had accepted him^f—

They were rather so many remembrances of his sin^g—

But Christ has freed *us* from the pains of a guilty conscience^h—]

He has set us at liberty also from a servile spirit

[The Jews could not enter into the most holy place—

None could go there but the high priest; and he only on one day in the year; and then not without bloodⁱ—

But now all believers are priests^k—

The vail which separated the most holy place was rent at the death of Christ^l—

^a 1 Thess. v. 12. ^b Acts xv. 10. ^c Gal. v. 1.

^d Baptism and the Lord's Supper. ^e 1 John v. 3. Matt. xi. 30.

^f Heb. ix. 9. ^g Heb. x. 1—3. ^h Heb. x. 14.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 7. ^k Rev. i. 6.

^l It was rent in twain from the top to the bottom at the very time of the evening sacrifice, by means of which it was opened to the view of all the worshippers in the temple.

All therefore may enter thither without fear^m—]

He has put us into the state of adult sons

[Believers under the law were like minors, or children under ageⁿ—

But *we* are brought to the full possession of our privileges^o—]

Our Lord proceeds to prove his assertion

II. What evidence we have that he does so regard us

He still carries on the comparison between servant and friends—

He points out one particular wherein he has eminently distinguished us, and exalted us above all the Jewish saints—

He has revealed to us the perfections of God

[These were but little known to the Jews—

But Christ has more clearly revealed them—

He has declared them to us in his discourses^p—

He has exhibited them in his life^q—]

He has shewn us the way of acceptance with him

[This was but obscurely shadowed under the law—

Many even rested in the ceremonies themselves—

But Christ has plainly declared himself to be the way to the Father^r—

He has expressly told us that we have acceptance through his blood^s—]

He has unfolded to us the privileges of God's people

[The Jews were encouraged by temporal promises—

But “life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel”—

Christ has fully opened to us our present privileges,^t and our future prospects^u—]

He has “made known all which he himself had heard of the Father”

[At that time he had not absolutely revealed *all*^s—

But he had declared all which he had been commissioned to reveal, or was necessary for them to know—

And he completed his revelation soon afterwards—]

This was a most undeniable evidence of his friendship

^m Heb. x. 19—22.

ⁿ Gal. iv. 1—3.

^o Gal. iv. 6, 7.

^p John i. 18.

^q Heb. i. 3.

^r John xiv. 6.

^s Matt. xx. 28. & xxvi. 28.

^t John xiv. 23.

^u John xvii. 24.

^v John xvi. 12.

[Servants are not admitted to the secret views and designs of their masters—

But Christ has made known to us all the mysteries of his Father's counsels—

What abundant evidence of his friendship does this afford !]

INFER

1. How should we esteem the holy Scriptures!

[It is by the Scriptures that Christ declares to us the Father's will—

In them therefore we see the strongest testimony of his love—

The written memorials even of a creature's love are dear to us—

Of what inestimable value then should we account the word of Christ!—

Let us regard it with the same affection as David did^z—

Let it “dwell richly in us in all wisdom”^a—]

2. What love and honour should we shew to Christ!

[We should not consider him *merely* as a lord and master—

We should rather view him as our dearest friend—

Let us then delight ourselves in communion with him—

Let us open to him all our cares, wants, fears, &c.—

Let us give him that best proof of our regard, a willing and unreserved obedience^b—]

^y Col. i. 26, 27.

^z Ps. xix. 10.

^a Col. iii. 16.

^b John xv. 14.

XLVI. THE END FOR WHICH CHRIST DEDICATED HIMSELF TO GOD.

John xvii. 19. *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

PURITY of heart is the best preservative against sin and error—

Truth and righteousness are most necessary parts of the Christian's armour^a—

On this account our Lord prayed earnestly that his followers might possess them^b—

^a Eph. vi. 14.

^b Ver. 17.

He was about to send forth his disciples into a persecuting world—

For their encouragement under all the trials they might meet with, he gave them the strongest assurance that his prayer for their sanctification should be answered—

I. What is implied in our Lord's sanctifying himself

“To sanctify” his various meanings in the Scriptures—

The most common senses of it are, to purify from sin, and to devote to God—

In the former sense it is applicable to sinners only; in the latter to Christ—

Our Lord's sanctifying of himself implies

1. A consecration of himself to God's service

[Under the law, the priests, the altars, &c. were sanctified to the Lord^c—

Thus our Lord sanctified or consecrated himself at various periods—

When he first undertook our cause^d—

When he assumed our nature^e—

When he went to John to be baptized of him^f—

When he gave up his life upon the cross^g—]

2. A devoting of himself as a sacrifice

[The paschal lamb was to be set apart four days^h—

Our Lord was the true paschal lambⁱ—

He offered himself as a sacrifice to God^k—

He sanctified and devoted himself, as it were, for this purpose^l—]

3. A mysterious composition in his character

[He himself was both the sacrifice and the priest that offered it—

His body and soul were not a typical, but a real sacrifice—

Nor was this sacrifice typically, but really efficacious^m—

As a priest, he did not officiate, like others, by a delegated authority—

^c Exod. xxx. 29.

^e Heb. x. 5—7.

^g Heb. x. 29. Here Christ is said to be sanctified by the blood of the new covenant to his priestly office in heaven, as Aaron and his sons were by the blood of the Mosaic covenant to the high-priesthood in the earthly sanctuary. Lev. viii. 30.

^h Exod. xii. 3, 6.

ⁱ 1 Cor. v. 7.

^l John xii. 27, 28.

^d Ps. xl. 7, 8.

^f Matt. iii. 15.

^k Eph. v. 2.

^m Heb. ix. 13, 14.

His divinity both qualified and authorized him to officiate in this manner—]

In this act of condescension our Lord had a view to the good of his people—

II. The end for which he sanctified himself

In general our Lord sanctified himself “for the sake of his people”

He intended that they by his means should obtain eternal blessedness—

More particularly he desired to effect the sanctification of their souls

[Our Lord would have all his people purified from sin—

He would have them also dedicated to God as “vessels of honour”—

He sought their sanctification in both these respects—

He gave up himself on purpose to redeem them from iniquityⁿ—

He died also that they might wholly devote themselves to God^o—

Hence they, who are redeemed by him, are spoken of as offering up themselves living sacrifices to God^p—]

This end, however, is accomplished through the instrumentality of God’s word

[The Holy Spirit is he that “sanctifieth the elect people of God”—

But the word (i. e. “the truth”) is the instrument whereby this work is wrought—

It is by this that souls are first converted to the faith^q—

By this also are believers nourished and confirmed^r—

INFER

1. How wonderful is the love of Christ to sinful man!

[He well knew all which his substitution in our place would bring upon him—

Yet he *voluntarily* sanctified himself for us—

Let all which he did and suffered dwell upon our minds—

Let us endeavour to comprehend the heights and depths of his love^s—]

2. How great are our obligations to holiness!

[Our sanctification was the end which Christ proposed to himself in all which he did for us—

ⁿ Tit. ii. 14.

^o 2 Cor. v. 15.

^p Rom. xii. 1.

^q Jam. i. 18.

^r 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^s Eph. iii. 18, 19.

To accomplish it, he accounted nothing too much to do or suffer—

What unspeakable obligations does this lay upon us!—

Let us strive to be holy as he is holy—

Let us shew our gratitude by our zeal in his service—]

3. How easily may the weak believer have all his doubts removed!

[Many upright persons doubt whether Christ died for *them*—

But they need not to read the book of God's decrees in order to determine this—

We may judge with certainty from the state of our own souls—

If we be truly devoted to God, we have already attained in a measure the fruits of Christ's death—

Let all therefore endeavour to keep this evidence clear—

Let all rest assured, that, if they themselves be sanctified, Christ did sanctify himself for them—

And all, who are sanctified to God here, shall dwell with God for ever—]

XLVII. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LORD'S DEATH FORE-ORDAINED.

Luke xxii. 22. *Truly the Son of Man goeth, at it was determined.*

THE doctrine of predestination is very mysterious—

If it be so held as to destroy the free agency of man, it must be pernicious and false—

But it cannot be denied without denying also the omniscience and immutability of God—

Nor, if properly understood, is it at all inconsistent with the responsibility of man—

If we know not how to reconcile all the difficulties that arise from this doctrine, it is not *therefore* false—

Certain it is that Judas was punished, and that eternally^a—

Nor can we doubt but that the Judge of all the earth will do right^b—

^a Mark xiv. 21.

^b Ps. cxlv. 17.

Yet his sin was among the things which had been fore-ordained—

To this effect St. Peter speaks respecting the Jewish nation at large^c—

To the same purpose our Lord speaks of Judas in particular^d—

I. Our Lord's death in general was fore-ordained

No unprejudiced person can entertain a doubt of this truth—

There are innumerable proofs of it in the holy Scriptures—

Our Lord's death was fixed before the foundation of the world—

[God foresaw the fall of man from eternity—

He from eternity also determined to restore man again to his favour—

The mean by which he resolved to effect it, was the death of his own Son—

Hence the apostle speaks of Christ as “fore-ordained,” &c.^e—]

It was predicted soon after man had fallen

[God denounced a curse against the serpent—

In that denunciation he foretold the destruction of Satan himself—

He foretold it as to be effected by the death of Christ^f—]

It was shadowed forth in a variety of types

[The paschal lamb represented it^g—

It was prefigured by the daily sacrifices^h—

It was typified by the offerings on the great day of atonementⁱ—

The serpent in the wilderness was a striking representation of it^k—

It was foretold by all the prophets

[The prophetic writings are full of declarations respecting it—

Isaiah seems rather to have composed an history than a prophecy—

To quote particular passages is needless—

St. Peter mentions it as foretold by all the prophets^l—

Our Lord himself speaks to the same effect^m—

^c Acts ii. 23.

^f Gen. iii. 15.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 13, 14.

^l Acts iii. 17, 18.

^d The text.

^g 1 Cor. v. 7.

^e 1 Pet. i. 20.

^h John i. 29.

^k John iii. 14.

^m Luke xxiv. 25—27.

A body was prepared him on purpose that he might die

[He freely undertook to suffer in our steadⁿ—

This was the ground on which a body was provided for him^o—

This reason for his inclination is often noticed in the Scriptures^p—]

It was foreknown and consented to by our Lord himself

[Our Lord often spake of it to his disciples^q—

It was the subject of his conversation with Moses and Elias^r—

He could have delivered himself from his enemies if he had chosen it^s—

But it was a season he greatly longed for^t—]

Hence we may conclude, that though the agents were guilty, as having acted freely, the actions themselves were fore-ordained^u—

But there was not merely a decree respecting our Lord's death in general

II. Every particular respecting it was determined

It would be endless to enumerate all the predictions respecting Christ, and to compare them with his history^x—

But we will point out a few that relate more immediately to *his death*

1. Those that were immediately to precede his death

[It was foretold *by whom* he was to be *betrayed*^y—

Our Lord himself applies this prediction to Judas^z—

The price that should be *paid* for his blood, together *with the disposition of the purchase-money*, was accurately foretold^a—

ⁿ Ps. xl. 6—8. ^o Heb. x. 5—7. The apostle explains the expressions in Ps. xl. 6. "Mine ears hast thou opened," by other words to the same effect, "A body hast thou prepared me." The boring of the ear of a servant bound him to his servitude for ever; Exod. xxi. 6. And the preparing of a body for Christ fixed him to his engagements.

^p Heb. ii. 9, 14. ^q Luke xviii. 31—33. ^r Luke ix. 31.

^s He had frequently done so, Luke iv. 29, 20. John viii. 59. and he could easily have done it then, John xviii. 6. Matt. xxvi. 53.

^t Luke xii. 50.

^u Acts iv. 28.

^x Matthew alone quotes above thirty passages that refer to Christ.

^y Ps. xli. 9.

^z John xiii. 18.

^a Zech. xi. 12, 13.

This very sum (the price of a slave) was paid, and afterwards so applied^b—

It was moreover foretold that he should be *scourged*^c—

This was complied with *to prevent his death*^d—

He was also destined to be *mocked, spit upon, and smitten*^e—

His enemies vented their indignation in this very way^f—]

2. Those that were to accompany his death

[It was foretold that he should be *nailed to a cross*^g—

The accomplishment of this was very singularly effected^h—

He was to be crucified *with others, malefactors*ⁱ—

The fulfilment of this also is particularly noticed^k—

He was to experience *fresh insults* here^l—

This was fulfilled in the most literal manner^m—

He was also to suffer *the hiding of his Father's face*ⁿ—

David's words were those used by Christ under his dereliction^o—

He was to have *vinegar offered him* to drink^p—

He would not resign his breath till this was accomplished^q—]

3. Those that were immediately to follow his death

[He was to be *pierced*^r—

This was fulfilled in a very remarkable manner^s—

Yet he was *not to have a bone broken*^t—

This, too, received its accomplishment^u—

The manner in which his clothes were to be disposed of was also foretold^v—

The fulfilling of this strongly marked the overruling hand of God^y—]

We may say of every the most minute circumstances, as St. Matthew does^z—

^b Matt. xxvii. 6—10.

^e Ps. cxxix. 3. & Isai. liii. 5.

^d Luke xxiii. 22.

^f Isai. l. 6.

^f Matt. xxvii. 26—30.

^g Ps. xxii. 16.

^h John xviii. 31, 32. Crucifixion was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment: yet he was put to death for a crime of which the Roman law would not have taken cognizance.

ⁱ Isai. liii. 12.

^k Mark xv. 27, 28. ^l Ps. xxii. 6—8. ^m Matt. xxvii. 41—43.

ⁿ Ps. xxii. 1.

^o Matt. xxvii. 46.

^p Ps. lxix. 21.

^q John xix. 28—30. ^r Zech. xii. 10.

^s John xix. 34, 36.

^t Exod. xii. 46. This was very unlikely to be fulfilled, seeing that many of his bones were out of joint, Ps. xxii. 14. and the bones of those who were crucified with him were broken.

^u John xix. 32, 33, 36.

^x Ps. xxii. 18.

^y John xix. 23, 24.

^z Matt. xxvi. 56.

INFER

1. How certainly is Jesus the true Messiah

[Such a variety of circumstances could not have concurred but from the express determination of Providence—

Let us then receive Jesus as the promised Messiah—

Let us welcome him with acclamations and Hosannas—

Let us depend upon his death as a sure ground of hope— — —]

2. How cheerfully may we leave ourselves to God's disposal!

[How were the malice of Satan, the envy of the priests, the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, &c. overruled for the effecting of the divine purposes!—

Thus may God overrule the most adverse circumstances for our good—

Let us then in all states rely on that gracious declaration^a—]

^a Rom. viii. 28.

XLVIII. THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF CHRIST.

John iii. 14, 15. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

THE humble condition of our Lord was a stumbling-block to the Jews—

They could not receive the idea of a suffering Messiah—

But our Lord prepared the minds of his disciples—

He frequently spake to them of his approaching death—

He declared to Nicodemus that the brazen serpent typified the manner in which it should be accomplished—

We propose to point out the resemblance between the type and the antitype—

They correspond with each other

I. In the occasion of their institution

The Israelites in the wilderness were bitten by fiery serpents

[They murmured for want of water, and loathed the manna which God gave them—

For this God sent fiery serpents among them—

Of the multitude who were bitten, many died—

Nor was there any remedy for those who had been wounded—

They cried to God, and intreated Moses to intercede for them—

God, in answer to them, ordered the serpent to be erected^a—]

We are wounded by the more deadly sting of sin

[The poison of sin had pervaded all our faculties—

It was bringing speedy and everlasting destruction on our souls—

We had no power whatever to heal ourselves^b—

But God, of his own mercy, provided a remedy—

He appointed his own Son to suffer in our stead^c—]

There is a further agreement between them

II. In the ends for which they were instituted

God intended to remove the judgment from the Israelites

[He had sufficiently testified his displeasure against them—

“In the midst of judgment he remembered mercy”—

He commanded that they should look to the serpent, and be healed—]

The institution perfectly answered the end proposed

[As many as looked to it were restored to health—

However deadly their wounds might be, their cure was immediate—

Nor were they disappointed, though their views of the serpent might be dim—]

To deliver us from sin and death was the intention of Christ's death

[God willed not our destruction, but our salvation—

Hence did he devise and execute the plan whereby it is to be accomplished—

Our Lord himself assures us that this was the end of his crucifixion^d—]

Nor will any be disappointed who trust in it

[It makes a full atonement for all our sins—

None can ever “perish” who trust in it—

They will surely be raised to an “eternal life”—

Nor shall any malignity of past sins prevent this effect^e—]

^a Numb. xxi. 6—9.

^b Rom. v. 6.

^c Isai. liii. 6.

^d John xii 32, 33.

^e “Whosoever” See also Isai. i. 18.

INFER

1. How plain and simple is the way of salvation!

[Nothing can more plainly declare it than this typical representation—

The wounded Israelites were not to heal themselves *in part*—

They were to look to the serpent as God's ordinance—

Thus we are not to trust in any works of our own^f—

We must look simply by faith to the crucified Saviour—

But we must look to him as wounded, helpless, and dying sinners—

This doctrine is thought by some to encourage sin—

But would an Israelite provoke the serpent's attack because he could so easily obtain another cure?—

Much less would a Christian who has felt the deadly wounds of sin be willing to renew the pains and horrors occasioned by them^g—

The very means of his deliverance will make him the more abhor that from which he has been delivered^h—

Let us then seek to feel our disorder, and to apply the remedy—

Nor let us fear though our views be imperfect, provided they be sincere—]

2. How injurious to our welfare is unbelief!

[If any had despised God's ordinance, he must have perished—

Nor could he have been benefited by it if he had declined looking to the serpent through an apprehension of his own unworthiness—

Thus the infidelity of some, and the unbelieving fears of others, keep them from enjoying his salvation—

Let us remember that "Christ came to seek and save the lost"—

Let us not question his ability or willingness to save—

Let us hear and obey his gracious invitationⁱ—]

^f Tit. iii. 5.

^g Rom. vi. 1, 2.

^h Zech. xii. 10.

ⁱ Isai. xlv. 22.

XLIX. THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION A JUST GROUND OF APPREHENSION TO THE UNGODLY.

1 Pet. iv. 18. *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

EARNESTNESS in the concerns of religion is often thought unnecessary—

But the attainment of salvation is by no means easy—

This appears from the representations which the Scriptures give of religion;—a race, a warfare, &c.

The difficulties implied in these metaphors may well alarm the careless—

With this view St. Peter suggests the awful query in the text—

I. His assumption

The apostle did not mean to express a doubt, but rather to assume a position which he deemed incontrovertible—

The point he assumes is, that the righteous are saved with difficulty

The truth of this position will appear, if it be considered that the righteous are not saved without

Deep afflictions

[God's people, in all ages, have been afflicted^a—

They have much to endure on account of their religion^b—

But their trials are beneficial to them^c—

They scarcely ever make any great proficiency without them^d—

They always in the issue acknowledge them as blessings^e—]

Severe conflicts

[The Christian finds much opposition from without and from within^f—

No attainments whatever put him without the reach of trials—

St. Paul, long after he had been caught up into the third heavens, felt the severest conflicts in his soul^g—

They are, more or less, the lot of every Christian^h—

And, though painful, they are necessary for us allⁱ—

None can attain salvation without them,^k yet all find it extremely difficult to bear them without fainting—]

Powerful assistances

[Nothing less than Almighty power can uphold the Christian—

This the most righteous men have freely acknowledged^l—

Hence the preservation of the saints is ascribed to God alone^m—

^a Zeph. iii. 12.

^b 2 Tim. iii. 12.

^c 1 Pet. i. 7.

^d Ps. cxix. 67.

^e Ps. cxix. 71.

^f Eph. vi. 12.

^g Rom. vii. 15, 23.

^h Gal. v. 17.

ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 6.

^k Heb. xii. 8.

^l Ps. cxix. 117.

^m 1 Pet. i. 5.

How mistaken then are they who think the attainment of salvation easy!—]

Surely if the righteous find the way to heaven so difficult, the ungodly have reason to tremble for their state

II. The inference he draws from it

The different characters in the text are the same as those mentioned in the preceding verse—

The question respecting the latter implies that their destruction must be

1. Certain

This is constantly affirmed throughout the holy Scriptures

[The ungodly shall appear at the judgment-seat of Christⁿ—

But they shall not be united with the righteous^o—

They shall be separated from them for ever^p—]

It is deducible also from the foregoing assumption

[The righteous are justified by the blood of Christ, renewed by the Spirit of God, and are striving with all their might, &c.—

The ungodly are unpardoned, unsanctified, unimpressed—

It is impossible that these should have the same end^u—

We will appeal to the ungodly themselves, and leave them to say, “where they shall appear?”—]

The want also of many advantages for salvation is a further ground for it

[The righteous have sanctified afflictions, victorious conflicts, and all-sufficient assistances—

The ungodly remain unaltered by afflictions, unacquainted with spiritual conflicts, nor do they even seek God’s assistance—

Surely if *those* be *scarcely* saved, *these* cannot be saved *at all*—]

2. Dreadful

[St. Peter refers to the fiery trial of persecution in particular as rendering the Christian’s way to heaven so difficult—

He mentions it as permitted of God for the purging of his church—

ⁿ 2 Cor. v. 10.

^p Matt. xxv. 46.

^o Ps. i. 5.

^u Isai. iii. 10, 11.

He infers from it the dreadfulness of their destruction who oppose or reject the gospel—

This inference naturally follows—

If such be the *salutary purgations* of God's friends, what must be the *vindictive chastisements* of his enemies?

If such things come on his friends in this state of *probation*, what shall come on his enemies at the time appointed for final *retribution*?

If such be the visitations experienced by his friends *in the day of mercy*, what must his enemies expect *in the day of his wrath*?—]

We may IMPROVE this subject

1. For conviction

[Every one should enquire into his own character, state, and end—

Let none rest till they can satisfy their consciences on scriptural grounds—]

2. For consolation

[The difficulty of the salvation of the righteous implies however, that, though scarcely saved, they are saved at last—

This is a blessed and consolatory truth^s—

Let all then under their difficulties commit themselves to God^t—]

^r Am I righteous, that is, justified, sanctified, and striving for the heavenly prize? Am I improving afflictions, maintaining conflicts, and receiving assistances from God? Have I reason to hope that I shall appear at the right hand of the Judge; or am I still unprepared to meet my God?

^s John x. 28. This may be well illustrated by the narration of Paul's shipwreck, when all the crew, having been given to him, were, though with great difficulty, saved. Acts xxvii. 44.

^t 1 Pet. iv. 19.

L. THE GREAT SIN OF REJECTING CHRIST.

John xv. 22. *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.*

EVERY sin is committed against an infinitely good and gracious God—

Yet the stoical doctrine of the equality of sins is not therefore true—

Guilt may be aggravated or diminished by a variety of circumstances—

Hence our Lord denounced peculiar woe against Chorazin and Bethsaida—

To the same effect he speaks concerning the Jews in the text—

I. How greatly aggravated the sin of the Jews was in rejecting Christ

Sin admits of so many degrees of malignity, that one may be considered as no sin in comparison of another—

Not that any man can be absolutely without sin^a—

Nor is any man really excusable in the sight of God^b—

But *comparatively* some may be said to “have no sin”^c—

Thus it was with those whom our Lord spake—

If he had not come to them, they might have pleaded a want of the necessary means of salvation—

But our Lord’s preaching rendered them wholly inexcusable—

They could not plead any want of

Instruction

[Our Lord often spake in parables—

This was the means of inflicting judicial blindness on the proud^d—

But it was well calculated for the instruction of the humble—

Besides, he delivered many things in the simplest terms—]

Evidence

[Our Lord wrought many and stupendous miracles—

He performed them by a touch, a word, and even at a distance—

His miracles were as benevolent as they were open and undeniable—

Those who wished to discredit them, imputed them to the agency of Satan—

Our Lord mentions them as aggravating the guilt of those who rejected him^e—]

Warning

[There was no want of fidelity on our Lord’s part—

He warned the people in the plainest and most awful manner^f—]

^a 1 John i. 8.

^b Rom. i. 19—21.

^c John ix. 41.

^d Luke viii. 10.

^e Ver. 24.

^f John viii. 21, 24.

Encouragement

[Every one that thirsted for his benefits was invited by him^e—

He offered to give *spiritual* life to all who would come to him^h—

He promised also to crown them with eternal happiness and gloryⁱ—]

If *they* were thus without excuse, it becomes us to consider

II. How much more inexcusable we are if we reject Christ

Christ has come and preached to us by his word and ministers—

And many reject him after the example of the unbelieving Jews—

Though we be not avowed infidels, we *practically* reject Christ, when we do not receive him for all the ends and purposes for which he was sent—

And if we do so, our guilt is peculiarly aggravated—

We have not any Jewish prejudices to encounter

[The Jews had received their law from God—

They had been accustomed to expect a temporal Messiah—

Yet they saw a man altogether destitute and despised—

And beheld the law of Moses superseded by a new religion—

His works indeed should have obviated all these difficulties—

But we have not these difficulties to contend with—

We profess that the gospel is from God—

We profess that Christ's kingdom is of a spiritual nature—

We profess that his cross is his own glory, and his church's hope—]

We see the whole design of God unfolded

[The Jews had only partial and contracted views—

They could not reconcile many seeming contrarieties—

The disciples, even after Christ's resurrection, were at a loss to account for the occurrences they had seen^k—

But we behold the counsels of God completed—

The various prophecies are all accomplished—

The characters and offices of Christ are opened—

The great ends of his incarnation and death are effected—

The glory of God, as shining in his face, is fully displayed—]

^e John vii. 37, 38. ^h Ibid. ⁱ John xii. 26. ^k Luke xxiv. 21.

We have witnessed the success of the gospel

[Those to whom our Lord spake, saw his ministry despised—

The great and learned of their nation rejected him—

His followers were only a few, and those of the lowest class—

But we have seen the “grain of mustard become a large tree”—

The gospel has spread to the remotest corners of the earth—

It has triumphed over the prejudices and passions, the interests and powers, of the world—

Its influence is yet daily exhibited before our eyes—]

How heinous then must be our guilt if we reject him!

Surely our “sin must be of a crimson or a scarlet die”—

ADDRESS

1. Those who make excuses for their neglect of Christ

[With what foolish and weak excuses do men deceive themselves!—

Surely God will not be deceived by these—

What cloak for your sin will you find when he shall call you to account?—

Will you plead a want of instruction, evidence, warning, or encouragement?—

Know that in that day you will be speechless^m—

Your love of sin and hatred of the light are the true causes of your rejecting Christⁿ—

And this will be the ground of a more aggravated condemnation^o—]

2. Those who desire to attain the saving knowledge of him

[It is a great mercy to have such a desire formed in the heart—

But beware of cloaking or extenuating your sin—

Remember that awful yet encouraging declaration^p—

Confess your sin with all its aggravations—

There is a virtue in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from it all^q—]

¹ We may notice a few: “I have not time.” For what is time given?—“I am not able.” Do you do what you can?—“It is time enough yet.” Shall you certainly live, and have the grace you now slight offered you again?—“I have the majority on my side.” Are you not then in the *broad* road? and will associates mitigate your pain?—“Professors are hypocrites.” Is that a reason *you* should not be sincere?—“God is merciful.” To whom? the *impenitent*?

^m Matt. xxii. 12.

ⁿ John v. 40.

^o John iii. 19.

^p Prov. xxviii. 13.

^q 1 John i. 7.

LI. THE FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF CHRIST CONTRASTED.

(Rev. xvii. 14. *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

THE book of Revelations is confessedly dark and mysterious—

Yet there are many parts of it plain and perspicuous—

The prophecy before us is not without its difficulties—

We cannot doubt, however, but that it declares the downfall of Popery—

But we forbear to dwell on those parts which are difficult of interpretation—

We confine our attention to what is most obvious in the text: in illustrating which we shall shew

I. Who they are that war against the Lamb

The text speaks of those who should oppose the cause of Christ, and the interests of his gospel—Now this is done by

1. Those who maintain sentiments contrary to the gospel of Christ

[A person may err with respect to subordinate matters, and yet have his heart, on the whole, right with God—

But an error in the fundamental points argues a depraved state of mind—

A man who denies the divinity of Christ, the sufficiency of his atonement, the influences of his Spirit upon the soul, or the necessity of an unreserved devotedness of heart to God, sets aside the whole gospel—

He therefore opposes Christ in his most essential interests, and wars against the Lamb^a—]

2. Those who endeavour to subvert his influence over his peoples hearts

[There is scarcely an unconverted person that does not, like Cain and Ishmael, revile and persecute the children of God—

And how many does such treatment intimidate and subvert!—

^a Luke x. 16.

Whatever then a scoffing world may think of their conduct, they are really fighting against Christ himself—

In touching his people, they touch the apple of his eye^b—]

But we cannot doubt

II. What will be the issue of the contest

The enemies of Christ may appear to triumph for a while—

But he will surely overcome them at the last—

Over some he will triumph by his grace

[None are beyond the reach of his arm—

None are so vile but that he feels compassion towards them—

Nor are any so stout-hearted but he is able to subdue them—

He who vanquished the persecuting Saul, can and will make others also to be similar monuments of his grace and mercy—]

But those who reject all his overtures of mercy, he will break in pieces like a potter's vessel

[His triumphs over them are admirably painted in the second Psalm—

And he himself tells us what a sentence he will pass upon them in the day of judgment^c—

However long their conflicts with him may be, this must at last be the termination of them—]

To impress this on our minds, let us consider

III. What assurance we have that such shall be the issue of it

Two pledges of his victory are mentioned in the text

1. His own power

[Were he the first of created beings, his success might be uncertain—

But he is “Lord of lords, and King of kings”—

And though he is a Lamb, yet will he shew himself to be the “Lion of the tribe of Judah”—

Whoever shall presume to oppose him, he will go through them, and burn them up together^d—]

2. His people's constancy

[They have not indeed, of themselves, any strength or constancy—

But they have been “chosen” of God from before the foundation of the world^e—

^b Acts ix. 4. Zech. ii. 8.

^c Isai. xxvii. 4.

^e Luke xix. 27.

^d Eph. i. 4.

They have in due time been “called” by the effectual operation of his grace—

And they are made “faithful” by him, so that nothing can induce them to desert his cause^f—

The least and weakest among them all is more than conqueror through the strength of Christ^g—

And all may adopt the language of triumph, even while conflicting on the field of battle^h—]

APPLICATION

1. Let us assist you in enquiring whether ye be among the friends or enemies of Christ

[While some are against Christ, others “are with him”—

They are with him in sentiment, in affection, in profession, in conduct—

How great is the difference between those who in outward appearance are the same!—

O search and see whether ye be the friends or enemies of Christⁱ—

According as you prove yourselves to be in this life, you will surely be found in the day of judgment—]

2. Let us address each of those characters

[*To his enemies* we say, Consider whose enemies you are—

Is this the treatment he has deserved at your hands?—

Is there not a time coming when he will fearfully resent it?—

If you be of the number of *his friends*, “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”^k—

Let nothing, however pleasing, or however formidable, tempt you to forsake him—

Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life^l—]

^f Acts xx. 20.

^g Rom. viii.

^h Rom. viii.

ⁱ Matt. xii. 30.

^k Eph. iv. 1.

^l Rev. ii. 10.

LII. THE DUTY OF CASTING OUR CARE ON GOD.

1 Pet. v. 7. *Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you*

INEXPERIENCED Christians are generally partial in their views of religion—

They often exalt one duty, to the neglect, if not the exclusion of another—

But a proficiency in the divine life will discover itself by the united exercise of the various, and apparently opposite, graces—

Faith will not exclude fear, nor meekness fortitude—

Every grace will be limited and tempered by some other—

The soul must be humbled before God in dust and ashes—

Yet should it rely on him with most implicit confidence^a—

I. The duty of Christians

Christians have learned “not to seek great things for themselves”—

Hence they are free from the corroding cares of avarice and ambition—

But they still have many grounds of care

[They cannot but feel some concern respecting their bodily wants—

The casualties of life may also occasion some uneasiness—

But they have other cares far more weighty and important—

They see many dishonouring their holy profession—

They feel within themselves also “an evil heart of unbelief”—

Nor are they ignorant of Satan’s devices to overthrow them—

Moreover, they frequently anticipate future evils—

And tremble, lest in the day of adversity they should faint—

Thus do they torment themselves with anxious and depending fears—]

It is their duty, however, to “cast their care on God”

[To cast their care upon any creature would be fruitless—

And it would involve them in the deepest guilt^b—

God alone is able to sustain their burthen—

On him they are commanded to cast it^c—

They must do so in the exercise of faith and prayer^d—

Nor are any cares whatever to be excepted, “Cast *all*,” &c.—

None are so small but they shall be regarded, none so great but they shall be alleviated—]

There is a backwardness in many to comply with this duty

II. Their encouragement to perform it

^a Ver. 6, 7.

^b Jer. xvii. 5.

^c Ps. lv. 22.

^d Phil. iv. 6, 7.

God extends his care to the whole creation—

But in a more especial manner careth for his people—

[He conducted the Jews through the wilderness—

He interposed for them in all their dangers—

He supplied their every want^e—

Thus, though less visibly, he still regards those who trust in him—

He watches over them for good^f—

He limits and restrains all their adversaries^g—

He sympathizes with them in all their afflictions^h—

He imparts to them all temporal and spiritual blessingsⁱ—

He hears and answers all their supplications^k—

He accounts them his most inestimable treasure^l—

He communes with them as his sons and daughters^m—

He takes upon him the management of all their concernsⁿ—]

What encouragement does this afford us to trust in him!

Our guardian and protector is infinitely *wise*^o

[He knows what trials we stand in need of—

He can suit all the circumstances of them to our necessities—

He can overrule them for our eternal benefit—]

He is possessed of *almighty* power^p

[There is no difficulty from which he cannot extricate^q—

Nor duty which he cannot enable us to discharge—

Should we, for whom such wisdom and power are exercised, be anxious?^r—

Moreover he is *good* and gracious

[What innumerable blessings has he already bestowed upon us!—

He has even given his own Son to die for us—

What then can we have to fear, if we trust in him?^s—]

Above all, he is a *faithful* God

[He has promised reasonable protection and strength^t—

And is not his word a sure ground of confidence?^u—

Surely then we should be filled with consolation rather than with care^v—]

^e Ps. cv. 39—41.

^f 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

^g Ps. lxxvi. 10.

^h Isai. lxiii. 9. Heb. iv. 15.

ⁱ Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

^k John xv. 7.

^l Mal. iii. 17.

^m 2 Cor. vi. 18.

ⁿ Isai. xlvi. 4.

^o Isai. xxviii. 29.

^p Job xl. 2.

^q Isai. l. 2. and xliii. 13. ^r Isai. xl. 27, 28.

^s Rom. viii. 32.

^t Isai. liv. 10. Deut. xxxiii. 25. 1 Cor. x. 13.

^u 2 Sam. xxii. 31. Heb. x. 23.

^v Heb. vi. 18.

INFER

1. How needful is it that all should acquaint themselves with God!

[Gaiety and dissipation may bear up the spirit in prosperity—

But God alone can comfort us in adversity^y—

At the hour of death we shall all need divine support—

Let the careless then begin to reflect upon their state—

Let them provide a refuge against the day of trouble—

Let them follow that salutary advice^z—]

2. How happy would Christians be if they rightly enjoyed their privileges!

[It is their privilege to be “without carefulness”^a—

If they trusted in God as they ought, nothing could disturb them^b—

Hence that exhortation to joy in God^c—

Let the afflicted saints then commit themselves to him^d—

Let them know that duty is theirs, but events are his—

Let them, in the face of all difficulties, adopt the words of Joshua^e—

Let them, with Hezekiah, repose themselves on God^f—]

^y Job xxxv. 10.

^z Job xxii. 21.

^a 1 Cor. vii. 32.

^b Isai. xxvi. 3.

^c Ps. v. 11, 12.

^d Mic. v. 4.

^e Numb. xiv. 9.

^f 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8.

LIII. THE GLORY WHICH CHRIST GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE.

[John xvii. 22. *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.*

THE dignity of human nature is a favourite subject with many—

Nor if man be considered in his primæval state, can it be estimated too highly—

But man is a fallen creature, and reduced to the most abject condition—

The Scriptures speak of him in the most humiliating terms—

Nevertheless, through the grace of the gospel, he is restored to his primitive honours—

He in some respects is elevated even above the angels of heaven—

No words can express his dignity more fully than those of the text—

We enquire what that glory is which the Father gave to Christ, and Christ gives to his church and people

I. The glory of manifesting the divine power

Angels have been used as instruments of divine power both for the preservation and destruction of mankind—

But it is peculiar to Christ and his people to manifest the divine power in conflicts with their enemies—

Christ had this glory given him

[He had innumerable enemies, both men and devils^a—

But he conquered sin, Satan, death, and hell^b—

This he did through the support and influence of his Father^c—]

This *glory* has Christ given us

[His people are in a state of warfare^d—

But the very weakest of them triumph at last through Christ^e—

Paul acknowledges this to the praise of his divine Master^f—]

II. The glory of displaying the moral perfections of the Deity

The material world displays the *natural* perfections of God—

But not even the angels in heaven can set forth all his *moral* perfections

[Being never injured, they cannot exercise mercy, forbearance, love of enemies—]

This is the peculiar prerogative of Christ

[Christ manifested the most wonderful compassion^g—

In so doing he displayed the Father's perfections^h—

This honour he himself received of the Fatherⁱ—]

His people however are made to share this glory with him

[They, as stars in their several spheres, reflect the beams of the Sun of righteousness—

How strongly was his character delineated in the life of Paul and in the death of Stephen!—

^a Ps. ii. 2. Luke xxii. 53.

^b Col. ii. 15. Eph. iv. 8.

^c Isai. xlii. 1.

^d Eph. vi. 12.

^e Rom. viii. 37.

^f 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^g Luke xix. 41. and xxiii. 34. and xxix. 47.

^h John xiv. 9.

ⁱ John xiv. 10.

Every one of them endeavours to “walk as he walked”—
They are enabled to do this by Christ himself^k—]

III. The glory of being sons of God

The angels are sometimes called sons of God
But they bear this relation to him only as creatures—
Christ has this honour in an infinitely higher sense^l

[Christ is the Son of God both in his divine and human nature—

He is emphatically called by the apostle “God’s dear Son”^m—]

The same honour has Christ conferred on us

[Every believer is brought into this relation to Godⁿ—

This astonishing mercy may well excite wonder and admiration^o—

It is bestowed on the believer by Christ himself^p—]

IV. The glory of being united to God

The Scriptures often speak of the union that subsists between Christ and the Father—

[Our Lord himself affirmed that he and the Father were one^q—

St. Paul declares that all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ^r—

What our Lord did as man is attributed to him as God^s—]

A similar, though not the same, union subsists between Christ and his people—

[Our Lord represents them as branches of the living vine^t—

He compares their union with him to his with the Father^u—

He declares not only that he himself is the author of this union, but that it is a part of that glory which he has given us^x—]

V. The glory of reigning with God

Both the good and evil angels are called principalities and powers—

But they are never said to “reign” with God—

Our Lord however has received this honour of his Father

^k Phil. iv. 13.

ⁿ 2 Cor. 18.

^l John x. 30.

^t John xv. 1.

^l Heb. i. 5.

^o 1 John iii. 1.

^r Col. ii. 9.

^u John xvii. 21.

^m Col. i. 13.

^p John i. 12.

^s Acts xxi. 28.

^x Ver. 22, 23.

[All power in heaven and in earth is committed to him^y—
He is exalted far above all principalities and powers^z—
It is decreed that every soul shall submit to Jesus^a—]

This honour also has Christ vouchsafed to his people
[The victorious saints will exercise a kind of dominion
over the ungodly at the last day^b—

They will sit with Christ as assessors in judgment over men
and devils^c—

They have a kingdom appointed to them even now^d—

They will be formally invested with it at the last day—

They will receive it as a special grant from Christ him-
self^e—]

INFER

1. What an exalted character is the true Christian!

[Christians are despised by the unbelieving world—
But the Scriptures describe their dignity in most exalted
terms—

How can we ever estimate aright the glory given them by
their Lord!—

What glory can the earth afford in comparison of this?—

Let us not then act unworthy of this high character—]

2. How marvellous is Christ's love to his people!

[Every thing, which he himself has received of the
Father, he gives to them—

He even bought it with his blood, that he might bestow it
upon them—

How incomprehensible is this love!—

Let us entertain worthy conceptions of it—

Let us be constrained by it to love and serve him—]

^y Matt. xxviii. 18.

^z Eph. i. 20, 21.

^a Isai. xiv. 23.

^b Ps. xlix. 14. Rev. ii. 26, 27. Ps. cxlix. 7—9.

^c 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

^d Luke xxii. 29.

^e Rev. iii. 21.

— LIV. A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FATHER'S LOVE TO CHRIST AND CHRIST'S TO US.

John xv. 9. *As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:
continue ye in my love.*

REASON could never suggest motives sufficient to
counteract the passions—

The law of God itself, with all its sanctions, could not
change the heart—

The gospel only can make sin odious, and holiness delightful—

It effects this by revealing to us the love of Christ^a—

Hence our Lord reminds us of his love in order to confirm our love to him—

I. The nature and extent of Christ's love to us

The comparison in the text denotes not equality but resemblance^b—

The love of Christ to us, like that of his Father to him, is

1. Without beginning

There never was a period when the Father first began to love his Son

[He loved him before his entrance on his ministry,^c before his existence in the world,^d before Isaiah's time,^e from all eternity^f—]

There never was a period when Christ first began to love us—

[His love is first *manifested* when we believe in him—

But our faith in him is the effect, not the cause, of his love to us—

This is affirmed by the prophets,^g and by Christ himself^h—]

2. Without measure

The Father's love to Christ was unbounded

[He is one with Christ in nature, and therefore in affectionⁱ—

He has shewn the greatness of his love to him, in the gifts bestowed upon him,^k and in his constant co-operation with him^l—]

Christ's love to us is also unbounded

[It produces most astonishing acts of kindness towards us^m—

Human affections fall far short of itⁿ—

It "passes all knowledge," whether of men or angels—]

^a 2 Cor. v. 14.

^b Matt. v. 48.

^c Matt. iii. 17.

^d John i. 18.

^e Isai. xlii. 1.

^f In this sense many commentators explain Prov. viii. 22, 23, 30 : and if that interpretation be admitted, the eternity of Christ's love may be confirmed by ver. 31. But, however this passage be interpreted, the fact itself stands on the most unquestionable authority. John xvii. 24.

^g Jer. xxxi. 3. Ezek. xvi. 6.

^h John xv. 16.

ⁱ John x. 30.

^k John iii. 35. Col. i. 19.

^l John v. 19, 20.

^m Eph. v. 25. Rev. i. 5, 6.

ⁿ Isai. xlix. 15, 16.

3. Without variation

The Father's love to Christ was unchangeable

[His love *seems* to have been withdrawn for a season^o—

He *seemed* not to answer his prayers^p—

But he heard him always,^q and loved him always—

The apparent suspensions of his love were the necessary means of accomplishing the purposes of his love even towards Christ himself^r—]

Christ's love to us also is unchangeable

[There are seasons when he *seems* to withdraw his love—

But his chastisements are tokens of his love^s—

He hates sin indeed, and will correct his people till they put it away—

But he will not withdraw his love from them^t—

Wherever he fixes his love, he rests unalterably in it^u—]

4. Without end

The Father's love to Christ shall endure for ever—

[He has given him a pledge of this in his exaltation to heaven—]

Christ's love to us shall also be everlasting—

[He knows no change of mind with respect to what he has bestowed^x—

Whomsoever he loves he continues to love^y—

This truth is a just ground of joy and confidence^z—]

What returns can we ever make to Christ for such amazing love?

II. The duty resulting from it

This part of the text requires application rather than discussion—

It sets before us, not merely *our privilege* (which is, to continue in a sense of Christ's love to us) but *our duty*

1. To love Christ

[This would have been our duty, though he had not so loved us—

But the obligation to it is greatly increased by his love—

Let him then be exceeding precious to us—

Let us despise every thing in comparison of him^a—]

2. To continue in love to him

[We are too apt to decline in our love^b—

^o Matt. xxvii. 46. ^p Luke xxii. 42, 44. ^q John xi. 42.

^r Heb. ii. 10. ^s Heb. xii. 6.

^t Ps. lxxxix. 31—33.

^u Zeph. iii. 17. ^x Rom. xi. 29.

^y John xiii. 1.

^z Rom. i. 35, 38, 39.

^a Phil. iii. 8.

^b Matt. xxiv. 12.

But declensions, however secret, are very offensive^c—

They will, if continued in, disqualify us for heaven^d—

They will reduce us to a worse situation than ever^e—

Let us therefore cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart^f—]

3. To abound in all acts and offices of love to him

[In secret, let us contemplate, admire, and adore his excellencies—

In public, let us confess, honour, and obey him^g—]

It commends to us that duty as resulting from the declaration that precedes it

[The love of Christ towards us is the strongest of all motives to the love of him—

Was Christ's love to us so unmerited, unbounded, invariable, and lasting? and shall ours to him be weak and transient? — — —

Let it operate then suitably on all our hearts—

Let us not rest satisfied with what we have attained^h—

Let us meditate on his love as the means of increasing oursⁱ—]

^c Rev. ii. 4.

^d Luke ix. 62.

^e 2 Pet. ii. 22.

^f Acts xi. 23.

^g Matt. x. 32. John xiv. 21.

^h Phil. iii. 12, 13.

ⁱ Eph. iii. 18, 19.

LV. THE FOLLY OF DEPARTING FROM THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.

Gal. iii. 1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

THE method of a sinner's justification is plainly revealed in the gospel—

Nor is any doctrine more worthy of attention—

An error with respect to many other points may consist with our salvation—

But to err in this, is to destroy all hope of acceptance—

Hence St. Paul devotes even an angel from heaven to a curse, if it could be supposed that one should be found who would introduce a gospel different from that which he himself had preached—

Unhappily, however, the Galatians had been misled—
The apostle writes this epistle in order to reclaim them—

He tells them that he had reproved even Peter himself, and that too before the whole church at Antioch, for dissembling the truth^a—

He then proceeds to reprove their declension also—

We shall consider

I. Wherein their disobedience to the truth consisted

The Galatians had formerly “received the truth in the love of it”

[They had entertained the highest respect for him who first evangelized them^b—

They had been knit to him with the most cordial affection^c—

They had found much blessedness by means of the gospel^d—

They had received miraculous powers in confirmation of the word^e—

They had been enabled to adorn their profession by a suitable life and conversation^f—

They had even endured many sufferings for their attachment to the truth^g—]

But they had lately imbibed the doctrines of some Judaizing teachers

[Many of the Jewish converts were still zealous for the law of Moses—

Hence they laboured to make proselytes wherever they came—

Many of the Galatian churches were induced to embrace their doctrines—

Hence, though Gentiles originally, they put themselves under the yoke of the Jewish law^h—]

Thus they, in fact, “disobeyed and renounced the truth” itself

[They had been taught to expect justification by faith in Christⁱ—

But now they superadded an obedience to the law as a joint ground of hope—

By this they declared that faith in Christ was insufficient for their justification—

^a Gal. ii. 13, 14.

^d Gal. iv. 15.

^g Gal. iii. 4.

^b Gal. iv. 14.

^e Gal. iii. 2.

^h Gal. iv. 8—10.

^c Gal. iv. 15.

^f Gal. v. 7.

ⁱ Gal. ii. 16.

They did not indeed intend by this to reject Christ entirely—

But the apostle tells them repeatedly that God considered their conduct as equivalent to an utter rejection of the gospel^k—

Hence he warns them that they were turned altogether to “another gospel”^l—]

Their defection therefore involved them in the deepest guilt; as will appear more fully, if we consider

II. The particular aggravation with which it was attended

St. Paul himself had preached among them in a most lively and affecting manner

[Wherever he went, his constant subject was Christ crucified^m—

He fully opened to his hearers the nature and ends of Christ’s death—

He always declared the efficacy of it as an atonement for sin—

He earnestly exhorted all to trust in it for their acceptance with God—

He had dwelt so much, and in so affecting a manner, on this subject, that the crucifixion of Christ might be said to have been depicted, or even exhibited before their eyes—]

This was a great aggravation of their guilt in departing from the faith

[Had they heard less of Christ, they had been less culpable—

Had they heard of him in a less affecting manner, they had not been without a plea—

Had they seen no particular effects flowing from the apostle’s preaching, they might have had some excuse—

Had the subserviency of the law to the gospel never been opened to them, their defection from the truth might have been accounted for—

But to renounce the truth, after it had been set forth with such energy, and attended with such effects, was extreme folly and wickedness—

Their conduct was no less than a crucifying of Christ afreshⁿ—]

What animadversion their disobedience merited we may see in

III. The reproof which the apostle gave them on account of it

^k Gal. ii. 21. and y. 2—4

^m 1 Cor. ii. 2.

^l Gal. i. 6.

ⁿ Heb. vi. 6.

St. Paul ascribes their declension to the subtlety of their false teachers

[Sin has an astonishingly fascinating power^o—

Error, whether in faith or practice, soon insinuates itself into our hearts—

Whenever people are drawn from the truth, they are first beguiled by the specious appearances of false principles—

Apostates therefore may be justly considered as deluded creatures—

And if at any time they be recovered, they wonder at themselves how they ever could have been so “bewitched,” so blinded, so befooled—]

Nevertheless he deservedly censures their compliance with them

[He was far from indulging a contemptuous or vindictive spirit—

Yet he judged it his duty to “rebuke them sharply”—

He therefore spoke of their conduct with holy indignation—

He expressed his wonder that they could be so soon turned from the truth^p—

He seems at a loss to represent their folly in terms sufficiently humiliating—

Yet his question evidently imports also a mixture of pity—

He felt deeply in his soul for their spiritual welfare^q—

He therefore expostulated with them in order to reclaim them—]

INFERENCES

1. How great is the evil and danger of self-righteousness!

[The Galatians intended to honour God’s own institutions—

But by laying an undue stress upon them they endangered their own salvation—

How careful then should we be not to trust in any righteousness of our own!—

Let us remember in what light our own righteousness should be viewed^r—

Let us bear in mind our Saviour’s direction^s—

Let us cultivate the disposition of the great apostle^t—]

2. What need have even the most eminent Christians to watch against apostasy!

[The attainments of the Galatians seemed to be very eminent—

^o This seems the exact import of the original.

^p Gal. i. 6.

^q Gal. iv. 19.

^r Isai. lxiv. 6.

^s Luke xvii. 10.

^t Phil. iii. 9.

Yet they were soon seduced from the simplicity of the gospel—

Who then are we, that we should be over-confident?—

Our dearest friends may well regard us as Paul did the Christians at Corinth^u—

Let us attend then to the advice which he gives us^s—

Nor let us despise that salutary admonition of St. Peter^v—]

3. What cause of thankfulness have they who are kept stedfast in the truth!

[They who know their own instability will wonder that they are kept at all—

Surely such will adopt the grateful acknowledgment of David^z—

And these are the persons in whom that declaration shall be verified^a—

We conclude with that suitable doxology^b—]

^u 2 Cor. xi. 3.

^s 1 Cor. x. 12.

^v 2 Pet. iii. 17.

^z Ps. xxvi. 12.

^a 1 Pet. i. 5.

^b Jude 24, 25.

LVI. THE WHOLE AND THE SICK, THE RIGHTEOUS AND SINNERS, DESCRIBED.

Mark ii. 17. *They that are whole, have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

THERE is no action, however benevolent, which cavillers may not censure—

Every part of our Lord's conduct was worthy of his divine character—

Yet was he constantly “enduring the contradiction of sinners,” &c.

He was now conversing familiarly with publicans for their good—

This was condemned by the scribes as unbecoming an holy person, if not also as giving countenance to sin—

Our Lord vindicated himself on principles acknowledged by them—

His words contain

I. A generally established maxim

Persons desire not a physician unless they be sick—

This is true according to its *literal* import

[A person in health wishes not for any medical assistance—
He would refuse it if it were tendered to him—
He would not submit to any regimen that should be prescribed—

But they who are diseased are glad to hear of a skilful physician—

They will cheerfully put themselves under his direction—
And they will follow his prescriptions, that they may obtain a cure—]

It is more particularly so in a *figurative* sense

[There is an analogy between sickness and sin—
This is a disorder of the soul as *that* is of the body—
A person unconscious of his sinfulness desires not a saviour—
Nor will he comply with the self-denying directions given him—

But one who feels his lost state longs earnestly for a cure—
He delights to hear of Christ, and to make application to him—

Nor does he esteem any injunction too severe^a—]

This being acknowledged, our Lord proceeds to make

II. An application of it to his own conduct

The physician's office leads him to converse with the sick—

Our Lord's work required him to maintain an intercourse with sinners—

There are many who conceive themselves to be "righteous"

[None are absolutely and perfectly righteous^b—

But many suppose that their sins are neither great nor numerous—

Such were the Scribes and Pharisees whom our Lord addressed^c—

And there are many of this description in every age^d—]

Such persons were not so much the objects of our Lord's attention

[He "willed indeed that all should come to repentance"^e—

But he knew that they would not receive his offers—

They saw no need of the salvation which he came to accomplish—

Their pride and prejudice unfitted them for receiving it—

^a 1 John v. 3.

None by *practice*, Rom. iii. 10, 12, 23.

^d Prov. xxx. 12.

^b None by *nature*, Job xiv. 4. and xv. 14.

^c Luke xviii. 9, 11.

^e 2 Pet. iii. 9.

He therefore bestowed less labour in calling *them* to repentance—]

But there are many of more ingenuous disposition

[They are not really more heinous “sinners” than others—
But they are made sensible of their guilt and danger—
Such was the publican at whose house our Lord was—
And such are to be found in every place—]

To call these to repentance was the great object of Christ’s ministry

[These were prepared, like thirsty ground for the rain—
To them he was a welcome messenger—
They rejoiced to hear that repentance could profit them—
And our Lord delighted to encourage their hopes^f—]

Thus did his conduct accord with the dictates of reason, and with the great ends of his mission

INFER

1. The danger of self-righteousness

[Men feel of themselves the danger of gross sin—
But they cannot be persuaded that they will suffer any thing by self-righteousness—

But a person who, under dying circumstances, denies his need of help, as effectually destroys himself, as if he drank poison or plunged a dagger to his heart—

Deny not then your need of the heavenly Physician—
Nor think to heal yourselves by any self-righteous methods—
You must resemble the publican, if ever you would enjoy his lot^g—]

2. The folly of unbelief

[We are apt to make the depth of our misery a reason for despondency—

But the doubting of the Physician’s power will be as destructive to the soul, as the denying of our need of him—

O behold the remedy! are you sick?^h—sinners?ⁱ—lost?^k
Christ suits his promises to your state—

He addresses himself to each,^l nor shall any suppliant be disappointed^m—]

^f Luke iv. 18, 19.

ⁱ 1 Tim. i. 15.

^m John vi. 37.

^g Luke xviii. 13, 14.

^k Luke xix. 10.

^h Jer. viii. 22.

^l John v. 6.

LVII. THE REST THAT REMAINS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

Heb. iv. 9. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

THE servants of God possess many distinguished privileges—

Their state in this world is far happier than that of the ungodly—

But there is an infinitely richer portion reserved for them hereafter—

To this David had respect in that awful denunciation^a—

Whence it appears, that though prefigured by other rests, it remains yet to be enjoyed^b—

I. Who are the people of God

This title cannot belong to all indiscriminately

[The greater part of the world are idolatrous heathens—
The generality of those who are called Christians are ignorant of God—

Impiety and profaneness abound in every place—

This indisputably proves the apostle's assertion^c—

The sinful works of men plainly shew whose people they are^d—

Nor do all who “ profess godliness ” really belong to God^e—

There are many who deceive both themselves and others^f—]

Those who alone have a right to it are described by God himself^g—

They “ worship God in the Spirit ”

[It is the characteristic of God's enemies that they neglect prayer^h—

Nor will formal services prove us to be God's peopleⁱ—

^a Ps. xcvi. 11. ^b The apostle's argument seems to be this: God instituted a day of rest in commemoration of his having ceased from his works of creation. And many centuries afterwards he promised a rest to his people in the land of Canaan. But that rest was only typical of a more glorious sabbath, of which David spake a long time after the other had been enjoyed. From hence the apostle concludes that there must yet be a rest, or *Σαββατισμὸς* (for he changes the word which he had before used, in order more strongly to intimate the analogy between the different rests there spoken of,) remaining for the people of God.

^d 1 John iii. 8. John viii. 44.

^f Rev. iii. 1. Jam. i. 26.

^h Ps. liii. 4.

^c Rom. ix. 6.

^e Rom. ii. 28, 29. Tit. i. 16.

^g Phil. iii. 3.

ⁱ Matt. xv. 8, 9.

No worship is acceptable to him but that which is spiritual^k—

His faithful servants are importunate at the throne of grace^l—]

They “rejoice in Christ Jesus”

[They do not merely acknowledge him to be the Messiah—

They make daily application to him as the only ground of their hopes—

Their hearts are lifted up with devout affection towards him—

They delight in him as their all-sufficient Redeemer^m—]

They “have no confidence in the flesh”

[They are deeply convinced that “in them dwelleth no good thing”—

They see the folly of trusting to their own strength or wisdomⁿ—

They acquiesce fully in Solomon's direction^o—

They look for every thing in Christ alone^p—]

To these belong many glorious privileges

II. What is the rest which remaineth for them

They have already in some respect entered into rest^q

[They are freed from the terrors of a guilty conscience^r—

They feel a delight in ordinances and sabbaths—

Their minds are fully satisfied with the gospel salvation—

They experience the truth of our Lord's promise^s—]

But the rest which awaits them is far superior to that they now possess

They will enjoy a freedom from all labours and sorrows

[They are constrained to labour as long as they are in the world—

Their whole life resembles a race or warfare—

They can obtain nothing without strenuous exertions^t—

And of necessity they are encompassed with many sorrows^u—

But in heaven they will cease from their labours^x—

Nor will their happiness have any intermission or alloy^y—]

They will be exempt from all influence of sin or temptation

^k John iv. 23, 24.

ⁿ Prov. iii. 5.

^q Heb. iv. 3.

^r Matt. xi. 12.

Rev. xxi. 4.

^l Eph. vi. 18.

^o Prov. xxviii. 26.

^p Heb. x. 22.

^m Acts xiv. 22.

^m 1 Pet. i. 8.

^p 1 Cor. i. 30.

^s Matt. xi. 28.

^x Rev. xiv. 13.

[Sin now defiles their very best services—

Satan is also unwearied in his endeavours to corrupt them^z—

These are sources of much pain to them at present—

But the souls of all in heaven are made perfect^a—

Nor can any unclean thing enter to defile them^b

Their triumph will be complete and everlasting^c—]

They will dwell in the immediate presence of their God

[Their capacity of enjoying God will be wonderfully enlarged—

They will behold him not darkly, as now, but face to face^d—

The Saviour's glory will be the object of their devoutest admiration^e—

Their delight in him will surpass their present conceptions^f—

They shall know that their happiness will be eternal^g—

Then will every desire of their heart be fully satisfied^h—]

INFER

1. How desirable is it to be numbered among God's people!

[The rest described is the portion of them alone—

God himself declares that the wicked have no part in itⁱ—

Their portion will be very different^k—

And its duration also will be endless^l—

Who then would not wish to be numbered with the saints?—

Who does not desire to participate their inheritance?—

But we must first be conformed to their character—

We must renounce self-confidence, and believe in Christ—

It was unbelief which excluded the Israelites from Canaan^m—

Let us fear lest the same evil principle rob us of the heavenly restⁿ—]

2. With what delight may God's people look forward to death!

[The hour of death is often an object of terror to the godly—

But it should be welcomed as a season of joy—

Does not the husbandman rejoice in his wages, the mariner in his haven, the soldier in the spoils of victory?—

Much more should the Christian rejoice in the approach of his rest—

^z 2 Cor. xi. 3.

^c Isai. lx. 20.

^f Ps. xvi. 11.

ⁱ Isai. lvii. 21.

^m Heb. iii. 18, 19.

^a Heb. xii. 23.

^d 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^g Rev. xxii. 3—5.

^k Ps. xi. 6.

^b Rev. xxi. 27.

^e John xvii. 24.

^h Ps. xvii. 15.

^l Rev. xiv. 11.

ⁿ Heb. iv. 1, 11.

Let us then long after it, like the holy apostle^a—
 And let us labour to attain it in full confidence of success^b—]

^a 2 Cor v. 2.

^b 2^d Cor. v. 6, 8, 9.

LVIII. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN STRENGTHENING MEN FOR SUFFERING OR DUTY.

[Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

AN hope of eternal happiness is as an anchor to the troubled soul—

It enables a person to bear up under the heaviest afflictions—

But the mind of a believer would soon faint, if it were not strengthened from above—

God therefore communicates his Spirit to his people under their trials—

By his Spirit he enables them to go forward in the way of duty—

St. Paul has been speaking of sufferings as the Christian's portion here^a—

He has mentioned "hope" as a principal support to the soul under them^b—

He now specifies the Holy Spirit's agency as another mean of confirming and establishing the soul—

This agency of the Spirit we may consider

I. In seasons of suffering

Men are, in themselves, too weak to sustain many or severe trials

[There is much impatience in the heart of every man—

It too often discovers itself even in those who are, on the whole, pious—

Sometimes it is called forth by small and trifling occasions—

How passionately did Jonah resent the loss of his gourd!^c—

^a Ver. 17, 18.

^b Ver. 24.

^c Jonah iv. 8, 9.

How bitterly would the disciples have revenged an act of unkindness!^d—

There is no trial so small but it would overcome us, if we were left to ourselves—

And they who have endured heavy trials, often faint under small ones—]

But God sends his Spirit to help the infirmities of his people

[We cannot exactly discriminate between the Spirit's agency and theirs—

Indeed the Spirit acts in and by their endeavours^e—

He leads them to see the source and tendency of their trials—

He strengthens the natural vigour of their minds—

He suggests to them many consolatory thoughts—

Thus he fulfils to them his gracious declarations^f—]

These operations of the Spirit are yet more manifest

II. In seasons of prayer

God's people “know not even what to pray for”

[A great variety of passions may agitate their minds—

When this is the case, their petitions may be unbecoming and sinful—

Even a sense of guilt will often stop the mouth before God^g—

Sometimes also trouble itself will utterly overwhelm the soul, and incapacitate it for prayer^h—

Our Lord himself seems to have experienced such a perturbation of mindⁱ—

Nor are there any praying persons who have not often found themselves straitened in the exercise of prayer—]

It yet oftener happens that they know not how to pray “as they ought”

[We may easily utter good and suitable words before God—

But it is by no means easy to pray with fervent importunity—

An insurmountable languor or obduracy will sometimes come upon the soul—

Nor though we were ever so fervent can we always exercise faith—

^d Luke ix. 54. ^e This is implied in the term *συναντιλαμβάνεται* —“Metaphora ab oneribus sumpta, quæ, utrinque admotis manibus, sublevantur.” Beza in Luc. x. 40. Feeble therefore as our strength is, we must exert it: and if we cheerfully put our hands to the work, the Holy Spirit will always afford us effectual succour.

^f Ps. cxlvii. 3.

^g Compare Ps. xxxii. 3. & 5.

^h Ps. lxxvii. 4.

ⁱ John xii. 27.

Many have felt the same workings of mind with David^k—
At such seasons they cannot pray as they ought—]

But the Holy Spirit will “make intercession for them”

[Christ is properly our advocate and intercessor^l—

But the Spirit also may be said to “intercede for us”—

The Spirit intercedes *in* us at the *throne of grace*, while
Christ intercedes *for* us at the *throne of glory*—

He sometimes enables us to pour out our hearts with
fluency—

This he does by discovering to us our wants, quickening
our affections, and testifying to us God’s willingness to answer
prayer—

He does not, however, always operate in this way—]

He will make intercession “with unutterable groans”

[The joy of Christians is represented as being sometimes
inexpressible^m—

But frequently a sense of sin overwhelms them—

Then sighs and groans are the natural language of their
hearts—

Nor are such inarticulate prayers unacceptable to God—

We have a remarkable instance of their success in the
history of our Lordⁿ—

Perhaps no prayers are more pleasing to God than these^o—]

INFER

1. How many are there who live all their days without
prayer!

[Those in whom the Spirit intercedes are often made to
feel their inability to pray aright—

Under a sense of their infirmities they are constrained to
cry to God for the help of his Spirit—

But many pass all their days without any painful sense of their
weakness—

They satisfy themselves with a formal performance of their
duties—

Such persons never pray in an acceptable manner^p—

Real prayer implies fervour and importunity^q—

And it is in vain to think that we have the spirit of grace,
if we have not also the spirit of supplication^r—

May WE therefore never be of those who fulfil that
prophecy!^s—]

2. What comfort may this passage afford to praying
people!

^k Ps. lxxvii. 7—10.

^l 1 John ii. 1.

^m 1 Pet. i. 8.

ⁿ John xi. 33, 38, 41.

^o Ps. li. 17.

^p John iv. 23.

^q Isai. lxiv. 7.

^r Zech. xii. 10.

^s Matt. xv. 7, 8.

[Many are discouraged by the difficulties which they experience in the duty of prayer—

If they feel not an enlargement of heart, they doubt whether their prayer will be accepted—

But God will notice the groaning of his people^t—

Such inward desires may often be more pleasing to him than the most fluent petitions—

They are, in fact, the voice of God's Spirit within us—

Let not any then be dejected on account of occasional deadness—

Let every one rather follow the advice of the prophet^u—

God, in due time, will assuredly fulfil his promise^x—]

^t Ps. xxxviii. 9.

^u Hab. ii. 3.

^x Ps. lxxxii. 10.

LIX. THE OBJECTS OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION.

John xvii. 9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*

THE apostles were but weak in knowledge or in grace till the day of Pentecost—

Nevertheless, they were greatly beloved by their Lord and master—

He declared in their hearing (ver. 6—8.) that they were true believers—

He testified also that they were the peculiar objects for whom he prayed—

I. For whom our Lord interceded

The disciples of Christ are characterized as persons "given" him by the Father

[This is a just description of every child of God—

None would ever give themselves to Christ, if they were not previously given to him by the Father; or come to Christ, if they were not drawn to him by the Father^a—

As every grace we possess must be traced to the operations of the Spirit, as its immediate cause,^b so must it be traced to the electing love of God, as its primary and original source'—

^a John vi. 44.

^b 1 Cor. iv. 7. Gal. v. 22.

^c Eph. i. 4, 5.

And it is of great importance, both for our humiliation and for God's glory, that this matter should be clearly known and understood^d—]

It was for these more especially that Jesus interceded

[We apprehend that the apparent exclusion of the world from his intercessions is not to be understood strictly and positively, but only in a comparative sense^e—

But certainly the saints were the objects whom, both in this and all other intercessions, he had principally in view—

The high-priest, in bearing the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast-plate whenever he went within the veil, was a type of Christ in this particular^f—

Christ would not be a high-priest, if he omitted this part of his office; since intercession was no less necessary to that office than oblation—

But he does intercede for his people, and lives in heaven, as it were, for that very purpose^g—

Yes; He that formed the universe, and upholds it by his power, and whose petitions are commands, says, "I pray for them"^h—

And the petitions he then offered for his living disciples had respect to all his believing people, even to the end of the world^h—]

This distinguishing favour, however, was not conferred without reason

II. Why he interceded for them in particular

The reasons of the divine procedure are in many cases inscrutable

But our Lord condescended to state some on this occasion

1. Believers are the Father's property, "They are thine"

[All things belong to God as his creatures—

But believers are his in a far higher sense—

He has made them his by adoption—

He has confirmed his interest in them by regeneration—

He esteems them as his peculiar treasure,ⁱ in comparison of whom the whole universe is as nothing in his eyes—

^d This description of God's people is repeated *five times* in seven verses. See ver. 6, 9, 11, 12. Was there no design in this? and is there nothing to be gathered from it?

^e In this respect it resembles Hos. vi. 6.: for our Lord did pray for the ungodly world, Luke xxiii. 34. and had their good in view even in this very prayer: ver 21. ^f Exod. xxviii. 9—12, 29, 30.

^g Heb. ix. 24. & vii. 25.

^h Ver. 20.

ⁱ Ps. cxxxv. 4.

Hence our Lord interested himself more particularly on their behalf—

His zeal for his Father's glory would not suffer him to be for one moment unmindful of their interests—]

2. Christ himself has an equal propriety in them, "All mine," &c.

[They belong to Christ both by the Father's donation, by his own purchase, and by the closest possible union^k— — —

Will he then be regardless of this precious gift, and lose the purchase of his blood, and suffer his own members to perish, for want of his continual intercession?—

Surely his interest in them is a very sufficient reason for his unwearied solicitude respecting them—]

3. Christ is glorified in them

[The ungodly world bring no glory to Christ—

But it is the labour and delight of his people to glorify him—

He is glorified now in their faith, love, worship, and obedience—

He will be glorified and admired *in* them at his second coming^l—

He will be glorified *by* them to all eternity—

While therefore he has any concern for his own glory, he cannot but be studious of their welfare—]

INFER

1. How honourable a character is the true Christian!

[The Christian is eminently distinguished from all the rest of the world—

He is highly esteemed both by the Father and by Christ, who claim him as their property, "He is mine;" "he is mine"—

He is interested in all which Christ has done or is now doing—

How infinitely does this honour exceed that which cometh of man!—

Let every one be ambitious to attain it—

Nor let any earthly attainments whatever satisfy our desires—]

2. How secure and blessed is his state!

[There may be some who shall never be benefited by the Saviour's intercession—

But Christ's people are continually remembered by him before the throne—

^k They are one body with him, Eph. v. 30. and one Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

^l 2 Thess. i. 10.

They therefore are sure to have every want supplied—
Nor can any defeat the purposes of their blessed Lord—
Let therefore every Christian rejoice and glory in the
Lord—

Let the thought of Christ's intercession dissipate all fears of
condemnation^m—

Let Christ be viewed as an advocate under every fresh-con-
tracted guiltⁿ—

Let every one seek to glorify him, and to be glorified with
him—]

^m Rom. viii. 34.

ⁿ 1 John ii. 1.

LX. THE GOSPEL FREES MEN FROM SIN AND DEATH.

Rom. viii. 2. *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath
made me free from the law of sin and death.*

THE world in general account it liberty to give loose
to their passions—

But such freedom is indeed the sorest bondage to sin
and Satan^a—

None possess true liberty but those who are freed by
Christ^b—

The state of the demoniacs when healed by Christ re-
sembled theirs^c—

Paul was made a glorious example of it to all ages—

He was once under condemnation, both because he ad-
hered to the covenant of works, and was governed by
his own impetuous will—

He now rejoiced in a freedom from the sin that he had
indulged, and from the curse to which he had subjected
himself—“The law of,” &c.

We shall first *explain*, and then *improve* the text

I. Explain it

It is not needful to state the various interpretations
given of the text—

We shall adopt that which seems most easy, and agree-
able to the context—

^a Rom. vi. 16.

^b John viii. 36.

^c Luke viii. 35.

We will begin with *explaining the terms*

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is the gospel covenant, as confirmed to us in Christ, and revealed to us by the Spirit

[The “Spirit of life” is the Holy Ghost, who is the author and preserver of spiritual life^d—

The “law” of the Spirit is the gospel as revealed and applied by him—

It is called a law because it has all the essential properties of a law^e—

It is often spoken of as a law both by prophets and apostles^f—

It is said to be the law of the Spirit “in Christ Jesus,” because the blessings of the gospel are treasured up in Christ, confirmed to us through Christ, and received by us from Christ^g—]

“The law of sin and death” may be understood either of the covenant of works or of our indwelling corruption

[The covenant of works is a “law” to which all are by nature subject—

It is called the “law of sin and death,” because both sin and death come by that law^h—

Our indwelling corruption also operates as “a law” within usⁱ—

It invariably hurries us on to “sin and death”^k—]

We shall next *explain the proposition contained in the terms*

The proposition is, that “the gospel frees us from the curse of the law, and from the dominion of sin”

[When we embrace the gospel we cease to be under the covenant of works^l—

We then partake of all the blessings which Christ has purchased for us—

We are liberated from the condemnation due to sin^m—

^d John iii. 5. Eph. iii. 16. ^e A law is a precept enforced with sanctions: and such is the gospel: it is a precept, 1 John iii. 23; and it is enforced with the most encouraging and awful sanctions, Mark xvi. 16. ^f Isai. ii. 3. Rom. iii. 27.

^g Col. i. 19. 2 Cor. i. 20. John i. 16.

^h Without that law there had been no transgression, and consequently, no sin (which is the transgression of a law); nor death (which is the penalty inflicted for transgression)—Compare 1 John iii. 4. Rom. v. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 56. Hence it is called “the ministration of death and of condemnation.” 2 Cor. iii. 7. 9.

ⁱ Rom. vii. 23.

^k Rom. vii. 5.

^l Rom. vi. latter part.

^m Rom. viii. 1.

We are freed, through the aid of the Spirit, from the power of sinⁿ—]

This proposition is to be understood as extending to all believers

[It is not true with respect to the apostles only—

It was exemplified in all the first converts^o—

And is experienced still by every sincere Christian—]

The text thus explained is capable of most useful improvement

II. Improve it

It is replete with very important *instruction*

It shews us the wretched state of every unregenerate man

[We are all in bondage to “the law of sin and death”—

We are justly subjected to the curses of the broken law^p—

We are also led captive by our own corrupt appetites—

Even St. Paul himself was in this very state^q—

Let us then humble ourselves under a conviction of this truth—]

It declares to us the only method of deliverance from that state

[It was the gospel which freed the apostle—

The same will avail for every other person—

We must however “obey the gospel,” and receive it as our “law of faith”—

We must look for its blessings from Christ through the Spirit—

In this way we may all adopt the language of the text in reference to our own happy experience—]

It affords also abundant matter of *reproof*

It reproves those who despond as though there were no hope for them

[Many think their guilt too great to be pardoned, and their lusts too strong to be subdued—

But Paul’s case was intended to prevent such desponding fears^r—

Let none therefore any more complain like those of old^s—

Every one may find encouragement in the power and mercy of God^t—]

ⁿ Rom. viii. 13. and vi. 14. former part.

^o One hour they were full of guilt and wickedness; the next they were rejoicing in the pardon of their sins, and in the practice of all holy duties. Acts ii. 46, 47. ^p Gal. iii. 10.

^q Rom. vii. 9. ^r 1 Tim. i. 16. “ἐν ἐμοὶ πρῶτον, in me the chief.”

^s Ezek. xxxvii. 11.

^t Isai. lix. 1.

It reproveth also those who speak against an assurance of faith

[It would indeed be presumptuous in some to profess an assurance of faith—

But God is desirous that all his people should enjoy it^u—

Let not any one therefore reprobate it as presumption—

Let every one rather seek the assurance expressed in the text—]

It may administer *comfort* also to many sincere Christians

[Many are yet fighting against their manifold corruptions—

And because they obtain not a perfect deliverance, they tremble under apprehensions of the divine wrath—

But Paul himself bewailed bitterly his indwelling corruption^x—

Yet that did not prevent him from rejoicing in the partial freedom he experienced—

Let upright souls take comfort from this reflection—]

^u 1 John v. 13.

^x Rom. vii. 24.

LXI. SOULS QUICKENED BY THE GOSPEL.

Ezek. xxxvii. 11—13. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.

THE writings both of the Old and New Testament abound with allegories—

But the interpretation of them is generally given by the writers themselves—

Many of our Lord's discourses were of this nature—

They are admirably calculated to convey instruction—

We have a very remarkable allegory in this chapter—

The prophet sees in a vision a valley of dry bones—

He is interrogated with respect to the possibility of their living—

He is commanded to bid them live in the name of the Lord—

On issuing the proclamation he perceived a noise among the bones—

The bones shook, and came, each to its kindred bone—

The sinews, flesh, and skin, then came upon them—

Lastly, in answer to his prayer, life was communicated to them—

This allegory is then interpreted by God himself—

It describes the state of the Jews in Babylon, and their unexpected deliverance from it—

But it may be properly considered as relating to the deliverance of God's people from the sorer bondage of sin—

We shall take occasion from the text to consider

I. The state of unregenerate men

The Jews in Babylon were as unlikely to return to a state of political existence, as dry bones are to the functions of animal life—

They themselves utterly despaired of such an event, ver. 11.—

Their condition fitly represents that of the unregenerate—

The unregenerate are dead even as dry bones

[In this light they are represented by the apostle^a—

They are destitute of all inclination or ability to serve God^b—

They have not a sufficiency even for the smallest good^c—]

They not unfrequently despair of ever obtaining deliverance

[Despondency is far more common than is generally supposed—

Many imagine, like Job, that they are given over by God^d—

Hence they express themselves like the desponding Jews^e—]

They are not, however, beyond the reach of mercy—

This will appear by considering

II. The means by which God delivers them from it

God can work by the weakest and most contemptible means

^a Eph. ii. 1.

^b Phil. ii. 13.

^c 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^d Compare Lam. iii. 18. and Job xix. 10.

^e Jer. ii. 25.

[By the sound of rams' horns he overthrew Jericho—
By the stroke of Elijah's mantle he parted the waters of
Jordan—

So, by the preaching of his gospel he quickens the dead—]

He commands his power and grace to be proclaimed

[He is an almighty, all-sufficient God—

He promises pardon to all who seek it in his appointed
way—

He offers his Spirit to renew all who call upon him—

He assures the believing soul that it shall never perish^f—

Thus he encourages the weakest and the vilest to look unto
him^g—]

In this way he accomplishes the deliverance of his peo-
ple

[A gradual change is made in the most obdurate sinners—

There is "a great army" of whom it may be said as of the
prodigal^h—

They go forth immediately to "the promised land"—]

Nor does any one remain ignorant of his benefactor—

This leads us to consider

III. The effects which this deliverance produces

While dead in sin we imagine we must quicken our-
selves

[We know not the depth of misery into which we are
fallen—

We little think how great a change must take place upon
us—

Nor are we aware how entirely destitute we are of
strength—]

But when once we are quickened, we see whence our
deliverance came

[We feel by experience the truth of Jeremiah's asser-
tionⁱ—

We see that the apostles themselves were only God's instru-
ments^k—

Then we know God to be the Lord, the source of every
good—

We learn also to commit all our ways to him—]

INFER

1. How valuable are the ordinances of religion!

^f Isai. xli. 10.

ⁱ Jer. xiii. 23.

^g Isai. xlv. 22.

^h Luke xv. 24.

^k 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

[God makes use of his ordinances for the most glorious purposes—

He works principally in and by them^l—

They who neglect them are generally left in darkness—

But sincere worshippers reap the greatest benefit from them—

Let us never then grow weary of attending them—

Let us use them with a dependence on God for his blessing—]

2. What care has God taken to encourage desponding sinner !—

[No state can be worse than this represented in the text^m—

Yet God has shewed how he could overrule the heart of Cyrus to proclaim liberty, and of his own people to accept it—

He displayed also his mighty power in re-establishing his people—

What then can he not do for those who are dead in sin?—

Let none say “ My hope is lost, I am cut off ”—

Let it be remembered that the power and grace of Christ are sufficientⁿ—

Let every one hear in faith the apostle’s exhortation^o—]

^l Rom. x. 17.

ⁿ John xi. 25.

^m Ver. 2. “ very dry.”

^o Eph. v. 14.

LXII. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING IN FAVOUR WITH GOD.

(Job xxxiv. 29. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?*)

GOD orders and appoints all things throughout the universe—

Nations are not so mighty as not to need his superintending care—

Nor are any individuals so insignificant as to be disregarded by him—

The words immediately following the text shew that the text itself is equally applicable to nations or to individuals—

The history of the Jews is a striking comment on them in the former view—

The experience of every man attests the truth of them in the latter view—

Waving the less profitable consideration of the text, we observe,

I. None can trouble those whom God comforts

God is pleased to bestow peculiar quietness on his own people

[He sprinkles their souls with the blood of his dear Son^a—

Hence they enjoy peace with God, and in their own consciences^b—

By his Holy Spirit also he sheds abroad his love in their hearts^c—

Hence they maintain a filial confidence towards him^d—

Moreover he convinces them of his own continual care over them^e—

Hence their minds are established in the most trying circumstances^f—]

This quietness is widely different from the false peace enjoyed by the world

[There is a kind of peace possessed even by the ungodly^g—

But it flows only from inconsiderateness or delusion—

It vanishes as soon as light breaks in upon the soul—

Hence the wicked cannot be said to enjoy true and solid peace^h—

But the peace of God's people consists in a resignation to his will, affiance in his promises, assurance of his love, and an expectation of his glory—

Hence the apostle speaks of it in the most exalted termsⁱ—]

When God vouchsafes it to their souls, none can trouble them

[The question is much stronger than the strongest affirmation—

It is a triumphant challenge to the whole universe^k—

They who enjoy God's presence may disregard the pressures of poverty^l—

^a Heb. x. 22.

^b Rom. v. 1.

^c Rom. v. 5.

^d Rom. viii. 15, 16.

^e Rom. viii. 28.

^f Job v. 19—24.

^g Luke xi. 21.

^h Isai. lvii. 21.

ⁱ Phil. iv. 7.

^k It is not said here that none will *endeavour* to trouble the believer; for it is certain that both the world and Satan will exert all their influence for this end; 2 Tim. iii. 12. 1 Pet. v. 8. Nor is it said that God's children shall never *have cause* for trouble, for they are liable to pain, sickness, &c. as much as others; but it is affirmed, that none shall greatly or materially trouble them; and this assertion is verified by daily experience.

^l Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Nor will they be discouraged by the persecutions of man, or the temptations of Satan^m—

Every child of God therefore may adopt the apostle's wordsⁿ—

He may assume the triumphant language of Messiah himself^o—]

On the other hand, God's determinations are irresistible also with respect to his enemies; so that

II. None can comfort those whom he troubles

Though God does not leave it in the power of creatures to trouble his people, he does not see fit altogether to exempt them from trouble—

He sometimes, for wise and gracious reasons, hides his face from them—

[David had frequent occasion to lament the loss of God's presence^p—

It was a subject of complaint with the church of old^q—

Even our Lord himself cried out by reason of dereliction^r—

There is therefore an awful propriety in the prophet's address to God^s—]

Nor can any comfort them at such seasons^t

[Job speaks of himself as quite disconsolate under the hidings of God's face^u—

David also describes the anguish of his heart on a similar occasion^v—

And universal experience confirms the truth of Job's assertion^w—]

The wicked, however, are more awfully exposed to these tokens of God's displeasure

[They are *now* indeed, for the most part, insensible of God's absence from them—

But at the hour of death they will feel the whole weight of his indignation^x—

^m 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 31.

^o Isai. l. 7—9.

^p Ps. xxx. 7. and xiii. 1.

^q Isai. xlix. 14.

^r Matt. xxvii. 46.

^s Isai. xlv. 15.

^t The last clause of the text admits of two different interpretations: it may import, either that none can behold God with comfort, when he hides his face from them, or, that if God hide his face from any one, men will no longer look upon him, or at least that they cannot so look upon him as to impart comfort to him. The sense we adopt includes both. God will not, and men cannot, comfort those from whom God hides his face.

^u Job iii. 23, 24.

^x Ps. cii. 1—11.

^y Job xii. 14.

^z Rom. ii. 8, 9.

God will then assuredly hide his face from them, and bid them to depart from him^a—]

And who will comfort them, when they are in such a tremendous state?

[Sinners even *here* are often made utterly inconsolable^b—

But, in the *eternal world*, GOD will afford them no comfort—

The *angels* will certainly administer none^c—

Nor can their *fellow-creatures* help them in the least^d—

They cannot derive any comfort from *reflections on the past*—

Nor can they find consolation in their *prospects of the future*—

Thus can they find no comfort *from without*, or *from within*—]

APPLICATION

1. To those who are seeking rest and quietness in the world

[How poor a portion is the world in comparison of God!—

And how absurd would it appear if any one should affirm of the world what is here affirmed respecting God!^e—

Let every one then acquiesce in the decision of Solomon^f—

And let Christ be regarded as the true and only source of rest^g—]

2. To those who now enjoy quietness in God

[Peace, however firmly established at present, may soon be lost—

^a Deut. xxxii. 20. Matt. xxv. 41.

^b This is awfully exemplified in Judas, Matt. xxvii. 3—5.

^c The angels will rather

be the executioners of God's vengeance, Matt. xiii. 41.

^d Their wicked companions will only increase their misery, as may be inferred from the solicitude which the rich man manifested respecting the probable condemnation of his five brethren, Luke xvi. 27, 28.; and the righteous will not afford them so much as a drop of water to cool their tongue, Luke xvi. 24, 25.

^e Should any one ask, "If the world comfort me, who can trouble me?" we answer without fear of contradiction; "Conscience, if awakened by God, may trouble thee; pain and sickness may disquiet thee; the prospect of death may appal thee; and, above all, the wrath of God *shall* trouble thee for ever, if thou continue to seek thy happiness in the world." If, on the contrary, any one say, "When the world troubles me, who can comfort me?" we may refer him to that unalterable declaration of the prophet, Isai. xxvi. 3.

^f Eccl. i. 14.

^g Matt. xi. 28.

It can be maintained only in a way of holiness^h—

Sin indulged will cause God to hide his face from us—

This is the true source of the inquietudes which many feel—

Let all therefore mortify secret and besetting sins—

In this way they shall attain happiness in life, in death, and for ever^h—]

^h Isai. xxxii. 17.

ⁱ Isai. lix. 2.

^k Ps. cxix. 165. and 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

LXIII. THE FOLLY OF A FRUITLESS PROFESSION.

Luke vi. 46. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

THE honour of Christ and the salvation of our souls depend on our having right views of the gospel—

We cannot therefore too earnestly insist on the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ—

Nevertheless we should constantly urge the practice of good works as the fruits and evidences of our faith in Christ—

The folly of expecting salvation while we neglect them is strongly represented by our Lord in the text—

I. Shew who they are that deserve the censure in the text—

The heathens have less to aggravate their sins than Christians—

The greater part of those who live in countries that are evangelized are obnoxious to this censure—

1. Mere nominal Christians deserve it

[Many are Christ's, as having been devoted to him in baptism—

By the appellation of Christians they profess to be his followers—

But they are in no respect subject to his will and word—

Christ commands them to “seek first the kingdom of God,” &c. and they seek it last—]

2. Formal, self-righteous persons deserve it

[Many will go far in the outward duties of religion—

They will profess too a veneration for the name of Christ—

But he calls them to regeneration,^a and they deny their need of it—

He bids them live by faith on him, and it proves an hard saying^b—

They are satisfied with the form of godliness, without the power—]

3. False professors deserve it

[None are so worthy of reproof as they—

They will talk much of their dependence on Christ—

They will profess perhaps to have experienced much of his power and grace—

They may even glory in the recollection of his truth and faithfulness—

But in the midst of all, they can be proud, covetous, passionate, censorious, unforgiving, deceitful, and dishonest—

To such the text may be applied with peculiar energy—]

Such persons ought to be addressed, with all plainness of speech

II. Expostulate with them on the folly of their conduct

The service of God is justly called a “reasonable service”—

But a fruitless profession is most unreasonable—

No reason can be assigned “why” persons should rest in such a state

1. Is not a conformity to Christ’s precepts practicable?

[Many allege that such strictness as he requires is unattainable—

We allow that absolute perfection is not to be expected in this world—

But an unreserved devotedness of ourselves to God is attainable—

Thousands of the saints of old have walked thus with God—

There is a cloud of living witnesses who exemplify this conduct—

God has promised grace to all who seek it diligently—]

2. Is not obedience to him necessary?

[We may be good citizens if we possess only the virtues of heathens—

Put an unfeigned regard to Christ is necessary to constitute us Christians—

St. Paul has fully declared the inefficacy of outward religion^c—

^a John iii. 5.

^b John vi. 55. 60.

^c Rom. ii. 28, 29.

Judas and the foolish virgins awfully exemplified it^d—
Our Lord has warned us all respecting it^e—]

3. Will not a feigned allegiance be discovered by him?

[We may easily deceive our fellow-creatures—

But every motion of our hearts is visible to Christ^f—

Nor can the most specious appearances deceive him^g—

In his final judgment he will shew that he was privy to our most secret thoughts and desires^h—]

4. Shall we not wish at last that we had been sincere and upright?

[The reproach which attends the exercise of real religion, may make us satisfied with the form of it at present—

But in the day of judgment we shall see our follyⁱ—

We shall not know what to reply to this question then—

The vain excuses we now make we shall not even dare to offer—]

APPLICATION

[Let all then seek to become Christians indeed—

Let us not be afraid to confess our Lord before men—

But let our lives be consistent with our professions—

Let us trust in the Lord as simply as if obedience were *not* required—

Let us obey the Lord as zealously as if obedience *only* were required—]

^d Matt. xxv. 3, 11, 12.

^f Heb. iv. 13.

^h 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^e Matt. vii. 21—23.

^g John ii. 24, 25.

ⁱ Wisd. v. 1—9.

LXIV. AN EXHORTATION TO CARELESS SINNERS.

Eph. v. 14. *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

THERE is a harmony in the Scriptures which many overlook and destroy—

Detached passages are often wrested to establish a favourite system^a—

But the various truths of God should be viewed as they stand connected with each other—

^a Calls to duty are supposed to imply the sufficiency of man to do the will of God; while the confessions or petitions of the saints, and the promises of divine aid given to them, are brought to justify a negligence in the use of means.

There would then be diversity indeed, but no contrariety between them^b—

This observation will throw light, as on many other parts of Scripture, so on that before us in particular; in which we have

I. A command

The Scripture abounds with useful and instructive metaphors—

Our state is here represented under the images of sleep and death—

Sleep implies a state of *inactivity* and *security*

[Men are busily employed about their worldly concerns—

But a lamentable supineness prevails with respect to spiritual things—

The generality do not apprehend their souls to be in any danger—

Death, judgment, heaven, and hell, do not seem worthy their notice—

God's threatenings against them are denounced without effect—

They are like Jonah, sleeping in the midst of a storm—

Hence they are described as “at ease from their youth”^c—

To the same effect is the testimony of him that searcheth the heart^d—]

Death includes the ideas of *impotence* and *corruption*

[An inanimate body cannot perform any of the functions of life—

It has within itself the seeds and principles of corruption—

The soul also, till quickened from the dead, is in a state of impotence—

It is incapable of spiritual action or discernment^e—

Its powers and faculties are altogether vitiated^f—

Whatever is loathsome and offensive to God proceeds from it^g—

So true is that humiliating declaration!^h—]

Yet, notwithstanding this state appears so desperate, we

^b God gives a *command*, Ezek. xviii. 31. David, knowing his duty, and feeling his inability to perform it, had long before presented this to God in the form of a *petition*, Ps. li. 10. And God, to encourage such applications to him, *promises* to work in us that which he requires of us, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

^c Jer. xlviii. 11.

^d Ps. x. 4, 5.

^e John xv. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^f Rom. vii. 18.

^g Mark vii. 21, 22.

^h Job xv. 14—16.

must address, to every one that is under it, the command "Awake," &c.

[Your inactivity and security involve you in the deepest guilt—

Your corruption of heart and life provokes the majesty of God—

Nor is your impotence any excuse for your disobedience—

It is your love of sin that disables you for duty—

Nor is God deprived of his right to command, though you have lost your power to obey—

Let every one then strive to comply with this heavenly call—

They who exert their feeble powers may expect divine assistanceⁱ—]

To convince us that none shall fail who use the appointed means, God enforces his command with

II. A promise

Sleep and death are states of intellectual *darkness*—

Hence *light* is promised to those who obey the divine mandate—

Light in Scripture imports knowledge,^k holiness,^l comfort,^m and gloryⁿ—

And all these blessings shall they receive from Christ, the fountain of light^o—

Knowledge

[Spiritual knowledge every natural man stands in need of—

Nor is it attainable by the teaching of men, or the efforts of genius^p—

We can receive it from none but Christ^q—

Hence Christ invites us to come to him for it^r—

Nor shall an application to him ever fail of success^s—]

Holiness

[A despair of attaining this deters many from seeking it—

ⁱ See Matt. xii. 10, 13. The man with the withered hand was unable to stretch it forth; but in attempting to obey, he was endued with strength.

^k Isai. viii. 20.

^l 1 John i. 7.

^m Ps. xcvi. 11.

ⁿ Col. i. 12.

^o Mal. iv. 2. John i. 9.

^p Matt. xi. 25.

^q Matt. xi. 27.

^r Matt. xi. 29.

^s Ps. xxv. 9. Prov. ii. 3—6.

They think their inveterate habits cannot be rooted out^t—
 But Christ is our “sanctification” as well as our wisdom^u—
 His very name encourages us to expect deliverance from
 him^s—

And he will fulfil the promises which he has made to this
 effect^v—]

Comfort

[A sense of guilt shall yield to holy joy^z—
 Deplored weakness shall be succeeded by a divine energy^a—
 Our delight in him shall be spiritual and exalted^b—
 It shall far transcend all earthly pleasures^c—]

Glory

[Our Lord will not confine his blessings to this world^d—
 He will raise his people to thrones of glory^e—
 He will cause them to participate his own inheritance^f—
 He will be the ground and object of their joy for ever^g—]

APPLICATION

[What greater encouragement can any one desire?—
 What richer promises can any one conceive?—
 How suited are they to our necessities!—
 Let every one consider the command as addressed to him-
 self; “Awake, *Thou*”—
 Let all our powers and faculties be called forth to action—
 In exerting ourselves let us expect the promised aid—
 Thus shall we be eternal monuments of Christ’s power and
 grace—]

^t Jer. ii. 25.

^x Matt. i. 21.

^z Isai. xxix. 19. and lxi. 3.

^b Isai. li. 11. and lviii. 11.

^d Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

^f Rom. viii. 17.

^u 1 Cor. i. 30.

^y Mic. vii. 19. Isai. i. 25.

^a Isai. xxxv. 5, 6.

^c Ps. lxxxiv. 10. and iv. 6, 7.

^e Rev. iii. 21.

^g Isai. lx. 19, 20.

LXV. THE FINAL JUDGMENT REPRESENTED BY THE HARVEST.

Joel iii. 13. *Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe.*

THIS is a remarkable prophecy of the destruction of
 God’s enemies—

The prophet summons the executioners of vengeance to come up against them^a—

They are represented as a field of corn—

The command is given to cut them down; and the prophet instantly sees them fall; “multitudes,” &c.

Our Lord delivers a parable resembling this in reference to the whole world—

In a similar manner we shall improve the passage before us, by enquiring

I. What it is that makes us ripe for the great harvest

There is a ripeness to which every one must attain—

The wicked have a measure of sin which they must fill up^b—

The righteous have degrees of holiness for which they are reserved^c—

There are growing in the world both tares and wheat—

And both are ripening for their proper end—

Sin is ripening some for vengeance

[It unfits the soul for the enjoyment of God—

It renders a person meet for destruction^d—

It creates many horrors, which are foretastes of hell itself—]

Holiness is ripening others for glory

[It unfits the soul for the society of the wicked—

It induces a meetness for the heavenly inheritance—

It is a source of joys which shall be consummated in glory—]

The holy Scriptures enable us to discern

^a The valley of Jehosaphat, or of decision, to which they are summoned, ver. 12, 14. seems to be not any particular place: It may rather be considered as an allusion to the utter destruction which his enemies (the Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Grecians, and Romans) should successively bring on each other. And it may have a further reference to the destruction of Antichrist, and of the wicked at the last day.

^b Gen. xv. 16.

^c Eph. iv. 7, 13. Not that there is any *general* standard either of sin or holiness to which all persons *must* attain: There is no degree of sin to which any shall be impelled against their will; nor of holiness, which any shall be prevented from surpassing. But some are kept from more sin, and others are excited to more holiness, by the preventing or assisting grace of God; for sinners would commit more sin unless prevented, and saints attain less holiness unless excited.

^d As dry wood for the fire. See Luke xxiii. 31.

II. What are the marks of our being ripe

Nothing can be more awful than the thought that a sinner is ripe for everlasting misery—

Yet it may be justly apprehended that he is so

1. When he is given over to a total insensibility

[Custom in sinning will harden the heart, and sear the conscience—

When a person is arrived at such a state, he is fitted for destruction—

This is both figuratively^e and plainly^f declared in the Scriptures—]

2. When he continues wilfully in sin against conviction

[There are some who determine to hold fast their sins—

These have reason to think that God's Spirit will be taken from them^g—

They may expect to be utterly given up to their own lusts^h—]

Saints, on the other hand, may be judged ripe for glory

1. When they unfeignedly rely on the Lord Jesus

[We fix upon the lowest marks of true grace—

Faith in Christ is exercised by the weakest saint—

Yet to that is eternal happiness annexedⁱ—

Of consequence, he who possesses it must be fit for glory—]

2. When they unfeignedly desire to be conformed to his image

[There is a great difference in the attainments of different Christians—

And much allowance must be made for a difference in their respective advantages—

But all desire to be “holy as God is holy”—

Vessels thus sanctified are meet for their master's use^k—]

While space is yet allowed us, it becomes us to consider

III. What shall be done when we are ripe

When the corn has attained maturity, the sickle is put to it—

^e Heb. vi. 8.

^g Gen. vi. 3.

ⁱ John iii. 36.

^f Prov. xxix. 1.

^h Rom. i. 28. Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

^k 2 Tim. ii. 21.

Thus, when our measure of sin or holiness is complete,
we shall be reaped down

[Our existence in the world is entirely dependent upon
God^l—

None can shorten or protract it beyond its appointed
bounds^m—]

The saints will be “gathered into the garner of their
Lord”

[Saints, at their departure, ascend immediately to Godⁿ—

But in the day of judgment their bodies also will rise—

They shall then be carried to their eternal home—]

The wicked will be “bound in bundles, and cast into
the fire”—

[They, who die in sin, immediately sustain their just pu-
nishment^o—

But at the last day their bodies also shall be restored to
life—

Then shall they too be collected by the ministry of angels—

And receive their final doom in fire unquenchable—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who are ripening for destruction

[You may easily discern your real state—

But who can express the misery of it?—

You ripen, however involuntarily, every day—

Notwithstanding your security, you will quickly fall—

The great Husbandman will easily distinguish you from the
saints—

And he will most assuredly, yea eternally, separate you from
them—

But, through the mercy of God, you may yet be changed—

Though you be tares at present, God can make you
wheat^p—

Seek then this divine change before it be too late—]

2. Those who are ripening for glory

[What thanks do you owe to God for his distinguishing
grace!—

And how well may you be reconciled to the afflictions of
life!—

There is no event which does not promote your maturity—

Look forward then for the blessed period of the harvest—

^l Ps. xxxi. 15.

^m Job xiv. 5.

ⁿ Luke xxiii. 43.

^o Luke xvi. 23.

^p 2 Cor. v. 17.

Reflect on the happiness of the state for which you are preparing^a—

Still seek the showers of the Spirit, and the influences of the Sun of righteousness—

Thus shall you, in due season, be transmitted to the mansions of bliss—]

^a No wintry blasts, no scorching sons, no worm at the root, &c.

LXVI. GOD'S DWELLING IN US IS A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS.

Rom. viii. 12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

IN the Scriptures, privilege and duty are inseparably connected—

By this means we are kept at an equal distance from presumptuous confidence and painful servility—

And the best feelings of the soul are rendered subservient to our eternal welfare—

This observation is verified, as in many other passages,^a so particularly in that before us; which is a conclusion from very important premises—

We propose to consider

I. The grounds of the conclusion

Believers have God himself dwelling in them

[God is here represented as a Tri-une God^b—

And he dwells in all his believing people^c—

^a Rom. xii. 1. 1 Cor. vi. 20. with the two verses before the text.

^b The Father raised Christ: Christ dwells in all believers at the same instant: and the Holy Ghost will raise the saints at the last day. Can any one of these be less than God? Their distinction and equality may be further proved from Matt. xxviii. 19. It is observable also that in ver. 9. the Spirit of Christ is called the Spirit of God.

^c 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 John i. 3. and 2 Cor. xiii. 14.—They do not indeed pretend to distinguish the agency of one of these divine persons from that of another (for indeed no one of these persons acts separately from the others) but they exercise faith on the Father, as their protector and governor; on the Son, as their mediator and advocate; and on the Spirit, as their guide and comforter.

This is a most inestimable privilege to them^d—]

By means of this they enjoy the richest blessings

[*Their souls* are quickened from their death in trespasses and sins—

And, by a new principle of life infused into them, are enabled to live unto God—

And this “life they have because of Christ’s righteousness” wrought out for them, and imputed to them—

Their bodies also, though doomed to “death, as the penalty of sin,” “will be raised again by that very Spirit who now dwelleth in them”—

And these shall participate with the soul the glory and felicity of the heavenly world—]

Such being the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, we proceed to consider

II. The conclusion itself

We certainly are “debtors to the flesh” to a certain degree

[The flesh cannot subsist without care and labour—

And whatever is necessary for the preservation of life, or the restoration of our health, it is our bounden duty to do—]

But we are not debtors to obey its dictates

[To “live after” the flesh, must import a consulting of its ease, a complying with its solicitations, a devoting of ourselves to its interests—

To this extent we certainly are not debtors to the flesh—]

This may plainly be concluded, as from many other topics, so especially from the foregoing statement

[*The privileges* vouchsafed to us strongly prohibit a carnal life—

Can the Tri-une God, who dwells in us, be pleased with our living after the flesh?—

Is not the very intent of his mercies to bring us rather to live after the Spirit?—

The mercies too which we enjoy by means of those privileges, teach us the same divine lesson—

The quickening of our spirit should lead us to “mind the things of the Spirit”—

And the prospect of endless felicity and glory for the body should keep us from seeking its present gratifications to the destruction of its eternal interests—

^d Far greater than that mentioned, 1 Kings viii, 27.

To whomsoever we are debtors, we are not (in this extent at least) debtors to the flesh—]

INFER

1. How mistaken are the world in their course of life!

[The generality live as if they had nothing to do but to consult the flesh—

And when exhorted to mind the concerns of their souls, reply immediately, “I *must* attend to the interests of my body”—

But in thus opposing the declaration in the text, they will ruin their bodies as well as their souls for ever—]

2. How unmindful are even good people of their duty and interest!

[The best of men find it difficult to “keep under their bodies”—

And there are seasons when they are apt to yield to sloth or sensual indulgence—

But let all remember their obligations and possessions—

And labour rather to pay what they owe to the Spirit—]

LXVII. THE COMFORT TO BE DERIVED FROM CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

John xiv. 2, 3. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

AN hope of future happiness affords strong consolation under present trials—

The children of God, if destitute of this, would be “of all men most miserable”—

But this renders them incomparably more happy, even under the most afflictive dispensations, than the greatest fulness of earthly things could make them—

Our Lord opened these springs of comfort to his disconsolate disciples—

Being about to leave them, he not only told them whither, and for what purpose, he was going, but that he

would assuredly return to recompense all which they might endure for his sake—"In my Father's, &c.

We shall consider

I. Our Lord's description of heaven

We are taught to conceive of heaven as a place of unspeakable felicity—

The description given of it by St. John is intended to elevate our thoughts, and enlarge our conceptions to the uttermost^a—

But a spiritual mind, which is dead to earthly things, may perhaps see no less beauty in our Lord's description—

Our Lord thus describes it; "My Father's house with many mansions"

[Here seems to be an allusion to the temple at Jerusalem—

God dwelt there in a more especial manner^b—

Around it were chambers for the priests and Levites—

Thus in heaven God dwells, and displays his glory^c—

There also are mansions where his redeemed people "see him as he is"—]

This description may be depended upon

[The disciples had left all in expectation of a future recompence—

Our Lord had taught them to look for it, not on earth, but in heaven—

Had no such recompence awaited them, he "would have told them so"—

Thus he pledges, as it were, his love and faithfulness for the truth of what he had told them—]

Our Lord further acquaints them with the reason of his ascending thither

II. The end of his ascension thither

All which our Lord did on earth was for the good of his people—

He consulted their good also in his ascension to heaven—

He went "to prepare a place for them," which he does

^a Rev. xxi. 19, 21.

^b 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.

^c Isai. lvii. 15.

1. By purging heaven itself with his own blood

[Heaven would have been defiled, as it were, by the admission of sinners into it—

He therefore entered into heaven to sanctify it by his blood—

This was typified by the atonement made for the altar and the tabernacle^d—

The type is thus explained and applied^c—]

2. By taking possession of it as their head and representative

[He is the head, and his people are his members^f—

His ascension to heaven is a pledge and earnest of theirs^g—

In this view he is expressly called “our forerunner”^h—]

3. By maintaining their title to it

[They would continually forfeit their title to it by their sins—

But he maintains their peace with God by his intercession—

Hence his power to bring them finally to that place is represented as depending on his living in heaven to intercede for themⁱ—]

By these means every obstacle to his people’s happiness is removed

III. The prospects which his ascension affords us

His ascension is the foundation of all our hope—

As it proves his mission, so also it assures us,

1. That he shall “come again”

[The high-priest, after offering incense within the vail, was to come out and bless the people—

This was a type of our Lord’s return from heaven when he shall have finished his work of intercession there^k—]

2. That he shall take his people to dwell with him

[He had promised this as a condition of their engaging in his service^l—

He declared it to be his fixed determination just before his departure^m—

^d Lev. xvi. 16—20.

^e Heb. ix. 21—24. Here is a parallel drawn not only between the Holy of holies and heaven, but also between the purifying of the Holy of holies by the high-priest, and the purifying of heaven itself by Christ with his own blood: and both are declared to have been necessary; the one as a type, and the other as the anti-type.

^f Eph. iv. 15, 16.

^g 1 Cor. xv. 20.

^h Heb. vi. 20.

ⁱ Heb. vii. 25.

^k Heb. ix. 28.

^l John xii. 26.

^m John xvii. 24.

It may even be inferred from his ascension; for his ascension would have been utterly in vain without itⁿ—]

What a bright and blessed object is this!—

What an effectual antidote against their approaching troubles!—

INFER

1. How wonderful are the condescension and grace of Christ!

[We cannot conceive any thing more tender than the whole of this address—

Such is still his conduct towards all his people— — —

Let us admire and adore this compassionate high-priest—]

2. How highly privileged are they that believe in Christ!

[How different was our Lord's address to unbelievers^o—

But to believers he says "Where I am, ye shall be also"—

Let this inestimable privilege have its due effect upon us—

Let it stimulate our desires after heaven—

Let it reconcile us to the thoughts of death—

Let it engage us more earnestly to serve God^p—]

ⁿ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

^o John viii. 21.

^p 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.

LXVIII. THE CHARACTER AND AIM OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Col. iv. 12. *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

LOVE is the essence of the Christian religion—

The heathens themselves noticed the fervour of the love which subsisted among the first Christians—

Ministers in particular feel a distinguished regard for those to whom they have been signally useful^a—

Epaphras is set forth as a most eminent pattern of affection and zeal

^a 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

I. The office he sustained

Epaphras was perhaps the same with Epaphroditus—
He was a Colossian, and probably a pastor of the church at Colosse—

He sustained the most honourable of all offices, being
“a servant of Christ”—

This office every Christian may be said to bear—

But ministers bear it in a higher and more exalted sense: They are

1. His stewards

[A steward has the care and management of the family committed to him—

So Christ's ministers have the mysteries of the gospel committed to them^b—

They are to dispense these mysteries to men^c—

Hence we are taught to consider them expressly in this view^d—]

2. His messengers

[They are ambassadors from the court of heaven^e—

They deliver to men his messages of grace and mercy—

They negotiate, as it were, a peace between God and man—]

3. His representatives

[They stand in his stead;^f the word they speak is not theirs, but his^g—

The reception or rejection of them will be deemed a reception or rejection of Christ himself^h—]

4. His glory

[They are the instruments whereby he is known and glorified—

Hence they are expressly called “the glory of Christ”ⁱ—]

In this office he acted worthy of the trust reposed in him

II. The love he manifested

Love will invariably manifest itself in acts of kindness towards those who are the objects of it—

A minister's love will shew itself most towards the souls of men—

^b 2 Cor. iv. 7.

^o 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

1 Thess. iv. 8.

^c Luke xii. 42.

^f 2 Cor. v. 20.

ⁱ 2 Cor. viii. 23.

^d 1 Cor. iv. 1.

^e 1 Thess. ii. 13.

But none can do good to souls unless God himself vouchsafe his blessing^k—

Hence Epaphras made application to God in prayer—

He did this fervently

[It is said of Jacob that he “wrestled” with God all night in prayer^l—

Thus did Epaphras on behalf of the Christians at Colosse^m—

How desirable is it that every minister should be so occupied!—]

He did it constantly

[He was not satisfied with preaching to them, or praying with them—

He remembered them “always” in his secret prayers before Godⁿ—

Nor did his absence from them diminish his concern for their welfare—

This was the most unequivocal testimony of his affection that he could possibly give them^o—]

Nor could he rest satisfied, while his people had a sin to be forgiven, or a want to be supplied

III. The end he aimed at

He desired that his Christian friends might be Israelites indeed—

No doubt he had exerted himself much and often to make them so—

He sought the same blessed end in all his prayers for them—

1. That they might have no secret reserves in their obedience

[He well knew that one sin indulged would destroy the soul^p—

He was aware that nothing but the most unreserved dedication of ourselves to God’s service would be of any avail^q—

He therefore prayed that they might do “all” the will of God—]

^k 1 Cor. iii. 7.

^l Compare Gen. xxxii. 24, 28. with Hos. xii. 4.

^m This is implied in the term ἀγανίζομενος.

ⁿ 1 Thess. iii. 10. with Isai. lxii. 7.

^o It is easier to preach to men *ten* hours, than to pray for them *one*.

^p Jer. xlvi. 10.

^q Ps. cxix. 6.

2. That they might attain the highest degree of holiness

[There is no absolute perfection or completeness in the creature—

But there are high degrees of holiness to which the upright may attain^r—

He longed that they might be as eminent as possible^s—]

3. That they might be stedfast to the end

[Many “endure only for a season, and in a time of temptation fall away”—

But the apostatizing of persons who have been hopeful, is death, as it were, to a faithful minister of Christ^t—

He knew that there were many seeking to turn them from the faith^u—

He therefore sought to have them so established that they might “stand”—]

We may OBSERVE from hence

1. What should be the standard of a minister’s preaching

[Faithful ministers are often thought too strict and severe—

But if they should desire such perfection for their people, they should labour also to promote it by their preaching—

If they should lower the standard of men’s duty, they would betray and murder the souls committed to them—

Let not any then condemn the strictness or severity of what they hear, unless it exceed the Scripture standard—]

2. What should be the measure of the people’s practice

[There is no attainment with which we should be satisfied, while there remains any thing to be attained—

What ministers should desire for us, we ought to desire and aim at for ourselves—

Whatever then we may have attained, let us forget what is behind, and press forward toward that which is before—]

^r Τέλειοι καὶ πεπληρωμένοι imply, that he wished them not to continue babes, but to arrive at a state of manhood; and not to be satisfied with a scanty measure of grace and knowledge, but to be “filled with all the fulness of God.”

^s 1 Thess. v. 23.

^t 1 Thess. iii. 8.

^u Col. ii. 8.

LXIX. THE EXTENT AND EXCELLENCY OF THE
MORAL LAW.

Deut. xxvii. 26. *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: And all the people shall say, Amen.*

THE law here spoken of is the moral law^a—

This every person is bound to keep in its utmost extent—

The curse of God is denounced against every violation of it—

This sanction, tremendous as it is, should be universally approved—

Hence God commanded his people to express their approbation of it—

“Amen” in Scripture signifies an affirmation,^b or a wish^c—

The adding of “Amen” to the doctrine of the text implies

I. An assent to its truth

The doctrine is, that the law of God curses us for one offence—

This is often, through ignorance of the Scriptures, denied—

But it may be established by a cloud of witnesses

[Death is declared to be the necessary fruit of sin^d—

Every deviation from the line of duty subjects us to God’s wrath^e—

An idle *word* is sufficient to condemn us^f—

The most secret *thought* is punishable by our judge^g—

Omissions of duty will entail on us the same judgments^h—

A violation of the law on one point insures condemnation *as truly*, though not *as severely*, as a rejection of the wholeⁱ—

One single transgression brought misery on the whole world^k—

^a Several particulars of the moral law are enumerated from ver. 15. to the end; and here it is mentioned summarily, as comprehending the whole.

^b John iii. 3.

^c Matt. vi. 13.

^d James i. 15.

^e Rom. i. 18.

^f Matt. xii. 36.

^g Eccl. xii. 14.

^h Matt. xxv. 30.

ⁱ James ii. 10.

^k Rom. v. 12, 18, 19.

And this was agreeable to the terms of the Adamic covenant^l—

St. Paul speaks of this penalty as still in force^m—

He even cites the very words of the text in proof of the doctrine which we deduce from themⁿ—

Hence the law is called “a ministration of death”^p—]

None, however, will cordially assent to the truth of this doctrine till they see ground for

II. A confession of its reasonableness

The law, both in its extent and sanctions, is highly reasonable^o—

That one sin may reasonably subject us to condemnation appears

From analogy

[Offences in civil society are rated according to the dignity of the person against whom they are committed^p—

Now sin is committed against an infinitely great and good God—

Hence it contracts an inexpressible malignity—

Moreover *one act* of treason is punished with death—

Nor is this judged unreasonable in human governments—

Why then may not the death of the soul be annexed to every instance of rebellion against God?^q—]

From the nature of sin

[Sin *dishonours God, takes part with Satan, and unfits for heaven*—

Are these light evils, that they not only *may*, but *must* be overlooked?—

^l Gen ii. 17.

^m Rom vi. 23. It is not said that death is the wages of *much or heinous* sin, but of sin, i. e. of *any and every* sin.

ⁿ Gal. iii. 10.

^o We would not be understood to make the doctrine depend on its reasonableness, and much less on *our statement* of its reasonableness: we only wish to vindicate it from the objections which *unhumbled* reason would bring against it. If we were not able to urge one reason in its defence, it were quite sufficient to say, “God has revealed it, and therefore it must be reasonable;” for nothing can be unreasonable which proceeds from him.

^p Should we strike an inferior, an equal, a superior, a benefactor, a parent, a sovereign, the offence would proportionably rise; so that, what in one case might be expiated by a small fine, in another would be counted worthy of death.

^q Is not God’s Majesty to be regarded as well as man’s? and his government to be supported as well as man’s?

Is God forced to honour those who dishonour him?—

Has not He as much right to be our enemy, as we have to be his?—

When he sees us destitute of any love to him, is he bound to renew our hearts that we may be capable of enjoying him?—

Is he *unjust* if he leave us to eat the fruit of our own way?^r—]

But an extorted confession of its reasonableness is not sufficient—

God requires of us further

III. An acknowledgment of its excellency

The law thus sanctioned is truly excellent

Any other would have been *less worthy of the great law-giver*

[Had it required less than perfect obedience, or had the penalty of transgressing it been no more than a temporary punishment, neither his holiness nor his justice had been so conspicuous—]

Any other would have been *more ruinous to man*

[A permission to violate that law in ever so small a degree would have been a licence to make ourselves miserable—

Had death been annexed to *many* transgressions, and not to *one*, we should have been at a loss to know our state—

We should have been with more difficulty drawn from seeking righteousness by our obedience to the law—

We should have seen less evil in transgressing it—

We should have been less anxious to obtain an interest in Christ—

Thus, though mercy is provided, we should have been less likely to obtain it, or to secure its continuance—]

Any other would have been *less honourable to Christ*

[He would have endured less suffering for us—

^r Is it unreasonable that God should vindicate his own honour? are *we* at liberty to insult him, and *he* not to punish us? *may* we be his enemies, and *must* he treat us as friends? When our first parents sinned, was God *obliged* to remedy the evil they had brought upon themselves? might he not have left *them*, as he had already left *the fallen angels*? was there any *necessity* that God should assume the human nature, and offer himself a sacrifice for his creature's sin? If so, they, even after their fall, might have disdained to ask for heaven as a *gift*; they might still have demanded it as a debt. Then God is under a law, and we are free from a law; we are free to live as we please; and he is under a necessity to save us at all events. The absurdity of such positions is obvious.

His interposition for us had been less needed—

It would have discovered far less love—

The obligations conferred by it would have been comparatively small—

He would have been less honoured by all—

Some would have been saved without his aid—

Many would, to eternity, have ascribed the honour of their salvation to themselves—]

In this view “the ministration of death was glorious”^s—

Such a discovery of its excellency will immediately produce

IV. An approbation of it with respect to our own particular case

A person taught of God will cordially approve of this law—

He will love it as the means of humbling him in the dust

[It discovers to him, as in a glass, his manifold transgressions—

It convinces him of his desert of punishment—

It shews him the impossibility of making reparation to God—

It constrains him to cry, “Save, Lord, or I perish”—

And thus it brings him to the state he most desires^t—]

He will delight in it as endearing Christ to his soul

[The depth of his disorder makes him value the physician—

He sees his need of one to “bear the iniquity of his holy things”^u—

He finds that Christ is set forth for this very purpose^x—

Hence he rejoices in Christ as his almighty Saviour—]

Such an approbation of it was expressed by Jeremiah^y—

St. Paul also highly commends it in this view^z—

And every true Christian can adopt his words^a—

APPLICATION

[Let us study this law as a covenant—

Let us acknowledge our condemnation by it—

Let it serve as a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ”^b—

Let that declaration be the ground of our hope^c—]

^s 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9, 10, 11.

^t Luke xviii. 13.

^u Exod. xxviii. 38.

^x Rom. x. 4.

^y Jer. xi. 3, 5.

^z Rom. vii. 12.

^a Rom. vii. 22.

^b Gal. iii. 24.

^c Gal. iii. 13.

LXX. REDEMPTION BY CHRIST.

Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*

THE law, which subjects all mankind to a curse, is the moral law—

That is principally intended in the passage before us^a—

It remains unalterable in its demands of obedience or punishment—

But in the gospel a remedy is provided for transgressors—

This remedy is proposed to us in the text—

I. Clear up some points relative to redemption

The most important truths of Christianity are often denied—

But we must be established in them, if we would receive the blessings of redemption—

We should know clearly,

1. What is that “curse” from which we are redeemed—

[Many suppose it to be annihilation, or at most a temporary punishment—

But the Scriptures represent it in a far different light—

We cannot precisely declare the exact *quality* of it—

It consists, however, partly in banishment from God^b—

And partly in inconceivable anguish both of soul and body^c—

Its *duration* certainly will be eternal—

It will continue coeval with the happiness of the righteous^d—

Neither the curse shall cease, nor sinners cease to endure it^e—]

2. Who it is that redeems us from it

[It is thought by many that we must deliver ourselves by repentance, &c.—

^a It is that law, from the curse of which Abraham and the Gentiles were redeemed, ver. 10. ; and consequently, though the *ceremonial* law be not entirely excluded, the text must be understood principally in reference to the *moral* law. ^b 2 Thess. i. 9.

^c Luke xvi. 23, 24. ^d Matt. xxv. 46. *αἰώνιον* is used respecting both.

^e Our Lord repeats this no less than five times in six verses, Mark ix. 43—48.

But it is impossible for fallen man to deliver his own soul—
He cannot *by doing*, because he cannot perfectly obey the law in future; and if he could, his obedience would not atone for past sins^f—

He cannot *by suffering*, because the penalty of one sin is eternal death—

Nor could the highest archangel redeem the world—

If he could, God needed not to have sent his own Son—

None but “Christ” was sufficient for so great a work—

But his obedience unto death has effected our redemption—

He “made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness”^g—]

3. Who they are that shall enjoy the benefits of redemption

[Many imagine that, because Christ has died for all, all shall be saved—

But redemption is by no means so extensive as the curse—

With respect to heathens we know little how God will deal with them—

But we know what will be his conduct towards the Christian world—

They who believe in Christ, and they only, will be finally saved^h—

Such alone were comprehended under the term “us”—]

These points being cleared up, we shall

II. Shew by what means we are redeemed

By the Mosaic law persons hanged were deemed accursedⁱ—

Hence Christ, in his death, was “made a curse” or held accursed^k—

In becoming a curse, he was our substitute

[Christ did not die merely *for our good*—

He endured the curse *in our stead*—

This was typically represented under the Mosaic law^l— —

The prophets concur in establishing this truth^m— — —

^f The ceasing to increase a debt will not cancel a debt already incurred: see Luke xvii. 10. ^g Dan. ix. 24.

^h Mark xvi. 16. The faith here spoken of is not a mere assent to the truths of Christianity, but a living, operative, and purifying faith, Acts xv. 9. Jam. ii. 20, 26. ⁱ Deut. xxi. 23.

^k See the words immediately following the text.

^l Lev. xvi. 7—10, 21, 22. It is impossible not to see in this passage that the scape-goat had the iniquities of the Jewish nation transferred to him, while the goat that died made atonement for them.

^m Dan. ix. 26. “Not for himself,” Isai. liii. 5.

The apostles confirm it in the plainest terms"— — —

His curse indeed was not *the same* with ours, either in quality or duration—

Yet it was fully adequate to all the demands of law and justice—

And it was such as God appointed for him, and accepts on our behalf—]

This substitution of Christ was the mean of effecting our redemption

[God ordained it for this very end"—

He was pleased with it in this view"—

He was reconciled to man on account of it"—

Our redemption is expressly ascribed to it"—

Our deliverance from the guilt and power of sin is effected by it"—

It was the price paid for the salvation of the church"—]

INFER

1. How great was the love of Christ towards our fallen race!

[That he who was happy in the bosom of his Father should become a curse!—

That he should submit to such misery in our place and stead!—

Well might that anathema be denounced against the ungrateful"—

Let us then study to "comprehend the heights and depths of his love"—]

2. What folly and impiety is it to seek justification by the law!

[When the moral law was once broken, it was absolutely impossible that any man should be justified by it"—

There remained no way of escaping its curse but by embracing the gospel"—

What folly then is it to reject salvation when it is freely offered, and to seek it in a way in which it cannot be found!—

Nor is the impiety of such conduct less than the folly—

It declares that the sacrifice of Christ was unnecessary, or ineffectual—

This conduct proved destructive to the bulk of the Jewish nation"—

May we never imitate them to our eternal ruin!—]

ⁿ 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 24. and iii. 18.

^p Eph. v. 2.

^q Rom. v. 10.

^o Rom. iii. 25.

^r Eph. i. 7.

^s Heb. ix. 13, 14.

^t Acts xx. 28. with 1 Cor. vi. 20.

^u 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

^x Gal. iii. 21.

^y Gal. iii. 22.

^z Rom. ix. 31, 32. and x. 3.

3. How strong are the Christian's obligations to holiness!

[Christ did not die to deliver us from the curse only, but from sin also^a—

Shall we hope to attain one end of his death while we defeat the other?—

We should reject such a thought with the utmost abhorrence^b—

Let every one then strive to attain the disposition of St. Paul^c—]

^a Tit. ii. 14.

^b Rom. vi. 1.

^c 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

LXXI. FAITH ESTABLISHES THE LAW.

Rom. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

A GENERAL prejudice obtains against the way of salvation by faith—

But it prevailed equally [even in the apostolic age—

Paul himself saw that his statement of the gospel did not escape censure—

He perceived that it was deemed injurious to the interests of morality—

He therefore anticipated and obviated this objection—

I. Whence it is that people suppose we make void the law through faith

The truth, however clearly stated, is often misapprehended—

In explaining salvation by faith we affirm two things concerning the law

1. That it has no power either to condemn or to justify believers—

[It cannot *condemn* them, because Christ has redeemed them from its curse^a—

It cannot *justify* them, because they have transgressed it, and its demands of perfect obedience are unalterably the same—

^a Gal. iii. 13.

Faith in Christ delivers us from the penal sanctions of the law, but does not lower its demands—]

2. That our obedience to it makes no part of our justifying righteousness—

[Faith and works, *as grounds of justification*, are opposite to each other^b—

If our works had any share in our justification we should have a ground of boasting, which is utterly to be excluded^c—

The smallest reliance on these makes void all hope by the gospel^d—

All dependence therefore on the works of the law must be entirely renounced—]

These affirmations evidently exclude morality from the office of justifying—

They are therefore supposed to discountenance all practical religion—

But this mistake originates in the ignorance of the objectors themselves

II. That the believer, so far from making void the law, establishes it

The power of the law is twofold; to command obedience, and to condemn for disobedience

The believer establishes the law in each of these respects—

1. In its commanding power

[He owns its absolute authority over him as God's creature—

All his hope is in the perfect obedience which Christ paid to it for him—

He looks upon his obligations to obey it as increased, rather than diminished, by the death of Christ—

He actually desires to obey it as much as if he were to be justified by his obedience to it—]

2. In its condemning power

[He acknowledges himself justly condemned by it—

He founds his hope in Christ as having borne its curse for him—

His own conscience cannot be pacified but by that atonement which satisfied the demands of the law—

Bereft of an hope in the atonement, he would utterly despair—

^b Rom. xi. 6.

^c Rom. iii. 27.

^d Gal. v. 2, 4.

He flees to Christ continually “to bear the iniquity of his holiest actions”—]

Thus he magnifies the law while the objector himself makes it void

III. That the person, who objects to salvation by faith alone, does indeed make void the law—

Objections against the doctrine of faith are raised from a pretended regard for the law—

But the person who blends faith and works effectually undermines the whole authority of the law—

1. Its commanding power

[He is striving to do something which may serve in part as a ground of his justification—

But he can do nothing which is not imperfect—

Therefore he shews that he considers the law as less rigorous in its demands than it really is—

Consequently he robs it in a measure of its commanding power—]

2. Its condemning power

[He never thoroughly feels himself a lost sinner—

He does not freely acknowledge that he might be justly cursed even for his most holy actions—

He even looks for justification on account of that which in itself deserves nothing but condemnation—]

Thus the advocates for the law are, in fact, its greatest enemies—

Whereas the advocates for the gospel are the truest friends to the law also—

INFER

1. How absurd is it for persons to decide on religion without ever having studied its doctrines!

[In human sciences men forbear to lay down their dogmas without some previous knowledge of the points on which they decide—

But in theology all, however ignorant, think themselves competent to judge—

They indeed, who are taught of God, can judge—

But unenlightened reason does not qualify us to determine—

Let us beware of indulging prejudices against the truth—

Let us seek to be “guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit”—]

2. How excellent is the salvation revealed to us in the gospel!

[Salvation by faith is exactly suited to man's necessities—

It is also admirably calculated to advance the honour of God—

Every man that is saved magnifies the law, and consequently the lawgiver—

The commanding and condemning power of the law are equally glorified by the sinner's dependence on the obedience and sufferings of Christ—

But in those who are condemned, *its sanctions only* are honoured—

Thus is the law more honoured in the salvation of one, than in the destruction of the whole human race—

Let all then admire and embrace this glorious salvation—]

LXXII. THE WORLD'S AND THE CHRISTIAN'S GOD CONTRASTED.

Mic. iv. 5. *All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord God for ever and ever.*

THERE may be idolatry where there is no outward act of worship—

The prophet foretells its prevalence even under the gospel dispensation^a—

In the words before us he contrasts

I. The practice of the world

The world at large have other gods besides Jehovah

[They do not acknowledge a plurality of gods—

But they pay to the creature the regard due to God alone—

This, in the sight of God, is no other than idolatry^b—]

Every one has his own peculiar god

[Men's pursuits vary according to their situations in life—

Age, inclination, interest, will also influence their choice—

Their predominant lust is their god—]

“In the name of this god they walk”

[They yield obedience to their favourite passion— — —

They depend on it for happiness— — —

They delight in it as their supreme good— — —]

^a Ver. 1—4.

^b Rom. i. 25.

That this is their practice appears from Scripture and experience

[St. Paul affirms it respecting all in their unregenerate state^c—

Every one feels it to be true with respect to himself—
And sees it exemplified in those around him—]

But all do not persist in this evil way; as appears from

II. The determination of the Christian

The regenerate as well as the unregenerate has *his* God

[He has not the same god as formerly—
He now acknowledges God in Christ to be his God—]

In the name of *this* God he walks

[He boldly confesses his divine Master—
On him he depends for present and future blessings—
In him he “rejoices with joy unspeakable”—]

His conduct is the result of deliberation

[He knows the guilt and folly of spiritual idolatry^d—
He therefore resolves with those of old^e—

He devotes himself to God's service “for ever and ever”^f—]

Scripture and experience confirm these observations also

[With what energy do the saints of old speak on this subject!^g—

Every believer now also holds the same language—]

INFER

1. The nature of true conversion

[Conversion consists in “turning from idols to the living God”^g—

Let us then serve Christ, as others serve the world—]

2. The wisdom of those who are converted

[What can the gods of the world do for them?^h—

But the Christian's God is an all-sufficient and eternal portion—

Let all, then, imitate the example of Joshuaⁱ—]

^c Rom. iii. 10—12. Tit. iii. 3.

^d Ps. xvi. 4.

^e Isai. xxvi. 13.

^f Exod. xxi. 6.

^g See John vi. 68. Ps. lxxiii. 25. Phil. iii. 8. Gal. vi. 14.

^h Judg. x. 14. Elijah's irony may well illustrate this, 1 Kings xviii. 27.

ⁱ Josh. xxiv. 15.

LXXIII. OUR LORD'S DESIRE TO BE GLORIFIED
IN HEAVEN.

John xvii. 4, 5. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

The promises of God do not supersede the use of prayer—

They are rather encouragements to it, as being a guide to our desires, and the ground of our hopes—

It is necessary on our part in order to obtain the performance of them^a—

The necessity was laid upon our Lord himself^b—

Hence, in his last moments, he prays for his promised reward—

I. Our Lord's appeal

Christ acted in the capacity of a servant—

He considers now his work as completed, and speaks of it in that view—

He appeals to the Father

1. That he had “glorified him on earth”—This he did

In his life

[The whole of his life was conformed to the divine will—
Not the smallest blemish could be found in it—]

In his doctrine

[He declared the Father to the world—
He directed persons to himself only as *the way* to the Father—]

In his miracles

[These, though wrought by his own power, were ascribed to the Father^c—

Hence the Father was particularly glorified by them^d—]

In his death

[In this he most eminently glorified the Father^e—

^a Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

^b Ps. ii. 7.

^c John xiv. 10.

^d Matt. ix. 8.

^e John xiii. 31, 32.

Even Peter in his death is said to glorify God^f—

Much more did Jesus both in the manner and end of it—]

2. That he had “ finished the work which had been given him to do”

He had fulfilled the law

[This was part of his commission—

It was necessary that he should fulfil it, both that the law might be honoured, and that a righteousness should be wrought out for us—

He did fulfil it in every point—]

He had satisfied the demands of justice

[He had undertaken to expiate sin by the sacrifice of himself—

It was necessary he should do so as our surety—

He did it by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree—

He paid our debt to the uttermost farthing—]

He had introduced a new dispensation

[He had fulfilled and abrogated the Mosaic ritual—

He had set up the kingdom of God among men—

He had commissioned and qualified men to carry it on—]

This appeal afforded him just ground for the petition he proceeded to offer

II. The petition he grounds upon it

He had before prayed to be glorified on earth, ver. 1.—

He now prays to be glorified in heaven—

He had a glory with the Father before the world was

[He was from eternity with God^g—

As God he had equal glory with the Father—]

This glory he had laid aside

[He veiled his godhead in human flesh—

Being in the form of God he took on him the form of a servant—

Hence he is said to have “ made himself of no reputation”—]

He now desired to resume it

[The ends for which he had laid it aside were accomplished—

It was therefore expedient that he should resume it—]

^f John xxi. 19.

^g John i. 1.

He prayed that his human nature might be exalted to a participation of it.

[This had been promised to him^b—

And it was now about to be conferred upon himⁱ—]

This petition was highly reasonable as grounded on the foregoing appeal

[He had left heaven to promote the Father's glory—

He ought therefore to return to it for his own glory—

It was right that his body, which had been the instrument whereby the Father was glorified, should itself be glorified with the Father—]

INFER

1. How easy is it to see who are real Christians!

[Every true Christian follows Christ, and walks as he walked—

But the end and aim of Christ's life was to glorify the Father—

Here then is a plain line of distinction whereby we may judge—

May we all dread the doom of the unprofitable servant!—

May we begin the work assigned us in good earnest!—

May we on our death-bed be able to make the same appeal, and offer a similar petition to that in the text!—]

2. What ground of consolation is there for true penitents!

[The work assigned to Christ was to redeem a lost world—

He perfected that work, so that nothing need or can be added to it—

Let penitents then confide in him, and rejoice in his salvation—]

3. How blessed is the end of the Christian's labours!

[He here labours much and suffers much for God's glory—

But soon he shall be glorified with God himself—

He shall continue to enjoy that glory when the world shall be no more—

Let Christians then look forward to the end with joy—]

^b Ps. xvi. 10, 11.

ⁱ Phil. ii. 9.

LXXIV. GOD'S GIFT OF HIS SON A GROUND FOR EXPECTING EVERY OTHER BLESSING.

Rom. viii. 32. *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?*

THE gospel is justly compared to an inestimable treasure—

While it reserves all the glory to God, it communicates unspeakable blessedness to men—

The person who truly receives it cannot have any just ground of *fear*—

Nor is there any thing so great, but he may reasonably *hope* that it shall be given him—

To this effect the apostle speaks in the passage before us—

He represented the salvation of believers as altogether of grace^a—

In a triumphant manner he teaches them to defy all their enemies^b—

He declares that God's past goodness to them is a ground for expecting every other blessing at his hands

I. The goodness of God towards sinful man

The state of fallen man was desperate—

No possible way was left whereby we might restore ourselves to God's favour

God in compassion to us "spared not his own Son"^c

[Nothing less than the incarnation and death of the Son of God could remedy the miseries which mankind had brought upon themselves—

Yet, such was God's regard for our sinful race, that, rather than they should perish, he would not withhold his only Son—]

He "delivered him up" to death

[God sent not his Son merely to instruct us—

^a Ver. 30.

^b Ibid.

^c Οὐκ ἐφείσατο may either mean that he spared him not *in a way of justice*, i. e. that he exacted of him the utmost farthing of our debt (see 2 Pet. ii. 4.) or that he spared him not *in a way of bounty*, i. e. withheld him not. The latter seems to be the sense in this place.

He gave him to make atonement for our sins—
 He sent him to die even the accursed death of the cross—]

We “all” were the persons for whose sake God thus delivered him

[All indeed are not alike benefited by this gift—

But there is a sufficiency in the death of Christ to expiate the sins of all mankind—

If any receive not salvation through him, they owe it to their own obstinate unbelief—

Every one, who desires acceptance through him, may say, He was delivered up for *me*—]

This manifestation of divine goodness affords abundant ground for

II. The inference drawn from it

God will “give us all things” that are needful

[The general expression “all things” must be understood in a limited sense—

God will not give worldly riches and honours to his people—

But all things that are *good* for them he will bestow—

Whatever they need for body or soul, for time or eternity—]

He will give us all things “freely”

[He does not need to have blessings extorted from him by importunity—

He is far more willing to give than we are to ask—

Nor does he give *because* we ask, but stirs us up to ask, because he before determined to give—

He will bestow every thing on his people as a father on his own children—]

This may be inferred from what he has already done

[Will not he, who has given *his own Son*, give *smaller things*?—

Will he, who was so gracious to his *enemies*, forget his *friends*?—

Will he, who did so much *unsolicited*, refuse those who cry *day and night* unto him?—

This inference is so obvious, that the apostle appeals to the reason of every man to judge of it—

He insinuates that to doubt it would be the height of absurdity—

He seems to think that God could not act otherwise—]

By way of IMPROVEMENT let us

1. Endeavour to estimate aright this gift of God

[God's own Son is infinitely above all creatures—

All the hosts of angels and all the glory of heaven were nothing in comparison of him—

Had he been a mere creature, the apostle's inference had been inconclusive^d—

He, against whom the sword of vengeance was put forth, was Jehovah's fellow^e—

Let our gratitude rise in proportion to the excellency of this gift—

Let us contemplate its excellency, till we exclaim with the apostle^f—]

2. Let us avail ourselves of the encouragement given us to ask for more

[We daily need many things both for our bodies and souls—

And we have the fullest assurance that God will grant us what we need—

Let not any one then say "I am too unworthy to ask"—

What worthiness was there in man to obtain the gift of God's own Son?—

After HIM, can there be any thing too great for God to bestow?—

Surely then the weakest and the vilest may enlarge their petitions—

If we "open our mouths wide, God will fill them"—]

3. Let us be chiefly solicitous to receive Christ himself

[God will bestow every thing "*with Christ*"—

We cannot receive his blessings without HIM, nor him without his blessings—

Let us then in every state labour most to secure our interest in Christ—

If he be ours, we cannot but have every thing in, and with him^g—]

^d If our Lord were only a creature, the reasoning would be to this effect:—"If God delivered up one creature to endure temporal pain, how shall he not deliver millions of creatures from enduring eternal misery? If he gave one creature, who was infinitely below himself, to be deprived of life for a time, how shall he not give himself, who is infinitely above all creatures, to be our everlasting portion?" What force or propriety would there be in such reasoning as this?

^e Zech. xiii. 7. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^f 2 Cor. ix. 15.

^g 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

LXXV. ADVICE TO BACKSLIDERS.

Rev. iii. 2. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*

THE epistles to the churches of Asia seem descriptive of the state of the several churches at the time they were written—

But they are for the most part applicable also to other churches—

There are too many societies of Christians that resemble that at Sardis—

There was much profession and but little life among them—

This our Lord signified to them in the letter he dictated to St. John—

On account of it he gave them the salutary admonition in the text

I. When it may be said that the things which remain in us are ready to die

It is here supposed that there were some good things in the Sardinian church, though they were much on the decline—

What is said therefore of their being “dead” must be understood rather in reference to their *frame* than their *state*—

The things which remain in us are ready to die, *when our graces languish*—

The exercise of our graces is a sure test both of the reality and degree of our spiritual life—

We may form a judgment by examining

Our faith

[The office of faith is to realize invisible things—

When it is vigorous it discovers the comparative value of heaven and earth—

It regards the promises and threatenings of God as certain—

Hence it stimulates the soul to an active pursuit of its chief good—

But many decline in their apprehension of divine things—

They neither see so clearly, nor feel so powerfully the truths of God as they once did—

They consequently relax their diligence in the ways of God—

Such persons are evidently in the state of those at Sardis—]

Our hope

[Faith sees the reality, and hope anticipates the enjoyment of heavenly things—

When hope is lively it serves as an anchor of the soul—

It keeps us from fainting under the trials we meet with—

But oftentimes it is suffered to grow dead—

Then the future prospects are less valued—

Earthly things also rise in importance—

We are more discouraged with any difficulties—

We lose our enjoyment of heavenly things—

In this state the things that remain are ready to die—]

Our love

[Love is as wings to the believing soul—

It carries us on with ardour and delight—

It makes us entertain low thoughts of all we do—

It excites us to still greater exertions—

But when it decays, we lose our fervour—

Duties become a burden and a task—

They are performed with less frequency and spirituality—

We endure with less concern the hidings of God's face—

We are more indifferent respecting his return to our souls—

We feel less solicitude to please or honour him—

What can more strongly indicate the dying state of a soul?—]

Moreover the things which remain are ready to die, *when our corruptions increase*

Graces and corruptions are as the scales of a balance—

The growth of corruption argues the decay of the divine life—

And such decay is manifest

1. When our besetting sin resumes its ascendancy

[It is the effect of grace to mortify and subdue our besetting sin—

But that sin is rarely if ever extinguished in this world—

It is generally the first that discovers our declensions—

When that regains its power, we are sure that it is ill with the soul—]

2. When our natural hardness and obduracy of heart return

[Divine grace brings a tenderness of spirit—

It shews itself by humiliation and contrition—

But sin will blind the eyes, and harden the heart—

In this state we shall feel less compunction *in* or *after* the commission of sin—

When conscience thus fails in its office we are in a dying state indeed—]

3. When we are unwilling to be reclaimed

[A heart duly impressed desires the light—

But persons in a backslidden state often feel averse to it—

They are backward to be told of their faults—

They are ready to palliate and excuse them—

They willingly expose themselves to the temptations of sin—

This is the worst symptom that a *living* soul can experience—]

May God now accompany with his blessing

II. Our Lord's advice to persons in such a state

None can more need advice for their bodies, than these for their souls

1. Be watchful

Against self-deception

[There are many things which may hide our condition from us—

We may easily mistake gifts for graces—

We may attribute to God's Spirit what results from the operation of natural principles—

We may be less sensible of decay because it happens to be gradual—

The heart will suggest many plausible excuses—

It may satisfy itself also with hopes of a speedy revival—

But "be not deceived; God is not mocked"—]

Against the occasions of sin

[Many fall by means of their excessive care about worldly business—

Others decline through mixing too much with worldly company—

Too free an use even of lawful things injures many—

But all decay through a neglect of secret duties—

Be watchful then against these occasions of sin—

See the effect which they have produced upon you—

Resist them in future on their first appearance^b—]

2. Strengthen the things that remain

Go to Christ for his Spirit

[Christ is the only source of spiritual strength^a—

In vain will be all human endeavours without his aid—

Go then, and plead with him that promise^d—

“They that dwell under his shadow shall return,” &c.^e—]

Exercise your graces more diligently

[Every thing improves by exercise—

Put forth therefore your faith, your hope, your love—

“Stir up the gift of God that is in you”—

You will then experience the truth of that promise^f—]

Lay home upon your heart the most powerful considerations

[Think how uncomfortable a declining state is! how dishonourable to God, and dangerous to your own souls!

Consider that if God ever restore you, he may do it in such a way as shall be extremely terrible and distressing—

But what if he should “come at an unexpected hour?”—

Let instant attention then be paid to the direction following the text^g—]

ADDRESS

1. To those who have no marks of life in them

[They who are in a declining state are in great danger—

If they be not restored “their last state will be worse than their beginning”—

What danger then must they be in who exercise no graces, and indulge numberless corruptions!—

Oh! repent, ere it be too late—]

2. To those who are enjoying the divine life

[“Be not high-minded, but fear,” and be watchful—

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”—

If it be difficult to proceed, it is still more so to recover lost ground—

Remember your strength consists in depending upon Christ—

When you are weak in yourselves, then only are you truly strong—

Comfort yourselves with that description of your almighty guardian^h—]

^b Prov. iv. 14, 15.

^c Rev. iii. 1. “He hath the seven spirits of God,” i. e. a fulness of all the gifts and graces of the Spirit, with a power to dispense them in all their perfection and variety.

^d Jer. iii. 22.

^e Hos. xiv. 7.

^f 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

^g Rev. iii. 3.

^h Jude 24.

LXXVI. A CHRISTIAN'S DYING REFLECTIONS.

2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

CHRISTIANITY adapts its comforts to every part of our existence—

But its influence is peculiarly visible at the close—

St. Paul, when expecting death, was not without the most comfortable reflections,

I. In his review of the past

He had had different views of life from what are generally entertained

[Many think they have little to do but to consult their own pleasure—

But St. Paul had judged, that he had many important duties to fulfil—]

He had devoted himself to the great ends of life

[He had maintained a warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil—

He had run his race with indefatigable zeal and ardour^a—

He had kept the faith with undaunted courage and constancy—

He had disregarded life itself when it stood in competition with his duty^b—]

Hence the approach of death was pleasant

[He enjoyed the testimony of a good conscience—

He could adopt the language of his Lord and Master^c—

He was a prisoner without repining, or wishing to escape—

He was condemned, and could wait with complacency for the tyrant's stroke—]

In consequence of this, he was happy also

II. In the prospect of what was to come

He had long enjoyed the earnest of eternal blessings^d—

^a 1 Cor. ix. 26.

^c John xvii. 4.

^b Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 18.

^d Eph. i. 14.

He looked forward therefore now to the full possession of them—

[A crown of righteousness means a most exalted state of holiness and happiness in heaven—

Nor did he doubt but that such a reward was laid up for him—]

He did not however expect it on account of any merit in himself

[He speaks of it indeed as bestowed in a way of “righteous” retribution—

But he expected it wholly as the “gift” of God through Christ^e—]

Nor did he consider it as a gift peculiar to himself as an apostle

[The “longing for Christ’s second coming” is a feeling common to all Christians^f—

For them also is this crown of righteousness reserved^g—]

INFER*

1. How does the apostle’s experience condemn the world at large!

[The generality are strangers to spiritual consolations—

But there is no true religion where they are not experienced—

Let all consider what would be *their* reflections, and prospects, if they were now dying—

Let all live the life of the righteous, if they would die his death—]

2. How amply does God reward his faithful servants!

[Poor and imperfect are the best services that they can render—

Yet how different is their state from that of others both in and after death!—

Let all then devote themselves entirely to God—]

^e Rom. vi. 23.

^f 2 Pet. iii. 12.

^g Heb. ix. 28.

* If this were the subject of a funeral sermon, it might be improved *in reference to the deceased and the survivors*, to shew that the former resembled the apostle, and to stimulate the latter to a due improvement of their time.

LXXVII. THE MEANS OF DEFEATING SATAN'S
MALICE.

1 Pet. v. 8, 9. *Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, stedfast in the faith.*

THERE are many who deny the influences of the Holy Spirit—

No wonder therefore if the agency of Satan be called in question—

But there is abundant proof in the Scriptures that Satan exercises a power over the minds of men—

St. Peter had learned this truth by bitter experience—

In this view the caution he gives us is worthy of particular attention

I. The malice of Satan

Satan is the great adversary of mankind—

It was he who caused the fall of our first parents^a—

He has exerted a similar influence over all their descendants—

He still maintains his enmity against the seed of the woman^b—

He is justly compared to “a roaring lion”—

He is subtle

[The lion prowls with subtilty in search of prey—

This is noticed in David's description of wicked men^c—

Satan also uses many devices to destroy souls^d—

He suits his temptations to us with astonishing craft—

He draws us into his snare before we are aware of his designs^e—

To be acquainted with his devices is a most eminent and useful part of Christian knowledge^f—]

He is active

[The lion ranges far and wide in search of his prey—

And Satan “walks to and fro throughout the earth”^g—

He ceases not from his exertions day or night^h—

^a Gen. iii. 1—5.

^b Gen. iii. 15.

^c Ps. x. 9, 10.

^d Eph. vi. 11.

^e 2 Cor. ii. 11.

^f Ib.

^g Job i. 7. and the text.

^h Rev. xii. 10.

He is the more diligent as knowing that his time is limitedⁱ—

He has legions of emissaries acting in concert with him^k—

If at any time he suspend his attacks, it is but for a season, that he may return afterwards with greater advantage^l—]

He is cruel

[The lion little regards the agonies which he occasions—

Nor has Satan any compassion for the souls which he destroys—

The savage animal kills to satisfy the calls of nature—

But our adversary reaps no benefit from the destruction of men—

His exertions serve only to increase his own guilt and misery—

Yet is he insatiable in his thirst for our condemnation^m—]

He is powerful

[Feeble is the resistance of a lamb against the voracious lion—

Still more impotent are men before “the god of this world”—

Satan has a limited power over the elements themselvesⁿ—

The ungodly are altogether subjected to his will^o—

Nor would the saints have the smallest power to resist him, if God should deliver them into his hands^p—]

If we believe this representation of Satan’s malice, we cannot but desire to know

II. The means of defeating it

Our adversary, though great, is not invincible—

There is one stronger than he, that can overcome him^q—

And God has prescribed means whereby *we* also may vanquish him

Moderation

[An undue attachment to the things of time and sense gives him a great advantage over us—

ⁱ Rev. xii. 12.

^k Mark v. 9.

^l Compare Luke iv. 13. with Luke xxii. 53.

^m This is strongly intimated in the word *καταπίη*, “he would swallow us up.”

ⁿ Job i. 12, 19. He is called “the prince of the power of the air.”

^o Eph. ii. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

^p Many who have appeared lights in the church have been swept away by the tail of this great dragon, Rev. xii. 3, 4.

^q Luke xi. 21, 22.

He will not fail to assault us on our weak side^r—

But a deadness to the world will in some measure disarm him—

He prevailed not against our Lord, because he found no irregular affection in him^s—

Nor could he so easily overcome us if we disregarded earthly things—

A contempt of life has been a principal mean whereby the saints and martyrs in all ages have triumphed over him^t—]

Vigilance

[Unwatchfulness, even in a victorious army, exposes it to defeat—

Much more must it subject us to the power of our subtle enemy—

St. Peter had experienced its baneful effects—

He had been warned of Satan's intention to assault him^u—

He had been commanded to pray lest he should fall by the temptation^x—

But he slept when he should have been praying^y—

He stands in this respect, like Lot's wife,^z a monument to future generations—

But vigilance on our part will counteract the designs of Satan—

The armed Christian, watching unto prayer, must be victorious^a—]

Fortitude

[The timid Christian falls into a thousand snares^b—

The only way to obtain a victory is, to fight manfully—

And this is the duty of every follower of Christ^c—

We must never give way to Satan^d—

We are called to wrestle and contend with him^e—

Nor shall our resistance be in vain^f—]

Faith

[Unbelief is a powerful instrument in the hands of Satan—

He excites it in us that he may turn us from the faith—

We must therefore hold fast *the doctrines of faith*—

^r It was he who instigated Judas to treachery, and Ananias to falsehood; but he wrought by means of their covetousness, John xiii. 2. Acts v. 3.

^s John xiv. 30.

^t Rev. xii. 11.

^u Luke xxii. 31.

^x Luke xxii. 40.

^y Luke xxii. 45, 46.

^z Luke xvii. 32.

^a Eph. vi. 18.

^b Prov xxix. 25.

^c Eph. vi. 10, 13.

^d Eph. iv. 27.

^e Eph. vi. 12.

^f James iv. 7. Satan is not only checked but *terrified*, and vanquished by the resistance of the weakest Christian.

We should not suffer ourselves to be moved from the hope of the gospel—

This is our anchor whereby we must outride the storms^g—

We must also stedfastly exercise *the grace of faith*—

This is the weapon whereby we overcome the world^h—

And by this shall we triumph over Satan himselfⁱ—

APPLICATION

[Let not the ungodly despise this adversary—

But let them seek deliverance from him through the gospel^k—

And let the godly be continually on their guard against him^l—

So shall they experience that promised blessing^m—]

^g Heb. vi. 19.

^h 1 John v. 4.

ⁱ Eph. vi. 16.

^k Acts xxvi. 18.

^l 2 Cor. xi. 3.

^m Rom. xvi. 20.

LXXVIII. THE CAUSES OF OUR SAVIOUR'S INCARNATION.

Luke i. 78. 79. *Through the tender mercy of our God, the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

OUR Saviour's birth, though in many respects peculiarly low and abject, was attended with some circumstances not unworthy the occasion—

We might mention his miraculous conception, the acclamations of angels, &c. &c.—

But we shall only advert to the account given in the context of his Forerunner, who was prophesied of by Isaiah—named by the angel before his conception in the womb—born in a preternatural way—celebrated by several to whom the spirit of prophecy was given after it had been withdrawn from Israel three hundred years—commissioned to prepare men for the reception of the Saviour, and to publish the tidings in the text

I. Our Saviour's incarnation

His birth is set forth under the idea of the rising sun—

He is spoken of to this effect in the Old Testament^a—
Similar descriptions are also given of him in the New Testament^b—

He admirably answers to these descriptions

1. In himself

[He is to us what the sun is in the material world—
He is the author of all light, natural,^c intellectual,^d spiritual^e—]

2. In the effects produced by him

[The face of nature withers or revives, according as the influence of the sun upon it is increased or diminished—

So the soul continues dead or is quickened, according as the Sun of righteousness withholds or imparts his invigorating rays—]

He hath visited our benighted world

[A dawning of his appearance had been long visible in the promises, in the prophetic writings, and in the Mosaic ritual—

But at his incarnation he began more clearly to illumine this horizon—

He diffused a light around him by his doctrine and example—

They, who could see through the veil of his flesh, beheld his glory^f—]

This event is as interesting now as at the first moment it took place

We should endeavour to have our souls deeply impressed with it

II. The causes of it

We confine our attention to those mentioned in the text—

The final cause of it was the salvation of man

[The state both of Jews and Gentiles was truly deplorable—

Nor is our state, if we be unregenerate, superior to theirs—

We are “in darkness” with respect to our most important concerns—

^a By Balaam, Numb. xxiv. 17. by Isaiah, ix. 2. with Matt. iv. 16. by Malachi, iv. 2.

^b By John Baptist, John i. 9. by our Lord himself, John viii. 12. by Peter, 2 Pet. i. 19. by John the evangelist, Rev. xxii. 16. and again as the light of heaven itself, Rev. xxi. 23.

^c Gen. i. 3.

^d Job xxxviii. 36.

^e James i. 17.

^f John i. 14.

We are expecting "peace," though "in the way" of sin—
We are "in the shadow of death," or on the confines of
destruction—

But Christ became incarnate to deliver us from this state—
This end he invariably pursued in the days of his ministry—
He still prosecutes it by the ministry of his servants—]

The initial or moving cause was "the mercy of God"

[There was nothing in us that could induce God to send
his Son—

There was every thing rather that could provoke his indignation—

Yet, unsolicited, he promised to send this Saviour^g—

Thus was he actuated by mere love and mercy^h—

This account is confirmed by St. Paulⁱ—]

How should our souls glow with a sense of this
mercy!—

INFERENCES

1. How willing is God to save sinners!

[With what unwearied kindness does he cause the sun to
rise!—

And how incomprehensible the love that sent us the Sun of
righteousness!—

Surely we cannot doubt his willingness to bestow salvation—

Let not any then entertain hard thoughts of God—

Let all rather seek to have this "Day-star arise in their
hearts"—]

2. How great is the happiness of those who believe in Christ!

[They were once sitting in darkness even as others^k—

But they have been brought to behold this Day-spring from
on high!—

They are now "in the way of" present and eternal
"peace"—

How great and inestimable is their felicity!—

Let those that enjoy it be thankful for it, and look for its
full completion—]

^g Gen. iii. 15.

^h From the expression *σπλάγχνα ἐλέους*, "bowels of mercy," we may consider God as looking with pity upon fallen Adam, and reasoning with himself as he did in the case of his people Israel, Jer. xxxi. 20.

ⁱ Eph. ii. 4, 7.

^k Tit. iii. 3.

^l 1 Pet. ii. 9.

LXXIX. THE ENDS AND EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S EXHIBITION TO THE WORLD.

(Luke ii. 34, 35. *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

THE ways of God are deep and unsearchable—

The richest displays of his love have been often accompanied with the heaviest afflictions—

The honour bestowed on Paul was the forerunner of great sufferings—

Thus the Virgin's distinguished privilege of bringing the Son of God into the world was a prelude to the severest anguish to her soul—

Even the gift of the Messiah himself, while it saves some, is the occasion of a more dreadful condemnation to others—

It was foretold, that, as this was one end, so it would also be an effect of Christ's mission

I. The remote ends of Christ's exhibition to the world

God has *on the whole* consulted his creatures' good as well as his own glory—

But he will not effect the happiness of every individual—

The "*fall of many*" was one end of Christ's coming

[His appearance was contrary to the carnal expectations of the Jews—

Hence he became a stumbling-block to almost the whole nation—

It had been plainly foretold that he should be so^a—

This prophecy is frequently quoted by the inspired writers^b—

Our Lord himself expressly refers to it^c—

He elsewhere confirms the declaration contained in it^d—]

The coming of Christ actually produced this effect

[Many took offence at him^e—

^a Isai. viii. 14, 15.

^c Matt. xxi. 42, 44.

^e At his low parentage, his mean appearance, his sublime doctrines, his high pretensions, &c.

^b 1 Cor. i. 23. 1 Pet. ii. 8.

^d John ix. 39.

Thus they became more wicked than they would otherwise have been^f—

Thus also they perished with a more aggravated condemnation^g—]

But this was by no means the chief end—

The “*rising of many*” was another end of Christ’s coming

[Jews and Gentiles were in a most deplorable condition—

They were guilty, helpless, hopeless—

From this state Christ came to raise them—

This also was a subject of prophecy^h—

And our Lord often declares that this was the end of his comingⁱ—

Hence he calls himself “the resurrection and the life”^k—]

And his coming produced this effect also

[Few believed on him before his death—

But myriads were raised by him soon after—

They rose from a death in sin to a life of holiness—

This effect is still carrying on in the world—

Many from their own experience can say with Hannah^l—]

These ends, however, were more remote

II. The more immediate end

The minds of men in reference to God were very little known—

Neither ceremonial nor moral duties could fully discover their state—

But he came to make it clear how every one was affected towards God—

In order to this he was “a mark or butt of contradiction”^m

[No man ever met with so much contradiction as heⁿ—

He was contradicted by all persons,^o on all occasions,^p in the most virulent manner,^q in spite of the clearest evidence,^r and in the most solemn seasons^s— — —

John xv. 22.

g Matt. xi. 22.

b Isai. viii. 14.

i Luke xix. 10. John x. 10.

k John xi. 25.

l 1 Sam. ii. 8.

m Σημείον ἀντιλεγόμενον.

n H. b. xii. 3.

o Scribes, pharisees, lawyers, Herodians.

p In all that he *taught* about his person, work, and offices, and in all he *did*, in working miracles, &c.

q They came to catch, ensnare, and provoke him.

r They would rather ascribe his miracles to Beelzebub, and his doctrines to madness, impiety, and inspiration of the devil.

s Even on the cross itself.

This was frequently as a sword in Mary's breast—]

By his becoming such a mark, the thoughts of men's hearts were discovered

[The Pharisees wished to be thought righteous—

The Scribes, the free-thinkers of the day, pleaded for candour—

The Herodians professed indifference for all religion—

Yet they all combined against Christ—

Thus they shewed what was in their hearts—]

The preaching of Christ still makes the same discovery

[Christ is still a butt of contradiction in the world—

Before his gospel is preached, all seem to be agreed—

But when he is set forth, discord and division ensue^t—

Then the externally *righteous* people shew their enmity—

Then the *indifferent* discover the same readiness to persecute—

On the other hand the humility of others appears—

Many publicans and harlots gladly embrace the truth—

And many believers manifest a willingness to die^r for Christ—]

By way of IMPROVEMENT we may enquire

1. What self-knowledge have we gained from the preaching of Christ?

[He has been often "set forth crucified before our eyes"—

This must in a measure have revealed our thoughts to us—

What discoveries then has it made?^u—

Let us take the gospel as a light with which to search our hearts—

Let us beg of God to illumine our minds by his Holy Spirit—]

2. What effect has the preaching of Christ produced on our lives?

[We must either rise or fall by means of the gospel—

Are we then risen with Christ to a new and heavenly life?—

Or are we filled with prejudice against his church and people?—

Let us tremble lest he prove a rock of offence to us—

If we rise with him now to a life of holiness, he will raise us ere long to a life of glory—]

^t Matt. x. 34—36.

^u Has it shewn us our natural pride and self-righteousness, our self-sufficiency and self-dependence, our light thoughts of sin, our ingratitude, our unbelief, our enmity against God and his Christ? If it have not taught us these humiliating lessons, we have learned nothing yet to any good purpose.

LXXX. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN
INNOCENCE.

Hos. viii. 5. *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?*

MAN was originally made in the image of God—
He then possessed perfect innocence both in body and
soul—

But this he lost through the commission of sin—

Nor can he ever recover it in this world—

Nevertheless there is a comparative innocence to which
he may be restored—

The Israelites had altogether revolted from God—

Yet to them did God address this affectionate interro-
gation

I. In what sense sinners may be said to attain to inno-
cency

It is certain we cannot undo any thing that is past

[Not only our actions, but the effects of them will re-
main—

We cannot restore those who are now suffering the punish-
ment of sins, which they were led into by our influence or ex-
ample—

Nor can we reclaim those who are now living in courses
which we once countenanced and approved—]

Nor can we absolutely live without sin in future

[The Scriptures plainly affirm this^a—

They who boast of *sinless* perfection are under a delusion^b—

The most perfect man on earth needs as much to implore a
forgiveness of his trespasses, as a supply of his daily bread^c—]

But there is a sense wherein we may attain to inno-
cency—

Our guilt may be removed

[Christ died that he might take away all our sins^d—

And they who are interested in his death are spotless before
God^e—]

Our natures too may be renewed

[The Holy Spirit is promised to renew our souls^f—

^a 1 Kings viii. 46. James iii. 2.

^c Matt. vi. 12.

^e Eph. v. 25—27.

^b 1 John i. 8.

^d Heb. ix. 26.

^f Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

He will impart to us a divine nature^g—

He will transform us into the very image of our God^h—]

Our lives also may be holy

[A change takes place in the whole of a believer's conductⁱ—

True Christians are without any allowed guile^k—

Their new nature preserves them from all wilful sin^l—

It may be said of them as of Zacharias and Elizabeth^m—]

In these respects the apostles were said to be innocentⁿ—

Nor need any despair of attaining the same privilege

II. The greatest sinners may attain to it

Many, being already pure in their own eyes, neglect to seek it^o—

But all who seek it with humility, may attain it—

This appears throughout all the Scriptures

[The invitation to accept it extend to all^p—

The promises are unlimited, either with respect to persons,^q or sins^r—

There are examples of the most abandoned profligates having attained it^s—

Those for whom God expressed such solicitude were idolaters^t—

The voice of God by the prophet may be applied to all^u—]

APPLICATION

1. To those who are under the guilt and power of sin

[Such are they who are not cleansed by Christ, and renewed by the Spirit—

“How long” then shall it be ere this proffered mercy be accepted?—

Why should any wish to defer the pursuit of it one hour?—

Let it be sought instantly and with our whole hearts—]

2. To those who are longing for innocency

[To the question in the text, some through despondency may answer, “Never”—

But let not any fancied impossibilities discourage our application to God for this rich mercy—

^g 2 Pet. i. 4.

ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 17.

^m Luke i. 6.

^p Isai. lv. 1.

^s 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

^h Ps. li. 7. Eph. iv. 23, 24.

^k John i. 47.

ⁿ John xv. 3.

^q John vi. 37.

^t Hos. viii. 4.

^l 1 John iii. 9.

^o Prov. xxx. 12.

^r Isai. i. 18.

^u Jer. xiii. 27.

God is as able and as willing to bestow it on us, as on others—

Let us, however, beware of seeking it in our own strength—
If we look to Christ he will “save us to the uttermost”—]

3. To those who have attained it

[The best have reason to be ashamed that they were *so long* before they sought the Lord—

Nor have they now any ground for pride and self-sufficiency—

They would soon be what they once were, if God should leave them one moment—

They may rejoice, however, that their innocence is not destroyed by the unavoidable infirmities of fallen nature—

Let them then seek to have this innocency maintained in them—

Let them study to manifest it in their temper and conduct—]

LXXXI. CONSOLATION FOR THE DESPONDING.

Isai. xli. 17, 18. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

THE word of God is an inexhaustible source of instruction and comfort—

There are passages in it suited to persons in all states and conditions—

But it is calculated more especially for the afflicted and contrite—

The passage before us is peculiarly adapted to a desponding soul^a—

In its primary sense it is an encouragement to the Jews to trust in God—

In its spiritual meaning it extends to the church of God in all ages

^a God, in ver. 8. reminds his people of his *relation to them*, assures them of *his presence*, and promises them *strength*, ver. 10. *victory*, ver. 14, 15. (“thou, a worm, shalt thresh the mountains,”) and *triumph*, ver. 16. Not that they are to expect a continued series of prosperity: they may be reduced to great straits; but in their lowest state they shall still have ground for the richest consolation.

I. An afflicted case described

The people of God are for the most part in a low and afflicted state

[All men, if they knew their state, are indeed “poor and needy”—

But the generality think themselves “rich and increased with goods”—

God’s people, however, *feel* their poverty and need—

They are deeply sensible how destitute they are of wisdom, strength, &c.]

They ardently desire to be endued with holiness and comfort

[Water, as having a cleansing and refreshing quality, may well be understood to mean holiness and comfort—

And these are the chief objects of a Christian’s pursuit—

They long to be “delivered from the body of sin and death”—

They desire to be walking always in the light of God’s countenance—

They leave no means untried for the accomplishing of their wishes—]

But they often seem to be labouring in vain; “they seek water, and find none”

[They strive for victory, but the conflict remains—

Corruptions still at times harass and defile their souls—

Deadness and darkness still occasionally return upon them—

And the blessedness they pant after seems as distant as ever—]

Their frequent disappointments create much dejection of mind; “their tongue faileth,” &c.

[“Hope deferred maketh their heart sick”—

They faint, as a traveller after a long and fruitless search for water—

They begin to conclude that God will not hear their prayers—

They fear that he “has forsaken and forgotten them”—

Such diligence, disappointment, and despondency were not unknown to David^b—]

But in the text we have

II. Suitable consolation administered

A desponding person could not dictate more suitable matter of consolation—

^b Ps. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 7, 9. and Ps. lxxxviii. 1, 3, 6, 7, 14.

The character here given of God is not without great force

[The desponding person thinks his case too hard to be remedied, and his sins too heinous to be forgiven—

He is here reminded what a God he has to deal with—

God is “the Lord” with whom nothing is impossible,^e whose mercy is infinite,^d and whose love is unchangeable^e—

He is “the God of Israel,” who, however long he may try his people, will certainly bless them at last^f—

Thus do these titles of God justify that consoling declaration^g—

The promises here made by God are exactly suited to the case^h—

[“I will hear:” what an encouragement to continue in prayer!—

“I will not forsake thee:” what can the fainting soul desire more?ⁱ—

“The most discouraging circumstances shall be no bar to my favours”—

“Apparent impossibilities shall be surmounted by me”^k—

“Nor shall my communications to you be either small or transient”^l—]

Every one who relies on these promises shall experience consolation from them

^e Jer. xxxii. 27.

^d Exod. xxxiv. 6.

^e Mal. iii. 6.

^f This title is very significant: it is as though God said “Remember my servant Jacob, to what a distressing state he was reduced, how he wrestled with me all night in prayer, and yet did not prevail: remember, how I made as though I would leave him; yea, how I lamed him, and thus apparently increased his calamity. But he would not let me go, unless I blessed him. I therefore not only blessed him, but changed his name, and conferred a singular honour upon him by calling my church after his name. Thus did I shew myself *his* God; and thus will I be, yea, thus I *am* the God of all who call upon me after his example.” Or perhaps it refers rather to Exod. xvii. 1—6. where his supplying of Israel with water is mentioned.

^g Lam. iii. 32.

^h The subject of the soul’s complaint is the very subject of God’s promise. The soul laments “God will not hear me; he has utterly forsaken me; it is absurd for me to cherish an hope; I might as soon expect to find rivers on a lofty mountain, as to possess grace and peace in my soul.”

ⁱ Here is a particular reference to the promise made to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 15. which he afterwards pleaded with God, Gen. xxxii. 12. and which is renewed to us, Heb. xiii. 5.

^k Though the heart be as a dry and barren wilderness, it shall be refreshed, “I will open rivers in high places.”

^l They shall be *plenteous* as “pools and rivers,” and *incessant* as “springs and fountains.”

[David bears his testimony that his cries were not in vain^m—

And all who plead like him, shall find reason to make his acknowledgmentsⁿ—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who are unconcerned about the blessings of salvation

[The generality know but little of *spiritual* troubles—

But their exemption from them is by no means to be desired—

They at the same time have no interest in these precious promises—

They taste not the rich consolations of the gospel—

And how will “their tongue fail for thirst” in the eternal world!—

Let all then seek to know their spiritual wants—

Let them obey the invitation of our blessed Lord^o—

Let them take encouragement from that gracious offer^p—]

2. Those who are fainting for want of them

[Many, eminently pious, have been in your state—

But none ever waited upon God in vain—

These promises cannot possibly fail of being accomplished—

From them, as “from wells of salvation, you may draw water with joy”—

They shall certainly be fulfilled to you, both here,^q and for ever^r—]

^m Ps. xxxiv. 6.

ⁿ Ps. xxx. 8—11.

^o John vii. 37, 38.

^p Rev. xxii. 17.

^q Ps. xxxvi. 8.

^r Ps. xvi. 11.

LXXXII. CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS.

1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious.*

THERE is a great difference between the views of natural and spiritual men—

This exists even with respect to things temporal; much more in those which are spiritual and eternal—

It appears particularly with respect to Christ—

Hence St. Peter represents him as disallowed of some, but chosen by others—

This was designed of God, and agreeable to the prophecies—

And it justifies the inference drawn from it in the text—

We shall shew

I. That Christ is precious to believers

We might suppose he would be so to all men; but he is not—

Nevertheless he is so to all that truly believe—

The history of the Old Testament affords abundant proof of this—

[Abraham rejoiced to see his day, though at a distance^a—

Job delighted in death as the means of introducing him to his presence^b—

Moses esteemed reproach for his sake^c—

David regarded nothing in earth or heaven in comparison of him^d—

Isaiah exulted in the prospect of his incarnation^e—]

The New Testament scriptures confirm it

[The virgin, while he was yet in her womb, sang his praises^f—

The angels congratulated the shepherds on his incarnation^g—

The just and devout Simeon after seeing him, could depart in peace^h—

John baptist, as the bridegroom's friend, rejoiced in his voiceⁱ—

How precious was he to that Mary who was a sinner!^k—

St. Paul counted all as dung for the knowledge of him, was willing to be bound, or to die for him, and knew no comfort like the expectation of being with him^l—

The glorified saints and angels incessantly adore him^m—]

The experience of living saints accords with that of those who have gone beforeⁿ—

^a John viii. 56.

^b Job xix. 25—27.

^c Heb. xi. 26.

^d Ps. lxxiii. 25.

^e Isai. ix. 6.

^f Luke i. 47.

^g Luke ii. 10.

^h Ib. ver. 29, 30.

ⁱ John iii. 29.

^k Luke vii. 38.

^l Phil. iii. 8. Acts xxi. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 18.

^m Rev. v. 12, 13.

ⁿ There are many to whom he is τιμιον preciousness itself; who account him as the pearl of great price, desire to know more of him, grieve that they cannot love him more, think afflictions good when they lead to him, and despise all in comparison of him.

The world even wonders at them on account of their attachment to him

II. Why he is so precious to them

They have reason enough for their attachment—

They love him *for his own excellence*

[He is infinitely above all created beauty or goodness—

Shall they then regard these qualities in the creature, and not in him?—

Whosoever views him by faith cannot but admire and adore him—]

They love him *for his suitableness to their necessities*

[There is in Christ all which believers can want—

Nor can they find any other capable of supplying their need—

Hence they delight in him as their “all in all”—]

They love him *for the benefits they receive from him*

[They have received from him pardon, peace, strength, &c.

Can they do otherwise than account him precious?—]

We may rather wonder why all do not feel the same attachment

III. Why he is not precious to others

There certainly exists no reason on his part; he is good to all—

But unbelievers cannot love him

1. Because they have no views of his excellency

[The god of this world has blinded them that they cannot see him^o—

How then should they esteem him, whose excellency they know not?—

They must of necessity be indifferent to him, as men are to things of little value—]

2. Because they feel no need of him

[Christ is valuable only as a remedy^p—

Nor can any man desire him as a physician, a fountain, a refuge, unless he feel some disease, some thirst, some danger—]

APPLICATION

[All, who have any spiritual discernment, feel a love to Christ—

^o 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^p Isai. xxxii. 2.

He is beloved of the Father, of angels, and of saints—
None but devils and unbelievers despise him—

And shall any, who do not account him precious, be objects of his regard?—

Surely his final decision will correspond with that declaration^a—

Let all then believe in him, that he may become precious to them—

Nor let any be dejected because they cannot delight in him as they wish—

The more we love him, the more shall we lament the coldness of our love—

In a little time all the powers of our souls shall act without controul—

Then shall we glory in him with unrestrained and unabated ardour—]

^a 1 Sam. ii. 30.

LXXXIII. GOD'S COMPASSION.

Hos. xi. 7—9. *My people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them unto the Most High, none at all would exalt him: [yet] how shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger.*

THE riches of divine grace are manifest in all the promises—

But they are more eminently displayed in the manner in which the promises are given—

God often introduces them after an enumeration of his people's sins—

The passage before us well exemplifies this remark^a—

God has been contrasting his kindness to Israel, and their ingratitude towards him—

In the text he sets forth their wickedness with all its aggravations—

^a See similar instances, Isai. xliii. 22—25. and lvii. 17, 18.

Yet all this is preparatory, not to an heavy denunciation of his wrath, but to the tenderest expressions of paternal love—

I. The conduct of men towards God

The ten tribes, since their separation from Judah, had become idolaters—

Yet God calls them his people because they had been admitted into covenant with him, and still professed to be his—

Thus all who call themselves Christians are “God’s people”—

But they “are bent to backsliding from him”

[The ungodly are justly compared to an unruly heifer—

They will not submit to the yoke of God’s laws—

Their whole spirit and temper is like that of Pharaoh^b—

The “bent” and inclination of their hearts is wholly towards sin—

An outward conformity to God’s will they may approve—

But they have a rooted aversion to spiritual obedience—]

Nor can they by any means be prevailed on to “exalt and honour him”

[They are “called” frequently by God’s ministers—

They are exhorted and intreated to return to the Most High—

But neither promises can allure nor threatenings alarm them—

They turn a deaf ear to all admonitions—

They will not “exalt” God in their hearts and lives—]

This is almost universally the conduct of mankind

[There are a few indeed who desire and delight to serve God—

They wish him to be the sole Lord and Governor of their hearts—

It is their study to exalt him both in their words and actions—

But these are few in every age and place—

So few, that, in comparison of the rebellious, they may be said to be “none at all”—]

What might such persons expect at the hand of God?

II. God’s conduct towards them

^b Exod. v. 2.

How different are God's ways from the ways of man!—

Instead of executing vengeance in a moment,
He deliberates

[Admah and Zeboim were cities destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah—

And such monuments of wrath do the unregenerate deserve to be—

But God knows not, as it were, how to inflict the deserved punishment—

He calls to mind that they are *his* people^e—

He hesitates, like a parent, that is about to disinherit his son—

Thus is he distracted between his affection for them, and his regard for his own honour^d—]

He relents

[To accommodate himself to our weak comprehensions he speaks of himself after the manner of men—

He cannot endure the thought of making men the objects of his everlasting displeasure—

Thus did Jesus weep over the murderous Jerusalem^e—

And thus do the bowels of our Father yearn over us^f—]

He resolves

[Often has “the fierce anger” of the Lord been kindled against us—

Yet many times has he turned away from his wrathful indignation^g—

Often, when his bow was bent, has he forborne to strike^h—

He waits, in hope that he may yet return to him—

His language to his rebellious creatures is the same as everⁱ—]

INFER

1. How precious in the sight of God are the souls of men!

[When it was necessary for man's salvation, God gave his Son—

Nor did he then *deliberate*, “how shall I do this?”^k—

Neither did he *relent*, when he laid our iniquities on him^l—

Yea, he was even *pleased* in bruising his own Son for us^m—

* The repetition of their names, “*thee*, Ephraim, and *thee*, Israel,” seems to import tenderness and affection towards them.

^d Thus also in Hos. vi. 4.

^e Luke xix. 41.

^f Jer. xxxi. 20. ^g Ps. lxxviii. 38.

^h Ps. vii. 11, 12.

ⁱ Jer. ii. 12, 13. ^k Rom. viii. 32.

^l Mark xiv. 35, 36.

^m This is the proper sense of Isai. liii. 10.

But when a sinner seems irreclaimable, every tender emotion is excited—

God sustains a conflict in his mind, and cannot give him up—

O that men would duly estimate the worth of their own souls!—]

2. How just will be the condemnation of the impenitent!

[This compassion of God greatly aggravates their backslidings—

And at last it will give way to wrath and indignationⁿ—

Soon God will not deliberate, but decide; not relent, but laugh at their calamity; not resolve to pardon, but swear they shall not enter into his rest—

Then how just will their condemnation appear!—

May this goodness of God now lead us to repentance!—]

3. How certainly shall the returning sinner find mercy!

[If God feel thus for the rebellious, how much more for the penitent!—

Let all then seek him with humble confidence in his mercy—

Let them offer their supplications like those of old^o—

So shall that song of praise succeed their present disquietude^p—]

ⁿ Gen. vi. 3.

^o Isai. lxiii. 15.

^p Isai. xii. 1.

LXXXIV. THE GOOD EFFECTS OF A CANDID ATTENTION TO THE GOSPEL.

— Acts xvii. 11, 12. *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.*

THE clamour often raised against the gospel is no argument against the gospel itself—

God's messengers have in all ages been opposed by the ungodly—

Even our Lord himself, who spake as never man spake, was credited by very few—

But there will always be found some who will give the truth a favourable reception—

Different hearers are differently affected with the word they hear in these days—

This however only shews that human nature is the same now that it was in St Paul's time—

I. Wherein the Beræans excelled the Thessalonians

The Jews in Beræa had been educated in the same prejudices as those in Thessalonica—

Yet their conduct was in perfect contrast with that of the Thessalonians—

They excelled

1. In candour

[The Thessalonians would not so much as consider what they heard from the Apostle—

But the Beræans “enquired whether these things were so”—

They did not conclude every thing to be false which did not accord with their pre-conceived opinions—

This was a noble spirit, because it shewed that they were not in subjection to their prejudices—]

2. In equity

[The Thessalonians, not satisfied with rejecting the word, were filled with wrath against those who delivered it unto them^a—

Nothing could be more contrary to equity than thus to calumniate the innocent, and persecute the messengers of heaven—

The Beræans, on the contrary, made a diligent use of the means afforded them for solving their doubts—

They “searched the Scriptures,” which they considered as the only standard of truth, and to which the Apostle himself had appealed—

They “searched them daily,” that they might form their judgment upon the surest grounds—

They would neither receive nor reject any thing which they had not maturely weighed—]

3 In regard for truth

[Truth was neither sought for nor desired by the Thessalonian Jews—

Loving darkness rather than light, they strove to extinguish the light which shone around them—

^a They misrepresented the principles of the apostle, stirred up a tumult against him, assaulted his friends under colour of justice, obliged him to flee for his life, followed him with unrelenting animosity to Beræa, and, notwithstanding the acceptance he met with there, drove him from thence also.

But the Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind”—

They were glad to get instruction in matters of such moment—

Their hearts were prepared for it, as melted wax for the seal^b—

Thus they acted as beings endowed with reason, while the Thessalonians resembled irrational and ferocious beasts—]

Suited to their noble disposition^c was

II. The benefit which accrued to them by means of it

Many at Berea became obedient to the faith

[While the Thessalonians rejected the overtures of mercy, the Bereans thankfully embraced them—

By believing in Christ they became partakers of his salvation—

And now are they rejoicing before the throne of God, while the contemners of the gospel are gnashing their teeth in hell—

Who can duly appreciate the greatness of this benefit?—]

This benefit resulted from the noble disposition which they exercised

[Faith is certainly the gift of God^d—

Nor can any disposition that is in us, merit that gift—

But there is a preparation of mind requisite for a due reception of the gospel—

And where that state of mind is, there truth will make its way—

This arises from the very structure of the human mind, which, like the eye, beholds things imperfectly when diseased, but clearly when free from blemish^e—

And it is both illustrated and confirmed by various examples in Holy Writ—

Where the “honest and good heart” is, there the seed will spring up, and bring forth fruit^f—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who never have believed

[Guard against the illiberal conduct of the Thessalonians—

^b See Rom. vi. 17. which, in the Greek, conveys the idea of being cast into a mould. ^c Even a heathen saw that such a virtuous disposition constituted the only true nobility. “Nobilitas sola est, atque unica, virtus.” Juv. Sat. 8. ^d Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29.

^e Matt. vi. 22, 23 with Prov. ii. 10, 11.

^f Nicodemus; John iii. 2. Cornelius; Acts x. 33. And Lydia; Acts xvi. 14. ^g Luke viii. 15.

Avoid a captious, envious, persecuting spirit—
 Cultivate the more noble spirit of the Beræans—
 Take the Scriptures as the test of truth^h—
 Search them with care and diligenceⁱ—
 Compare what you hear with them^k—
 Pray for wisdom, that you may discern aright^l—
 Rest assured that you shall not use these means in vain^m—]

2. Those who have believed

[Love instruction, and improve all opportunities of gaining itⁿ—

Seek to be more established in the faith^o—

But weigh every sentiment in the balance of the sanctuary^p—

And let the Scripture be your study and delight^q—]

^h Isai. viii. 20.

ⁱ John v. 39.

^k 1 Thess. v. 21.

^l Jam. i. 5.

^m Prov. ii. 1—6.

ⁿ Prov. iv. 5—9.

^o Col. ii. 6—8.

^p 1 John iv. 1.

^q Ps. i. 2, 3.

LXXXV. THE STABILITY OF THE COVENANT.

— 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

GOD has a people whom he will preserve from apostasy—

But he will keep them by the instrumentality of their own care and watchfulness—

There were *some* in the apostolic age seduced from the faith, and led to think that the resurrection was passed already—

But St. Paul entertained no fears for the ark of God—

He was persuaded that God would keep his faithful people: “they overthrew the faith of some: nevertheless,” &c.

I. What is meant by the foundation of God

It does not seem to refer to the doctrine of the resurrection—

The context indeed mentions this doctrine; but the immediate connexion of the text is with the apostasy that had prevailed—

The “foundation” relates rather to the covenant of grace—

Christ is, in some respects, the *only* foundation^a—

Nevertheless the covenant of grace may be represented in this light—

It is the foundation of *God's dealings towards us*

[From a regard to it he bears with us in our *unconverted* state^b—

From a regard to it he effects our *conversion*^c—

From a regard to it he endures our backslidings *after conversion*^d—

From a regard to it he restores us after we have fallen^e—]

It is also the foundation of *our hope towards God*

[We have no claim upon God independent of the covenant—

But in his covenant with Christ, and with us in him, he has engaged to give us all that we want^f—

We receive spiritual blessings, only as being parties in it^g—

The continuance of those blessings to us is only in consequence of our interest in it^h—]

This foundation standeth sure

II. Wherein its stability consists

The foundation of God is represented as having a sealⁱ—

This seal is God's unchanging love; “God knoweth,” &c.

[Knowledge is here, as in many other places, put for love^k—

In this sense it is represented as a seal of the covenant—

Love is stamped, as it were, on every part of the covenant, gives a kind of validity to it, and is inseparable from it—]

This unchanging love is the stability of the covenant

[We should continually forfeit our interest in it—

^a 1 Cor. iii. 11. ^b Ezek. xxxvi. 21—23, 32.

^c 2 Tim. i. 9. Jer. xxxi. 3. ^d 1 Sam. xii. 22.

^e Luke xxii. 32. ^f 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. ^g Rom. viii. 29, 30.

^h Rom. ix. 16. ⁱ There is no confusion of metaphor here,

because foundation stones often have *σφραγίδες*, an inscription (as the word means, Rev. ix. 4.) But there is peculiar propriety in the metaphor of a seal as applied to a covenant. ^k Ps. i. 6.

No believer whatever, if left to himself, would be stedfast in it—

Our daily transgressions are sufficient to exclude us from it for ever—

But God's love changeth not!—

He betroths us to himself in faithfulness for ever^m—

He loves and keeps us, not for our sake, but for his own name's sakeⁿ—

Hence all our security arises^o—]

The covenant, however, does not make void our obligations to holiness—

III. The improvement we should make of it

The privileges of Christians are exceeding great—

But we are in danger of turning the grace of God into licentiousness—

Hence the apostle cautions us against abusing this covenant^p

[They “who name the name of Christ” are those who profess Christ's religion—

And *that* profession supposes them to be interested in the covenant—

But continuance in sin would be inconsistent with that profession—

The covenant prohibits the indulgence even of the smallest sin—

It provides strength for the mortification of every lust—

It secures holiness to us as well as salvation—

It engages for our salvation *only* in a way of holiness—

Let it not then be made a ground of presumptuous security—

Let it rather operate as an incentive to diligence—

Let it incline “every one” to stand at the greatest distance from sin^q—]

INFER

What rich consolation is here for every true believer!

^l Jam. i. 17. Rom. xi. 29.

^m Hos. ii. 19.

ⁿ Deut. vii. 6—8.

^o St. Paul considers

the stedfastness of the foundation as connected with, and depending on God's immutable regard for his people: and to this is their final salvation to be ascribed. Mal. iii. 6. ^p If *καὶ* were translated “*but*” the sense would be incomparably more clear: it has this sense in many places; and is so translated, 2 Tim. iii. 11. and 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

^q Ἐπισητά ἀπὸ.

[There ever have been some apostates from the church of Christ—

But their defection does not disprove the stability of God's covenant—

The reason of their departure is accounted for by St. John^r—

Let not then any be dejected when they see the falls of others—

God “knows” his sheep, and will suffer “none to pluck them out of his hands”—

Nor need any despond on account of their indwelling corruptions—

It is not *sin lamented*, but *sin indulged*, that will destroy the soul—

Let every one be more anxious to lay hold on this covenant—

It will be found at last, that it is “ordered in all things and sure”—]

† 1 John ii. 19.

LXXXVI. THE DESIGN AND IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi. 24. 26. *This do in remembrance of me for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

THE Corinthians had shamefully profaned the Lord's supper—

St. Paul reproveth them, and rectifies their views of that ordinance—

I. The design of the Lord's supper

Our ungrateful hearts are prone to forget the richest mercies—

To keep up “the remembrance” of his death, Christ instituted his last supper—

When we celebrate that ordinance, we “shew forth” his death

[The passover was a memorial of the deliverance vouchsafed to the Jews from the sword of the destroying angel—

At every returning celebration of it the reason of that ordinance was declared^a—

Christ in his death has effected a greater deliverance for us—

In partaking of the bread and wine we “shew forth” his death—

We shew forth *the manner of it* as excruciating and bloody^b—

We shew forth *the end of it* as a sacrifice for our sins^c—

We shew forth *the sufficiency of it* for our full salvation^d—]

We shew forth his death “till he come”

[Christ will, in due season, come again to judge the world—

Then his people will no longer need such memorials as these—

They will incessantly enjoy the brightest vision of his person, and the richest fruits of his death—

But till then the remembrance of his dying love, and the expectation of his future advent, must be thus preserved—

Such was Christ’s end in instituting, and such should be our end in observing it—]

To enforce the observance of this ordinance, we will proceed to shew

II. The necessity of attending it

The duty of commemorating our Lord’s death is much neglected

But a neglect of it involves us in the deepest guilt—

It implies

1. Rebellion against the highest authority

[Christ, the supreme governor of heaven and earth, has said, “Do this”—

Yet the language of too many is, “I will not”—

^a In reference to Exod. xii. 26, 27. a custom obtained among the Jews that a child should ask the meaning of the passover, and that the person who presided should then give an account of its intent and origin, that so the remembrance of God’s mercy might be transmitted to their latest posterity: and this was called “the declaration” or “shewing forth.” Dr. Gill on the text.

^b The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine seem well calculated to impress this idea.

^c In this light it is represented by St. Paul, 1 Cor. v. 7, and by our Lord himself, Matt. xxvi. 28.

^d We express our affiance in his blood as the Jews did in the blood of the Paschal Lamb, when they sprinkled their door-posts with it, and eat of the flesh that had been roast with fire.

But they who disregarded *the passover* did not go unpunished^e—

Much less shall they who slight the invitations to *Christ's supper*^f—

Surely it is no less than madness to persist in this rebellion—]

2. Ingratitude towards our greatest benefactor

[Christ has even “given his own life a ransom for us”—

And shall we disregard his dying command?—

On the same night that he was betrayed, did he institute these memorials of his death—

Had he *at that season* such a concern for us, and can we refuse to do so small a thing in remembrance of him?—

The Jews went thrice every year up to Jerusalem, from the extreme parts of Judea, to commemorate their deliverance—

And shall we turn our backs on the table when it is spread before us?—

Shall not God visit for such ingratitude as this?^g—]

3. Contempt of the richest mercies

[To communicate, without discerning the Lord's body, can profit us nothing—

But to approach the table in humility and faith is a sure mean of obtaining all spiritual blessings—

Christ sometimes reveals himself in the breaking of bread, to those who had not so fully discovered him in the ministration of the word^h—

And do they not manifest a contempt of these mercies, who will not use the means of procuring them?—

How may the Saviour take up that lamentation over them!ⁱ—]

4. A renunciation of our baptismal covenant

[In baptism we covenanted to renounce the world, &c. and to serve God—

This covenant we ought to renew and confirm at the Lord's table—

^e If a man had contracted any ceremonial defilement, or were on a journey, he might omit eating the passover at the appointed time; only he must eat it a month afterwards. But if he forbore to eat of it without any such impediment, God said concerning him, “that soul shall be cut off, *that man shall bear his sin.*” Numb. ix. 7—11.

^f Luke xiv. 24. ^g Let such conduct be expressed in words; “Thou didst indeed give thy body to be broken, &c. for me; and only requirest me to eat bread, &c. in remembrance of thee; but I account even that too much to do for thee:” Who could dare to utter such language? Or who would endure it if spoken by his servant or his child? Yet such is the language of our actions.

^h Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

ⁱ Matt. xxiii. 37.

But our refusing to confirm it is a tacit renunciation of it—
And can we hope that God will fulfil his part while we violate ours?—

Will he be our God when we refuse to be his people?—]

We shall CONCLUDE with answering some excuses

[“*I am not prepared*”—How then can you be prepared to die?^k—

“*I am afraid of eating and drinking my own damnation*”—

Are you not afraid of damnation for neglecting your duty?^l—

“*I am afraid of sinning afterwards, and thereby increasing my guilt*”—

If sins after receiving the Lord's supper were unpardonable, none should receive it till the last moment of their lives^m—

“*The time of administering it interferes with other engagements*”—

To those who cannot deny themselves in any thing, we say with Paulⁿ—

But where the difficulties are insurmountable, God will accept the will for the deed^o—

They however, who are at liberty, should attend “as often” as they can—

Only they must be careful to communicate with reverence, humility, faith, and gratitude—]

^k Is not this acknowledgment the strongest reason for immediate repentance?

^l In neglecting duty you insure condemnation; in practising it as well as you can (to say the least) you *may* avert it.

^m If you really desire strength, where would you so soon obtain it? But if you determine to live in sin, your condemnation will be equally sure whether you come or not.

ⁿ Rom. iii. 8. ad fin.

^o Matt. xii. 7.

LXXXVII. ON THE PREPARATION REQUISITE BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

GOD is an holy and jealous God, and greatly to be feared—

In all our approaches to him we should be filled with awe—

But a want of reverence prevails among the generality of mankind—

Even real Christians manifest it sometimes, and that too even in the most sacred ordinances—

St. Paul, reproving the Corinthians for their conduct at the Lord's supper, lays down an universal rule for communicants—"Let a man," &c.

I. The duty of self-examination in general—

This is an important but much neglected duty—

It is strongly recommended in the Scriptures—

[The apostle expressly enjoins it to all^b—

This injunction is remarkably strong and energetic^c— — —]

There is great reason for it—

We cannot ascertain the state of our souls without it

[It is evident that the generality of men deceive themselves—

We also are liable to the same deception through pride and self-love—

Nor can we form a right conclusion without a strict investigation—]

A mistake respecting our state would be fatal

[There is no repentance in the grave—

As we die, so shall we continue for ever—]

The benefits to be derived from it are exceeding great

[If our state be found good, we shall rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience—

If it be bad, we shall be stirred up to flee from the wrath to come—]

We should therefore live in the habitual practice of this duty^d—

But self-examination is more especially needful on certain occasions—

^a 1 Cor. xi. 20—22.

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^c In the words δοκιμάζετε and ἀδόκιμοι, which latter is too harshly translated "reprobate," there seems an allusion to the trying of metals by a touchstone: the repetition also of the injunction, and the expostulation that follows it, are expressive of the apostle's earnestness, and consequently of the importance of the duty enjoined.

^d Ps. lxxvii. 5.

II. The need of it before the Lord's supper in particular

This is intimated in the text; "Let a man examine himself, and *so* let him come"—

And indeed there is peculiar reason for it at that time—

That ordinance is a season of remarkable solemnity

[There we see Christ crucified, as it were, before our eyes—

There we contemplate the most stupendous mysteries—

There we commemorate the greatest of all mercies—

There we are admitted to most familiar fellowship with God—

And does it become us to engage lightly in such an ordinance?—]

It is a season that calls for the exercise of all our powers

[The understanding should be occupied in devoutest meditations—

The affections should be engaged to the uttermost—

And can we thus command our faculties without any preparation?—]

The neglect of self-examination may rob us of all the benefit of the ordinance

[Who can estimate the benefits we might receive if we came prepared?—

But who has not often communicated in vain?—

And has not our neglect been the true cause of this?—]

We should therefore be peculiarly attentive to it at such a season

To assist in the discharge of this duty we shall shew

III. The subjects which we should then more especially enquire into

We should examine ourselves respecting

Our knowledge of the ordinance itself

[To come without a proper discernment is dangerous—

We should enquire what we know of the nature and ends of the ordinance—

On a distinct view of these our profiting much depends—]

The state of our souls before God

[At the Lord's table we receive "the children's bread"—

We should enquire therefore whether we be God's children?—]

The immediate frame of our souls

[We ought to have all our graces in lively exercise—]

APPLICATION

[Begin this necessary work without delay— — —

Yet set not about it in a legal manner or for self-righteous ends—

Do not trust in your preparation, or expect acceptance on account of it—

But look to Christ as the only ground of your hope towards God—

Neither stay away from the table because you have not spent so much time in preparation as you could wish—

Whether you have used more or less diligence you must go as the publican^e—

Be assured however that your profiting will for the most part be proportioned to your preparation—]

^f Cant. iv. 16.

^e Luke xviii. 13.

LXXXVIII. ON EATING AND DRINKING OUR OWN DAMNATION.

1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. *Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

THE more excellent any thing is, the greater is the guilt contracted by the abuse of it—

A contempt of the law is not so bad as a contempt of the gospel—

An irreverent attendance on divine ordinances is exceedingly sinful—

But to profane the Lord's supper is worse, inasmuch as that institution is more solemn and brings us nearer to God—

^a Heb. x. 28, 29.

Hence when St. Paul reproved the former, he spake mildly—

But when he reproved the latter, he spake with great severity—

I. What it is to eat the bread, and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily

To understand this, we should enquire how the Corinthians behaved—

The abuses of which they were guilty are impracticable now—

Nevertheless we may imitate them in our spirit and temper—

Like them we shall eat and drink unworthily if we do it

1. Ignorantly

[The Corinthians did not discriminate between the common and religious use of the consecrated elements—

Many at this time also partake without discerning the Lord's body—

They, not remembering his death, defeat the end for which the Sacrament was instituted—]

2. Irreverently

[The customs of our country do not admit of our meeting in the tumultuous way that was practised at Corinth^d—

But many are altogether as destitute of reverence and sacred awe—

A light, worldly, impenitent heart is unbecoming that solemnity—

Such a frame, if habitual, makes us partake unworthily—]

3. Uncharitably

[The rich did not impart of their provisions to the poor^e—

We also may be equally destitute of Christian love—

We may be haughty, injurious, unforgiving, &c.—

Such a frame wholly unfits us for the Lord's table^f—]

^b 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40.

^c Ver. 20—22. Their conduct seems at first sight to be absolutely inconsistent with a profession of Christianity. But, having been accustomed to such behaviour in their feasts during their Gentile state, they were as yet too much addicted to their former habits.

^d 1 Cor. xi. 21.

^e 1 Cor. xi. 22.

^f Matt. v. 23, 24.

4. Sensually

[The Corinthians made it an occasion for intemperance and excess—

Though we cannot imitate them in this, we may be as carnal as they—

A want of spirituality and affiance in Christ makes our service carnal—

Nor can such a service be acceptable to Him who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth—]

To attend at the Lord's table in such a manner is no slight or venial offence

II. The consequence of so doing

The consequences mentioned in the text respect

1. The guilt we contract

[They were "guilty of the body and blood of our Lord" who crucified him, as are they also who apostatize from his truths—

They too are involved in the same guilt who partake unworthily of the Lord's supper—

They manifest a contempt of his sacrifice^b—

What dreadful iniquity is this!—

How careful should we be to abstain from the commission of it!—]

2. The punishment we incur

[The word "damnation" imports *temporal judgment*ⁱ—

Eternal damnation is by no means a necessary consequence of this sin^k—

Yet if it be unrepented of, no doubt this punishment will follow—

And we may expect some spiritual or temporal judgments for it *here*—

We should therefore examine ourselves well before we attend the table of the Lord^l—]

ADDRESS

1. Those who urge this as an excuse for neglecting the Lord's supper

[There are many who under this pretext cover their own unwillingness to yield themselves up to God—

But God will not admit their vain excuses—

^g Heb. vi. 6.

^b Heb. x. 29.

ⁱ The apostle explains his meaning in the following verse; "for, for this cause," &c. and he tells us that it was a chastisement inflicted to *keep them from* eternal condemnation, ver. 32.

^k Matt. xii. 31.

^l Ver. 28.

The habitual neglect of their duty insures the punishment which they desire to avoid—

Let all then devote themselves to the Lord in the use of all his instituted ordinances—]

2. Those who are really kept away by a fear of incurring this punishment

[Many are kept from the table by a sense of their own unworthiness—

But to be unworthy, and to partake unworthily, are very different things^m—

Yet if we have partaken unworthily in past times, let us humble ourselves for it; and then may we come again with joy—

This has been the experience of many,ⁿ and may be ours also—]

^m A rebel against a mild and merciful prince is unworthy of pardon: but if he receive with gratitude the pardon offered him, and return to his allegiance, he receives it worthily. Thus we are *unworthy* of the smallest mercies, and much more of the children's bread: but if we receive this bread with humility, gratitude, and an increasing devotedness of heart to God, we receive it as we ought, that is, *worthily*.

ⁿ 2 Chron. xxx. 15—23.

LXXXIX. CHRIST, THE FOUNTAIN OPENED.

Zech. xiii. 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness.*

THE various metaphors by which our Lord is described in Scripture, while they give just representations of him, are frequently calculated in a peculiar manner to impress the minds of those who heard them—

This remark admits of the fullest confirmation from our Lord's own discourses^a—

It may also be illustrated by the prophecy before us

The Jews had heard of the wanderings of their ancestors in the wilderness—

^a See John vi. 35. and xi. 25.

And they had themselves traversed a much larger tract of country in their return from the Babylonish captivity—

To them therefore the tidings of a fountain to be opened would convey very strong and pleasing sensations—

Nor shall *we* be unaffected by them if we lament our spiritual defilements—

We propose to consider

I. The meaning of the prophecy

The Scriptures often mention a time under the expression “that day”

[This expression sometimes refers to the apostolic, and sometimes to the millennial period—

It is to be understood in this place as designing the former—

That was a day in comparison of which all preceding ages were but as the morning dawn—

Then the mists of Gentile ignorance and Jewish superstition were dispelled before the Sun of Righteousness—]

At that period Christ was to be known under the notion of “a fountain”

[Christ is frequently spoken of under the metaphor of a fountain^b—

He virtually applies the name to himself^c—

He is described nearly by the same character even in heaven^d—

He justly answers to this description, having within himself an inexhaustible source of blessings—]

He was to be a fountain “opened”

[From eternity was he as “a fountain sealed,” having in himself all fulness, before there existed any creatures to whom he might impart of it—

Before his incarnation he afforded a scanty measure of his Spirit^e—

^b Jer. ii. 13. Isai. xii. 3.

^c The Jews after their return from Babylon used on a certain day to fetch water in a joyous and triumphant manner from the pool of Siloam, in reference, it is supposed, to Isai. xii. 3. And on that day our Lord addressed them, and pointed them to himself as the true well of salvation, John vii. 37, 38.

^d Rev. xxii. 1. The river, which John beheld, proceeded out of the throne of the Lamb.

^e The meanest Christian is more enlightened than the greatest of the prophets, Luke vii. 28.

At the time of his death he properly became a fountain opened—]

The persons for whom it was to be opened were “the house of David,” &c.

[“The house of David” are the spiritual seed of Christ^f—

“The inhabitants of Jerusalem” are the members of the Christian church—

Both together import all believers, high and low, rich and poor—

None are excluded who wish to participate his blessings—]

The end for which it was to be opened was, to cleanse from “sin”

[There had been fountains for *ceremonial uncleanness*^g—

There were also fountains for the cure of *bodily disorders*^h—

But Christ was a fountain for *moral defilement*, and *spiritual maladies*—]

In due season this prophecy received its accomplishment

II. The completion of it

From the incarnation of Christ this fountain was more fully exhibited—

During his ministry its waters flowed in partial streams—

But at his death it was fully opened

It was *broken open* on the cross

[In our Lord’s agony, the blood had flowed through every poreⁱ—

Previous to his crucifixion his back had been torn with scourges^k—

The crown of thorns pierced his sacred temples^l—

His hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree^m—

^f He is the root as well as the offspring of David, Rev. xxii. 16.

^g There was a brazen sea, above fifty feet in circumference, and almost ten in depth, wherein the priests were to wash their hands and feet: there were also ten lavers wherein the things offered for sacrifice were washed, and from whence the water for the sprinkling of the offerers was taken, 2 Chron. iv. 6.

^h The pool of Siloam, whither our Lord sent the blind man to wash, John ix. 11. and which was typical of him, and was the Shiloh of the tribe of Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. and eminently *the sent* of God. Compare John ix. 7. and vi. 38—40. Bethesda was still more appropriate to this use, John v. 2—4.

ⁱ Luke xxii. 44.

^k John xix. 1. Ps. cxxxix. 3.

^l Mark xv. 17, 19.

^m Ps. xxii. 16.

And his side, pierced with the spear, emitted blood and waterⁿ—

Thus did men and devils concur in breaking open this fountain—

The dying thief was made a monument of its cleansing efficacy^o—]

It was *set open* on the day of Pentecost

[Then the Spirit was poured out in a more abundant measure—

Thousands, even of the murderers of our Lord, were cleansed by it—

The effects produced were instantaneous and abiding^p—

The blackest guilt was purged, the most ferocious natures changed—

Nor was its influence to be confined any longer to one age or nation—]

It was *left open* in the promises to all succeeding generations

[We may say of this fountain as St. Paul does of the gospelⁿ—

The word is the channel in which it flows—

It has already spread its streams to the ends of the earth^r—

It will flow till that prophecy be fully accomplished^s—

The invitations to it are yet sounding in the ears of all^t—]

ADDRESS

1. To those who expect salvation while they live in sin

[If men could be saved *in* their sins, why was this fountain opened?—

Would God have given up his Son to death without necessity?—

Or shall they who neglect the fountain be cleansed like those who wash in it?—

Let none deceive their own souls—

To wash in this fountain is **THE ONE THING NEEDFUL**—

They who cry with the leper, shall receive the same answer^u—]

2. To those who hope to cleanse themselves in some other way

[Many hope to wash away their guilt by tears of repentance—

ⁿ John xix. 34. This imported that he should cleanse both from the guilt and power of sin, 1 John v. 6.

^o Luke xxiii. 43. ^p Acts ii. 42—47. ^q Rom. x. 6—8.

^r Rom. x. 18.

^s Hab. ii. 14.

^t Isai. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.

^u Matt. viii. 2, 3.

But would God have opened *this* fountain, if any other would have sufficed?—

How lamentable that there should still be such cause for those expostulations!^x—

Let those who say like Peter, remember the answer given him^y—]

3. To those who doubt whether they may come to this fountain

[Many imagine that the greatness of their guilt is a bar to their acceptance—

But the fountain was opened *for* sin, and *for* uncleanness—

What would have been the effect of such hesitation at the pool of Bethesda?^z—

Be it remembered that all, who have *a need*, have *a right* to wash—

Let every one then press forward, lest he lose the blessing—]

4. To those who have experienced its cleansing efficacy

[It is in you that the efficacy of this fountain must be seen—

Let it appear that it has cleansed you from earthly and sensual desires—

But still you have need to wash in it daily^a—

This do, and you shall soon join in that triumphant song^b—]

^x 2 Kings v. 13.

^y John xiii. 8.

^z John v. 4, 7.

^a We contract defilement every step we take. Bishop Beveridge justly observes "Our very tears need to be washed, and our repentances to be repented of."

^b Rev. i. 5, 6.

XC. MEN'S DISREGARD OF THE GOSPEL.

[Hos. viii. 12. *I have written to them the great things of my law, and they were counted as a strange thing.*

MEN judge of sins often by their outward appearance—

But God takes into consideration its several aggravations—

Nothing more aggravates our guilt than our contempt of the means used to deliver us from it—

Hence God, in cranimating his people, whom he was about to punish, particularly charged upon them their disregard of his word

I. What are the great things of God's law

The "law" is here used for the word in general—

The "great things" of it are its fundamental truths, some of which we shall specify—

1. That man is by nature totally depraved

[The rite of circumcision and many plain passages declared this^a—]

2. That Christ offered himself a sacrifice for our sins

[This was exhibited in the types and prophecies^b—]

3. That the Holy Spirit will renew and sanctify our souls

[This was intimated by all the ceremonial lustrations, and promised in the most express terms^c—]

These things are more fully set forth in the New Testament^d—

And God himself has written them to us^e—

II. In what respects they are called "great"

1. As being *deeply mysterious*

[How inexplicable the mystery of original sin!—

How marvellous the substitution of God's only Son in our stead!—

How incomprehensible the renewal of our souls after God's image!—

Well might "the angels desire to look into these things"—]

2. As being *of infinite importance*

[Every one must *feel* his depravity, *rely* on Christ, and experience the renewing influences of the Spirit—

On these things our everlasting state depends; since without them we cannot have true penitence, or genuine faith, or a meetness for heaven—]

III. What regard is shewn to them

We might expect that men would be constantly occupied about these *great* things—

^a Gen. vi. 5. Jer. xvii. 9. Ps. li. 5.

^b Lev. xvi. 21. Isai. liii. 5, 6.

^c Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

^d See Eph. ii. 3. Heb. ix. 13, 14. Tit. iii. 5.

^e 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Pet. i. 21.

But "they are counted as a strange thing"—

They are judged *uninteresting*

[Public news or private interests will engage attention—

But God's law is read and heard with indifference—

They are thought *absurd*

[They were judged so by the church of old^f—

Christ and his apostles were despised for declaring them—

Such too is the judgment of men in this day^g—]

INFER

1. How great is the blindness of natural men!

[Men have explored the wonders of creation—

But the wisest are offended at the doctrines of grace—

Let us then seek a sense of our blindness—

Let us pray for divine illumination, as David,^h or Paulⁱ—

We can have no wisdom while the truths of God appear strange to us^k—]

2. How inestimable are the privileges of God's people!

[They are taught of God, and find delight in his word^l—

Hence they are often constrained to say with the apostle^m—

Let us be thankful if our eyes be opened—

Let us guard against remaining ignorance and unbelief—

Let us seek to grow in knowledge and in grace—]

^f Isai. viii. 18. Jer. xx. 8. Ezek. xx. 49.

^g The doctrine of man's depravity is reprobated as gloomy: salvation through Christ is supposed injurious to morality: and the influences of the Spirit are called enthusiasm.

^h Ps. cxix. 18.

ⁱ Eph. i. 18.

^k Jer. viii. 9.

^l Ps. xxv. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Jer. xv. 16.

^m Rom. xi. 33.

XCI. THE DUTY OF TRUSTING IN GOD.

Jer. xvii. 5—8. *Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river; and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall*

not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

EVERY created being derives its existence and support from God—

Yet man is prone to depend on the creature rather than on him—

Though constantly disappointed, he still leans on an arm of flesh—

But such conduct is justly reprobated in the strongest terms—

We shall consider

I. The characters that are contrasted

Every man by nature “trusts in man, makes flesh his arm, and in his heart departs from the Lord”—

We need not go to heathens or infidels to find persons of this description—

We need only search the records of our own conscience

[*In temporal things*, we never think of looking above the creature—

If they be prosperous, we trust in uncertain riches, and take the glory to ourselves—

If adverse, we lean to our own understanding and exertions, or rely for succour on our friends—

In spiritual things, we seek to establish a righteousness of our own—

We expect to repent and serve God by our own strength—]

The true Christian “trusts in the Lord, and makes the Lord his hope”

[He trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ as *the God of providence*—

He commits his affairs to him, expecting his promised aid—

He trusts also in Jesus as *the God of grace*—

He renounces all hope in his own goodness or resolutions—

He cordially adopts the language of the church of old^a—]

These marks afford a sure line of distinction between the nominal and real Christian

^a Isai. xlv. 24.

[Both may be moral, charitable, and attentive to religious duties—

But the regenerate alone trust simply in the Lord—

Not that all the regenerate are alike delivered from self-dependence—

Nor do the same persons always exercise their graces in the same degree—

There are remains of self-righteousness, &c. in the best of men—

But the unregenerate allow these things which are abhorred by the regenerate—]

Nor is this difference between them of trifling import—

II. Their respective conditions

Men's eternal state will be fixed with perfect equity—

The conditions of the characters before us are strongly contrasted

1. Simply; "blessed," &c. "cursed," &c.

[What can be more *important* than these declarations?—

They are not the dictates of enthusiasm, but the voice of God; "Thus saith the Lord"—

And may we not adopt Balak's words in reference to God?^b—

And what can be more *reasonable*?—

God has given his Son to be our Saviour; but while some confide in him, others, by not trusting in him, reject him: how reasonable then is it that a curse should attach to these, and a blessing to those!—

Such a difference in their conditions seems the *necessary* result of their own conduct—

Spiritual life or death are dependent on our trust in the Lord, just as the life of the body is on our receiving or rejecting of animal food—

Let every one then enquire, which of these conditions he has reason to expect?—]

2. Figuratively

To mark the contrast more clearly, it is further observed, that both the blessing and the curse shall be

Abundant

[The unbeliever "shall be like the heath in the desert"—

He shall be left in a state of extreme barrenness and wretchedness—

^b Numb. xxii. 6.

And this too amidst all his boasted fulness^c—

The believer “shall be as a tree planted by the waters,” &c.

He shall be made flourishing and happy by rich supplies of grace^d—]

Unmixt

[The unbeliever “shall not see when good cometh”—

He receives none of the heavenly dew that falls around him—

The believer “shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, nor shall he be careful in the year of drought”—

He may experience “heat” and “drought,” i. e. heavy afflictions—

He shall, however, not be injured, but benefited by them^e—

Free from all anxiety, he will say as the church of old^f—]

Eternal

[The unbeliever “shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited”—

He shall be an outcast from God in the regions of misery—

The believer “shall not cease from yielding fruit”—

His present enjoyments are the pledge and earnest of eternal happiness—]

INFER

1. How glorious a person must Christ be!

[If he were a mere creature, it would be ruinous in the extreme to trust in him—

But we are expressly commanded to trust in him^g—

He must then be “God over all, blessed for ever”—

And this renders him worthy of our fullest affiance—

On him must “hang all the glory of his Father’s house”^h—]

2. How are we all concerned to trust in Christ!

[God regards, not merely our outward conduct, but the frame of our hearts—

On this our present and everlasting happiness dependsⁱ—

Let us then trust in him for all temporal and spiritual aid—

So shall we receive his blessing, and escape his curse—]

^c Job xx. 22.

^d Phil. iv. 19.

^e His afflictions lose not their nature, but effect: tribulation, which fills others with vexation, works patience in him; the furnace, which consumes others, purges away his dross, Heb. xii. 11.

^f Hos. vi. 1.

^g John xiv. 1.

^h Isai. xxii. 23, 24.

ⁱ Conceive Christ as making this declaration in the day of judgment. Compare Matt. xxv. 34, 41.

 XCII. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES IMPROVED IN PRAYER.

Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

PRAYER is that which alone gives energy to our endeavours—

The means best calculated to do good will fail without it—

The Christian has recourse to it on all occasions—

St. Paul affords us in this, as in every thing else, a good example—

He begins and ends almost every epistle with prayer—

In discoursing on this comprehensive prayer, we shall

I. Explain it

The apostle's mind was much occupied in meditating upon God—

He here represents the Deity in a most glorious view—

We are *first* told what God is to us

[God under the Old Testament was called “the Lord of hosts”—

In the New, he is represented as “the God of peace”—

This endearing title justly describes his character—

He is fully reconciled to the true penitent—

He feels nothing but love towards those who believe—

He speaks peace to the consciences of his people—

He would that they should be “kept in perfect peace”—]

We are *next* informed what God has done for us

He has “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus”

[This exercise of the Father's power is of infinite importance to us—

If Christ had not been raised, our hopes had been vain^a—

But God raised him up that we might have a well-founded hope^b—

And this consideration encourages us to approach him—]

^a 1 Cor. xv. 17.

^b 1 Pet. i. 21.

He has constituted Christ “ the great Shepherd of his sheep”

[God’s people are like a weak and timid flock—

But he has appointed his own Son over them—

Christ, as their Shepherd, watches, feeds, heals them, &c.^e

The appointment of such a Shepherd is a wonderful token of God’s love—]

He, in both these instances, has had respect to “ the blood of the everlasting covenant”

[In the eternal covenant the Son undertook to humble himself, and the Father pledged himself to exalt his Son^d—

Christ in due time sealed this covenant with his own blood—

The Father also now remembered his part of the covenant—

He had regard to his own engagements, when he raised up his Son, and constituted him our head—]

Thus the apostle represents God as a *gracious, almighty* and *faithful* God—

With this view of the Deity his benevolent heart is expanded—

He enlarges his desires on behalf of the believing Hebrews—

The sum of them is, that they might be “ perfect”

[Absolute perfection was not to be expected^e—

But the will of God was to be the *rule* and *reason of their duty*—

The *extent* of their duty was, “ every good work” without exception—

For the performance of it he desires that God would “ fit them”^f—

And that he would “ work in them” by his Spirit, as *the means* whereby they might perform it—

The end he proposes is, that they might “ please” God—

And, that their services might be accepted “ for Christ’s sake” —]

To this devout wish he adds an ascription of praise

[He can scarcely ever mention Christ, but in terms of adoration—

He has been speaking of Christ as the head of the church, and as the author of our acceptance with God—

^e Isai. xi. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

^c Phil. iii. 12.

^d Isai. liii. 10.

^f Καταρτίζουσαι.

He now breaks forth into a tribute of praise to him—
Surely every one will add, “Amen,” to his doxology—]
Such being the import of his prayer, we shall

II. Improve it

The prayer before us is replete with sublime instruction—

There are two things in particular which we ought to learn from it

1. The true use of evangelical principles

[Many represent the doctrines of the gospel as mere objects of speculation—

But in reality they lie at the root of all vital godliness—

They afford us *the only sure directory for an acceptable approach to God*—

How can we venture to draw nigh to God, unless we have some view of him as a God of peace?—

Or how can we hope for acceptance with him, if we do not trust in the mediation of our risen Saviour, and in the covenant which he ratified with his own blood?—

Certain it is that no man can come to God in his own name, and that there is no name but that of Christ which will prevail for the obtaining of any blessings at God's hands^g—

Moreover, they afford us *the only effectual motives for devoting ourselves to his service*—

All other motives, whether of hope or fear, are found ineffectual for the making of our hearts right with God—

But what will not a sense of redeeming love effect?—

A view of God as reconciled to us in Christ, and of Christ as our living Head and Advocate, will constrain us to live to his service and glory^h—

Hence then we may see why the apostle introduced so much of Christian doctrine into his prayer—

He knew that such a view of the Deity was necessary to the acceptance of his prayers; and that, while it encouraged our hopes, it would stimulate our exertions, to obtain the object which he prayed for—

Let us then cultivate the knowledge of Christian principles in order to the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and to the practice of Christian duties—]

2. The proper aim of all that embrace them

[Though the world often calumniate the principles of the gospel as licentious, they expect eminent sanctity from all that profess them—

^g Acts iv. 12.

^h 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

But however high they raise their expectations, they still fall short of the scriptural standard of our duty—

If we cannot attain absolute perfection, we should never contentedly stop short of it—

Let us then make, not the practice of others, but the “will of God” the rule of our conduct—

Let us seek not to advance our own honour or interests, but to “please God” in all things—

Let us desire, both for ourselves and others, to be pure as God is pure, and “holy as God is holy”—

And if the world condemn us for our singularity and preciseness, let us “endure the cross and despise the shame—”

XCIII. THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING PRAYER.

Isai. lxiv. 7. *There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for^a thou hast hid thy face from us.*

MAN is encompassed with dangers from which no human foresight can deliver him—

He is oppressed with wants which no creature can supply—

It is to God that he must look for the blessings which he needs—

But he is naturally so averse to prayer, that he will bear all his own burthens rather than apply to God for relief—

On this account it is that so many faint under their afflictions—

And this was the ground of God’s controversy with his people

I. The nature of prayer

Prayer is represented in the Scriptures by a variety of expressions—

It is here set forth under the idea of “calling upon God”

^a It should be translated “therefore.” Bp. Lowth.

[Petitions, either with or without a form, are not worthy the name of prayer, if they be unattended with a devout spirit—

Prayer is a work of the heart rather than of the lips—

It supposes that we feel our wants, desire to have them supplied, and believe that God is able and willing to relieve them—]

It is also described as a “taking hold of God”

[God has set himself, as it were, before us in the promises—

There we may lay hold on him by faith—

We may address him as the patriarch of old^b—

And this is the mean prescribed by God for the obtaining of his blessings^c—]

It is further called a “stirring up of oneself” to lay hold on God

[It is no easy thing to gain access to God in prayer—

We engage in it for the most part with much reluctance—

Our thoughts wander, ere we are aware, and in spite of our endeavours to fix them—

We seem to lose the accustomed energy of our minds—

We need again and again to stir up our sluggish hearts—]

When we consider the duty in this light, we shall see reason to lament

II. The general neglect of it

Many live entirely without prayer

[They are wholly occupied with worldly concerns—

They are not sensible of any *spiritual* wants—

They rely on their own industry for *temporal* advancement—

They acknowledge not before God either their sins or their necessities—]

Others only occasionally lift up their hearts to heaven

[They will cry under the pressure of some heavy affliction^d—

But they resemble those spoken of by the prophet^e—

Like metal from the fire they soon return to their former hardness^f—

After some signal deliverance too they will praise God—

But, like the Israelites, they will soon forget his mercies^g—]

Some will maintain with constancy an external regard to this duty—

^b Gen. xxxii. 26.

^c Isai. xxvii. 5.

^d Isai. ~~xxvi.~~ 16.

^e Hos. vii. 14.

^f Ps. lxxviii. 34—37.

^g Ps. cvi. 11—13.

[They will repeat their accustomed form at stated seasons—

Or they will offer a few general and cold petitions—

And with this outward act they will rest satisfied—

They feel no pleasure in the duty, but perform it as a task—]

But there are few indeed who pray to God aright

[There is a remnant now, as there was in the prophet's days^h—

There are some who "stir up their souls to lay hold on God"—

But these are few when compared with the bulk of mankind—

They may be said comparatively to be "none" at all—]

To counteract this evil we proceed to set forth

III. The consequences of this neglect

The tokens of God's displeasure, which those in the text experienced, will be experienced by all who neglect prayer—

God will surely "hide his face from them"

He will not reveal to them his glory

[He reveals himself to his people as he does not unto the worldⁱ—

He shines into their hearts to discover to them his glory—

But he will vouchsafe no such mercy to those who call not upon him—

His perfections are to them rather an object of terror than of admiration—]

He will not manifest to them his love

[He often "sheds abroad his love in the hearts" of those who seek him—

But the neglecters of prayer "intermeddle not with their joy"^k—

They are strangers to the Spirit of adoption—

They rather banish God from their thoughts, and wish like the fool^l—]

He will not communicate to them his blessings

[His faithful worshippers have all the blessings of grace and glory—

But others have no part or lot with them—

^h Isai. viii. 18. The prophet certainly did not mean to include them in his censure.

ⁱ John xiv. 22.

^k Prov. xiv. 10.

^l Ps. xiv. 1. The words in Italics are not in the original.

The blessings they do enjoy are turned into a curse unto them—

And to eternity must they ascribe their misery to their own neglect^m—]

APPLICATION

They, who live without prayer, should consider these things

[This offence has been awfully marked [by the indignation of Godⁿ—

How bitter must be the reflections of those who perish through this neglect!—

Surely all should seek the Lord while he *may* be found—]

They also, who are formal in prayer, should lay them to heart

[These, as being more liable to deceive themselves, are in greater danger—

Our prayers must be fervent in order to be effectual^o—

If we would enter into heaven, we must press into it with violence^p—]

Nor should this subject ever be forgotten by those who profess godliness

[Unless we stir up ourselves continually, we shall soon lose the divine presence—

We cannot guard too much against formality in prayer—

Let us be encouraged by God's gracious declaration^q—]

^m If all the souls that are banished from the divine presence were asked, "Wherefore has God hid his face from you?" they must assign the reason that is given in the text.

ⁿ Ps. lxxxvi. 10—12. "God gave them up:" to what? to their enemies? to death? or to immediate and eternal condemnation? No; to what was worse than even that, "their own hearts lust," that they might "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

^o James v. 16.

^p Matt. xi. 12.

^q Prov. xv. 8. God is not more pleased with the songs of angels than with the sighs and groans of a contrite soul.

XCIV. THE DUTY OF PERSEVERING IN PRAYER.

— Luke xviii. 1. *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

THE efficacy of prayer is continually exhibited in the sacred writings—

And every incitement to it is afforded us—

Nevertheless we are prone to faint in the performance of it—

To encourage our perseverance in it our Lord delivered a parable—

Waving all notice of the parable itself, we shall consider

I. Our duty

To be always in the act of prayer would interfere with other duties—

That which is here inculcated, implies that we pray

Statedly

[Regular seasons for prayer should be fixed—

Except in cases of absolute necessity^a they should be adhered to—

We should constantly acknowledge God *in the public assembly*^b—

We should maintain his worship also *in our families*^c—

Nor should we on any account omit it *in our closets*^d—]

Occasionally

[There are many particular occasions which require us to pray—

Prosperity, that God may counteract its evil tendency^e—

^a Matt. ix. 13.

^b Heb. x. 25.

^c Abraham and Joshua were noted for their attention to family religion : Gen. xviii. 19. Josh. xxiv. 15. and our Lord's example is worthy of imitation ; he not only expounded his parables to his disciples in private, but prayed with them. See Luke ix. 18. which means, " he was at a distance from the multitude, and praying with his disciples."

^d How frequent the stated seasons shall be, must be left to our own discretion ; David's example is good, Ps. lv. 17. But as the morning and evening sacrifices were called the *continual* burnt-offering, so they may be said to pray *always* who pray at those returning seasons.

^e Our liturgy teaches us to pray, *in all time of our wealth* : See Prov. xxx. 9.

Adversity, that we may be supported under it^f—
Times of *public distress or danger*, to avert the calamity^g—]

Habitually

[We should maintain a spiritual frame of mind—

We may have a disposition for prayer in the midst of business—

Nor will secret ejaculations prevail less than solemn devotions^h—]

To pray thus is our duty; “We ought,” &c.

It is a duty we owe *to God*

[He, our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, has commanded it—

Nor can any thing absolve us from our obligation to obey—]

We owe it also *to our neighbour*

[The edification of Christ’s mystical body depends, not only on the union of every part with the head, but on the whole being fitly framed together, and on every joint supplying its proper nourishmentⁱ—

But if we be remiss in prayer, we shall be incapable of administering that benefit, which other members have a right to expect from us^k—]

We owe it *to ourselves*

[A “spirit of supplication” is as necessary to the soul, as food to the body—

Nor can we feel any regard for our souls, if we do not cultivate it—]

It is, however, by no means easy to fulfil this duty

II. The difficulties that attend it

When we set ourselves to the performance of it, we shall find difficulties—

Before we begin to pray

[*Worldly business* may indispose our minds for this employment—

Family cares may distract and dissipate our thoughts—

Lassitude of body may unfit us for the necessary exertions—

We may be disabled by an invincible *hardness of heart*—

A want of utterance may also operate as a heavy discouragement—

^f James v. 13.

^g 2 Chron. vii. 14.

^h Compare 2 Sam. xv. 31. with 2 Sam. xvii. 14, 23. See also Neh. ii. 4, 6.

ⁱ Eph. iv. 16. Col. ii. 19.

^k Samuel had a deep conviction of this truth; 1 Sam. xii. 23.

By these means many are tempted to defer their religious exercises—

But to yield to the temptation is to increase the difficulty—]

While we are engaged in prayer

[The *world* is never more troublesome than at such seasons—

Something seen or heard, lost or gained, done or to be done, will generally obtrude itself upon us when we are at the throne of grace—

The *flesh* also, with its vilest imaginations, will solicit our attention—

Nor will *Satan* be backward to interrupt our devotions^l—]

After we have concluded prayer

[When we have prayed, we should expect an answer—

But *worldliness* may again induce a forgetfulness of God—

Impatience to receive the desired blessings may deject us—

Ignorance of the method in which God answers prayer may cause us to disquiet ourselves with many ungrounded apprehensions—

Unbelief may rob us of the benefits we might have received^m—

Whatever obstructs God's answers to prayer, disqualifies us for the future discharge of that duty—]

APPLICATION

[Let us not expect victory without many conflicts—

Let us remember the effect of perseverance in the case of Mosesⁿ—

Above all, let us attend to the parable spoken for this end^o—

So shall we be kept from fainting under our discouragements—

And God will fulfil to us his own promise^p—]

^l He has various devices whereby he strives to accomplish his purpose. He will suggest "it is needless to pray:" or, "it is presumption for so great a sinner to ask any thing of God:" or, "it is hypocrisy to ask, when the heart is so little engaged." Sometimes he will inject into the Christian's mind the most blasphemous and horrid thoughts; and at other times tempt him to admire his own fluency and enlargement in prayer. Such are the "fiery darts" with which he often assails the soul, Eph. vi. 16.

^m James i. 6, 7.

ⁿ Exod. xvii. 11—13.

^o Luke xviii. 2—8.

^p Gal. vi. 9.

XCV. THE MERCY OF GOD.

Mic. vii. 18—20. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*

EVERY work of God should lead our thoughts up to its great author—

The prophet had prayed that the Jews might be restored to their own land^a—

God had promised that he would grant them such a deliverance from Babylon as he had before given to their ancestors from Egypt^b—

The prophet immediately elevates his thoughts from the deliverance to the author of it, and breaks forth in admiration of his mercy—

His devout acknowledgments lead us to consider God's mercy

I. In its rise

God has had at all times a “chosen remnant” in the world

[They were very few in the days of Noah, or of Abraham—

In our Lord's day they were but a “little flock”—

The apostle's description of them is still as true as ever^c—

These, however, are esteemed as God's “heritage”^d—]

Towards these He exercises peculiar mercy

[He “passes by their transgressions” with much long-suffering^e—

Though he feels anger against them,^f “he retains it not for ever”—

He “pardons their iniquities,” giving them repentance unto life—]

^a Ver. 14.

^d Ps. xxxiii. 12,

^b Ver. 15—17.

^e Ps. ciii. 10.

^c Rom. xi. 5.

^f Ps. vii. 11.

In so doing he is actuated only by his own love and mercy

[There is not any thing in his elect that can merit his favour—

But he “delighteth in mercy,” and would gladly exercise it towards all^g—

The iniquities of the wicked are a burthen to him^h—

He waits to be gracious unto themⁱ—

He deliberates long before he casts them off^k—

When he rejects them finally, he does it with reluctance^l—

He is often so troubled for the obstinate, that he resolves for his own sake to reclaim them by a sovereign exercise of almighty power^m—

When he has prevailed on a sinner, he exults for joyⁿ—

And thus it is that he saves the remnant of his heritage^o—

What reason then have they to exclaim, “Who is like unto thee?”—]

The mercy thus freely manifested is worthy of admiration also

II. In its progress

God continues to act with astonishing forbearance towards them

[They are, alas! too prone to backslide from him—

They often provoke him to withdraw himself from them^p—

But he leaves them not eternally to take the fruit of their misconduct—

He “has compassion on them,” remembering they are but dust^q—

He “turns to them again” after hiding himself for a little season^r—

He restores to them the light of his countenance—

How interesting and endearing is this description of his character!—

How must every saint adopt the church’s confession!^s—]

He pledges himself not only to pardon, but to “subdue their iniquities”

[He will not suffer sin to have dominion over them^t—

^g Judgment is called “his *strange work*, his *strange act*,” Is. xxviii. 21. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ^h Isai. i. 14, 24. Amos ii. 13.

ⁱ Isai. xxx. 18.

^k Hos. vi. 4.

^l Luke xix. 41.

^m Jer. iii. 19.

ⁿ Zeph. iii. 17. See also the parables of the shepherd, the woman, the father, Luke xv.

^o Isai. xliii. 25.

^p Deut. xxxii. 20

^q Ps. ciii. 14.

^r Isai. liv. 7, 8. See a striking declaration to this effect, Is. lvii. 16—18.

^s Lam. iii. 22.

^t Rom. vi. 14.

He hides his face in order to embitter sin to them—
 He turns to them again to encourage their opposition to it—
 He renews their strength when they are fainting^a—
 And gradually perfects in them the work he has begun—
 Who can survey this progress of mercy, and not exclaim
 “Who?” &c.—]

But the full extent of God’s mercy can only be seen

III. In its consummation

Sin cleaves to the Lord’s people as long as they are in the body—

Hence they have daily occasion for renewed forgiveness—

But soon their pardon shall be final and complete

[God overthrew the Egyptian host in the Red Sea—

“There was not so much as one of them left”—

So will God “cast his people’s sins into the sea”—

He will cast them “all” without one single exception—

And *that* “into the depths” from whence they shall never rise—

If the Israelites so rejoiced in seeing their enemies dead on the shore, how will Christians in their final victory over sin!—]

God will fulfil to them his promises in their utmost extent

[The promises as made to Abraham and his seed were “mercy”—

The confirmation of them to Jacob and to the church was “truth”—

They have been established with the sanction of an “oath”—

And these “promises” will be fulfilled “to all the seed”—

Soon will “the head-stone be brought forth with shoutings,” &c.^x—

How will every glorified soul *then* admire the divine mercy!—

What energy will a sight of sins forgiven, of backslidings healed, of glory bestowed, give to the exclamation in the text!—

May this view of the subject be realized in our experience!—]

APPLICATION

[Let *the careless* consider against whom their sins are committed—

^a Isai. xl. 29—31.

^x Zech. iv. 7.

Will they never pause, and exclaim, like Joseph?^y—

Let *the penitent* reflect on the descriptions given of God in Scripture^z—

Nor let them judge of him by the dictates of sense^a—

Let *the sincere believer* apply to himself that congratulation^b

And let him adopt that triumphant boast^c—]

^y Gen. xxxix. 9.

^z Neh. ix. 17. Isai. lv. 7.

^a Isai. lv. 8, 9.

^b Deut. xxxiii. 29.

^c Isai. xxv. 9.

XCVI. THE CHARACTER, DUTY, AND PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS.

Col. ii. 6, 7. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

The greatest joy of a faithful minister is to see his people flourish—

The apostles were eminent examples to all in this respect^a—

St. Paul was as solicitous for the welfare of those whom he had only heard of by report, as for those who had been converted by his ministry—

Hence he took occasion from what they had attained to urge them on to increasing watchfulness and assiduity

I. The Christian's character

Christ is the great gift of God to mankind^c—

When we believe on him we are said to receive him^d—

The distinguishing character of Christians is, that they have received him

Freely

[The pride of our hearts makes us backward to accept God's offers—

^a St. Paul was no less comforted with the piety of some, 2 Cor. vii. 4. than he was grieved with the want of it in others, Rom. ix. 2. Gal. iv. 19. See also 3 John 4.

^b Col. ii. 1, 5.

^c John iv. 10.

^d John i. 12.

We would gladly earn, if possible, an interest in his favour^e—

But we must receive him “without money, and without price”^f—

The Christian, from a sense of indigence, is willing to do this—

He accepts this gift as the most unworthy of mankind^g—]

Fully

[Some would embrace his sacrifice, and reject his laws—

Others would obey his commands, and set aside his atonement—

But the true Christian receives him alike in all his offices—

He relies on him as “Christ, Jesus, the Lord,” i. e. as his prophet to teach, his priest to atone, and his king to govern—]

Deliberately

[Many close with the offers of the gospel precipitately—

Hence “in time of temptation they fall away”—

But the true Christian has “counted the cost”—

He knows what he is to expect in a tempting, persecuting world—

He is determined to follow his Lord on the terms prescribed^h—]

In consequence of his character he stands engaged to serve God in a peculiar manner

II. His duty

The Christian is often represented as a pilgrimⁱ—

And Christ is his “way” to the country to which he is travelling^k—

Agreeably to this idea his duty is to “walk in Christ”

In conformity to him

[Believers are not at liberty to tread their former paths^l—

The Lord Jesus is to be their pattern and example^m—

His zeal for God should be the object of their constant imitationⁿ—

His love to them should be the measure of their love to others^o—

In every disposition they should strive to resemble him—

Their obligation to this arises from their character and profession^p—

^e Mic. vi. 6, 7.

^f Isai. iv. 1.

^g Eph. iii. 8.

^h Matt. xvi. 24, 25. See also Matt. xiii. 46.

ⁱ Heb. xi. 13.

^k John xiv. 6.

^l 1 Pet. iv. 2.

^m 1 Pet. ii. 21.

ⁿ John iv. 34.

^o 1 John iii. 16.

^p 1 John ii. 6.

In dependence on him

[Without this, all the endeavours of his people will be vain—

They can do nothing but by strength derived from him^q—

Nor can they obtain salvation except through faith in him^r—

They must continually trust in his righteousness for acceptance^s—

And on the communications of his grace for support^t—]

But the christian's duty is also

III. His privilege

Whilst he is studying to approve himself to his Lord, it is his privilege to walk

Firmly

[The office of a root is to keep the tree firm, while it transmits nutriment to the branches—

By means of that the tree successfully resists the storm—

The Christian experiences many storms of temptation and persecution—

His faith also and hope are often assaulted—

But it is his privilege to be “rooted in Christ”—

And to be “established” immovably “in the faith” of the gospel—

The storms shall cause him to strike his roots more deeply—

The shakings shall ultimately tend to his establishment^u—]

Progressively

[A building is carried on in order to its completion—

New materials are added to bring it to perfection—

The Christian is founded on the Lord Jesus Christ^x—

And daily should the superstructure be advancing^y—

To experience this is the privilege of all^z—

Care indeed should be taken respecting the quality of the materials^a—

But, if they be good, we cannot “build” too high—]

Triumphantly

[Doubtless the Christian has frequent cause for sorrow—

But his grounds for joy and gratitude are also “abundant”—

He should ever reflect on what has been, and shall be, done

In the view of this he should give “thanks”— [for him—

His daily walk should be triumphant, though in the midst of troubles^b—

As he grows in grace, he will experience this^c—]

^q John xv. 5.

^t Hos. xiv. 8.

^y Eph. ii. 21.

^b 2 Cor. ii. 14,

^r Acts iv. 22.

^u Phil. i. 14.

^z Eph. iv. 15.

^s Phil. iii. 9.

^x 1 Cor. iii. 11.

^a 1 Cor. iii. 10, 12—15.

^c Isai. li. 3.

APPLICATION

[Let us enquire whether we have received Christ aright? — — —

If we have not, let us not deceive our own souls^d — — —

If we have, let us not continue in a low and drooping state — — —

Let us endeavour to walk suitably to our profession^e — — —]

^d 1 John v. 12.

^e Col. i. 10.

XCVII. THE FRUITS OF GOD'S FAVOUR.

Hos. xiv. 5—7. I will be as the dew to Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

THERE are instances of beautiful imagery in the Scriptures equal to any that can be found in the works of the most renowned authors—

They are enhanced too by the importance of the subjects they contain—

In both respects the passage before us deserves peculiar attention—

Imagination cannot conceive a richer display of divine blessings than God here vouchsafes to his church and people—

I. The favour which God will shew his people

The metaphor of “dew” is at once simple and sublime—

[The benefits of the dew are but little known in this climate—

But in Judea the metaphor would appear very significant^a—

For some time after the creation, dew supplied the place of rain^b—

And, after rain was given, it still remained of great use—

^a Where the rains are periodical, and the climate hot, the dews are more abundant.

^b Gen. ii. 6.

The Scriptures speak of it as an important blessing^c—

They represent the withholding of it as a calamity and curse^d—]

The communications of God to his people are fitly compared to it

[It distils silently and almost imperceptibly on the ground—

Yet it insinuates itself into the plants on which it falls—

And thus maintains their vegetative powers—

In the same manner God's visits to his people are secret^e—

But he gains access to their inmost souls^f—

He cheers and revives their fainting spirits—

And thus he fulfils to them his own most gracious promise^g—]

Were his communications refreshing only, and not influential on the conduct, we might be afraid of enthusiasm—

But his favour invariably discovers itself by

II. Its fruits and effects

The effects of the dew are seen by the progress of vegetation—

The descent of God's Spirit on the soul produces

Growth

[The "lily" springs up speedily, but is of short duration—

The cedars of "Lebanon cast forth their roots" to a great extent—

Thus the soul that is refreshed with divine communications—

The quickness of its growth often excites admiration—

Its stability defies the assaults of earth and hell—

While it "spreads its branches," and displays its vigour in every good word and work—]

Beauty

[There is peculiar grace and "beauty in the olive-tree"—

And such is there in the soul that communes much with God—

^c See Gen. xxvii. 28, 39. and Deut. xxxiii. 13.

^d 2 Sam. i. 21.

^e He comes not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the small still voice, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

^f 2 Cor. vi. 16.

^g Isai. lviii. 11.

What a lustre was there on the face of Moses, when he came from the mount!^h—

And how is the lively Christian “beautified with salvation?”—

His outward conduct is rendered amiable in every part—

His inward dispositions of humility and love are ornaments which even God himself admiresⁱ—

He is transformed into the very image of his God^k—

Nor shall his beauty be ever suffered to decay^l—]

Fragrancy^m

[Lebanon was no less famous for its odoriferous vines than for its lofty cedars—

And does not the Christian diffuse a savour all around him?ⁿ—

How animated his discourse when God is with him!—

How refreshing and delightful to those who enjoy his conversation!^o—

How pleasing is it also to his God and Saviour!^p—

In proportion as he lives near to God, he fulfils that duty^q—]

Fruitfulness

[The “corn and the vine” are just emblems of a Christian’s fruitfulness—

They often wear the most unpromising appearance—

Yet are they “revived” by the genial influences of the sun and rain—

Thus the Christian may be reduced to a drooping or desponding state—

But the renewed influences of God’s Spirit will revive him—

They make him “fruitful in all the fruits of righteousness”

They too, who “dwell under *his* shadow,” and are most nearly connected with him, will participate his blessings^r—]

INFER

I. How honourable and blessed is the Christian’s state!

^h Exod. xxxiv. 30. ⁱ 1 Pet. iii. 4. ^k Eph. iv. 23, 24.

^l Ps. i. 3. The olive, as an evergreen, retains its beauty; and in this respect also is a fit emblem of the true Christian.

^m This is twice mentioned in the text, and therefore deserves peculiar notice. ⁿ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

^o See him before the sun has exhales the dew, or the world abated the fervour of his affections; and how does he verify that saying! Prov. xvi. 24.

^p Mal. iii. 16. Cant. iv. 16.

^q Col. iv. 6.

^r If he be a master, a parent, and especially a minister, the benefit of *his* revivals will extend to many.

[Often is he favoured with visits from above^s—

And glorious are the effects produced by God upon him—

The whole creation scarcely affords images whereby his blessedness may be adequately represented—

Who then is so honourable? who so happy?—

Let all endeavour to maintain a sense of their high privileges—

And to “walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called”—]

2. How hopeful is the state of those who wait on God!

[The promises in the text were given as an answer to prayer—

And they are made to all, who, “like Israel,” plead with God—

If the dew be withheld from others, it shall descend on them^t—

Its descent shall accomplish the utmost wishes of their souls—

They shall soon experience the fulfilment of that word^u—]

^s John xiv. 23.

^t Judges vi. 37, 38.

^u Isai. xl. 31.

XCVIII. GOD'S APPEAL TO MAN'S DECISION.

Isai. v. 3—5. *O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.*

MERCIES are obligations to obedience, and aggravations of the guilt of disobedience—

This is declared under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard—

The parable in the text foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon—

Our Lord applied it in reference to the approaching dissolution of their ecclesiastical and civil polity by the Romans—

^a Matt. xxi. 33, 41, 45.

It is applicable also to the church of God in all ages—

In this solemn address of God to his Church are contained

I. His appeal

Many and great are the *temporal* blessings which we enjoy

[In our *civil* capacity, we possess civil and religious liberty

In our *social* relations, our privileges and comforts are many^b—

In our *personal* concerns, we may all find abundant cause for gratitude—]

But our *spiritual* advantages are greater still

[We have *infallible directions* respecting the way of salvation^c—

We are urged by the *strongest motives* to walk in it^d—

Sufficient assistance also is provided for us^e—

We have the *religion* of Christ *established* in the land^f—]

In the name of God then we call you to judge between God and your own souls^g—

[*What obstructions to our fruitfulness has he not removed?*—

What means of promoting it has he not used?^h—

^b If this were the subject of a *Commemoration sermon*, the peculiar advantages belonging to the society should be enumerated.

^c John x. 9. and xiv. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 11. Acts iv. 12.

^d Not only our hopes and fears, which are the grand springs of human activity and vigour, are excited, Rom. ii. 6—10. but the love of Christ is set before us as the most irresistible of all motives, 2 Cor. v. 14.

^e Luke xi. 13. Every Christian may adopt the apostle's words, Phil. iv. 13.

^f The *Establishment* has been "the pillar and ground of the truth" ever since the reformation. Its liturgy is pure and scriptural: its articles and homilies are a barrier against the intrusion of error: and, were its institutions observed as they ought to be, there would be no minister in its communion who was not orthodox in his opinions and holy in his life; none could undertake the office of a teacher, who was not himself taught of God, and moved by the Holy Ghost."

^g See the verse before the text; which, stripped of the figure, may be considered as comprehending the two questions contained in this bracket.

^h Could *superstition* obscure the light? its clouds have been dispelled by the revival of literary and religious knowledge. Could *prejudice* pervert our judgment? a liberality of sentiment prevails beyond the example of former ages. Could *guilt* dismay our hearts?

We appeal to you, and make you judges in your own cause—]

Happy were it for us, if, while we reflect on the advantages God has favoured us with, there were no reason for

II. His expostulation

The fruit which God requires, is suitable to the pains he has bestowed upon us

[He expects, that we *follow his directions* and live by faith on his dear Son—

And that we *feel the influence of the motives* he has set before us—

And, that we *go forth against all the enemies of our souls in a humble dependence on his promised aid—]*

But very different is the fruit which the greater part of us have brought forth

[We have substituted in the place of Christ some self-righteous methods of acceptance with God—

We have been actuated chiefly by earthly, carnal, and selfish principles—

We have gone on in the strength of our own resolutions, instead of looking up continually for the assistance of the Spirit—

Alas! our fruit has been only as “the grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah”ⁱ—]

God has sent his own Son to die for us. Could a sense of our *weakness* discourage us? God has promised the aid of his Spirit. Could *persecution* alarm our fears? we “sit, every one under his own vine and fig-tree.” Could *erroneous teachers* misguide us? care has been taken, as far as human foresight could prevail, to exclude them. What, then, has not God done that could be done?

ⁱ How great the difference between him that produces good fruit, and him that “brings forth only wild grapes?” *The one* makes Christ all his salvation and all his desire; *the other* exalts himself into the place of Christ, and wishes to become, in part at least, his own Saviour: *The one* regards eternal things as a reality; *the other* is scarcely more affected by them than if they were a fiction: *The one* conquers sin and Satan in the strength Christ; *the other* is either openly or secretly led captive by them both. In a word, *the one* is a compound of humility, heavenly-mindedness, and zeal; and *the other* of pride, worldliness, and indifference.

N. B. The notes,^{f h, and, i} are too much compressed, and the subject of them is too remote for a country congregation. To an illiterate auditory, a general and popular statement would be more edifying.

But that God is displeased with our unprofitableness, will appear from

III. His menace

Under the figure of "laying waste" a vineyard,^k God warns us what he will do to us if we continue unprofitable servants

1. He will bestow no more pains upon us

[He who by "pruning and digging" has laboured incessantly for our good, will abandon us at last to our own hearts lustsⁱ—

He who has "commanded the clouds to rain down rain upon us," will cease to guard us by his providence, or assist us by his grace^m—]

2. He will withdraw the advantages we now enjoy

[He will "take away the candlestick" when we exclude or abuse the lightⁿ—

Or if he cause not "a famine of the word," he will make his gospel "a savour of death to us rather than of life"^o—]

3. He will expose us to the heaviest calamities

[We may easily conceive how the wild boar of the field will desolate a vineyard, when its "fences are all removed"—

And we know, from the instances of Peter and of Judas, what Satan will effect, if he be suffered to execute his will upon us—

Yet we can expect nothing but to be "delivered over to Satan for the destruction both of our bodies" and souls, if we "bring forth only wild grapes" after all the culture bestowed upon us^p—]

APPLICATION

[What reason have we all to be ashamed of our unfruitfulness!—

And to tremble lest God should execute upon us his threatened vengeance—

No words can more forcibly express his fixed determination to execute it, than the concluding words of our text—

Let us be thankful that the execution of it has been so long delayed—

Let the "forbearance exercised towards us, lead us to repentance"^q—

^k Ver. 5, 6.

^m Gen. vi. 3.

^o 2 Cor. ii. 16.

^q Rom. ii. 4.

^l Hos. iv. 17. Ps. lxxxii. 11, 12.

ⁿ Luke viii. 18. Rev. ii. 5.

^p Heb. vi. 7, 8. Luke xiii. 7. and
John xv. 6.

And let us henceforth seek to resemble the primitive Christians^r—]

And what reason can be assigned that shall justify our bringing forth only “wild grapes” under such circumstances?

[Has there been any want of care on the part of the husbandman?—

Has there been any thing defective in the means he has used?—

Could he, consistently with his plans of government, have done more for us than he has done?—

Can we at all excuse ourselves, and cast with propriety the blame on him?—

“Judge ye” whether the fault be not entirely in yourselves?—]

^r Rom. vi. 22.

XCIX. CHRIST THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

Haggai ii. 7. *The Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

MANKIND are apt to imagine that God is pleased with what is grand and magnificent in their eyes—

Hence the many splendid edifices that have been raised to his honour—

But a contrite heart is a more acceptable residence for God than even the temple of Solomon itself^a—

The Jews, on their return from Babylon, began to rebuild their temple—

But they, who remembered the former temple, wept aloud^b—

To encourage them to complete the structure, the prophet was sent to declare, that, however inferior *this* should be to the former in point of magnificence, it should exceed that in glory; for that the Messiah himself should adorn it with his own personal appearance

Let us enquire

I. Whose advent is here spoken of

^a Isai. lxvi. 1, 2.

^b Ezra. iii. 11—13.

The prophet does not speak of *desirable things*, as silver and gold^c—

He refers to Christ's advent, and appearance in the flesh—

Christ is here properly called "the Desire of all nations"^d—

Many in all nations do desire him

[The Jews, by means of their captivities, or flight, were scattered through the Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, and other empires—

And since the establishment of Christianity there are Christians in every corner of the globe—

Amongst these there is often found a considerable difference with respect to clearness of knowledge and fervour of affection—

But the desire of them all accords with that of the apostle^e—

All nations, if they knew him, would desire him

[He has in himself all imaginable excellencies, as God, as man, as mediator—

Would we desire a *mighty* Saviour? he is God over all^f—

Would we desire one *in our own nature*? he was made flesh^g—

Would we desire one *that had testified his love*? he has died for us^h—

Would we desire one *that from his own experience might sympathize with us*? he has been tempted like us for this purposeⁱ—

If any hear of him, and desire him not, the reason is plain^k—]

He did in due season honour the temple with his presence

^c Some, indeed, put that interpretation on the text: but it is not probable that such an event would be so solemnly introduced; or that such a fact ever took place in the degree supposed; or that, if it did, the glory of their temple could by such means be brought to exceed that of the former, considering how many things there were in the former, of which the latter was destitute.

^d All nations indeed do not *actually* desire him, because they know him not: but they may be said to desire him, just as the *whole creation* is said to be waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, &c. Rom. viii. 19—21. or, as Mount Zion is said to be the joy of *the whole earth*, Ps. xlviii. 2.

^e Phil. iii. 8—10.

^f Rom. ix. 5.

^g John i. 14.

^b Eph. v. 2.

ⁱ Heb. iv. 15. & ii. 18.

^k 2 Cor. iv. 4.

[The season of his appearance there was foretold^l—

At the appointed time he was brought thither by his parents^m—

At twelve years old he sat there among the doctorsⁿ—

And afterwards it became the frequent place of his resort—]

The prospect of this event was peculiarly consoling on account of

II. The consequences of his advent

The presence of Christ in the temple “filled it with glory”—

It rendered the latter temple far more glorious than the former^o—

He *more than supplied all those things which were wanting in his temple*

[Though many of the sacred vessels were restored to the Jews by Cyrus, there was much that was irrecoverably lost—

The *Shechinah*, the bright cloud, the symbol of the Deity, was withdrawn—

The *ark*, with all that it contained, was missing^p—

The *urim and thummin*, or breast-plate, whereby the high-priest discovered the divine will, was also gone—

The *fire*, that came down from heaven, was extinguished—

These defects however were more than supplied to the latter temple by the presence of Jesus—

Instead of a shadowy resemblance of the Deity, it had God incarnate—

It had the true ark, containing infinitely richer memorials of divine love^q—

It had a divine instructor, who revealed all his Father’s counsels—

Nor could it need the fire to render the sacrifices more acceptable, since Jesus was about to offer one sacrifice for all—

Thus did it excel in glory, even in those very particulars wherein it appeared most defective—]

He also *exhibited in it a brighter display of the Deity than ever had been seen in the former temple*

^l He was to come while the temple was standing; Mal. iii. 1. and the text. About forty years after his death it was utterly demolished.

^m Luke ii. 27.

ⁿ Luke ii. 46.

^o Hag. ii. 9.

^p Viz. a copy of the law, the pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded.

^q The Jews no longer need the law to instruct them, the rod to confirm their faith, and the manna to shew them how their fathers were sustained: since Jesus himself possessed all that was necessary for their instruction, confirmation, and nourishment.

[The glory of God did indeed fill the temple of Solomon^r—

But in Christ it shone with brighter, though less dazzling splendour—

Behold the *condescension* of the Deity, in that he not merely dwelt with man, but became man!—

Behold the *wisdom*, in every discourse that Jesus uttered!^s—

Behold the *power*, in his miraculous cures, and irresistible operation on the minds of men!^t—

Behold the *grace*, in his treatment of the adulterous woman!^u—

Such an exhibition of the divine perfections *in the temple* far over-balanced every defect—]

APPLICATION

[Wherever Christ dwells, he imparts a glory—

And has he not yet a temple to which he will come?^x—

Will he not vouchsafe his presence in his ordinances?^y—

And will not his presence in them make them glorious?^z—

Will he not also make the souls of his people his habitation?^z—

And will not the soul, in which he takes up his residence, be transformed?^a—

Let him then be “the desire” of our hearts—

Nor let us ever be satisfied till we possess that privilege^b—]

^r 1 Kings viii. 10, 11. ^s John vii. 46.

^t Matt. xxi. 12.

^u John viii. 11. ^x Matt. xviii. 20. & xxviii. 20. ^y Isai. lx. 7, 13.

^z 2 Cor. vi. 16. ^a Isai. lv. 13.

^b Eph. ii. 21, 22.

C. THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

Phil. iii. 10. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.*

MANY think that religion is not the object of choice, but of constraint—

Hence the godly are often told that their strictness is unnecessary—

But true Christians do not regard God as an hard task-master—

Holiness is their desire and delight—

St. Paul could not be satisfied with winning Christ, &c. but desired with equal earnestness “to know him in the power of,” &c.

I. What is meant by the power of Christ's resurrection

The different parts of Christ's work cannot, strictly speaking, be separated, because the combination of all is necessary to give efficacy to any—

Yet, in conformity with Scripture, we may treat of them distinctly—

The resurrection of Christ has a powerful influence

In our justification

[The death of Christ was our ransom^a—

Yet that of itself could avail nothing^b—

His resurrection was necessary to complete his work^c—

Hence our justification is ascribed to that^d—

There is even greater stress laid on that than on his death^e—]

In our sanctification

[Sanctification can be effected only by the Holy Spirit—

The Spirit would not have been given if Christ had not risen^f—

By ascending, Christ obtained the Spirit for us^g—

Hence our sanctification or subjection to him is represented as the end of his resurrection^h—]

In our exaltation to glory

[There had been no resurrection of the body if Christ had not risenⁱ—

But in rising he has assured a resurrection to us^k—

On this ground he taught his disciples to expect it^l—

We may regard him as “our forerunner,” and as “the first-fruits”^m—]

II. That it is desirable to know that power

To know, in Scripture language, is, to experience—

To experience the power of Christ's resurrection, is, to feel such an influence from it, as warrants us to believe that we are partakers of all the benefits procured by it—

This experience of its power is desirable, as having a tendency

^a Matt. xx. 28.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 17, 18.

^c The high priest was first to offer the sacrifice, and then carry the blood within the veil, Lev. xvi. 11—15.

^d Rom. iv. 25.

^e Rom. viii. 34.

^f John xvi. 7.

^g Ps lxxviii. 18.

^h Rom. xiv. 9. Christ's resurrection further influences our sanctification, in that it is proposed as a *pattern* to which our lives are to be conformed, Rom. vi. 10, 11. and urged as a *motive* to heavenly-mindedness, Col. iii. 1.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 21.

^k 1 Thess. iv. 14.

^l John xiv. 2, 3.

^m Heb. vi. 20. 1 Cor. xv. 20.

To confirm our faith

[The resurrection of Christ demonstrates the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine—

The experience of its power therefore must establish our faith with respect to both—

And what can be more desirable than such an unshaken confidence as that will produce?—]

To animate our hope

[One end of Christ's resurrection was to create *hope* in our breastsⁿ—

God makes use of it for this purpose^o—

Much more must the experience of its power do this—

And is it not desirable to have bright prospects of glory?^p—]

To purify our hearts

[The experience before mentioned produces every grace within us—

The more lively our hope, the more shall we be purified by it^q

How desirable to be freed from bondage to sin and Satan!—]

INFER

1. Religion must influence our practice

[If any doctrine were merely speculative, it would be this But this enters deeply into our experience—

Let us then guard against resting in notions—

And reduce every doctrine to practice—]

2. We should be satisfied with no attainments

[St. Paul had long known the power of Christ's resurrection

But he was not satisfied^r—

Much less should we, whose attainments are so small—

Let us press forward for more heavenly-mindedness—

We *shall* be "satisfied" when we awake up after God's likeness^s—]

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 21.

^o 1 Pet. i. 3.

^p 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.

^q 1 John iii. 3.

^r Phil. iii. 13, 14.

^s Ps. xvii. 15.



