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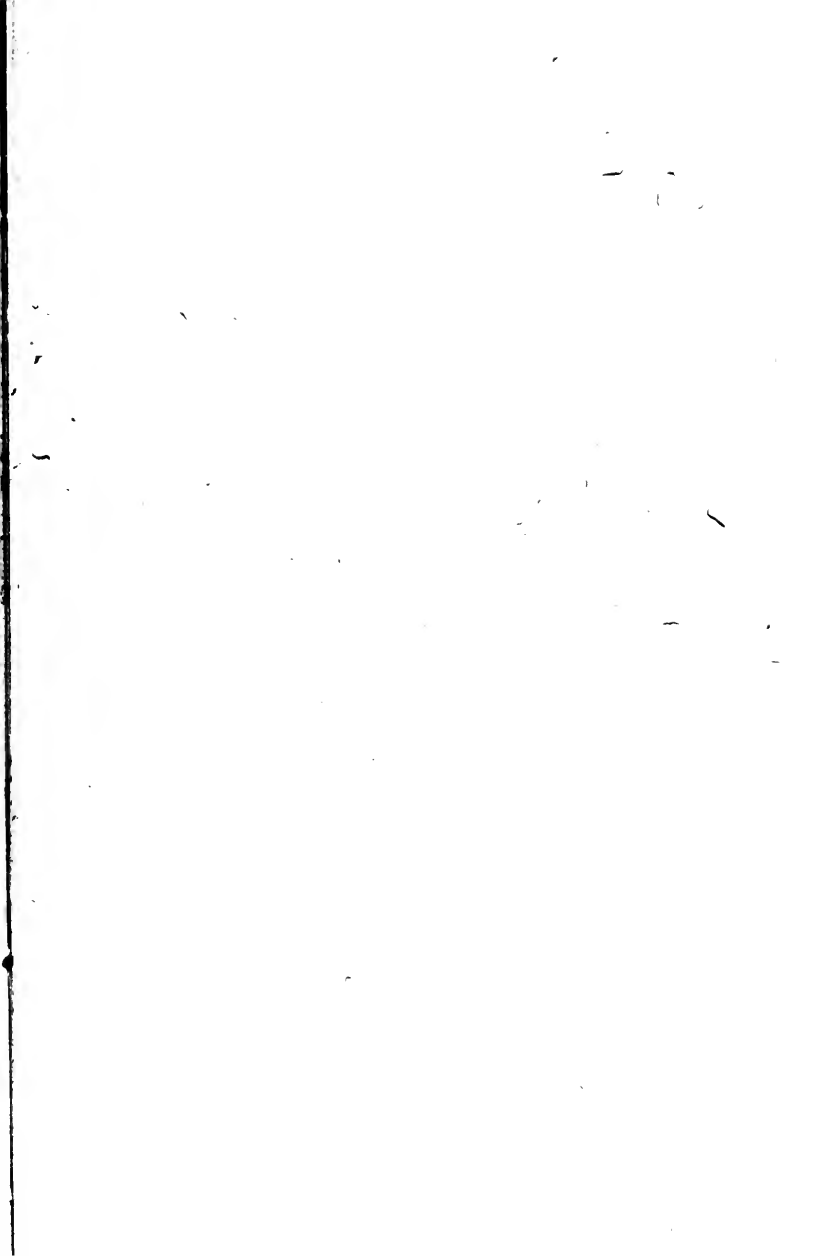
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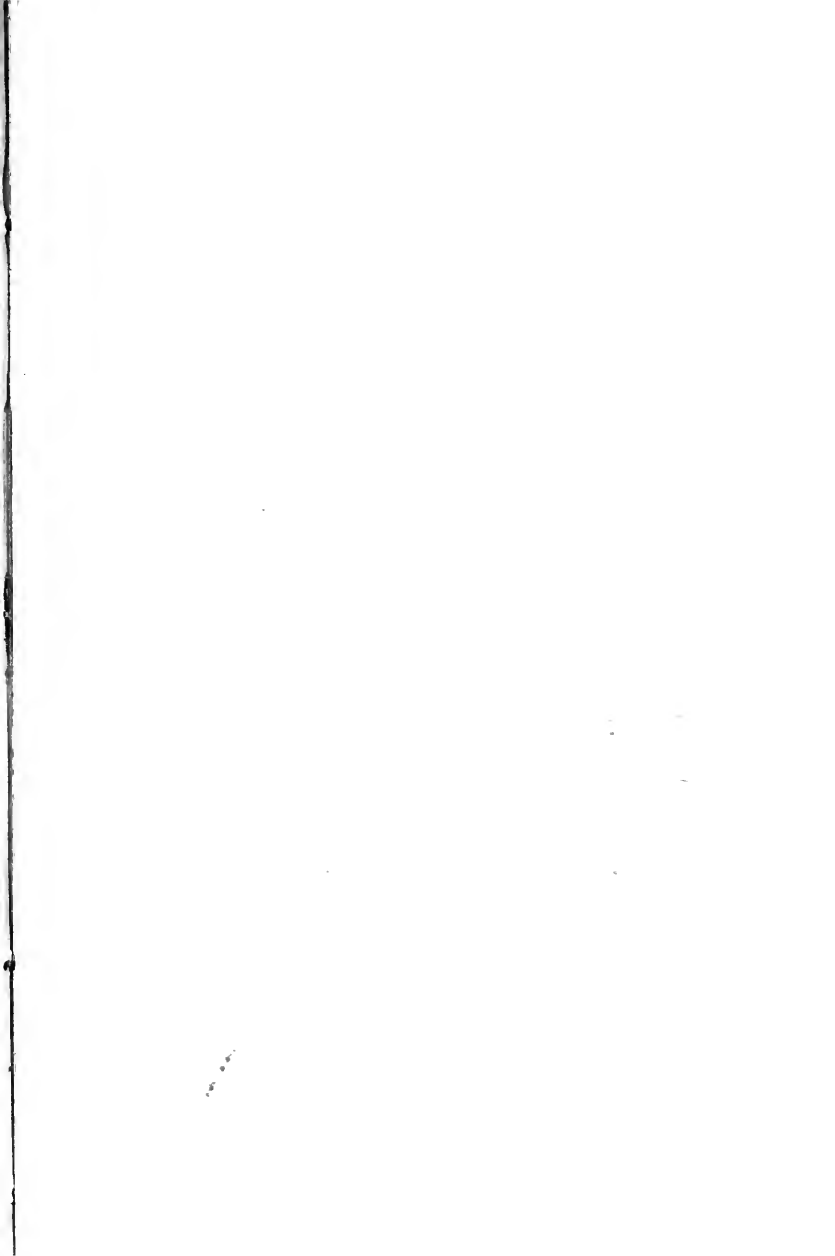
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LECTURES
ON THE
CATECHISM
OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH;
WITH A
DISCOURSE ON CONFIRMATION.

BY THOMAS SECKER, LL. D.
LATE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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BY BEILBY PORTEUS, D. D. AND GEORGE STINTON, D. D.
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PREFACE

TO THE

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

FEW prelates of the Church of England have stood higher for exalted piety, respectable talents, and extensive learning, than the excellent Archbishop SECKER. Born of dissenting parents, he was designed by his friends for the ministry in their connexion, and with that view early directed his attention to Theological studies; but in their prosecution conscientious scruples arising in his mind, he was induced to decline the appointment of a pastor among the dissenters, and in 1722 received orders in the established church.

His frequent and rapid preferments speak favorably of the high estimation in which he was held by the friends of that church.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, in her early commencement and during her many struggles for existence, is also much indebted to him for sound advice and frequent exertions for the establishment of the Episcopate. Indeed, he is said to have greatly excelled all his predecessors in pleading the cause of the Church of England in the then Colonies, and particularly in urging on the English authorities, the indispensable necessity, for the ultimate success of the Church, of their being furnished with a full supply of competent Bishops.

His writings are voluminous, and distinguished for sound learning, fervent piety, and clear, forcible and striking expositions of the Holy Scriptures. Though at times eloquent, and his style marked with a high degree of purity, he seems never to have been ambitious of embellishing his writings with the mere elegancies of language, nor to have aimed at any brilliant displays of eloquence; but feeling the infinite value of the immortal souls intrusted to his charge, he appears ever solicitous to present to their minds the momentous truths of the gospel in all their plainness and unadorned simplicity.

Of all his writings, it is believed, no part of them stands more deservedly high, than his Lectures on the Church Catechism. The numerous editions through which they have passed in England attest the high estimation in which they are held by Episcopalians in that country; while in this, they form one among the number of those works recommended by the House of Bishops for the formation of a Parish Clergyman's Library. Perhaps it will not be going too far to say, there are few, if any works in the English language, which comprise in the same compass, a better or more practical system of theology.

They evince an intimate acquaintance of the author with his subject, his possession of various and extensive learning, and at the same time they are illustrated and enforced by profound arguments, they are clothed in a style of language at once remarkable for its perspicuity and beautiful simplicity.

Early to instruct her members in the fundamental truths of Christianity, and in those doctrines and pe-

euliarities which distinguish her from other denominations of christians, has at all times been a prominent aim of the Protestant Episcopal Church, both in England and this country. And it has been frequently remarked, by others than her own members, that for domestic religion, and especially for the religious education of the young, her provisions are unrivalled. Of her Catechism it has justly been observed, by a distinguished writer and divine,* that "it is not a large system or body of divinity, to puzzle the heads of young beginners; but only a short and full explanation of the baptismal vow;" and in this respect, as indeed in all others, "it excels all Catechisms that ever were in the world; being so short, that the youngest children may learn it by heart, and yet so full, that it contains all things necessary to be known in order to salvation."

Such being the character and value of this Catechism, it is deeply to be regretted that it occupies not a more frequent and conspicuous place in the Clerical, Family, and Sunday School instructions of the Church in this country. Since children in their baptism engage "to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; to believe all the *Articles of the Christian Faith*; and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life," it is certainly fit and proper that they should be taught, so soon as they are able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession," they have made. Influenced by a full

*Dr. Wheatly.

conviction that the following Lectures will afford valuable aids in the prosecution of this interesting work, and under the hope that they may conduce somewhat to a more general attention to the subject, the Publisher has been induced to present an American Edition of them. While it is believed they will prove essentially beneficial to the clergyman in the course of his Catechetical exercises, to Families and Sunday School Teachers more especially, they cannot fail, under the blessing of God, of being important auxiliaries in their arduous and responsible employment of instructing their children in the principles of our holy religion, and of early imbuing their minds with a love of God and a veneration of his commands.

CONTENTS

LECTURE	PAGE
I. Introduction - - -	9
II. Privileges of Baptism - - -	13
III. Renunciation in Baptism - - -	26
IV. Obligations to believe and to do - - -	34
V. Grounds and Rule of Faith - - -	40
CREED.	
VI. Article i. I believe in God the Father, &c.	49
VII. Article ii. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord - - -	57
VIII. Article iii. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary	64
IX. Article iv. Suffered under Pontius Pi- late, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into Hell - - -	72
X. Article v. The third Day he rose again from the dead - - -	82
XI. Article vi. He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty - - -	90
XII. Article vii. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead - - -	99
XIII. Article viii. I believe in the Holy Ghost	108
XIV. Article ix. The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints - - -	117
XV. Article x. The Forgiveness of Sins	126
XVI. Articles xi. xii. Part i. The Resurrec- tion of the Body, and the Life everlast- ing - - - - -	135
XVII. Articles xi. xii. Part ii. The Resurrec- tion of the Body, and the Life everlast- ing - - - - -	145
XVIII. The first Commandment - - -	154
XIX. The second Commandment - - -	163
XX. The third Commandment - - -	172
XXI. The fourth Commandment - - -	179

CONTENTS.

LECTURE	PAGE
XXII. The fifth Commandment, Part I. -	188
XXIII. The fifth Commandment, Part II. -	197
XXIV. The sixth Commandment - -	206
XXV. The seventh Commandment -	214
XXVI. The eighth Commandment -	225
XXVII. The ninth Commandment - -	234
XXVIII. The tenth Commandment - -	243
XXIX. Of Man's Inability, God's Grace, and Prayer to him for it - -	252
THE LORD'S PRAYER.	
XXX. Our Father which art in Heaven, hal- lowed be thy Name - -	262
XXXI. Thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done	269
XXXII. Give us this Day our daily Bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us -	275
XXXIII. And lead us not into temptation; but de- liver us from Evil: for thine is the King- dom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen. - -	283
XXXIV. The nature and number of the Sacra- ments - - - -	290
XXXV. Of Baptism - - - -	297
XXXVI. Of the Lord's Supper, Part I. -	306
XXXVII. Of the Lord's Supper, Part II. -	314
XXXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper, Part III. -	320
XXXIX. The Conclusion - - - -	326
A Sermon on Confirmation - - - -	336

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.

IN all matters of importance, every one that wants information, should first seek for it, then attend to it: and the more our happiness depends upon judging and acting right in any case, the more care and pains we should take to qualify ourselves for both. Now the happiness of all persons depends beyond comparison chiefly on being truly religious. For true religion consists in three things: reasonable government of ourselves, good behaviour towards our fellow-creatures, and dutifulness to our Maker; the practice of which will give us, for the most part, health of body and ease of mind, a comfortable provision of necessaries, and peace with all around us; but, however, will always secure to us, what is infinitely more valuable still, the favor and blessing of God; who, on these terms, will both watch over us continually, with a fatherly kindness in this life, and bestow on us eternal felicity in the next.

Since, therefore, whoever is religious must be happy, the great concern of every one of us is to know and observe the doctrines and rules which religion delivers. Now we all come into the world ignorant of these; and our faculties are so weak at first, and gain strength so slowly; and the attention of our earlier years to serious things is so small; that even were our duty to comprehend no more than our own reason could teach us, few, if any, would learn it sufficiently without assistance; and none so soon as they would need it. They would come out into a world full of dangers, every way unprepared for avoiding them; would go wrong in the very beginning of life, per-

haps fatally; at least would hurt, if they did not ruin themselves; and make their return into the right path certainly difficult, and probably late.

But we must consider yet further, that reason, were it improved to the utmost, cannot discover to us all that we are to believe and do: but a large and most important part of it is to be learnt from the Revelation made to us in God's Holy Word. And this, though perfectly well suited to the purposes for which it was designed, yet, being originally delivered at very distant times, to very different sorts of persons, on very different occasions; and the several articles of faith and precepts of conduct, which it prescribes, not being collected and laid down methodically in any one part of it, but dispersed with irregular beauty through the whole, as the riches of nature are through the creation; the informations of the more knowing must be in many respects needful, to prepare the more ignorant for receiving the benefits of which they are capable from reading the Scripture. And particularly giving them beforehand a summary and orderly view of the principal points comprehended in it, will qualify them better than any other thing to discern its true meaning, so far as is requisite, in each part.

Therefore, both in what reason of itself dictates, and what God hath added to it, instruction is necessary, especially for beginners. And, indeed, as they are never left to find out by their own abilities any other sort of useful knowledge, but always helped, if possible; it would be very strange, if, in the most important kind, the same care at least were not taken.

But besides enlightening the ignorance of persons, instruction doth equal, if not greater service, by preventing or opposing their prejudices and partialities. From our tenderest age we have our wrong inclinations, and are very prone to form wrong notions in support of them; but which we are extremely backward to acknowledge, and very apt to model our religion in such manner as to leave room for our faults.

Now right explanations clearly delivered, and right admonitions pressed home, in early days, may preserve persons from thus deceiving themselves, and guard them against future, as well as present dangers. Nay, though slighted, and seemingly forgotten for a time, they may still keep secretly such a hold upon the mind as will sooner or later bring those back, who would else never have seen, or never have owned, that they had lost their way.

But a still farther advantage of instruction is, that bringing frequently before persons' eyes those truths on which they would otherwise seldom reflect, though ever so much convinced of them, it keeps the thoughts of their duty continually at hand, to resist the temptations with which they are attacked. Thus their lives and their minds are insensibly formed to be such as they ought: and being thus 'trained up in the way wherein they should go,' there is great hope, that 'they will not *afterwards* depart from it.'^a

Nor doth reason only, but experience too, show the need of timely institution in piety and virtue. For is it not visible, that principally for want of it, multitudes of unhappy creatures, in all ranks of life, set out from the first in sin, and follow it on as securely as if it was the only way they had to take; do unspeakable mischief in the world, and utterly undo themselves, body and soul: whilst others of no better natural dispositions, but only better taught, are harmless and useful, esteemed and honored, go through life with comfort, and meet death with joyful hope! There are doubtless, in such numbers, exceptions on both sides; but this is undeniably the ordinary, the probable, the always to be expected course of things. Therefore seriously consider, will you despise religious knowledge, and be like the former miserable wretches? or will you embrace it, and be happy, with the latter, here and to eternity?

But it is not sufficient that you be willing to receive instruction, unless they also, to whom the care be-

^a Prov. xxii. 6.

longs, are willing to give it. Now that care of giving it belongs to different persons in different cases. In the case of children, it usually belongs, in a peculiar degree, to their parents, who, having been the means of bringing them into the world, are most strongly bound to endeavor that their being may prove a benefit, and not a cause of lamentation to them; and having been endued by Heaven with tender affections towards them, will be doubly sinners against them, if they are guilty of that worst of cruelty, not teaching them their duty: without which also, and it deserves a very serious consideration, they can no more hope for comfort in them here, than for acceptance with God hereafter. And, therefore, both the Old Testament directed the Jews to ‘teach their children diligently the words which God had commanded them;’^a and the New enjoins Christians to ‘bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’^b Sometimes, indeed, want of leisure—sometimes, of knowledge and ability, obliges parents to commit part (it may be a considerable one) of the instruction of their children to other persons. But far from being ever discharged of the whole burthen, they must always remember, that unless they assist and enforce what others endeavor, it will seldom produce any valuable effect; and much less, if some of the things, which their children hear them say, and see them do, almost every day, are directly contrary to those which they pretend they would have them believe and learn.

The persons on whom usually this care is devolved by parents, are masters and mistresses of schools, and afterwards tutors in colleges, who ought never to omit furnishing children, amongst other knowledge, plentifully with that which is the most necessary of all; but constantly to employ the influence which they have on their minds, and the knowledge which they acquire of their tempers, in exciting them to good, and preserving them from evil, as much as they

^a Deut. vi. 7

^b Ephes. vi. 4

can. And parents ought first absolutely to require this of them, and then examine diligently, from time to time, whether it be done. But especially masters and mistresses of charity schools, which are founded purposely to give the children of the poor an early and deep tincture of religion and virtue, should look upon it as by far their principal business to teach them, not merely outward observances and forms of good words, but such an inward sense and love of their duty to God and man, as may secure them, if possible, from that lamentable depravity, into which the lower part of the world is falling; and which it is highly the interest of their superiors, if they would but understand their interest, to restrain and correct.

As the care of children belongs to their parents and teachers, so doth that of the servants to the heads of the families in which they live. And therefore it is mentioned in Scripture by God himself, as a distinguishing part of the character of a good man, that 'he will command his household to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.'^a For indeed it is a strong and a requisite proof of reverence to our Maker, as well as of kindness to them, and concern for our own interest, to direct them in the way of their duty, or procure them the direction of good books and good advice; to exhort them to the more private exercises of religion; to contrive leisure for them to attend the appointed solemn ones, which is plainly one part of *giving them*, as the Apostle requires, *what is just and equal*;^b and to see that the leisure allowed them for the purpose, be honestly so employed, and not abused.

For, after all, the most valuable instruction for servants, for children, and for all persons, is the public one of the Church, which our Saviour himself hath promised to bless with his presence.^c And therefore it is a rule of inexpressible moment: 'Gather the people together; men, women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates; that they

^a Gen. xviii. 19.

^b Col. iv. 1.

^c Matt. xviii. 20.

may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God; and observe to do all the words of His law: and that their children which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as ye live.’^a

Whoever else may fail of doing their duty, we, the ministers of Christ, must not fail ‘to be instant in season, and out of season:’^b to feed the young with ‘the sincere milk of the Word;’^c and to ‘preach the Gospel to the poor.’^d It is the peculiar glory of Christianity, to have extended religious instruction, of which but few partook at all before, and scarce any in purity, through all ranks and ages of men, and even women. The first converts to it were immediately formed into regular societies and assemblies, not only for the joint worship of God, but the farther ‘edifying of the body of Christ:’^e in which good work, some, of course, were stated teachers, or, to use the Apostle’s own expression, ‘catechisers in the Word;’ others taught or catechised.^f For catechising signifies in Scripture, at large, instructing persons in any matter, but especially in religion. And thus it is used, *Acts* xviii. 25, where you read, ‘This man was instructed in the way of the Lord;’ and, *Luke* i. 4, where again you read, ‘That thou mayest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.’ The original word, in both places, is *catechised*.

But as the different advances of persons in knowledge made different sorts of instructions requisite, so in the primitive Church different sorts of teachers were appointed to dispense it. And they who taught so much only of the Christian doctrine as might qualify the hearers for Christian communion, had the name of catechists appropriated to them; whose teaching being usually, as was most convenient, in a great measure, by way of question and answer; the name of catechism hath now been long confined

^a Deut. xxxi. 12, 13.

^d Matt. xi. 5.

^b 2 Tim. iv. 2.

^e Eph. iv. 12.

^c 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^f Gal. vi. 6.

to such instruction as is given in that form. But the method of employing a particular set of men in that work only, is in most places laid aside. And I hope you will not be losers, if they who are appointed to the higher ministries of the Church attend to this also.

Under the darkness of Popery, almost all religious instruction was neglected. 'Very few,' to use the words of one of our homilies, 'even of the most simple people, were taught the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of the Faith, or the Ten Commandments, otherwise than in Latin, which they understood not:'^a so that one of the first necessary steps taken towards the Reformation, in this country, was a general injunction, that parents and masters should first learn them in their own tongue, then acquaint their children and servants with them:^b which three main branches of Christian duty, comprehending the sum of what we are to believe, to do, and to petition for, were soon after formed, with proper explanations of each, into a catechism. To this was added, in process of time, a brief account of the two Sacraments; altogether making up that very good, though still improvable, *form of sound words*,^c which we now use.

And that it may be used effectually, the laws of the land, both ecclesiastical and civil, require not only ministers to instruct their parishioners in it, but parents, and masters and mistresses of families, to send their children and servants to be instructed; meaning evidently, unless they made some other more convenient provision, to answer the same end.* For promoting

^a Homily against rebellion, part 6.

^b See Wake's Dedication of his Commentary on the Church Catechism.

^c 2 Tim. i. 13.

* It is to be regretted, that this excellent regulation of the Church is not more generally observed in this country. The rubricks require, that 'The minister of every parish shall, diligently, upon Sundays and holy days, or on some other convenient occasions, openly in the Church, instruct or examine so many children of his parish, sent unto him, as he shall think convenient, in some part of the catechism.'

'And all fathers, mothers, masters, and mistresses, shall cause their chil-

religious knowledge and practice is not only the express design of all church government, but a matter (would to God it were well considered) of great importance to the State also: since neither private life can be happy, nor the public welfare secured for any long time, without the belief of the doctrines, and observance of the duties of Christianity, for which catechising the young and ignorant lays the firmest foundation.

It must be owned, the catechism of our Church is, as it ought to be, so clear in the main, as to need but little explaining, all things considered. But then it is also, as it ought to be, so short, as to leave much room for setting forth the particulars comprehended under its general heads; for confirming both these by reason and Scripture; and for imprinting the whole on the consciences and affections of the learners. This, therefore, I shall endeavor to do, in the sequel of these discourses, as clearly and familiarly as I am able.

In the nature of the thing, nothing new or curious ought to have any place in such an exposition, as indeed such matters ought to have little place in any public teaching of God's Word, but least of all, where only the plain and fundamental truths of our common faith are to be taught, confirmed, and recommended, in a plain way. And yet, as these truths are of all others the most necessary, the plainest things that can be said about them, may deserve the attention of all sorts of persons; especially as it is but too possible, that some of all sorts may never have been taught sufficiently even the first principles of religion, and that many may by no means have sufficiently retained, and considered since, what they learned in their early years: but preserving scarce more in their minds than the bare words, if so much,

dren, servants and apprentices, who have not learned their catechism, to come to Church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear, and to be ordered by the minister, until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn.—AMER. EDITION.

may be little the better, if at all, for the lessons of their childhood. To which it might be added, that every one hath need, in a greater degree, or a less, if not to be informed, yet to be reminded and excited.

Let me beg, therefore, that all who have cause to hope they may receive benefit, would attend when they are able: and that all who have children or servants, would bring or send them. This is not a day of business. It ought not to be a day of idle amusements. It is appointed for the public worship of God, and learning of his will. This is one of the hours of his worship: it is that part of the day in which you are, most of you, more at liberty, than you are in any other. And what will you say for yourselves hereafter, if when you have the most entire leisure, you choose rather to do any thing, or nothing, than to serve your Maker, and improve in the knowledge of your duty? Never was there more danger of being infected with the evil of every sort, from conversation in the world. Surely, then, you should endeavor to fortify yourselves, and those who belong to you, with proper antidotes against it. And where will you find better, than in the house of God? But particularly I both charge and beg you, children, to mark diligently what I shall say to you: for all that you learn by rote will be of no use, unless you learn also to understand it. The exposition, which you are taught along with your catechism, will help your understanding very much, if you mind it as you ought: and what you will hear from me may be a yet further help. For if there should be some things in it above your capacities, yet I shall endeavor, to the best of my power, that most things may be easy and plain to you. And, I entreat you, take care that they be not lost upon you. You are soon going out into the world, where you will hear and see abundance of what is evil. For Christ's sake, lay in as much good, in the mean while, as you can, to guard you against it.

But indeed, it behoves us all, of whatever age or station we be, to remember, that the belief and prac-

tice of true religion, are what we are every one equally concerned in. For without them, the greatest person upon earth will, in a very few years, be completely miserable: and with them, the meanest will be eternally happy. ‘O hear ye this, all ye people; ponder it, all ye that dwell in the world; high and low, rich and poor, one with another.’^a ‘Apply your hearts to instruction, and your ears to the words of knowledge.’^b ‘For whoso findeth wisdom, findeth life; and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against her, wrongeth his own soul: and they that hate her, love death.’^c

LECTURE II.

PRIVILEGES OF BAPTISM.

THE catechism of our Church begins with a prudent condescension and familiarity, by asking the introductory questions, *what is your name?* and, *who gave you this name?* which lead very naturally the person catechised to the mention of his baptism, at which time it was given him. Not that giving a name is any necessary part of baptism; but might have been done either before or afterwards, though it hath always been done then, as indeed it was likely that the first public opportunity would be taken for that purpose. But besides, it was no uncommon thing in ancient times, that when a person entered into the service of a new master, he had a new name bestowed on him. Whence, perhaps, the Jews might derive the practice of naming the child when it was circumcised: it being then devoted to the service of God. The first Christians, in imitation of them, would of course do the same thing, for the same reason, when it was baptized: and no wonder that we continue the practice. For it might be a

^a Ps. xlix. 1, 2.

^b Prov. xxiii. 12.

^c Prov. viii. 35, 36.

very useful one, if persons would but remember what it tends to remind them of, that they were dedicated to Christ, when their Christian name was given them; and would make use of that circumstance frequently to recollect those promises, which were then solemnly made for them; and which they have since confirmed, or are to confirm and make personally for themselves. Without performing these, we are Christians, not in deed, but in name only, and shall greatly dishonor that name, while we bear it and boast of it.

Our baptismal name is given us, not by our parents, as we read in Scripture the name of Jewish children was; but by our godfathers and godmothers.* And this custom may also have a double advantage. It may admonish them, that, having conferred the title of Christians upon us, they are bound to endeavor, that we may behave worthily of it. And it may admonish us, that our name having been given us by persons who were our sureties, we are bound to make good their engagements.

But the office and use of godfathers will be considered under one of the following questions. The subject to be considered at present, though not fully, is baptism. For this being our first entrance into the Christian Church, by which we become entitled to certain privileges, and obliged to certain duties; religious instruction begins very properly by teaching young persons what both of them are. And in order to recommend the duties to us, the privileges are mentioned first.

Not but that God hath an absolute right to our observance of his laws, without informing us beforehand what benefit we shall reap from it. Surely, it would be enough to know, that he is Lord and King of the whole earth; and that all his dealings with the works of His hands are just and reasonable. Our business is to obey, and trust Him with the conse-

* The Church in this country admits 'parents as sponsors, if it be desired.'
—AMER. ED.

quences. But in great mercy, to encourage and attract his poor creature, he hath been pleased to enter into a covenant, a gracious agreement with man: subjecting himself, as it were, to bestow certain blessings on us, provided we perform certain conditions. But though, in this covenant, the promises made on His part, flow from His own free goodness: yet the terms required on ours, are matter of necessary obligation: and what was altogether voluntary in Him, firmly binds us.*

Now the privileges thus conditionally secured to us in baptism, we find in our catechism very fitly reduced to these three heads: that the person who receives it, 'is therein made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.'

I. The first, and foundation of the others, is, that he is *made a member of Christ*. This figure of speech all of you may not immediately understand: but when it is understood, you will perceive in it great strength and beauty. It presupposes, what we must be sensible of, more or less, that we are every one originally prone to sin, and actually sinners; liable thence to punishment; and without hope of preserving ourselves, by our own strength, either from guilt or from misery. It further implies, what the Scripture clearly teaches, that Jesus Christ hath delivered us from both, in such manner as shall hereafter be explained to you, on the most equitable terms of our becoming His, by accepting Him from the hand of God for our Saviour, our Teacher, and our Lord. This union to Him, in order to receive these benefits from Him, our catechism, in conformity with the language of Holy Writ, compares with that of the members of the body to the head. And how proper the comparison is, will easily appear, by carrying it through the several particulars, in which the similitude holds.

As, in every living creature, perception and motion proceed from the head, so to every Christian,

* See *Waterland's* Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist, c. xl.

knowledge of God's will, and power to obey it, flow from Christ. As the head governs and directs each limb, so Christ is the Sovereign and Law-giver of each believer; as being joined to the head makes the whole body one animal frame, so being joined to Christ makes the whole number of Christians one spiritual society. As communication with the head preserves our natural life, so communion with Christ supports our religious life. He, therefore, is to the Church, what the head is to the body: and each person who belongs to the Church is a member of that body, or, in the language of the catechism, 'a member of Christ.' For He, as St. Paul expresses it, 'is the Head; from which all the body, having nourishment ministered, and knit together by joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.'^a

And this manner of speaking is frequently repeated in Scripture, as it well deserves, being not only, as you have seen, admirably fitted to represent the happy relations in which we stand to our Redeemer, but also to remind us of the duties which are derived from them; of the honor and obedience due to Him who is 'Head over all things to his body, the Church;'^b of our continual dependence on him, 'since he is our life,'^c and of the tenderness and kindness which we owe to our fellow Christians, and they to us, being all united, through him, so intimately to each other. For since, as the Apostle argues, 'by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body:' as in the natural body, 'the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee. nor any one member to the rest, I have no need of you; but even the more feeble and less honorable members are necessary:'^d so in the spiritual body, they who in any respect may seem to excel others, ought by no means to despise them; since every good Christian is, in his proper degree and place, both a valuable and a useful 'member of Christ.' And again: as in the natural body there is a connection and sym-

^a Col. ii. 19. ^b Eph. i. 22, 23. ^c Col. iii. 4. ^d 1 Cor. xii. 13, 21, 22, 23.

pathy of the several parts, by which the good state of one preserves the others in health and ease, or its bad state gives them pain and disorder; so should there be in the spiritual body, and there is in all true members of it, a mutual caution not to do harm to each other, and a mutual desire of each others' benefit. 'If one member suffer, all the other members should, by a compassionate temper, suffer with it;' and 'if one member be honored, all' the rest should sincerely 'rejoice with it.'^f Think then, do you feel in your hearts this good disposition, as a mark of being members of Christ? If not, study to form yourselves to it without delay.

2. The second privilege of Baptism is, that by it 'we are made the children of God,' in a sense and manner in which by nature we are not so.

Our blessed Saviour, indeed, is called in Scripture 'the only begotten Son of God.' Nor can the highest of creatures claim God for his Father by the same right that he doth. But in a lower sense, God is the Father of angels and men, whom he hath created in their several degrees of likeness to his own image. *Adam*, our first parent was the Son of God by a strong resemblance to his Heavenly Father in original uprightness. But as this similitude was greatly obscured both in him and his descendants, by the fall, though preserved by the covenant of the promised seed from being utterly effaced, so in time it was almost entirely lost among men, by the prevalence of sin; and they became in general *enemies of God*,^g and *children of the devil*.^h

But our gracious Maker, pitying us notwithstanding, and treating us like children, even when thus degenerated, hath mercifully appointed a method for adopting us into his family again, after we have cast ourselves out of it, and for restoring and raising us gradually to the same and greater likeness to him and favor with him, than even our first parents ever enjoyed. Now this inestimable blessing was procured

^f 1 Cor. xii. 26.

^g Rom. v. 10; Col. i. 21.

^h 1 John iii. 10.

for mankind through the means of Jesus Christ; and we become entitled to it by taking him for our head, and becoming his members, in such manner as you have heard briefly explained. For ‘to as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.’^a Being therefore thus united to him, who is in the highest sense the Son of God, and claiming not in our own name, but under him, we are admitted again into such a degree of sonship as we are capable of, and made the ‘Children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ.’^b

Indeed, not only Christians, but the Jews, are called in Scripture ‘the children of God;’^c and such they really were; being first as Christians were afterwards, the ‘children of the covenant.’^d But still, as theirs was a state of less knowledge, more burthensome precepts, and stricter government; the Apostle speaks of them, compared with us, only as servants in his family. ‘Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all. Even so we,’ speaking of the Jewish nation, ‘when we were children,’ unqualified for any great degrees of liberty, ‘were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, to redeem them that were under the law. Wherefore we are no more servants, but sons.’^e ‘Behold then,’ as St. John expresses it, ‘what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called,’ in this distinguished sense, ‘the sons of God;’^f especially considering the consequence drawn by St. Paul, ‘if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ:’^g which is the

3. Third and last privilege of Baptism, and completes the value of it, that by entering into the Christian covenant, we are *made inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven*; that is, entitled to perfect and endless

^a John i. 12.

^b Gal. iii. 26.

^c Deut. xiv. 1.

^d Acts iii. 25.

^e Gal. iv. 1, 3, 4, 7.

^f 1 John iii. 1.

^g Rom. viii. 17.

happiness in body and soul. Had we continued in the primitive uprightness of our first parents, and never sinned at all, we could have had no claim, but from God's free promise, to any thing more, than that our being should not be worse to us than not being. But as we are originally depraved, and have actually sinned, far from having any claim to happiness, we are liable to just punishment for ever. And least of all, could we have any claim to such happiness as eternal life and glory. But 'blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: who of His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.'^a

These then are the privileges of the Christian covenant. As for those who have no knowledge of that covenant, the Apostle hath told us indeed, that 'as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law:'^b but he hath told us also, that 'when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, they are a law unto themselves.'^c And whether none of them shall attain to any degree of a better life, is no concern of ours; who may well be contented with the assurance, that our own lot will be a happy one beyond all comparison, if we please. He who hath shown the abundance of His love to us, will undoubtedly shew, not only His justice, but His mercy, to all the works of His hands, as far, and in such manner, as is fit. There is, indeed, 'None other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved,' but that of 'Jesus Christ.'^d But whether they who have not had in this life the means of calling upon it, shall receive any benefit from Him; or if any, what and how; as neither Scripture hath told us, nor reason can tell us, it is presumptuous to determine, and useless to inquire.

The points to which we must attend, are these,

^a 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

^c Rom. ii. 14.

^b Rom. ii. 12.

^d Acts iv. 10, 12:

which relate to ourselves: that we give due ‘thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,’^a and be duly careful to ‘walk worthy of God, who hath called us to His kingdom and glory.’^b For we have a right to the privileges of the covenant, only on the supposition and presumption of our performing the obligations of it. Children, indeed, of believers, who are taken out of the world before they become capable of faith and obedience, we doubt not, are happy. For the general declarations of Holy Writ plainly comprehend their case: and our Saviour hath particularly declared, that ‘of such is the kingdom of God.’^c But all who live to maturer years; as, on the one hand, they may entitle themselves, through God’s bountiful promise, though not their own merit, to higher degrees of future felicity, in proportion as their service hath been considerable; so on the other, they are entitled to no degree at all, any longer than they practice that *holiness*, in which they have engaged to live, and *without which no man shall see the Lord.*^d We shall be acknowledged as children, only whilst we obey our heavenly Father: and *the Baptism which saveth us, is not the outward putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the inward answer of a good conscience towards God.*^e Which, therefore, that we may all of us be able always to make, may He of His infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

^a Col. i. 12.

^b Thess. ii. 12.

^c Mark x. 14; Luke xviii. 16.

^d Heb. xii. 14.

^e 1 Pet. iii. 21.

LECTURE III.

RENUNCIATION IN BAPTISM.

AFTER the privileges to which Baptism gives us a claim, our catechism proceeds to set forth the duties to which it binds us: those things 'which our god-fathers and godmothers promised and vowed in our names.' For without the performance of these conditions, neither hath God engaged, nor is it consistent with the holiness of His nature and the honor of His government, to bestow such benefits upon us; nor indeed shall we be capable of receiving them. For a virtuous and religious temper and behaviour here, are absolutely requisite, not only to entitle, but to qualify and prepare us for a virtuous and religious blessedness hereafter, such as that of Heaven is.

Now these conditions, or obligations, on our part, are three: that we renounce what God forbids: that we believe what he teaches, and do what he commands; or, in other words, repentance, faith and obedience. These things are plainly necessary; and they are plainly all that is necessary: for as, through the grace of God, we have them in our power; so we have nothing more. And therefore they have been constantly, and without any material variation, expressed in Baptism from the earliest ages of the Church to the present.

The first thing, and the only one which can be explained at this time, is, that we renounce what God forbids, every sin of every kind. And this is put first, because it opens the way for the other two. When once we come to have a due sense that we are sinners, as all men are, and perceive the baseness, the guilt, the mischief of sin, we shall fly from it, with sincere penitence, to the remedy of faith which God hath appointed. And when we in earnest resolve to forsake whatever is wrong, we shall gladly embrace all such truths as will direct us right,

and do what they require. But whilst we retain a love to any wickedness, it will make us, with respect to the doctrines of religion, backward to receive them,^a or unwilling to think of them, or desirous to interpret them unfairly: and with respect to the duties of religion, it will make our conduct unequal and inconsistent; perplexing us with silly attempts to reconcile vice and virtue, and to atone perhaps by zeal in little duties for indulgence of great faults; till at last we shall either fall into an open course of transgression, or which is equally fatal, contrive to make ourselves easy in a secret one. The only and effectual method, therefore, is to form a general resolution at once, though we shall execute it but imperfectly and by degrees, of following in every thing the Scripture rule, 'Cease to do evil, learn to do well.'^b

Now the evil, from which we are required to cease, is also ranged in our catechism, under three heads. For whatever we do amiss, proceeds either from the secret suggestions of an invisible enemy; from the temptations thrown in our way by the visible objects around us, or from the bad dispositions of our own nature; that is, from the devil, the world, or the flesh. And though every one of these, in their turns, may incline us to every kind of sin; and it is not always either easy or material to know from which the inclination proceeded originally; yet some sins may more usually flow from one source, and some from another; and it will give us a more comprehensive, and, so far at least, a more useful view of them, if we consider them each distinctly.

I. First, then, we renounce in Baptism, *the devil and all his works*. This, in the primitive ages, was the only renunciation made: the works of the devil being understood to signify, as they do in Scripture, every sort of wickedness: which, being often sug-

^a Hence our Saviour, speaking of *John Baptist*, tells the Jews, 'Ye repented not, that ye might believe him.' *Matt.* xxi. 32.

^b *Isaiah* i. 16, 17.

gested by him, always acceptable to him, and an imitation of him, was justly considered as so much service done him, and obedience paid him. But the method now taken, of renouncing the devil, the world and the flesh separately, is more convenient, as it gives us a more particular account of our several enemies.

What we are taught concerning the devil, and demons or wicked spirits, in the Word of God, is, that a number of angels, having sinned against their Maker, (from what motives, or in what instances, we are not, as we need not be, clearly told,) so as to be utterly unfit for pardon, were cast out from Heaven, and are kept under such confinement as God sees proper, till the day comes, when the final sentence, which they have deserved, shall be executed upon them: but that, in the mean time, being full of all evil, and void of all hope, they maliciously endeavor to make those, whom they can, wicked and miserable, like themselves. And being all united under one head, and actuated by one and the same spirit of ill-will against us, we are concerned to look upon them as one enemy: and therefore the catechism speaks of them as such.

What means they use to tempt us, we are not distinctly informed: and it is great folly, either, on the one hand, to doubt of the reality of the fact, because we know not the manner; or on the other, to entertain groundless imaginations, or believe idle stories; and ascribe more to evil spirits, than we have any sufficient cause. For there is no religion in favoring such fancies, or giving credit to such tales; and there hath frequently arisen a great deal of hurtful superstition from them. This we are sure of, and it is enough, that neither satan nor all his angels have power, either to force any one of us into sin, or to hinder us from repenting, or, without God's especial leave, to do any one of us the least hurt in any other way. And we have no cause to think, that leave to do hurt is ever granted to them, but on such extraor-

dinary occasions as are mentioned in Scripture. They are indeed often permitted to entice us to sin, as we too often entice one another. But these enticements of evil spirits may be withstood by us just as effectually, and nearly by just the same methods, as those of evil men. 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you: draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.'^a Unquestionably, our danger is the greater, as we have not only flesh and blood, our own bad inclinations, and the allurements of other bad persons to encounter, but the efforts of an invisible enemy likewise. And therefore it was great mercy in God, to grant us the knowledge of this interesting and otherwise undiscoverable circumstance of our condition, that we may increase our watchfulness in proportion. And if we do, 'greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world:'^b and 'he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear.'^c

But though the devil hath no power of his own over us, we may give him as much as we will; and become slaves and vassals to him as long as we please. In this sense, his empire is very large: and on account of it, the Scripture calls him 'the prince of the power of darkness,'^d and even 'the god of this world.'^e For he was, and is still, in great propriety of speech, the god of many heathen nations; who, instead of the Righteous and Good Maker of Heaven and earth, worship deities of such vile and mischievous characters, as we justly ascribe to the evil one. And even where faith in the true Deity is professed, yet pretended arts of magic, witchcraft, conjuring, fortune-telling, and such like wicked follies, approach more or less to the same crime. For if any of the wretches, guilty of these things, either have, or imagine they have, any communication with the devil; they plainly rebel against God, and endeavor, at least, to confederate with his enemy. Or if they

^a Jam. iv. 7, 8.

^b 1 John iv. 4.

^c 1 Cor. x. 13.

^d Eph. ii. 2; Col. i. 13.

^e 2 Cor. iv. 4.

only pretend a communication with him; as indeed usually, if not always, it is mere pretence; yet this is very inconsistent with renouncing him. And even when they do not so much as pretend it, and would make us believe, that they have such extraordinary skill and power derived from more innocent sources; though they profess no respect to his person, they imitate him in one of his worst qualities, as he is the father of lies. And the lies of this kind are very pernicious ones. They corrupt the notions of religion; give persons unworthy opinions of God; and lead them to imagine, that other beings, as the stars, or even mere names, as chance and fate, share with him in the government of the world. But, indeed, lies of all sorts are peculiarly the works of him who was *a liar*, as well as *a murderer from the beginning*.^a And other sins mentioned in Scripture, as more especially diabolical, are pride, envy, malice, false accusations. Whosoever, therefore, allows himself in any of these things, 'is of his father the devil, and the lusts of his father he doth.'^b But whoever is by Baptism 'delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son,'^c renounces them all.

Ask yourselves, then: Do you renounce them all, in fact? For mere words are nothing. Do you carefully avoid them, and labor to preserve yourselves free from them: or do you live in any of them, and love them? That is, are you children of God, or of satan; and whose are you willing to remain? Make us thine, good Lord, and keep us so forever!

II. We renounce in Baptism, *all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world*. The world, which God created, was good: and so far as it continues good, we renounce it not. Therefore, the innocent gratifications, which he hath provided for us in it, we ought not to condemn, but to partake of them with moderation and thankfulness: the difference of ranks and stations, which is requisite for the due order of

^a John viii. 44.

^b John viii. 44.

^c Col. i. 13.

society, we ought to maintain with prudent humility: and every one should take his proper part, as Providence directs him, in the various employments which furnish to us the necessaries and conveniences of life. Laboring to procure such a competency for ourselves and ours, as will support us comfortably in our present condition, is what we are bound to. And if, by lawful methods and reasonable care, we can rise higher, we may allowably do it, and justly consider it as the promised blessing of God upon our industry. In these respects, then, we do not renounce the world: for in these it is not wicked. And we should not affect to detach ourselves too much from the state of things in which Heaven hath placed us: but ordinarily speaking, take our share, (whatever it happens to be,) and that contentedly, of such employments as contribute to the common good. If we do meet with difficult trials in our way, as they are of God's choosing for us, we are not to fly from them improperly, but trust in him for ability to go through them well. And they, who resolve to retire out of the reach of all such temptations, seldom fail to run into more dangerous ones of their own creating.

We ought not, therefore, to shun what our Maker hath appointed us to engage in: but then we ought to engage in it only in such manner as he hath appointed; and to recollect continually, *'that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.'*^a Not only the heathen world had its idolatrous pomps, or public spectacles, and its immoral vanities, which were peculiarly meant in this renunciation at first; but that, which calls itself Christian, is full of things from which a true Christian must abstain. All methods of being powerful or popular, inconsistent with our integrity; all arts of being agreeable at the expense or hazard of our innocence; and all immoderate desires of adding to our own; all diversions, entertainments, and acquaintances, that have a tendency to hurt our morals or our piety; making com-

^a 1 John v. 19.

mon practice the rule of our conduct, without considering whether it be right or wrong; filling our time in such manner, either with business or amusements, (be they ever so innocent in themselves) as not to leave room for the main business of life, the improvement of our hearts in virtue, the serious exercise of religion, and a principal attention to the great concerns of eternity: these are the things, in which consist that 'friendship with the world,' which 'is enmity with God:'^a and 'if any man love it' thus, 'the love of the Father is not in him.'^b Which, then, do you renounce, and which do you choose? The world, or the Maker of it? Surely, you will adopt the Psalmist's words; 'I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my hope, and my portion, in the land of the living.'^c

III. We renounce at our Baptism, *all the sinful lusts of the flesh*, that is, every unreasonable and forbidden gratification of any appetite or aversion that belongs to the human frame. Whatever inclination is truly primitive in our nature, may be innocently gratified, provided it be in a lawful manner, and a due subordination to the higher principles within us: but when these bounds are transgressed, there begins sin. All such indulgence, therefore, in eating or drinking, as obscures the reason of persons, inflames their passions, hurts their healths, impairs their fortunes, or wastes their time; all sloth, indolence, and luxurious delicacy; all wantonness, impurity, and indecency, with whatever tempts to it: these are renounced under this head: and not these only; but every other sin that hath its first rise within our hearts. For in the language of religion, as the *spirit* signifies the inward principle of good, so doth the *flesh* that of all evil. Therefore, vanity and self-conceit, immoderate anger, ill temper and hard-heartedness, repining at the good of others, or even at our own disadvantages; in short, whatever disposition of our souls is dishonorable to God, prejudicial

^a James iv. 4.

^b 1 John ii. 15.

^c Psal. cxlii. 6.

to our neighbor, or unreasonable in itself, falls under the same denomination with the aforementioned vices. For ‘the works of the flesh,’ saith the Apostle, ‘are manifest: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditious, envyings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’^a ‘Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should come short of it.’^b And let us diligently and frequently examine our hearts, whether we use every proper method to ‘cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’^c

But before I conclude, I must desire you to observe, concerning each of the things which we renounce in Baptism, that we do not undertake what is beyond our power; that the temptations of the devil shall never beset and molest us; that the vain show of the world shall never appear inviting to us; that our own corrupt nature shall never prompt or incline us to evil: but we undertake what, through the grace of God, though not without it, is in our power: that we will not either designedly or carelessly, give these our spiritual enemies needless advantages against us; and that, with whatever advantage they may at any time attack us, we will never yield to them, but always resist them with the utmost prudence and strength. This is the renunciation here meant: and the office of Baptism expresseth it more fully; where we engage ‘so to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, that we will not follow nor be led by them.’ Now God grant us all, faithfully to make this engagement good, ‘that after we have done His will, we may receive His promise!’^d

^a Gal. v. 19—21.

^b Heb. iv. 1.

^c 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^d Heb. x. 36.

LECTURE IV.

OBLIGATION TO BELIEVE AND TO DO, &c.

OUR Catechism, in the Answer to its third Question, teaches that three things are promised in our name, when we are baptized: that we shall renounce what God forbids, believe what he makes known, and do what he commands. The first of these hath been explained to you. The second and third shall be explained, God willing, hereafter. But before the Catechism proceeds to them, it puts a fourth question, and a very natural one, considering that children do not, as they cannot, promise these things for themselves, but their godfathers and godmothers in their names. It asks them therefore, 'whether they think they are bound to believe and to do, as they have promised for them?' And to this the person instructed answers, 'yes, verily:' the fitness of which answer will appear by inquiring,

1. In what sense, and for what reason, they promised these things in our names?

2. On what account we are bound to make their promises good?

1. In what sense, and for what reason, they promise these things in our names? A little attention will shew you this matter clearly.

The persons who began the profession of christianity in the world, must have been such as were of age, to make it their own free choice. And when they entered into the covenant of baptism, they undoubtedly both had the privileges of it declared to them, and engaged to perform the obligations of it, in some manner, equivalent to that which we now use. When these were admitted by baptism into the christian church, their children had a right to be so too, as will be proved in the sequel of these Lectures: at present let it be supposed. But if baptism had been administered to children, without any thing said to

express its meaning, it would have had too much the appearance of an insignificant ceremony, or a superstitious charm. And if only the privileges to which it is entitled, had been rehearsed; they might seem annexed to it absolutely, without any conditions to be observed on the children's part. It was therefore needful to express the conditions also. Now it would naturally appear the strongest and liveliest way of expressing them, to represent the infant, as promising by others then, what he was to promise by and for himself, as soon as he could. So the form, used already for persons grown up, was applied, with a few changes, to children also. And though, by such application, some words, and phrases must appear a little strange, if they were strictly interpreted; yet the intention of them was and is understood to be a very proper one; declaring in the fullest manner what the child is to do hereafter, by a figure and representation made of it at present.

But then, as baptism is administered only on the presumption, that this representation is to become, in due time, a reality: so the persons, who thus promise in the child's name, are and always have been looked on as promising, by the same words, in their own name, not indeed absolutely, that the child shall fulfil their engagements, which nobody can promise; but that, so far as need requires, they will endeavor that he shall: on which it may be reasonably supposed, that he will. Anciently the parents were the persons, who, at baptism, both represented their children, and promised for their instruction and admonition. But it was considered afterwards, that they were obliged to do it without promising it: and therefore other persons were procured to undertake it also: not to excuse the parents from that care from which nothing can excuse them; but only, in a case of such consequence, to provide an additional security for it. If then the parents give due instruction, and the child follows it, the godfathers have nothing to do, but to be heartily glad. But if on either side

there be a failure, it is then their part and duty to interpose, as far as they have ability and opportunity with any prospect of success. Nor is this to be done only till young persons take their baptismal vow upon themselves at confirmation, but ever after. For to that end, even they, who are baptized in their riper years, must have godfathers and godmothers present: not to represent them or to promise for them, neither being wanted; but to remind them, if there be occasion, 'what a solemn profession they have made before those their chosen witnesses.'^a

This then is the nature, and these are the reasons of that promise, which the sureties of children baptized, make in their name; which promise therefore may without question be safely and usefully made, provided it be afterwards religiously kept. But they who probably will be wanted to perform their promise, and yet will neglect it, should not be invited to enter into it, and if they are, should refuse. Let every one concerned think seriously, whether he hath observed these rules, or not: for evidently it is a serious matter, how little soever it be commonly considered as such.

2. The second question is, on what account we are bound by what was promised at our baptism, since we neither consented to that engagement, nor knew of it? Now certainly we are not bound to do whatever any other person shall take upon to promise in our name. But if the thing promised be part of an agreement advantageous to us, we are plainly bound in point of interest; and indeed of conscience too: for we ought to consult our own happiness. Even by the laws of men, persons, unable to express their consent, are yet presumed to consent to what is for their own good:^b and obligations are understood to lie upon them from such presumed consent ever after: espe-

^a Office of Baptism.

^b The first foundation of obligations *quasi ex contractu* is, that *Quisque bræsumitur consentire in id, quod utilitatem affert* See Eden, *El. Jur. Civ.* l. 2. ut. 28. p. 206.

cially if there be a representative acting for them, who is empowered so to do.^a And parents are empowered by nature to act for their children: and by scripture to do it in this very case: and therefore may employ others to do it under them. But further still: the things promised in baptism would have been absolutely incumbent on us: whether they have been promised or not. For it is incumbent on all persons to believe and to do what God ommands. Only the tie is made stronger by the care then taken, that we shall be taught our duty. And when we have acknowledged ourselves to have learnt it, and have solemnly engaged ourselves to perform it, as we do when we are confirmed, then the obligation is complete.

But perhaps it will be asked, how shall all persons, especially the poor and unlearned, know, that what they are taught to believe is really true; and what they are taught to do, really their duty? I answer: The greatest part of it, when once it is duly proposed to them, they may perceive to be so, by the light of their own reason and conscience: as I doubt not to shew you. Such points indeed as depend not on reason, but on the revelation made in scripture, cannot all of them be proved in so short a way, nor perhaps to an equal degree of plainness: but to a sufficient degree they may; as I hope to show you also. And in such matters, they, who have but small abilities or opportunities for knowledge, must, where they cannot do better for themselves, rely on those who have more: not blindly and absolutely, but so far as is prudent and fit: just as, in common business, and the very weightiest of our worldly concerns, we all trust, on many occasions, to one another's judgment and integrity: nor could the affairs of human life go on, if we did not. And though in this method of proceeding some will have far less light than others, yet all will have enough to direct their steps; and they who have the least, are as much obliged to follow that carefully, as if they had the most, and will

^a Of stipulations in another's name, see Inst. 3. 20, 20.

be as surely led by it to a happy end. Hearken therefore to instruction diligently, and consider of it seriously, and judge of it uprightly; and fear not at all after this, but that when you are asked, whether 'you think yourself bound to believe and to do what was promised in your name,' you will be able, and on good grounds, to answer in the first place, 'yes, verily.'

But your answer must not stop here. When you are thus persuaded, your next concern is immediately to act according to that persuasion. Now as this depends on two things; our own resolution, and assistance from above; so both are expressed in the following words of the answer, 'and by God's help so I will.' Further: Because our own resolution is best supported by our sense of the advantage of keeping it: therefore the person instructed goes on, in the same answer, to acknowledge that the state, in which he is placed by baptism, is a state of salvation: and because assistance from above is best obtained by thankfulness for God's mercy hitherto, and prayer for it hereafter. he concludes, by, 'thanking our heavenly Father, for calling him to this state; and praying for his grace, that he may continue in the same to his life's end.'

Now the necessity and nature of God's grace and of prayer, and other means to obtain it, will be explained in their proper places. The two points therefore, of which it remains to speak at present, are, the need of good resolution, and of thankfulness for that happy state, in which baptism hath placed us.

In every thing that we attempt, much depends on a deliberate and fixed purpose of mind. But particularly in religion, when once we are thoroughly convinced, that whatever it requires must be done; and have determined accordingly, that though we know there will be labor and difficulty in going on, and many solicitations and enticements to leave off, yet we will set about the work, and persevere in it; obstacles and discouragements, that till then appeared very threatening, will, a great part of them, vanish

into nothing; and those, which remain, will serve only to exercise our courage, and make our triumph glorious; provided we keep our resolution alive, and in vigor, by frequently repeating it in a proper manner: that is, in a strong sense of God's presence, and an humble dependence on his blessing. For if we trust in ourselves, we shall fail. And if we pretend to trust in God, without exerting ourselves, we shall fail equally. In either case, the good impressions made in our minds will be continually growing fainter of course: and multitudes of things will conspire to wear them quite out. Pleasures will soften us into dissoluteness: or amusements, into neglect of every serious attention. Love of riches, or power of applause will engage us in wrong methods of attaining them: or the cares of life will banish the duties of it from our thoughts. Vehement passions will upset our virtue: or insinuating temptations undermine it as effectually. Some of these things must happen unless we preserve a steady and watchful, a modest and religious resolution against them, ever fresh on our minds.

And nothing will contribute more to our doing this than reflecting often, with due thankfulness, that the state, to which God hath called us, is a state of salvation: a state of deliverance from the present slavery of sin, and the future punishment of it: a state of the truest happiness, that this life can afford, introducing us to perfect and everlasting happiness in the next. Such is the condition in which, through the mercy of God, we christians are placed; and by which, by a christian behaviour, we may secure ourselves: and not only preserve, but continually enlarge, our share of its blessings. But if we now neglect to do for ourselves what we ought; all, that hath been done for us by others, will be of no avail. Neither our baptism, nor our instruction; nor our learning ever so exactly, or understanding ever so distinctly, or remembering ever so particularly, what we were instructed in can possibly have any effect,

but to increase our condemnation, unless we faithfully continue in the practice of every part of it to our life's end. This therefore let us all determine to make our constant and most earnest care, with humble gratitude to God, our heavenly Father, for his undeserved mercy to us; and with sure confidence, that if we be not wanting to ourselves, 'he that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ.'^a

LECTURE V.

FOUNDATIONS AND RULE OF FAITH.

HAVING already explained to you the several things which Christians by the covenant of Baptism renounce, I come now to speak of what we are to believe: after which will follow properly what we are to do. For all reasonable practice must be built on some belief, or persuasion, which is the ground of it: virtuous practice, on a persuasion that what we do is fit and right: religious practice, on a persuasion that it is the will of God. Now God hath been pleased to make His will known by two ways: partly by the mere inward light of our own understandings; partly by the outward means of additional declarations from Himself. The former of these we call natural religion: the latter, revealed religion.

The natural reason of our own minds, if we would seriously attend to it, and faithfully assist each other in using it, is capable of discovering, as shall be proved to you, not only the being, and attributes, and authority of God; but in general, what sort of behaviour He must expect from such creatures, placed in such a world, as we are, in order to avoid his displeasure, and procure some degree of His favor. And as we cannot doubt of what our own clear ap-

^a Phil. i. 6.

prehension, and the common sense of mankind, plainly tell us: here is one foundation of religious belief and practice evident to all men. And if our belief and practice be not suitable to it, our consciences, whenever we consult them, nay, often whether we consult them or not, will condemn us, to our faces, of sin, and proclaim to us beforehand the justice of that future condemnation, which God will pass upon it. Every one of you that hear me, have at times felt this: make, every one of you, a proper use of it.

If, then, the light of nature were our only guide, it would teach us more than, I fear, many of us observe. But happy are we, that this is not our only guide. For it would leave us uninformed in many particulars of unspeakable moment, even were our faculties unimpaired, and employed to the best advantage. But alas, the very first of mankind fell into sin, and derived a corrupted nature down to their posterity: who yet further inflamed their own passions and appetites, perverted their own judgments, turned aside their attention from the truth; 'the light that was in them became,' in a great measure, 'darkness.'^a even in respect of what they were to do. But what they were to hope and fear, after doing wickedly, this was a matter of far greater obscurity still. And had we, here at present, been left to ourselves, in all likelihood we had been, at this hour, (like multitudes of other poor wretches in every part of the world that is unenlightened by Christianity,) worshiping stocks and stones: or, however, we should certainly, in other respects, have been 'walking in the vanity of our minds, having the understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God;^b strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.'^c

But he was graciously pleased not to leave fallen men to themselves, but to furnish them with needful knowledge. What human abilities, when at the best, might have discovered, they would in all likeli-

^a Matth. vi. 23.

^b Eph. iv. 17, 18.

^c Eph. ii. 12.

hood have discovered, (if at all,) so slowly, that we have great cause to believe, the religion of our first parents was derived from his immediate instruction. But certainly after their transgression, he made an immediate revelation to them; and thenceforward vouchsafed from time to time, various manifestations, to such as would receive them, of his truths, his commands, and his purposes: not only republishing the original doctrines of reason, but adding new articles of belief, new promises, and new precepts, as the changing circumstances of things required; till at length, by his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, he confirmed all his past notifications, and took away all necessity of future ones; acquainting us fully, in the ever blessed Gospel, with all that we shall need to know, or be bound to do, 'till Heaven and Earth pass.'^a

Thus, then, besides those things in religion, which our own reason can discern, we receive others on the testimony of their being revealed by God: as unquestionably we ought. For if he, who cannot err, and cannot lie, communicates any information to us; though it requires us to believe, what we had before not the least apprehension of, or should else have imagined to be exceedingly strange and unlikely; tho' it requires us to do, what otherwise we should neither have thought of doing, nor have chosen to do; yet surely His testimony and command may well be sufficient reason for both. We admit every day, upon the testimony one of another, things utterly unknown to us, and in themselves extremely improbable: and we act upon such testimony in matters, on which our fortunes, our healths, our lives depend: as indeed without doing so, the affairs of the world could not be carried on. Now, 'if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.'^b And since we are able to convey the knowledge of our thoughts and our wills to each other, no question but God is able to convey his to his creatures.

^a Matth. v. 18.

^b 1 John v. 9.

But, allowing that he can, it may be asked, how do we prove, that he hath conveyed it to men in the Jewish and Christian revelations? I answer, we believe the Jewish revelation, for this plain reason, amongst others, because the christian confirms it: and we believe the christian, chiefly upon the full proof, which Christ and his Apostles have given of it. They who saw him, with their own eyes, perform things which man could not do; and heard him, with their own ears, foretell things which man could not foreknow, and yet experienced them to come to pass: as for instance, his healing great numbers of sick persons with a word, and raising himself from the dead: they must be sure, that some power attended him more than human. And since his doctrines all promoted the spiritual worship and honour of the one true God, and virtue and happiness among men; they must be sure, also, that this power was not that of an evil spirit, but of a good one; and consequently, that he came from God, and taught his will. If, then, it be true, that he did, in their presence, not only deliver such doctrine, but foretell and perform such things; then their faith was reasonable, and ours is so too. Now they do in the strongest manner affirm this; as you may read throughout the Gospels and Acts: and why are they not to be credited? They could not every one of them be mistaken in all; and think they saw and heard, day after day, and year after year, things which they did not, any more than we can be mistaken in every thing that we see and hear continually. Besides they affirm, that they were enabled to do the same wonders themselves, and enabled others to do them. All this could not be mistake, too.

And as they could not be deceived in these points, so neither could they intend to deceive mankind.— There is all the appearance in the world of their being fair and honest persons, that would not deceive for interest. But besides, what they affirmed, was absolutely against their interest. It exposed them, as they could but imagine it would, to reproach, impris-

onment, stripes, and death itself. Yet all these things they underwent, patiently, one after another, through a course of many years, for the sake of what they taught; none of them all confessing, or being convicted of any falsehood: which yet they must have been, had they been guilty of any: for the things, which they affirmed, were many, indeed most of them, done publicly: and all the power, and all the learning of the world, were employed against them from the first, to detect them, if possible. Yet nobody pretends, or ever did pretend, that they were detected. Besides, if any such discovery had been made, their whole scheme must have been ruined, immediately; whereas, instead of that, they spread their religion, (though it was contrary to the established superstitions, the deep-rooted prejudices, and favorite vices, of all mankind,) through the whole earth, within a few years, by mere force of miracles, and arguments, and innocence, against all opposition. These things surely are proofs sufficient of our Saviour's coming from God, without saying any thing of the prophecies of the Old Testament; so many of which were so clearly fulfilled in him.

But then, as all the facts hitherto mentioned are ancient ones; it may be asked farther, how can we now be sure of the truth of what is said to have been done so many ages ago? I answer, by all the same means, which can assure us of any other ancient fact. And there are multitudes of much ancients, which nobody had the least doubt of; and it would be reckoned madness, if they had. The miracles of Christ and his Apostles, are recorded in the New Testament: a book very fully proved, and indeed, acknowledged to be, the greatest part of it, written by the Apostles themselves; and the rest, in their days, by their direction: and no one material fact of it is, or ever was, so far as we can learn, opposed by any contrary evidence, whatsoever. Then, that vast numbers of persons were converted to this religion, as they declared, by seeing these miracles, and vast numbers

more, by the accounts which they received of them; and persevered in their faith, against all worldly discouragements, till at length it became the prevailing one; appears partly from the New Testament, also partly from other books of acknowledged authority, written in that age, and the following ones, by Heathens and Jews, as well as Christians; and indeed is in the main universally owned and notorious.

But supposing the facts, on which our religion is built, to be truly related, yet it may be asked further, how shall we be sure that its doctrines were so too, in which it is much easier to mistake? I answer again: the doctrines of the Old Testament are attested and confirmed by the New. And for those of the New Testament; we have our Saviour's own discourses, recorded by two of his Apostles, Matthew and John, who heard him constantly, and by two other persons, Mark and Luke, who at least received them from his constant hearers. We have, also, the discourses of his first disciples, after his resurrection, recorded in the Acts: we have, besides, many letters written by them, the epistles, sent on several occasions, for the instruction of several new-planted churches. Now all these agree in the same doctrine. But further, which adds inestimable value to what they have said and written, our Lord himself promised them, that the Spirit of God should 'teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatever he had said unto them;' ^a 'should come and abide with them for ever, and guide them into all truth.' ^b And accordingly, this spirit did come, and manifest his continual presence with them, by his miraculous gifts. We have, therefore, the fullest evidence, that both what they have delivered, as from our Saviour, and what they have said in their own name, is a true representation of his religion.

But another question is, supposing the Scripture a true revelation, so far as it goes; how shall we know,

^a *Jonh* xiv. 26.

^b *John* xiv. 16. xvi. 13.

if it be a full and complete one too, in all things necessary? I answer: since our Saviour had the Spirit without measure, and the writers of Scripture had as large a measure of it, as their commission to instruct the world required, it is impossible, that in so many discourses concerning the terms of salvation, as the New Testament contains, they should all have omitted any one thing necessary to the great end which they had in view. And what was not necessary when the Scripture was completed, cannot have become so since. For the faith was once for all delivered in it to the Saints: ^a and 'other foundation can no man lay,' ^b than what was laid then. The sacred penmen themselves, could teach no other gospel than Christ appointed them: and he hath appointed no one since to make additions to it.

In the books of Scripture, then, the doctrines of our religion are truly and fully conveyed to us; and we cannot be so sure of any other conveyance. It is a confirmation of our faith, indeed, that the earliest Christian writers, after those of Scripture, in all material points agree with it. But if they did not, no writers can have equal authority with inspired ones. And no unwritten tradition can long be of any authority at all. For things delivered by word of mouth, always vary more or less, in going through but a few hands. And the world hath experienced, that articles of belief, for want of having recourse to the written rule of them, have greatly changed in many churches of christians: but in few or none more, than that of Rome, which absurdly pretends to be unchangeable and infallible. It is in the Scripture alone, then, that we, who live in these later ages, can be sure of finding the christian faith preserved complete and undefiled: and there we may be sure of it.

For as to any pretence or fear of these books being corrupted and altered, either by design or mistake: had the Old Testament been depraved in any thing

^a Jude 3.

^b 1 Cor. lii. 11.

essential, our Saviour and his Apostles would have given us notice of it. And for the New, the several parts of it were so immediately spread through the world, and so constantly read, in public and private, by all christians; and so perpetually quoted in all their discourses, and all the disputes of one sect with another, that they could not possibly be changed, by any of them, in any thing considerable. For the rest would have immediately discovered it, and charged them with it, which must put an end to the danger. And indeed it is an agreed point, amongst all who understand these matters, that nothing of this kind, either hath happened or can happen, so as to effect any one article of faith.

But perhaps it will be alleged, that the Bible was written originally in languages, which have long been out of common use, and with which but a small part of christians now are acquainted: and how shall the rest be sure, that we have them rightly translated into our own? The plain answer is, that all translations, made by all parties, agree in most places, and those of the most importance: and where they disagree, moderate consideration, and inquiry will enable any persons who live in a country of knowledge and freedom, which, God be thanked, is our case, to judge on some good grounds, as far as they need judge, which is right, and which is wrong; which is clear, and which is doubtful. Nor doth any sect of christians pretend to accuse our common translation of concealing any necessary truth, or asserting any destructive error.

But supposing all this, yet it may be urged, that many parts of Scripture in our translation, and in the original, too, are dark and obscure: and how can it then be the guide and rule of our faith? I answer: these are few in proportion to such as are clear: and were they more, the Spirit of God, we may be sure, would make all necessary points, in one part or another, sufficiently clear. These, therefore, the most ignorant may learn from Scripture; at least by the

help of such explanations, as they are willing to ask and trust in all other cases, and much admirable instruction besides; which, if they do but respect and observe as they ought, they may be content to leave for the use of others, what a little modesty will shew them is above their own reach.

But that every person may be enabled the better to distinguish between the necessary doctrines and the rest: those, which either Christ or his Apostles, expressly taught to be of the former sort, or the nature of the thing plainly shews to be such, have from the earliest times been collected together: and the profession of them had been particularly required of all persons baptized. These collections, or summaries, are in Scripture called ‘the form of sound words,’^a ‘the words of faith,’^b ‘the principles of the doctrine of Christ:’^c but in the present language of Christians, the creed, that is, the belief.

The ancient Church had many such creeds: some longer, some shorter; differing in expression, but agreeing in method and sense: of which that called the Apostles’ creed, was one. And it deserves that name, not so much from any certainty that the Apostles drew it up, as because it contains the Apostolical doctrines; and was used by a church, which, before it corrupted itself, was justly considered as one of the chief Apostolical foundations. I mean the Roman.

But neither this, nor any other creed hath authority of its own, equal to Scripture; but derives its principal authority from being founded on Scripture. Nor is it in the power of any man, or number of men, either to lessen or increase the fundamental articles of the Christian faith: which yet the church of Rome, not content with this in its primitive creed, hath profanely attempted: adding twelve articles more, founded on its own, that is, on no authority, to the ancient twelve, which stand on the authority of God’s Word. But our church hath wisely refused to go a step beyond

^a 2 Tim. i. 13.

^b 1 Tim. iv. 6.

^c Heb. vi. 1.

the original form; since all necessary truths are briefly comprehended in it, as will appear, when the several parts of it come to be expounded, which it is the duty of every one of us firmly to believe, and openly to profess. 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'^a

LECTURE VI.

CREED.

ARTICLE I. *I believe in God the Father, &c.*

THE foundation of all religion is faith in God: the persuasion, that there doth, ever did, and ever will exist, one Being of unbounded power and knowledge, perfect Justice, Truth and Goodness, the Creator and Preserver, the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of all things. With this article, therefore, our Creed begins. And as all the rest are built upon it, so the truth and certainty of it is plain to every man, when duly proposed to his consideration, how unlikely soever some men would have been to discover it of themselves.

We know beyond possibility of doubt, that we now are: and yet the oldest of us, but a few years ago, was not. How then came we to be? Whence had we our beginning? From our parents, perhaps we may think. But did our parents know, or do we know in the least, how to form such a mind as that of man, with all its faculties; or such a body as that of man, with all its parts and members; or even the very smallest of them? No more than a tree knows how to make the seed that grows into a like tree; no more than any common instrument knows how to do the work which is done by its means. Our parents

^a Rom. x. 10.

were only instruments in the hands of some higher power: and, to speak properly, That *it is which made us, and not we ourselves,*^a or one another. And the same is the case of every animal and every plant upon the face of the earth.

But could our parents be the cause of our being, yet still, the first human pair must have had some different cause of theirs. Will it then be said, that there was no first? But we cannot conceive this to be possible. And it certainly is not true. For we have undoubted accounts, in ancient histories, of the time when men were but few in the world, and inhabited but a small part of it; and, therefore, were near their beginning: accounts of the times when almost all arts and sciences were invented, which mankind would not have been long in being, much less from eternity, without finding out. And upon the whole, there is strong evidence, that the present frame of things is not more than about six thousand years old; and that none of us here present is 150 generations distant from our first parents.

If it be said, that universal deluges may perhaps have destroyed almost all the race of men, and so made that seem a new beginning, which was not, we answer, that one such deluge we own: but that no such can possibly happen according to the common course of nature, as learned persons have abundantly shown. And, consequently, this proves a higher Power, instead of destroying the proof of it.

But without having recourse to history, it is evident, from the very form and appearance of this earth, that it cannot have been from eternity. If it had, to mention nothing else, the hills must all have been washed down by showers, innumerable ages ago, to a level with the plains.* And, indeed, they

^a Psal. c. 2.

* This argument is proved from *Theophrastus*, in *Philo*, p. 510; and two answers to it attempted, p. 513; that mountains may lose parts, and gain them again, as trees do their leaves; or are supported by the internal fire, which threw them up. The first is an absurd assertion: the latter a groundless and false one.

who have thought of these matters, well know and confess, that the present constitution of the heavens and earth both must have had a beginning, and must of itself come to an end.

To say, therefore, that things are by nature what they are, is to say a plain falsehood, if we mean, that they are so by any necessity in their own nature. For then they must always have been such as we see them; and not the least part of any thing could possibly have been at all different from what it is: which is the wildest imagination in the world. The only nature therefore, which we and the whole Universe have, was freely given us by a Superior Being. And the regularity in which things go on, is no more a proof that they were of themselves from everlasting, or shall continue as they are to everlasting, than the regular motion of a clock is a proof that no artist made it, or keeps it in order, or shall take it to pieces. On the contrary, the more complete this regularity is, and the longer it lasts, the more fully it shows the power of its author; and not only that, but his understanding and wisdom also.

Indeed, what hath no understanding, hath, in strictness of speech, no power; cannot act, but only be acted upon: as all mere matter is; which never moves, but as it is moved. But were this doubtful: look around you, and see what marks of understanding and wisdom appear. Turn your eyes upon yourselves: how *fearfully and wonderfully are we made!*^a Of what an incredible number and variety of parts (a vastly greater, perhaps, than any of us suspect,) are our bodies composed! How were these formed and put together at first? What hath caused, and what hath limited their growth since? How hath proper and suitable nourishment been distributed to them all? How hath the perpetual motion of our blood, and of our breath, sleeping and waking, both of them so necessary to life, been carried on? How is it, that we move every joint belonging to us, in-

^a Psal. cxxxix. 14.

stantly, and with such exactness, without knowing even which way we go about it? Our speech, our hearing, our sight, every one of our senses, what amazing contrivance is there in them! and the more amazing, the more strictly we examine them! In the works of men, it is often mere ignorance that occasions our admiration: but in these, the minuter our inspection and the deeper our search is, the greater abundance we always find of accurate adjustment and unimaginable precautions.

But then, besides ourselves, the earth is replenished with numberless other animals. Those, of which we commonly take notice, are an extremely small part of the whole. Different countries produce very different sorts. How many, still more different, the great waters conceal from us, we cannot even guess. Multitudes remain, so little, as almost to escape our sight, with the best assistance that we are able to give it; and, probably, multitudes more, which escape it entirely. But all that we can observe, we find, down to the very least, contrived with the same inconceivable art, strangely diversified, yet uniform at the same time, and perfectly fitted by most surprising instincts for their several ways of living, so entirely different each from the other.

What wisdom and power must it be, then, which hath peopled the world in this manner, and made such provision for the support of all its inhabitants: chiefly by the means of innumerable kinds of herbs and vegetables, just as wonderful in their make, as the animals themselves: that hath intermixed the dry land so fitly with springs, and rivers, and lakes, and the ocean, to supply every thing with necessary moisture, and make the communication of the most distant parts easy; that hath surrounded the earth with air for us to breathe in, to convey our voices to each other, and to support clouds for rain: that hath caused this air to be moved by winds, which preserve it healthful; and *bring those who go down to the sea in ships, unto the haven where they would be:*^a that hath

a Psal. cvii. 23, 30.

placed the sun at so exact a distance from us, that we are neither burnt up by heat, nor frozen by cold; and hath kept bodies of such incredible bulk, as the heavenly ones, rolling on for thousands of years together, with so orderly and exact a motion, that the returns of day and night, and of the various annual seasons, are precisely foreknown; and perfectly suitable for labor and rest, and bringing the fruits of the earth to maturity: whereas, were almost any one of these things considerably altered, we must all of necessity perish.

But then, how small a part of the Universe our habitation may be; and how many, perhaps greater, wonders the rest may contain, we cannot so much as conjecture. The millions of miles that are between us and the nearest of the celestial globes, would be astonishing, if mentioned to you. Yet their distance is as nothing, if compared with the farthest, which we see; and, very possibly, the farthest which we see, may be as nothing to many others: every one of which, we have no reason to doubt, is as full of regularity, and beauty, and use, as our own abode. And from what origin can the whole of this proceed, but that which the Psalmist rapturously expresses: 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!'^b

To speak of chance, as the cause of them, is absurd beyond measure. Chance is merely a word, to express our own ignorance: it is nothing, and can do nothing. Suppose one of us were asked, how this building, in which we are assembled, or the smallest part of the dress which we wear, came to be what it is; and should answer, that no person made it, but it jumped together and held together by chance; would not this be gross folly? And how shockingly foolish must it be, then, to give the same account of the existence of a whole world, so admirably contrived, adjusted and conducted throughout! As evidently, therefore, as any common piece of

^b Psal. civ. 24.

work proves a workman to have composed it, so evidently, and very much more, the immense fabric of the Universe proves a Being of unspeakable power and skill to be the Creator of it.

And accordingly, the belief of a wise and mighty author of all hath been received in every age and nation: which clearly shews it to be founded in truth, and written in the hearts of men. They corrupted it gradually indeed: first, by unworthy representations of the true God, then by adding the worship of false Gods, which at length excluded him. But undeniably the primitive notion was that of invisible mind, the maker and ruler of this visible frame: which being plainly under the uniform direction, shews itself to have one only sovereign director and governor. This doctrine God himself must have taught our first parents in the beginning: he hath confirmed it since by miracles from time to time: and perpetuated the evidence of it in his holy word.

That he is not perceived by any of our senses, is no objection at all against his being. For our minds also are imperceptibly by sense. But as they notwithstanding, shew their existence by moving and disposing of our bodies according to their pleasure; so doth God shew his, by moving and disposing of all things as he wills. And the same argument proves his presence with all things. For wherever he acts, there he certainly is: and therefore he is every where. Our presence is limited, and extends a very little way; but what is there to limit him? Our being is derived from his command; and therefore depends on it still; but he is underived: and therefore independent absolutely. Our Powers are only what he hath thought fit to give us: but his power is infinite: for every thing depending on him, nothing can resist him. Our knowledge is every way imperfect: but he who made all things, and is present with all things, must in the completest manner know all things, even the most hidden thoughts of the heart. We are often unjust and wicked: but God cannot be other-

wise than just and holy. For the only reasons of our failing to do right are, that we either perceive not what is so, or else are tempted to act contrary to our perceptions: but God is subject to no mistake, or weakness of any kind. And, which is the happiest attribute of all for his creation, he must be likewise good. For goodness is plainly a right thing; and therefore he must see it to be so: it is plainly a perfection; and therefore the perfectest being must possess it in the highest degree. We should be always good ourselves, if nothing misled us: and him nothing can mislead. But the most valuable proof is, that we experience his goodness; for we live in a world full of it. All that we enjoy, and every capacity of enjoyment that we have, proceeds from him. Most of what we suffer proceeds from our own faults and follies. And so much of it as comes wholly from his providence, is designed for our present improvement and future reward: unless by obstinate misbehaviour we become unfit for reward: and then we have only ourselves to blame. For as God is knowing and wise; he cannot but observe the difference between good persons and bad: as he is just and holy; he cannot take pleasure in those who are otherwise: and as he is the governor of the world; he cannot fail to shew his displeasure in that effectual manner, which the ends of government require. And they certainly do require the bad to be punished, as well as the good to be made happy.

Such then is the nature of God: to whom in the creed the name of father is given, as he is both the father of the creation by forming it, and also the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him our gracious and reconciled father, as shall hereafter be explained. The next word, 'Almighty,' denotes not barely his irresistible power, but principally that rightful and absolute authority, with which 'his kingdom ruleth over all.'^a And the last words of the des-

^a Psalm ciii. 19.

cription, ‘maker of heaven and earth,’ are added: partly to express the ground of that authority, his being the Creator, and therefore the proprietor of the world; and partly in opposition to the errors of the heathens, who worshiped many beings in the heavens and the earth, as Gods, which, in these terms of our creed, are by evident consequence declared to be no Gods, because they are the work of his hands ‘of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.’^a

The duties, owing to this our awful Sovereign, will be specified in expounding the ten commandments, particularly the first. At present therefore I shall only beg you to remember the Apostle’s exhortation: ‘Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.’^b Nothing, but an evil heart, can make unbelief desirable, or even supportable. For to every good heart it must be the greatest joy, to know that the world is governed by infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness; and the greatest affliction, to have any doubt of it. If therefore you find the thought of such a governor unwelcome; if you could inwardly wish there were none; be assured, ‘your heart is not right.’^c And though you could with such a disposition, bring yourself, almost or completely, to imagine there is none: what possible security can shutting your eyes give you against danger; or what excuse can wilfully denying God make for disobeying him?

But, then, observe further, that supposing you do not disbelieve a God at all, yet if you never think of him, this is not, to any good purpose, believing in him at all: and if you think of him but seldom, it is believing in him but little. He on whom we depend continually, to whom we owe duty continually, in whose presence we continually are, ought never to be far from our thoughts; but we should set him before our eyes so constantly, as to live in his fear al-

^a Rom. xi. 36.

^b Heb. iii. 12.

^c Acts viii. 21.

ways. Doing this, needs not keep us from common business; it needs not keep us from innocent pleasures. But it should influence us all, effectually, (and happy are we if it doth,) to conduct ourselves in every thing, as persons who act under the inspection of a wise and just superior: whom we may indeed forget, if we will; but shall be remembered by him: from whom we may depart, but cannot escape. In our choice it is, whether we will be the better, or the worse for him. But one we must; and that beyond expression. 'For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing; whether it be good or whether it be evil.' ^a

LECTURE VII.

CREED.

Article II. *And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.*

To believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, is the universal creed of nature and reason. But divine revelation adds further professions to it; of which the first is, that of faith in our ever blessed Redeemer: whose direction was, 'ye believe in God, believe also in me.' ^b Therefore, that we may believe in him as we ought, he is described, in the creed, by his name and offices, his relation to God and to us.

1. His name, Jesus: by which, indeed, many of the Jews were called: but it was given him in obedience to an appointment from Heaven, made with a peculiar regard for its proper meaning. For it signifies, a Saviour: which is a title conferred, in a lower sense, on several persons in Scripture, who delivered others

^a Eccl. xii. 14.

^c John xiv. 1.

from considerable dangers or evils, or obtained for them considerable benefits and advantages. Thus the Judges of the Israelites, that freed them from the oppression of their enemies, are said to be Saviours, whom God raised up ^a to them. And Joshua, who brought them out of the wilderness into the land of Canaan, subdued it, and put them in possession of it, not only was in these respects a Saviour to them: but, from a foresight that he would, was called so, as his proper name. For Joshua and Jesus, are, in the original, the same word; only pronounced a little differently. And Joshua is constantly called Jesus in the Greek language, and even in our translation of the New Testament, the two only times that he is mentioned there. ^b But if he deserved to be named a Saviour, how much more did that person, who hath taught and enabled us to overcome our spiritual, which are infinitely our worst enemies; who hath obtained for us, on most equitable terms, deliverance from punishment due to our guilt; who hath destroyed on our behalf, Death, and ‘him that had the power of death;’ ^c and will bestow on us eternal salvation in the kingdom of Heaven? With perfect justice, therefore, was the order given to his Virgin Mother. ‘Thou shalt call his name, Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins’: ^d only let us remember, that none will be saved from them hereafter, that continue to live in them here. For is the holy ‘Jesus the minister of Sin? God forbid!’ ^e

2. His offices are expressed by the word, Christ. This, and the Hebrew word Messiah, to which it answers, in their literal meaning, signify anointed. Oil was anciently in very high esteem among the eastern nations, on various accounts. And as they were wont to express almost every matter of importance, by actions, as well as words; one way of setting any thing apart, and appropriating it to an honorable use, was by anointing it with oil. Therefore, we find

^a Judges iii. 9. 15. Nehem. ix. 27.

^e Heb. ii. 14.

^d Matt. i. 21.

^b Acts vii. 45. Heb. iv 8.

^c Gal. ii. 17.

Jonathan, in his parable, makes the olive tree speak of its fatness, as that ‘wherewith they honour God and man.’^a Accordingly, the tabernacle, and temple, and their furniture, were consecrated by anointing them. And almost every sacrifice had oil, mixed with flour, added to it, when it was offered up. Nor was it used only to such things, but such persons as were distinguished in honour above others: to kings; who are thence frequently stiled in Scripture, the Lord’s anointed; to priests; concerning whom God commands, in the case of Aaron and his sons, ‘thou shalt anoint them, that they may minister to me in the priest’s office:’^b And lastly, to prophets, as where Elijah is directed to ‘anoint Elisha in his room.’^c

And when once, by custom, anointing came to signify raising any one to a station of dignity, the same word was used, even on occasions where no oil was actually employed.^d Thus, when Elijah was bid to ‘anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Elisha for prophet in his own room;’ we find not that he ever did it literally.^e Again, when God is introduced, as saying of the Jewish patriarchs, before Moses, ‘touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;’^f we have no ground to think, that they were ever entitled to this name, by any solemn outward unction, performed upon them; but only by the distinguished favour and regard of Heaven. And in this sense it was, that God anointed our Saviour ‘with the oil of gladness, above his fellows;’^g that is, exalted him to a rank of dignity and honour, beyond all creatures. For in his person were united, those three offices, in the highest degree, to which, you have seen, persons were anciently set apart by anointing.

He is the greatest prophet that ever was; having given to mankind, the fullest knowledge of God’s

^a Judges ix. 9.

^b Exod. xl. 15.

^c 1 Kings xix. 16.

^d The Jews say that “unction,” signifies “*principality and greatness*,” Re-land. Ant. Hebr. Par. 2. c. 8. §. 6, and see this further proved, ib. c. 9. §. 6.

^e See 1 Kings, xix. 15, 16. Comp. v. 19: and 2 Kings, viii. 13.

^f Psal. cv. 15.

^g Psal. xlv. 7.

will, and confirmed his doctrine by the most illustrious miracles and predictions. Hence, Isaiah, speaking in his name, long before his appearance, gave that description of him, which he so justly in the synagogue applied to himself: ‘the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me ^a to preach the gospel to the poor.’^b And St. Peter, after his resurrection, says, that God ‘anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.’ What these words mean, the next explain: ‘who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him:’^c and the whole means just the same thing, with what he elsewhere says, that he was ‘a man approved of God, by miracles and wonders and signs.’^d

In the next place, he is a priest of an order, strictly speaking, confined to his own person, and of which no other ever was, or can be; though in some respects, the priesthood of Melchizedek, peculiarly resembled and pre-figured it. He offered up himself for the sins of mankind, as shall hereafter be explained to you. With this sacrifice, he appeared before God, ‘not in the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but in Heaven itself;’^e made reconciliation for us with him, derives to us continual blessings from him; and thus remains for ever ‘an high priest over the house of God;’^f compared with whom, the Jewish priesthood, and the sacrifices, which they were daily making, were but as empty shadows, to the real substance.

But lastly, he is in the highest sense a king; king and Lord of all. Hence, in the second Psalm, he is called the ‘Lord’s anointed, whom he hath set to be King on his holy hill of Sion.’^g Hence, in Isaiah, it is prophesied, that he should ‘sit upon the throne of David, (that is, reign over the people of God,) to order and establish it forever.’^a And hence his title in

^a Chald. doth not understand the anointing here to be with material oil.

^b Isa. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. ^c Acts x. 38. ^d Acts ii. 22.

^e Heb. ix. 24. ^f Heb. x. 21. ^g Psal. ii. 6. ^a Isa. ix. 7.

Daniel is, ‘Messiah the Prince;’^b or the anointed Prince; the Son of Man, to whom dominion should be given, and a kingdom; that all people, nations and languages, should serve him.’^c The completion of these prophecies, we find in the New Testament; where, as he professes himself a King, but ‘not of a kingdom of this world;’^d so we find him, ‘after the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour,’^e infinitely superior to the highest of the mortal potentates, ‘all power being given to him in Heaven and in earth;’^f ‘and a name above every name, that is named in this world, and that to come;’^g for which reason, he is in the Revelation, styled ‘King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.’^h This kingly power, he exercises, partly by giving laws, which every one is bound to obey, and no one may alter, diminish, or add to them: partly by protecting his Church against all its enemies, visible and invisible, so that neither shall at any time totally prevail against it: partly by conducting every member of it, who is dutiful to him, in the way of peace and happiness, through the grace of his Spirit, and the ministry of his ordinances: and finally, he will, in the most conspicuous manner, display his regal power, by everlastingly rewarding his faithful subjects, and punishing all who have rejected his authority, rebelled against it, or disobeyed it.

These, then, are the offices, to which God hath anointed, that is, raised and exalted him; and in respect of which he is called the Christ. Let us all be careful to receive him suitably to them; and so hearken to him as our Prophet, that we may partake of his atonement, as our Priest; and live under his protection, as our King, for ever and ever.

3. The next thing mentioned in the Creed, concerning our Saviour, is the relation which he bears to God, as the only Son of the Father Almighty. In-

^b Dan. ix. 25. ^c Dan. vii. 13, 14. ^d John xviii. 33, 36. ^e Heb. ii. 9.
^f Matt. xxviii. 18. ^g Phil. ii. 9. ^h Eph. i. 21. ^k Rev. xix. 16.

deed, the Scripture speaks of God, as the Father of all men; and all that are good, as his sons. Good christians are so, in a higher sense, than other good men. Angels are the sons of God, in a degree still superior to them. But yet, all other sonships are so inconceivably inferior to that of Christ, that they are in comparison as nothing; and he deserves, notwithstanding, to be called, as he is several times called in Scripture, ‘the only begotten Son of God;’^a which greatest of titles appears to be his due, on several accounts.

First—because, being born of a Virgin, he had no earthly Father; but was begotten of God, by his Holy Spirit. This reason the angel gives, in St. Luke, ‘the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.’^b

Secondly—as by virtue of the above mentioned offices, to which he was anointed, he received higher marks of divine favour, and higher degrees of divine likeness, than any other person ever did. For as himself argues, with the Jews, if on account of mere earthly power and dignity, men were called ‘Gods, and children of the most High,’^c much more might he, ‘whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world,’ in so vastly superior a character, be styled, by way of eminence, ‘the Son of God.’^d And thus he is accordingly styled, on this account: ‘I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son’:^e ‘also, I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.’^f

Thirdly—He is the Son of God, as being by the power of God, ‘the first begotten of the dead,’^g restored to life to die no more. For thus St. Paul expresses it: ‘God hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.’^h

^a John i. 14, 18. ^{iii.} 16, 18. ¹ John iv. 9. ^b Luke i. 35. ^c Psal. lxxxii. 6.
^d John x. 36, &c. ^e 2 Sam. vii. 14. ¹ Chr. xvii. 13. ^{Heb.} i. 5.
^f Psal. lxxxix. 27. ^g Rev. i. 5. ^h Acts xiii. 33.

Fourthly—He is so, as being ‘Heir of all things,’^a and by this ‘inheritance having obtained a more excellent name than men or angels:’^b they being as ‘servants in the house of God, he as a Son.’^c

But the most important and eminent sense, in which Christ is the Son of God, remains yet to be mentioned: as, in respect to his divine nature, he derived his being from the Father, by an eternal generation; not as creatures do, who are made out of nothing, and were made by Him; but in a manner peculiar to Himself, and inconceivable to us: by which ‘all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him;’^d and ‘He and the Father are,’ in the strictest union, ‘one.’^e For God was his ‘Father, with whom he had glory before the world was:’^f and He ‘in the beginning was with God, and was God.’^g ‘God over all, blessed forever.’^h Of this mysterious doctrine, I shall speak somewhat further, under the article of the Holy Ghost: and, therefore, shall only say at present, that being expressly revealed, it ought to be implicitly believed; without attempting in vain to be wise above what is written: to know more, than God hath enabled us. And now,

4thly. From all these things arises what the Creed mentions, in the last place, his relation to us, *our Lord*. For being the only Son of God, he is Heir and Lord of all his Father’s house. Having triumphed over the power of darkness, which held mankind in bondage, we are his by right of conquest: and though ‘other Lords have had dominion over us, we are now to make mention of his name only,’ⁱ as such: having purchased us to himself for a ‘peculiar people,’^k with his own blood, ‘we are not our own; for we are bought with a price:’^l ‘and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.’^m ‘For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of

^a Heb. i. 2. ^b Ibid. 4. ^c Heb. iii. 5, 6. ^d Col. ii. 9; ^e John x. 30.
^f John xvii. 5. ^g John i. 1. ^h Rom. ix. 5. ⁱ Isa. xxvi. 13. ^k Tit. ii. 14.
^l 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. ^m 2 Cor. v. 15.

the dead and living:^a that he might be such, not in name only, but in deed and reality also. ‘For not every one, that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of his Father, which is in Heaven.’^b To all others, His words will be, at the great day, what they were whilst on earth: ‘Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’^c Obedience, constant, universal obedience, is the only manner of acknowledging him that will finally prove acceptable to him: and in that manner we have solemnly promised that we will acknowledge him, and serve him all our days. Thus, then, let us ever honor him; thus let us ascribe to him, who is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King, our Saviour, our Lord, and our God, ‘glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen.’^d

LECTURE VIII.

CREED.

ARTICLE III. *Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.*

AFTER setting forth, in general, the name and offices of our blessed Redeemer, his relation to the father and to us; our Creed goes on to recount the several particulars of what he did and suffered, what he continues to do still, and will do finally, for our salvation.

The first of these is, that ‘the word was made flesh:’^e that the eternal son of God, wonderfully joining to himself a body and soul like ours, united the human nature with the Divine into one person; thus becoming liable to the same necessities and wants, infirmities and pains: and endued with the same innocent

^a Rom. xiv. 9. ^b Matt. vii. 21. ^c Luke vi. 46. ^d 1 Pet. iv. 11. v. 11, Rev. i. 6.
^e John i. 14.

passions, appetites and affections, that we are: on which account we read in the gospel of his feeling hunger, and pity, and grief, and anger, nay, and increasing, as in stature, so in wisdom also:^a not surely in respect of that nature, which ‘in the beginning was with God, and was God,^b but of the other, by which he was the ‘Man Christ Jesus.’^c Further than these facts, we are not distinctly acquainted with the extent and properties of this unparalleled union. And it is no wonder, that we are not. For even that of our own souls with our own bodies hath many things in it, utterly beyond our comprehension. We must therefore, in all reason, without insisting to know, ‘how these things can be,’^d confine ourselves to learn from scripture, what they are. And it hath plainly taught us, that our blessed Lord was ‘conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.’

Concerning the Holy Ghost, there will be a proper place to speak more at large, in that article of the Creed, which directly relates to him. At present we are only to consider his influence in the conception of our Saviour: which conception was not in the ordinary course of things; but God himself, being already his father with respect to that divine nature, which he had from the beginning, became again so, in a new sense, with respect to his human nature too, by the incomprehensible operation of his spirit. For the birth of Jesus Christ, to use the words of scripture, was on this wise. ‘When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost,’^e in persuance of what the angel had told her, ‘Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing

^a Luke ii. 52.

^b John i. 1.

^c 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^d John iii. 9.

^e Matth. i. 18.

which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God.^a

And thus in the fulness of time, was accomplished, what had been intimated as early as the fall of man, by that remarkable expression, that ‘the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head:’^b and what had been expressly spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, 700 years before our Saviour’s incarnation, ‘behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel: which being interpreted, is God with us.’^c When the scripture says, that such a person or thing shall be called by such a name, it frequently means no more than that they shall have a right to be so called: that what that name signifies, shall be verified in them, shall be true in relation to them. There are many instances of this in the Old Testament. And therefore as our Saviour’s coming in the flesh was the most effectual and illustrious manifestation of God’s presence with men, and favor towards them, that could be: though perhaps in common speech he was seldom, if ever, called, yet in the language of prophecy he was very justly called, Immanuel, or, God is with us. For in his person God was really amongst men, in such a manner, and to such purposes of grace and salvation, as he had never been before. And therefore this name agrees perfectly in sense, though it differs in sound, from his common name, Jesus, i. e. Saviour.

After saying, that he was born of a virgin, the Creed adds, that it was of the virgin Mary: not that we are to seek for any particular mystery in her being called Mary: as some of the church of Rome have imagined, and accordingly formed groundless and ridiculous derivations of the word. But indeed the name was a very common one among the Jews: by which several women, mentioned in the New Testament, and several in other histories, went: and no

^a Luke i. 31, 34, 35,

^b Gen. iii. 15.

^c Isa. vii. 14, Matth. i. 23.

intimation was given in scripture of its having any especial propriety, or meaning, in relation to her. But the reason of inserting it into the Creed most probably was, because it is set down in scripture; and that, by naming the particular person, of whom our Saviour sprung, he might appear to be of that family, from which it was foretold he should arise, being born of this ‘Virgin of the house of David.’^a

Still we are very far from thinking lowly of one whom first an angel from heaven, then ‘Elizabeth filled with the Holy Ghost, declared to be blessed among women:’^b and who, with the greatest reason, said of herself, ‘He that is mighty, hath magnified me, and holy is his name.’^c For greatly without doubt she was magnified, a high honor she received, in becoming, as Elizabeth styles her, ‘the mother of our Lord.’^d But this, however singular, was not the most valuable distinction of the holy Virgin. In scripture, no advantage of any other kind is ever put on a level with that of a pious heart, and a virtuous life. On the contrary, when on hearing one of our Saviour’s discourses, a certain woman of the company, in a transport of admiration and affection, had cried out, ‘Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked:’ his answer was: ‘Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.’^e Now of this truest blessedness the virgin Mary enjoyed a most eminent share: appearing, in all that is said of her, to have been pious and devout, reasonable and considerate, humble and modest, mild and gracious, in the utmost degree.

But though, on account of these excellencies, as well as her peculiar relation to him, she was the object, both of her son’s dutiful subjection in his younger years; and of his tender care, even when he hung upon the cross: yet we find no footsteps of any such regard paid her, either by him or his disciples, as can give the least pretence for ascribing to her those pre-

^a Luke i. 27. ^b Luke i. 28, 41, 42. ^c Luke i. 49. ^d Luke i. 43.
^e Luke xi. 27, 28.

rogatives and powers, which the church of Rome doth. Our Saviour, in more places than one of the Gospels, treats her in so cold, and seemingly negligent manner, that one cannot well avoid thinking he did it on purpose, to discourage that monstrous notion, of her right, as a mother, to command him, who was her Lord, as well as ours. In the other parts of the New Testament, excepting those which I have already quoted, or to which I have referred, there is only an incidental mention made of her occasionally; as there is of many other persons: and not the most distant intimation of any especial honor shewn, or directed to be shewn her. Yet doth the Romish Church appoint offices of devotion to her, bearing her name; address her as queen of heaven, for so they expressly call her; petition her almost in the same breath with God and our Saviour, that she would bestow on them pardon and grace here, and everlasting life hereafter. Things infinitely beyond the power of any creature whatever. Nay, some of them professedly bind themselves to pray much oftener to her, than they do to their Maker or Redeemer: and appear accordingly to place much more confidence in her. And all this, not only without the least proof, that she hath any authority in human affairs, or even any knowledge of them; but in open defiance of the scripture, which directs our prayers to God alone; and particulary of that passage in St. Paul, where the voluntary humility of worshipping even Angels, though they are known to be ministering spirits, is forbidden, as what may beguile us of our reward; and the persons, who practice it, condemned, as ‘not holding the head, which is Christ.’^a

But to return to our subject. The foregoing doctrine of God manifest in the flesh, is undoubtedly one very wonderful part of that, which the Apostle calls ‘the mystery of godliness.’^b And yet there is nothing in it, either impossible, or indeed more difficult to

^a Col. ii. 19.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 16.

the Almighty, than in those productions of his, which we commonly call the course of nature; and wonder at them less, for no other reason, but because we see them constantly; the manner of both being equally inconceivable.

And as the miraculous conception, and birth of Christ, was easy to infinite power: so was it undoubtedly proper and fit, since it was chosen by infinite wisdom. Indeed some footsteps of that wisdom even we may be able to trace in this wonderful dispensation. It appears most becoming the dignity of so extraordinary a person, not to enter into the world in the ordinary manner. As the first Adam, possessed of original uprightness, was formed immediately by the hand of God; it was suitable, that the second Adam, who came to restore that uprightness, should not be inferior, but indeed superior in that respect. Accordingly we read, that 'the first man was of the earth, earthy: the second, the Lord from Heaven.'^a It seems requisite also, that he, who was designed both for a spotless example to us, and a spotless sacrifice to God, should be perfectly free from every degree of that impurity, and inward irregularity, which the tainted nature of a fallen earthly father may, for aught we know, according to the established laws of this world, communicate: whereas being produced in the manner that he was, may have qualified him perfectly for becoming, both a 'Lamb without blemish,'^b and a High Priest, in every respect and degree, 'holy and undefiled, and separate from sinners.'^c

But whether these or others, concealed from us for wise, though perhaps unsearchable ends, were the reasons why his incarnation was in this manner; yet, for his being incarnate, there are several weighty reasons very evident; and possibly many more, entirely unseen by us.

By becoming man, he was capable of becoming the most complete and engaging pattern of virtue to man,

^a 1 Cor. xv. 47.

^b Exod. xii. 5.

^c Heb. vii. 26.

The example of the invisible God might seem too high, and too remote from our view. The examples of men were all, in one respect or another, faulty, and likely to mislead us. But our blessed Saviour, by joining in his own person perfection with humanity, gives us the most encouraging invitation to endeavor at doing so too, according to our power. 'He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;^a 'to leave us an example, that we might follow his steps.'^b But in particular, by this means, he has set us the brightest example of that excellent virtue, humility, that ever was, or could be; to this intent, that 'the same mind might be in us, which was in him: who being in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.'^c Of mutual love also he hath set before us the most amiable pattern, by this amazing proof of his love to mankind. 'He, who was rich in all the Glories of God, became poor for our sakes: that we through his poverty might become rich,'^d in heavenly blessings. He, who was exempted from all sufferings, suffered every thing terrible in life and death for our good. Surely these are powerful motives both to give up, and do, and undergo, whatever we are called to, for our brethren; and to 'love one another, as he hath loved us.'^e His resignation likewise, his meekness, his zeal, his prudence, every one of his virtues, (and his whole character was composed of virtues,) are most useful lessons, derived from his appearing in our nature, that in a very peculiar manner command our attention, and require our imitation.

But further still; by becoming man he had the means of most familiarly and beneficially instructing men, in every point of faith and practice. 'The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and of his fulness we have all received.'^f This condescension enabled him to accom-

^a Heb. iv. 15. ^b 1 Pet. ii. 21. ^c Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7. ^d 2 Cor. viii. 9:
^e John xv: 12. ^f John i. 14, 16.

moderate his manner of teaching to the capacities and dispositions of his disciples, to remove their prejudices, insinuate truth into their minds gradually: and thus gently training them up to the kingdom of heaven, lay such deep foundations of his church, as shall never be moved.

By taking upon him our nature, he was likewise capable of being a sacrifice for our sins: a doctrine, which in its proper place shall be explained to you: 'Therefore, since we are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.'^a

And there was another benefit, consequent to his suffering in our nature, *viz.* his rising again in it; and thus giving us the fullest certainty of our own resurrection to eternal life.

Even while he sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for his church, and ruling over it, his being man, both makes him a proper person to represent men, and offer up their devotions: and affords us the most sensible assurance of his knowing the wants, and being touched with the necessities, of the nature in which he shares. 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him,' says the Apostle, 'to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God. For, in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'^b 'Seeing then that we have not a high priest, that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one who was in all points tempted like as we are: we may come boldly to the throne of grace, in confidence of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help, in time of need.'^c And since, lastly, we have a judge appointed us, who hath experienced whereof we are made; we may be in the utmost degree certain, that his judgment will be according to equity; that on

^a Heb. ii. 14.

^b Heb. ii. 17, 18

^c Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

the one hand, all due allowances will be made to us; and, on the other, no undue ones must be expected by us, in that day 'when God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained:'^a 'and to whom he hath given authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man.'^b

LECTURE IX.

CREED.

Article IV. Suffer'd under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell.

Immediately after the mention of our Saviour's birth, the Creed goes on to the mention of his sufferings; for, indeed, his whole state on earth, was a suffering state. By condescending to be 'made in the likeness of man,'^c he exposed himself to all the necessities, infirmities, and pains, to which men are naturally subject. Besides this, he underwent the many inconveniences of a low and unsettled condition. And which was yet much heavier, though his whole life was spent in 'doing good.'^d yet was it spent also in bearing troubles and uneasiness, from all around him.

The prejudices and misapprehensions of his kindred and disciples, were no small trial. But the perverseness and malice of his enemies, was a great one, beyond example. They were no less persons than the rulers and guides of the Jewish people, with their blind followers; whom the purity and humility of his doctrine, and the very needful severity of his reproofs, for their pride, superstition and wickedness, had rendered implacable against him. Every condescension to win them, gained only contempt from them; every endeavour to convince and reform them, did but exasperate them: they misrepresented and derided,

^a Acts xvii. 31.

^b John v. 27

^c Phil. ii. 7.

^d Acts x. 38.

they reviled and threatened, they assaulted and persecuted him; till at length, the hour being come, which he knew was the proper one to yield himself up to them; they bribed one of his disciples to betray him into their hands; terrified the rest into forsaking him; and, after a most unjust condemnation, followed by a variety of spiteful usage amongst themselves, to obtain the execution of their sentence, they accused him to the Roman power; first as a blasphemous against their law; and failing in this, then as a rebel against the Emperor, Tiberius Cæsar, the most suspicious of men; by which last suggestion, they forced the Governor, though declaring himself to be satisfied of his innocence, yet to comply with them for his own safety. After this, he was abused and scourged by the soldiers, crowned in cruel mockery, with thorns, and loaded, probably, till he sunk under it, with the cross, on which he was to suffer.

This instrument of death, consisted, as its name denotes, of two large pieces of wood, crossing each other. On one, the arms of the condemned person were stretched out, and his hands nailed; on the other, his feet joined together, were fastened in the same manner; and thus he was to hang naked, exposed to the heat and cold, till pain and faintness ended his life. The Jews, while they executed their own laws, never crucified any, till they were first put to death some other way; after which, their bodies were sometimes hanged on a tree, till the evening. But it seems, that only the worst of malefactors, were thus treated; who are, therefore, styled in the law of Moses, ‘accursed.’^a The Romans, indeed, and other nations, crucified men alive; but usually, none but their slaves; a sort of persons, most of them, far lower than the lowest of servants amongst us.

This, then, was what the Son of God underwent, when having ‘taken upon him the form of a servant,

^a Deut. xxi. 23.

he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’^a Now, the torment of hanging thus by nails, that pierced through parts of so acute a feeling as the hands and feet, could not but be exquisite; especially as it was almost always of long duration.— And, therefore, this punishment was accounted, in every respect, the severest of any. Our Saviour, indeed, continued under it only about three hours; a much smaller time, though a dreadful one, than was usual. And there are plain reasons for his expiring so soon. He had suffered the whole night before, and all that day, a course of barbarous treatment, sufficient to wear down the strength of a much rougher and robuster make, than probably his was. Before this, he had felt agonies within, grievous enough to make him ‘sweat, as it were, great drops of blood.’^b Partly the near view of what he was just going, most undeservedly, to suffer, might thus affect a mind, which, having so much tenderness and sensibility in the case of others, could not be without some proportionable degree of it in his own. And further, the thought, how sadly, from the time of their creation to that day, men had contradicted the end for which they were created; how large a part of the world would still reject the salvation which he came to offer, and how few receive it effectually: what guilt even good persons often contract, and how tremendous will be the final doom of bad ones: these reflections, which naturally would all present themselves to him in the strongest light, on this great occasion, could not but cause vehement emotions in his breast, zealous as he was for the glory of God and the eternal happiness of men. But chiefly beyond comparison, the awful sense, that he was to bear all these innumerable sins of mankind, ‘in his own body, on the tree,’^c ‘being made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law,’^d might well produce feelings inexpressible and inconceivable, which operating

^a Phil. ii. 7, 8.

^b Luke xxii. 44.

^c 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^d Gal. iii. 13.

much more powerfully than mere bodily tortures, and making 'his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,'^a might so exhaust his strength by heightening his sufferings, as to shorten them very considerably. And accordingly we read, that when he had hung on the Cross from the sixth hour to the ninth, he cried with a loud voice, in the words of the twenty-second Psalm, where David speaks as a type and representative, both of his sufferings and his following glory, 'my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' not in the least intending, as David before him did not, to signify a distrust of his love, in whom, at the same time, he claimed an interest, as his God; but only to express, that those comforts of the divine presence, which he used to feel, were now, for mysterious reasons, withheld from him, in that concluding hour of temptation, which himself so emphatically called 'the power of darkness.'^b Then adding words of the firmest truth, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.'^c

'Thus did God fulfil what he had before shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer.'^d It was intimated in the first prediction, made upon the fall; namely, that the 'seed of the woman should be bruised.'^e It was pre-figured, both in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and several remarkable portions of its history. He is mentioned by David, as having his 'hands and feet pierced:'^f he is largely described by Isaiah, as 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; wounded and bruised for our iniquities, and brought as a lamb to the slaughter:'^g he is expressly styled by Daniel, 'Messiah, the Prince, that should be cut off.'^h

These prophecies, the Creed informs us, were fulfilled under Pontius Pilate: for so was the then Governor of Judea, under the Roman Emperor, called.

^a Matth. xxvi. 38.

^b Luke xxii 53.

^c Luke xxiii. 46. John xix. 30.

^d Acts iii. 18.

^e Gen. iii. 15.

^f Psal. xxii. 7.

^g Isa. liii. 3, 5, 7.

^h Dan. ix. 25, 26.

And he is named, because the most usual way of signifying at what time any thing was done, anciently, was by mentioning the person in whose government it was done; there not being any other method of reckoning, universally received, as that of counting by the year of our Lord, is now among christians. And it was very useful to preserve the memory of the date; partly, that in after ages inquiry might be better made into the histories and records of that age, concerning these extraordinary events, said to have then happened, and chiefly, that the Messiah might appear to have come, and died at that exact ‘fulness of time,’^a when it was foretold he should. One mark of it was, that the sceptre was then to be ‘departed from Judah,’^b which evidently was departed, when it was reduced to be a Roman province. Another was, that the second temple was yet to be standing: for the ‘glory of it was to be greater than the glory of the former:’^c and this could be true only by the fulfilling of another prophecy, ‘the Lord, whom ye seek, shall come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.’^d Accordingly, he did come to it, and it stood but a few years longer. A third mark was, that from ‘the restoring of Jerusalem, to the Messiah’s being cut off,’^e were to be such a number of weeks; each plainly consisting, not of seven days, but of seven years; which number was completed, while Pontius Pilate was Governor; and, therefore, it was requisite to observe, that under him our Saviour suffered.

Next to the mention of his death, in the Creed, follows that of his burial; a favor not allowed by the Romans, to those who were crucified, unless some considerable person interceded for it. But the Jewish law requiring, that they should be taken down and buried, before night,^f and the next day being a great festival, when the violation of this law would give more than ordinary offence to the people; ‘Joseph of

^a Gal. iv. 4.

^d Mal. iii. 1.

^b Gen. xlix. 10.

^e Dan. ix. 25, 26.

^c Hag. ii. 9.

^f Deut. xxi 22, 23.

Arimathea, an honorable Counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, craved the body of Jesus from Pilate; who, after making due inquiry, if he were already, and had been any while dead, gave the body to Joseph; who buried him respectfully, in his own new tomb, a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, ^a the entrance into which, the Jews sealed up, and set a guard over. ^b And thus were his own predictions fulfilled, that he should be crucified, ^c the most unlikely of all deaths: and at the same time, that of Isaiah, that he should not only be buried, but with the most unlikely of all burials, in such a case, ‘making his grave with the rich.’ ^d

The last part of this article is, that ‘he descended into Hell;’ an assertion founded on Psal. xvi. 10, where David prophesies of Christ, what St. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, explains of him, ^e that his soul should not be left in Hell; which imports, that once he was there. And hence, after some time, it was inserted into our Creed, which in the beginning had it not. However, being taught in Scripture, the truth of this doctrine is indubitable; the only question is, about the meaning of it.

The first thought of most, or all persons, to be sure, will be, that the word Hell, in this article, signifies what it doth in common speech, the place where devils and wicked men are punished. And it hath been imagined, that Christ went to triumph over the devil there, and some add, to rescue part of the souls which he held under confinement, ^f by preaching, as the Scripture saith he did, ‘to the spirits that were in prison.’ ^g But the place of torment is never, determinately, expressed in Scripture by the word *Hades*, which both the Scripture and the Creed use in this article, but by very different ones; though unhappily, our translation hath used the same English word for

^a Matt. xxvii. 57—60 Mark xv. 43—46 Luke xxiii. 50—53, ^b Matt. xxvii. 62—66. ^c Matt. xx. 19. John iii. 14, xii. 32, 33. ^d Isa. liii. 9. ^e Acts ii. 24—32.

^f Origen against Celsus l. 2. §. 42, saith, that Christ converted souls to himself there. ^g 1 Pet. iii. 19.

both, instead of calling the former, what it strictly signifies, the invisible state, or region. Besides, we do not read of our Saviour's triumphing over the devil, any where, but 'on the Cross.'^a And the spirits in prison, to whom St. Peter saith Christ, 'by his spirit, preached,' he saith also were those 'which were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.'^b And, therefore, Christ's 'preaching to them by his Spirit,' probably means, his exciting by his Spirit, which strove with^c them for a time, that patriarch to be a preacher of righteousness among them, as the same St. Peter, in his other epistle, calls him.^d But not hearkening to him then, they are now in prison, reserved for the sentence of the last day. This opinion, therefore, hath no sufficient foundation. Nor would it be found, on further trial, agreeable either to reason or Scripture.

Others have thought, the word translated Hell, to signify in this article, as it seems to do in some passages of the Old Testament, and as the English word anciently did, merely a place under ground, by which they understand the grave. And they plead for it, that the first Creeds, which mentioned our Saviour's descending into Hell, used no other words to express his being buried, and therefore designed to express it by these. But allowing that, still our Creed, expressing the descent into Hell after the burial, must mean a different thing by it.

And indeed the most common meaning, not only among Heathens, but Jews and the first Christians, of the word *Hades*, here translated hell, was in general, that invisible world, one part or another of which, the souls of the deceased, whether good or bad, inhabit. And this, however strange soever it might seem to the unlearned, yet is by others acknowledged.^e Probably, therefore, all that was intended to be taught by the expression now before us, is, that when our Saviour died, as his body was laid in the

^a Col. ii. 13, 15.
^d 2 Pet. ii. 5.

^b 1 Pet. iii. 20.

^c Gen. vi. 3.

^e See Pearson on this article, p. 239, 249.

grave, so his spirit went where other separate spirits are. And we should remember, in repeating these words of the Creed, that this is the whole of what we are bound to profess by them. But in what part of space, or of what nature that receptacle is, in which the souls of men continue from their death until they rise again, we scarce know at all; excepting that we are sure it is divided into two extremely different regions, the dwelling of the righteous, called in St. Luke, Abraham's bosom, where Lazarus was; and that of the wicked, where the rich man was: 'between which there is a great gulph fixed.'^a And we have no proof that our Saviour went on any account into the latter: but since he told the penitent thief, 'that he should be that day with him in Paradise,'^b we are certain he was in the former; where 'they which die in the Lord, rest from their labours and are blessed;'^c waiting for a still more perfect happiness at the resurrection of the last day.

How the soul of our Saviour was employed in this abode, or for what reasons he continued there during this time, further than that he might 'be like unto his brethren in all things,'^d we are not told, and need not guess. But probably this article was made part of the Creed, in order to assert and prove that he had really a human soul, which was really separated from his body. And its residence during the separation, in the same state and place, where other 'spirits of just men made perfect'^e are, surely made a vast addition to their felicity. For Abraham, who rejoiced to see this day^f at a distance, must be inexpressibly more rejoiced to see him present there. All the good persons, whose going thither preceded the death of our Lord, must certainly partake in the joy. And all who came, or shall come after, must feel much grea-

^a Luke xvi. 22, 23, 26.

^b Luke xxiii. 43. Non ex his verbis in cælo existimandus esse paradus, neque enim ipso die in cælo futurus erat homo Christus Jesus: sed in inferno secundum animam, in sepulchro autem secundum carnem. Aug. Ep. 57, ad Dardanum. Pearson, p. 237.

^c Rev. xiv. 13.

^d Heb. ii. 17,

^e Heb. xii. 23. ^f John viii. 56.

ter consolation for being in a place where their redeemer had been seen by such numbers of his saints; and to which, in some peculiar sense, his presence is yet continued: for we learn from St. Paul, that the immediate consequence of a pious man's departure hence, is being with Christ. ^a

But were the reasons of his *descending into Hades*, or of the insertion of it into our belief, ever so obscure, it may suffice us, that the reasons of his sufferings and death are very plain, as well as very important. With these, therefore, I shall conclude this lecture.

1. The first is, that he might be an example to his followers. For so he became the noblest and most engaging pattern imaginable of that great and hard duty, patient submission to the will of God: since being of a rank infinitely superior to the afflictions of this world, and having done nothing to deserve the least of them, he most willingly chose, and cheerfully bore the most grievous that were possible. Well then may we, mortals and sinners, take whatever befalls us, in life or in death, meekly and contentedly, 'because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who yet when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'^b The example also of kindness and love to men he shewed yet more fully by his crucifixion, than by his incarnation: foreseeing, as he plainly did, all the pains and torments he should undergo, in executing his great design of reforming and saving mankind: yet deterred by nothing from undertaking it, and persevering in it. If, therefore, he so loved us, we ought also, as St. John argues, to love one another.^c and because he laid down his life for us, we ought, if a proper occasion require it, even to lay down our lives for the brethren.^d

^a Phil. i. 23. See Peters on Job, § 11, p. 399.

^c 1 John iv. 11.

^b 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23.

^d 1 John iii. 16.

2. A second reason of his dying was, that he might thus confirm the truth of his doctrine; to which it must needs add a very powerful confirmation, that though the Jews expected a warlike and victorious Messiah, and therefore his taking upon himself a meek and suffering character, must grievously prejudice them against him; yet he declared from the very first, what you read in St. John, that ‘as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so should the Son of Man be lifted up:’^a signifying, as the same Evangelist elsewhere assures us, what death he should die.^b And he all along persisted in this declaration; rejected every opportunity of worldly power; fearlessly taught the most provoking truths, and voluntarily met what he foretold he should suffer.—Stronger evidences of sincerity than these, a man cannot give; and therefore St. John thus reckons up the testimonies to Christ’s mission: ‘There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.’^c And St. Paul observes, that before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession; ^d on account of which, he is called in the book of Revelation, the faithful witness, or martyr.^e

3. The third and principal reason of our Saviour’s death was, ‘to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;’^f that ‘being justified by his blood, we may be saved from wrath, and reconciled to God.’^g But as I cannot now enlarge on this doctrine suitably to its importance, and the article of the forgiveness of sins will be a proper place to treat of it, I shall only add at present, that ‘God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’^h ‘For if one died for all, then we are all dead; and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.’ⁱ This we should do with great dutifulness:

^a John iii. 14.

^d 1 Tim. vi. 13.

^g Rom. v. 9, 10.

^b John xii. 32, 33. xviii. 32.

^e Rev. i. 5.

^h 2 Cor. v. 21.

^c 1 John, v. 8.

^f Heb. ix. 26.

ⁱ *Ibid*, 14, 15.

for 'we are not our own, we are bought with a price;'^a and with great thankfulness, for he hath 'delivered us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'^b Unto him, therefore, 'that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, unto Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.'^c

LECTURE X.

CREED.

ARTICLE V. *The third day he rose again from the dead.*

HAVING carried on the history of our Saviour to the lowest act of his humiliation, our Creed sets forth, in the next place, how God was pleased to exalt him for undergoing it. And the first part of this brighter view of things, was his Resurrection—that is, the restoring of his body to a condition of performing the several functions of life, as before; and the re-union of his soul to it. In discoursing of which, I shall speak, first, concerning the reality of his rising again; secondly, the circumstances; thirdly, the use of it.

I. The reality; which depends on two things: that he was really dead, and that he was really alive afterwards.

As for the former, the whole of the history shews it fully, nor did any of his opposers ever call it in question. His crucifixion was public, at noon day, before a great multitude. The Jews who procured it, the Romans who executed it, would both take care that it was done effectually. And the piercing of his side with a spear, which, by the blood and wa-

^a 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

^b Rom. viii. 21.

^c Rev. i. 5, 6.

ter that followed, plainly appeared to reach his heart; as it must have produced some signs of life, had there been any remaining, must also have destroyed, in a few moments, all that could remain. Then, after this, we find him treated as dead, both by friends and enemies. Pilate, after a particular inquiry into that very matter, granted his body to be buried; one of his disciples embalming him with spices, another laying him in his own sepulchre; the Jews making no objection, but fully satisfied of his death, and only careful to guard against any pretence of a resurrection.

But that notwithstanding, he was afterwards really alive again, which is the other point, we have multiplicity of evidence of the strongest kinds. The sepulchre was newly hewn out of a rock, shut up with a very large stone rolled to the mouth of it, and guarded night and day by a band of soldiers, who were to watch till the time was over, within which he had said he should rise. Yet, on that very day the sepulchre was found open, and the body was gone. Now by what means could this come to pass? To his disciples it could be of no possible use to carry on a deceit, by getting his corpse into their possession. For if they had succeeded so ill with their master at their head, what could they expect by carrying on the same scheme after they had lost him, but to come to the same end? And what in all reason had they to do, but get quietly out of the way, at least till the matter was a little forgotten? Indeed we find in fact, that far from being enterprising, they were so disheartened, even when he was first seized, that they all forsook him: and there was little likelihood that they should have more courage to attempt any thing, just after he was executed. Or if they had, what manner of chance was there, that when a band of sixty men, used to military discipline, were set to watch the grave, they should either find them all asleep at once, though it was death to be so, and not wake one of them; or be able to convey the body away from

them, though they were awake? Evidently they must have failed, and probably have been seized in the attempt. Or could they have carried their point, yet by the resistance made to them, it must have appeared how unfairly they had carried it, and all hope of getting a resurrection believed must have been utterly at an end. Since, then, the body was not found, and could not by any human means, or indeed for any rational purpose, have been carried away, it must have been raised by the power of God, as the Gospels relate it was.

But to give a full and sensible demonstration of it, he shewed himself alive to his disciples, ‘after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days.’^a Now in this they could no more be mistaken, than you can in seeing and hearing me, and knowing me to be alive at this time. As they had almost despaired of his rising again, they were but too backward to believe it: and indeed they would believe it on no other testimony, than that of their own eyes and ears; and *Thomas* even not without touching him, and putting his hands on the marks of his wounds; which the rest, as well as he, when they were terrified, and supposed they had seen a spirit, and not their Lord, were invited to do. ‘Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have.’^b

They could not, after such trials, be deceived in so plain a matter. And if it be imagined that they might intend to deceive others, consider: They began their testimony to his resurrection, at the very time, and in the very place, where they affirmed this fact to have happened: Their adversaries had all the power of the place in their hands; and all the advantages that men could wish, for detecting the fraud, if it was one; and they were in the strongest manner interested and concerned to make use of them. Is it possible now, that men so timorous as the disciples

^a Acts i. 3.

^b Luke xxiv. 37, 39.

plainly were just before, should immediately after, venture without need, to bring the just resentment of both magistrates and people upon themselves, by asserting so strange an event, if it was not true? Yet they did assert it, and far from being disproved in it, thousands at once, notwithstanding the most powerful worldly motives, and the deepest rooted prejudices to the contrary, were convinced by them. And thus they went on, through many years, to the end of their days, all of them suffering patiently and joyfully, for the sake of this testimony, every thing that could be terrible in life, and at length death itself: nor is it pretended that any one of them either retracted at any time what he had said; or behaved in any respect so as to weaken the credit of it. On the contrary, they were uncommonly pious and virtuous, as well as bold and unwearied: and, to complete the strength of their evidence, they not only taught, illiterate as they were, a doctrine more worthy of God, than the wisest of men had known before, professing to have received it from their Master's mouth: but they confirmed the whole by vast numbers of miracles, which he enabled them, and they enabled their followers to perform, both during that age and the next.

This is briefly the proof of our Saviour's resurrection. And if this be sufficient proof, then it is no objection, and more than sufficient was not given, for instance: that he did not appear to the rulers and whole people. They had no way deserved it. He was no way bound to it. Nor doth God, in any case, give men just such evidence as they please; but such as he knows to be enough for honest minds; and if others will not believe with more, they must take the consequence. Christ appeared to the Twelve Apostles often: to 500 persons at once besides. If this number be thought too small, when was ever the tenth part of it required in any other matter? And if Christ was to appear to all the Jews, why not to all the Gentiles? Why not to all of us at this day? We

have no proof that any one, who desired it, was refused seeing him. Possibly many, certainly *St. Paul*, were converted by seeing him. Some perhaps nothing would have convinced: others would not have owned their conviction. This would have made strange confusion, and had the whole nation been convinced, their notions of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, would probably have thrown them, at the same time, into a rebellion against the Romans; or, however, the suspicions of the Romans would have driven them into one: and then the Gospel would have been thought a mere political artifice, to serve a favourite purpose. Nay, had they continued quiet, and the Romans let them alone, even then we should have lost that evidence for the truth of our Religion, which arises from the persecutions undergone by the first teachers of it: from the very advantageous circumstances, that the Jews, our adversaries, have been the keepers of those prophecies, which prove Christ to be come; and also from their wonderful dispersion and preservation; besides the proof which will arise, in God's good time, from their conversion to Christianity.

2. Thus much for the reality of Christ's resurrection. The circumstances of it, which was the second head proposed, it is best that you should read in the New Testament, where they are told at large. And if the accounts which the several evangelists give, should seem not easy to be reconciled in some particulars, you will recollect that nothing is more common in all historians, than for one to omit what another relates; to tell but part of what another tells more fully; to join close together in writing, what happened at some distance of time in fact; and to neglect a trifling exactness in points that are not material. And the Spirit of God, which directed the Gospel historians might with great wisdom permit them to do thus: it being a strong proof to every considerate mind, that they did not contrive together what story they should tell; but that each related

fairly and artlessly, what he saw and heard at the time, and recollected afterwards, concerning this great fact: of which the more absolutely certain they were in general, the less they would think of being accurate in every little part; and of drawing up a methodical, and minute, and scrupulously strict narration of the whole that had passed.

But there is one circumstance, which requires to be considered more distinctly; that of the time. The almost constant expression of Scripture, concerning this, is the same with that of the Creed, that he ‘rose again the third day; reckoning the day of his death for the first; the day, which he continued dead, for the second; the day of his resurrection, for the third.— And this is the common way of computing, every where. Thus the Jews computed the eighth day, on which their children were to be circumcised. Thus, also, the physicians call that a tertian, or third day ague, in which there is but one day wholly free from it. And thus men reckon, in all cases. Sometimes the expression in Scripture is, that ‘he should rise after three days;’ meaning, not after the third day was ended, but after it was begun. Just as when Rehoboam had said unto the people, ‘come again unto me after three days;’ it follows, ‘so all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the King bade, saying, come again to me on the third day.’^a And in one single place of the New Testament, it is said, ‘the Son of Man should be in the heart of the earth, three day and three nights.’^b But this without doubt was intended to be understood conformably to the rest; as it well may. For a day and a night, in the Jewish language, is no more than what we commonly call a day in ours. Hence we find in the book of Esther, that when she had appointed the Jews to fast for her good success, ‘neither eating nor drinking three days, night nor day,’ that is to fast three days and three nights; and, after that, she would ‘go

^a 2 Chron. x. 5, 12. See Whitby on Mark viii. 31.

^b Matt. xii. 40.

into the King,' to petition for them; the very next words, notwithstanding, are, that 'on the third day she put on her royal apparel, and went into the King's presence.'^a Again, when we read that Elijah went forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God, 1 Kings, xix. 8, we have no cause to think the meaning is, that he traveled incessantly, night and day; for so his journey must have been much sooner ended: but that he employed in it such a part of every day, during all that time, as he was conveniently able. This way of speaking, may seem strange to us; but the Jews understand it so well, that not a man of them, excepting a very weak one, of late date, ^b hath ever pretended to raise an objection from this passage, though very slight pretences will serve their turn.^c Thus, then, our Saviour, dying on Friday, and rising on Sunday, was dead three days, and yet rose the third; which was a sufficient space of time to prove him really dead; but not sufficient, either for him to see corruption, or for his enemies to leave off watching his grave, or for his disciples to despair absolutely and totally; and, therefore, no fitter time could have been fixed.

III. The third point to be considered is, the uses of the resurrection of Christ, which are great and many.

In general, it appears plainly from hence, that he really came from God; and that, therefore, whatever he hath commanded must be done; and whatever he hath affirmed, promised, or threatened, will be found true. For there can possibly be no stronger proof of his divine mission, than, when he had been openly put to death as a deceiver, for God to reverse the sentence in so extraordinary a manner, as restoring him to life again. This was the great evidence, to which he had, before his death, appealed. No one either did, or could, object against it, as not being a

^a Esth. iv. 16. v. 1. See Whitby on Matth. xii. 40.

^b Nizzachon vet. in Wagenseil, p. 236, who objects that at most it could be but three days and two nights.

^c Concerning this whole matter, see Retand, Ant. 4, 1, 21.

decisive one. And, therefore, on its coming to pass, as he had foretold it would, he is justly said by the Apostle, to be ‘declared the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead.’^a But there are two things proved by it, more particularly.

1. That his sufferings are accepted by our heavenly Father, as a full atonement for the sins of men. For since God hath loosed the bands of the grave, with which he was holden, on our account, it is manifest, that he hath completed the satisfaction owing from us; that he hath ‘through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered those, who through fear of it, were all their life-time subject to bondage.’^b If, then, we do, by faith and repentance, qualify ourselves to receive the pardon that he is authorized to give; we may boldly say, with the Apostle, ‘who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.’^c

2. From our Saviour’s resurrection, appears the certainty of our own. The promise which he made, was, that ‘every one who believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and he would raise him up at the last day;’^d and to shew the truth of it, he raised up himself from the death, which he had suffered for the sins of men. This is a proof, clear and strong, beyond all exception or cavil. Since Christ is risen, our resurrection is possible: and since Christ hath promised, it is certain. If, then, ‘we believe that Jesus died, and rose again,’ we must believe too, as St. Paul justly argues, that ‘them, also, which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-angel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; and they which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up, to-

^a Rom. i. 4. ^b Heb. ii. 14, 15. ^c Rom. viii. 33, 34. ^d John vi. 40:

gether with them in the clouds, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.'^a 'Blessed, therefore, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.'^b And may the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory, forever and ever. Amen.'^c

LECTURE XI.

CREED.

Article VI. *He ascendeth into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.*

The first care of our blessed Lord, in consequence of his resurrection, was to satisfy his disciples fully of the truth of it: the next, to fit them for instructing mankind in his religion, of which it was one principal doctrine and evidence. He, therefore, 'shewed himself alive to them, after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days; and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.'^d This being done, as he had now gone thro' the whole of his work on earth, it was proper that he should return to that happy place from whence his compassion to a lost world had brought him down, according to the words of his own prayer, 'Father, the hour is come; I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

^a 1 Thess. iv. 14, 16, 17. ^b 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. ^c Heb. xiii. 20, 21. ^d Acts i. 3.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was:’^a There did not remain any further reason for his appearing, personally, amongst men; till he should ‘come again to judge the quick and the dead.’ Many ages were to pass, ‘before that great and terrible day of the Lord.’^b It was fit, therefore, that, as St. Peter speaks, the ‘Heaven should receive him, until the times of the restitution of all things.’^c

And though the redemption of mankind, was completed by him, so far, as, in this lower world, it could be; yet there was left an important part of it, to be accomplished above. The Jewish dispensation, as the epistle to the Hebrews more especially informs us, ‘was a shadow of good things to come.’^d As, therefore, under this, the great sacrifice of atonement was yearly slain without the sanctuary first; and then the high priest entered alone, with the blood of it, into the most holy place; there to offer it before the Lord, and atone for the sins of the people: so, in the gospel age, was our blessed Saviour; first, ‘as the Lamb of God,’^e to be sacrificed for our sins on earth; and then, as the ‘High Priest of our profession,’^f to enter, with his own blood, into Heaven, the true holy place, of which the other was a figure; there to appear with it, in the presence of God, for us:’^g and thus, having ‘offered one sacrifice for sins, he was for ever to sit down on the right hand of God.’^h

When the time, therefore, was come, for this purpose of divine wisdom to take effect; having gradually prepared the minds of his Apostles to bear his departure, he, in the last place, with his usual tenderness, gave them a solemn blessing, the words of which, indeed, are not delivered down to us; but probably they might not be unlike, and certainly they could not well be more affectionate, than those which we find he used for their consolation, even before his sufferings, on a more distant prospect of his

^a John xvii. 4, 5.

^b Joel ii. 31.

^c Acts iii. 21.

^d Heb. x. 1.

^e John i. 29.

^f Heb. iii. 1.

^g Heb. ix. 12, 24.

^h Heb. x. 12.

being taken from them. 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'^a It is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'^b

Undoubtedly, with such like words of grace and affection, which every good christian may and ought to consider as spoken to himself, did our Lord, before his departure, comfort his disciples under the immediate view of that interesting event. 'And it came to pass,' the evangelist informs us, 'that as he was yet blessing them, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.'^c

It is hardly possible to conceive stronger or more various emotions of mind, than those with which the breast of every one of his followers must be filled, on this occasion: of surprise and astonishment at what they had seen; of gratitude and tenderness, in return for what they had heard; of grief and fear, concerning their now solitary condition; yet mixed, at the same time, with submission and hope, and faithful trust in their dear Lord. But as he himself had told them, 'if they loved him, they would rejoice, because he went unto the Father;'^d so, in fact, amidst all the passions working within them, this prevailed above

^a John xiv. 1, 2, 13, 16, 27.

^c Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 9.

^b John xvi. 7, 22, 33.

^d John xiv. 28.

the rest; and triumphant gladness of heart was the feeling, that took possession and dwelt with them.—‘They worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.’^a

Let us, then, rejoice also in this glorious exaltation of Christ our head. Let us consider the opportunity it gives us, of exercising that faith in him, which the Apostle justly calls ‘the evidence of things not seen;’^b and of obtaining a reward, suitable to the greater virtue and piety that we show, in conducting aright our understandings, and our hearts and our lives, under a lower, and yet sufficient degree of evidence for our holy Religion. ‘Because thou hast seen me,’ saith he, himself, to St. Thomas, ‘thou hast believed; blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed.’^c This blessedness, therefore, by his ascension, he hath left to his whole Church the means of acquiring: ‘that the trial of your faith,’ as St. Peter expresses it, ‘may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.’^d Let us consider, too, that if his absence tries our faith, the manner of his going away, powerfully confirms it. For the Apostles were eye-witnesses of his ascending into the clouds: and what stronger proof need we, of his coming from God, than his being thus taken up to him again, according to his own repeated predictions; besides, the remarkable, though obscurer intimations of the same things, in the Old Testament?

Nor let it seem strange, that the Scripture should speak of one especial place, as the peculiar and appropriated residence of God. We acknowledge, that he is, and cannot but be, every where. ‘Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of his glory;’^e yea,

^a Luke xxiv. 52. ^b Heb. xi. 1. ^c John xx. 29. ^d 1 Pet. i. 7, 8, 9. ^e Te Deum

‘the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain him.’^a ‘Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there, also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.’^b Yet, notwithstanding this, the Scripture constantly mentions him, as having condescended to establish his throne in one particular place; and exhibit himself there, in the symbol of light inaccessible: there, therefore, his holy angels attend upon him, and see his face; from whence he issues forth his commands, as princes do theirs, from the royal palace; and is represented, as viewing and observing the actions of his creatures; and pouring down blessings or vengeance, as their behaviour requires. ‘The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord’s seat is in Heaven: his eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men.’^c Here it is, that ‘thousand thousands minister unto him; and ten thousand times ten thousand, stand before him.’^d celebrating his praises, and rejoicing in the light of his countenance. For ‘in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’^e

Into this blessed place, then did our Saviour ascend, and there, as the Creed, in conformity with Scripture, teaches, ‘sat down at the right hand of the Father.’ Not that God, who is an infinite Spirit, and by the word of his power, doth whatever he pleases, both in Heaven and earth; either hath, or needs, bodily members, for instruments of perfection or action, like our imperfect nature. But these things are figuratively ascribed to him, in condescension to human capacities. And the meaning of such figures is easily understood. He is the King of the whole world. Now, into a king’s immediate presence, not all persons are usually admitted; and of those who are, not

^a 1 Kings viii. 27.

^d Dan. vii. 10.

^b Psal. cxxxix. 7—10

^e Psal. xvi. 12.

^c Psal. xi. 4

all possess the same rank and degree of nearness to him; but every one such as he pleases to appoint. Now, the highest mark of dignity which the eastern monarchs conferred, on the person whom they esteemed and favored most, was placing him, on occasions of solemnity, at their right hand: the second, in honour, was next to the royal person, on the other side; and the rest of the court succeeded in the same order. Thus, when the mother of King Solomon came to petition for Adonijah, the Scripture informs us, ‘he sat down on the throne, and caused a seat to be set for her, and she sat on his right hand.’^a And when the sons of Zebedee, had, by mistake, imagined the kingdom of our Saviour to be like one of this world, their petition was, ‘that they might sit, one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom.’^b Sometimes the posture of standing is mentioned; as Psal. xiv. 9. ‘on thy right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir.’ And, when the court of Heaven, attending on their sovereign, is described: ‘I saw,’ saith the prophet, ‘the Lord sitting on his throne; and all the host of Heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left.’^c When, therefore, our blessed Lord is represented by St. Stephen to stand, or in the 110th Psalm, and frequently in the New Testament, to sit at the right hand of God; we are to conceive by it, not that he is confined to this or that posture, or place; but that he is raised, in respect of his human nature, to a rank and station above all creatures: possess of the fullest happiness, the highest honour, and the most sovereign authority; that authority, with which Daniel foretells his being invested: ‘I saw, and behold, one, like the Son of man, came with the clouds of Heaven; and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him, dominion and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting do-

^a 1 Kings ii. 19.

^b Matt. xx. 21.

^c 1 Kings xxii. 19.

minion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' ^a The fulfilling of which prophecy is thus recorded by the Apostle, 'God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the Heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,' ^b 'that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;' ^c 'and he must reign till he hath put all things under his feet.' ^d Sitting at God's right hand, implies this pre-eminence: 'for to which of the angels, said God, at any time, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies, thy footstool.' ^e

Indeed, 'all power, both in Heaven and in earth, was given to ^f our Saviour, before his ascension; but not till afterwards was his title to it publicly recognized, and possession of it solemnly taken by him: which, in other words, is 'sitting down at the right hand of God.'

But let us consider, not only the nature of our Saviour's exaltation; but what principally concerns us, the benefits of it to mankind, which are three; his sending the Holy Spirit to abide forever with his Church; his interceding for it with the Father; his powerful protection of it against its enemies.

I. His sending the Holy Spirit. This was reserved with great wisdom, till after his ascension; both because it was then most needed, to comfort his disciples under the loss of his personal presence, and, also, because it afforded a new evidence of his divine power, that, far from being in a worse condition by his departure, they were endued with higher degrees of miraculous gifts, than ever they had been before. St. John, therefore, upon our Saviour's promising the Spirit to them who should believe on him, observes, that 'the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was

^a Dan. vii. 13, 14.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 25.

^b Eph. i. 20, 21.

^e Heb. i. 13.

^c Phil. ii. 10.

^f Matt. xviii. 19.

not yet glorified.’^a And St. Peter, on the day when it was bestowed, saith, ‘therefore, being by the right hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.’^b The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, indeed, being no longer necessary, ceased many ages ago: but his sanctifying graces, a much more important blessing, which we shall always need, continue still; and constitute his present share in the work of our redemption; agreeable to the assurance which our blessed Lord gave, of ‘another comforter, to abide with us, and dwell in us forever.’^c

2. His Intercession with the Father. For his oblation of himself being accepted, as the foundation of a new covenant of mercy and favour; we have now an Advocate in Heaven, sure to prevail: ‘an High Priest, that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points as we are,’^d ever appearing for us in the presence of God; and efficaciously pleading the pardon, which he hath purchased, for all who repent of and forsake their sins. ‘Who then is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.’^e

3. His protection of his Church against all its enemies, spiritual and temporal. The attempts of the former he defeats by the above-mentioned methods, the influences of his Spirit to preserve us from sin, and the efficacy of his intercession to procure us pardon on most equitable terms, whenever we fall into it. As for the latter: upon the first opposers of his Church, the Jewish and Roman persecutors, his vindictive power hath been most remarkably exercised: and the succeeding adversaries of religion, in every age, have served, and shall serve, only for a

^a John vii. 39.

^d Heb. iv. 15.

^b Acts ii. 33.

^e Rom. viii. 34.

^c John xiv. 16, 17.

trial of ‘the faith and patience of the saints,^a generally, without prevailing to their harm even here; and always being subservient to their happiness hereafter: till at length the appointed time shall come, when ‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ:’^b and having reigned on this earth, till its period arrives, he shall resign up to God his kingdom of grace, its end being accomplished; and reign over his Saints, in that of glory, for ever and ever: fully performing that invaluable promise.’—‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcome, and am sat down with my Father in his throne.’^c

These things being so, instead of amusing ourselves with the speculative consideration of his ascension, and the reasons of it; we should learn from his departure to prepare for his return. To this was the attention of those, who saw it, directed by the angels. ‘Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.’^d The present article of our Creed is, that he ‘sitteth at the right hand of God.’ The next is, that ‘from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.’ And what should this very close connexion teach us, but that we all be careful to behave in such manner, that we may be ready to ‘meet our Lord’^e at his coming, and enter with him ‘into his Joy?’^f He hath descended upon earth to procure us a right to future happiness, and instruct us, how to obtain it: he is now ascended up into Heaven, to ‘prepare a place for us:’^g there seated in Glory, he invites us to him. What then remains, but that we fix ‘our hearts where our treasure is:’^h and ‘set our affections on those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at

^a Rev. xiii. 10.

^b Rev. xi. 15.

^c Rev. iii. 21.

^d Acts i. 11.

^e 1 Thess. iv. 17.

^f Matt. xxv. 21

^g John xiv. 2.

^h Matt. vi. 21

the right hand of God?'ⁱ But in vain do we rejoice in a glorified Saviour, unless we become 'his friends, by doing what he commands us:'^j in vain do we lift up our eyes and our wishes to his happy abode: unless, by resembling him now in purity and holiness, we qualify ourselves to partake hereafter the resemblance of his Glory. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbor, and hath not slandered his neighbor. He that sitteth not by himself; but is lowly in his own eyes. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, and doth not lift up his soul unto vanity. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.'^k

LECTURE XII.

CREED.

ARTICLE VII. *From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

THIS is the great and awful doctrine, which makes all the preceding ones so important to us; that 'God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained:'^a a truth, the belief of which it infinitely concerns every one of us to settle well in our souls, and be duly affected by it.

The reason of our minds, and even the feelings of our hearts, give us very strong grounds to be per-

ⁱ Col. iii. 1, 2. ^j John xv. 14. ^k Psal. xv. and xxiv. ^a Acts xvii 31.

suaded of a future judgment, had we no further evidence. We are all of us, by nature, capable of perceiving what is just and right for us to do, and what is otherwise: we are all capable of acting according to this perception: we all see, it is fit we should; and fit we should suffer for it, if we do not. When we behave according to our duty, there springs up a delightful peace and security within our breasts: when we knowingly transgress it, we not only disapprove and accuse ourselves, whether we will or not, but experience a foreboding expectation of just recompence. ‘For wickedness condemned by her own witness is very timorous; and, being pressed with conscience, always forecasteth grievous things.’^b Nor do these horrors relate only, or chiefly, to what we have deserved to suffer in this world; but when our share in it draws to an end, and death approaches, then our fears grow stronger than ever, concerning somewhat, which is yet to come.^c And thus are all men ‘a law unto themselves; and shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.’^d

That some persons are able to overwhelm these apprehensions under business and pursuits, to drown them in debauchery and intemperance, to divert them by pleasures and amusements, to set up little cavils against them, and even affect to ridicule them; is no objection in the least to their being just, and well grounded. The feeling is plainly natural: every one of these methods to get rid of it, is plainly a force upon nature. Often it returns with double terror, for having been unjustly driven away; and seldom, or never, can the most thoughtless, or most hardened person, lose entirely those fears, which are seated in the very bottom of our souls: and which, if we could lose, we should only be the more surely miserable: for still the foundation of them would remain unshaken.

^b Wisd. xvii. 11.

^c Plat. de. Rep. l. i.

^d Rom. ii. 14, 15.

Still it would be true, that there is a God, who made us, and is at all times intimately present with us; who therefore with unspeakably more ease perceives all that passes in our very hearts, than we do one another's outward actions: who being perfect in knowledge, distinguishes, in every case, what is good from what is evil: and being perfect in holiness, approves the one, and abhors the other. Even we are thus affected in some degree; and his infinite purity must therefore be infinitely more so. Now what he hates he can punish as he pleases; and reward what he loves: for all power is in his hands; all nature depends on the word of his mouth; and he is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.'^e

Think then: Will the righteous and holy king of the whole earth, when he hath planted his laws in our hearts, when he hath made us for the very purpose of obeying them, when he hath filled us with so deep a sense of what will follow, if we disobey them; suffer us, after this, to despise and dishonour him, to injure his creatures, abuse ourselves, and disappoint the great design of forming us: and yet take no notice? Doth he govern the world, to the very least parts of it, with so much wisdom and care, in every other respect: and will he be so unwise and negligent, as to overlook the one thing that deserves his attention above all; and make no distinction 'between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not?'^f It cannot be; and the conscience of every one of you, at this moment, tells you it cannot.

If then such a distinction will be made, when and where will it be made? Here in this world, it plainly is not done to a degree, that the Almighty Governor of it can possibly think sufficient. Perpetually we see 'just men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: and wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.'^g Amidst all this disorder, there are indeed evident

^e Heb. xiii. 8.

^f Mal. iii. 18.

^g Eccl. viii. 14.

marks of a Providence; but of a Providence, that gives only specimens and earnest of its justice at present; reserving the full vindication and display of itself for that future state, in which our souls, being naturally immortal, are evidently destined to exist; and where all men shall receive according to their works. This is the great end, that God had in his view, when he created us; and it is the principal point, that we should have in our own view, through the whole of our lives.

More or less all mankind, even in their darkest ignorance, have always had some persuasion of a future recompence; which however mixed with errors, yet being thus universal and lasting, must have been grounded in nature and truth. And the wiser and better any persons were, amongst the heathens, the stronger and more rational belief they had of this doctrine: which yet was not owing merely to their wishes and their hopes: for the worst sinners, that were the farthest from desiring a just reward hereafter, feared it, whether they would or not. Thus we find it recorded of a very wicked heathen, that when Paul reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled.^h

But still, while the evidence of this great article consisted wholly in mere human reasonings, about a matter that was out of sight: bad persons, though they could not help at some time believing enough to fright them; yet made a shift at others to disbelieve enough to make them tolerably easy in doing wrong: and good persons, though they might have hope sufficient to influence them in common cases; yet often had not sufficient to support them under harder duties, and heavier afflictions, than ordinary. Even the obscurer confirmations of this doctrine in the Old Testament therefore were a great benefit to those who partook of them: and as they had no right to any such assurances of it, they had no cause to complain

^h Acts xxiv. 25.

that they were not clearer. But we have infinite cause to be thankful, who are favoured in the Gospel with the fullest and strongest attestation to this most interesting of all our concerns. Christians, unless they renounce their christianity, cannot disbelieve a future judgment. The only difficulty is, to be influenced by our belief, as we ought. And in that also the Scripture hath given us the best help, which is possible to be given; by its affecting accounts of the several particulars that relate to this awful transaction: the persons on whom, the person by whom, the time when, the things for which, and the manner in which, the final sentence of happiness or misery is to be pronounced. These points therefore I shall now endeavour to place before you distinctly. And,

I. The persons on whom, are, 'the quick,' that is the living, 'and the dead.' All that have died before, in every age of the world, shall be restored to life: and all that remain alive, shall be joined with them to receive their doom; nor shall any exception be made. For we are expressly assured, that the 'dead, small and great, shall stand before God.'ⁱ The very highest therefore shall not escape by their power, the richest by their wealth, the wisest by their abilities or artfulness: nor, on the other hand, shall the meanest wretch be looked on, as too inconsiderable for God's notice; or the most ignorant be exempted from answering for the care which he hath taken, to get the knowledge, that he might, and to use the knowledge, that he had, of his duty. Whatever our station be, we are bound alike to behave in it, as well as we can: and how far we have done so, and how far we have failed of it, is the one inquiry that our Judge will make. Other distinctions, how considerable soever they appear in our eyes, to him are as nothing. All creatures are equally beneath his infinite majesty; but none are either beneath or above his inspection now, or his sentence hereafter. Here

ⁱ Rev. xx. 12.

then we are put, every one of us, on a fair trial, without any disadvantage or inequality whatever. Both the most honourable, and the most contemptible persons, as to worldly circumstances, may be either the happiest or the most miserable in the next life, just as they shall choose. Let those of high degree therefore be humble, those of low be content, and all be watchful over themselves.

2. The person by whom the sentence shall be passed, is Jesus Christ. 'For the Father himself judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and given him authority to execute it, because he is the Son of Man;'^a because he is the person described by that name in the prophet Daniel, before whom the 'judgment was to be set, and the books opened;'^b who also is no less peculiarly qualified, than expressly appointed for it; since in him divine perfection is joined with experience of human infirmity. So that being judged by one, who 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin;'^c we may be sure, that every due allowance will be made to our natural weakness, and no undue one to our wilful wickedness. Unless therefore we repent and amend, He, that came the first time to save us, will come the second to condemn us; and the meek and merciful Jesus appear clothed with such terror, that we shall 'say to the mountains, and to the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?'^d

3. The time when these things shall be, himself informs us, 'it is not for us to know;' being known to the Father alone, 'and put in his own power.'^e But still, what there is need we should be told concerning it, the Scripture hath revealed; that it should come unexpectedly, and that it shall come soon. The general judgment may come, when we least think of it.

^a John v. 22, 27.
^d Rev. vi. 16, 17.

^b Dan. vii. 10, 13.
^c Acts i. 7.

^e Heb. iv. 15.

But however distant it may possibly be, in itself, yet to every one of us, it is undoubtedly, in effect, very near, and even at the door. For it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment.^a A few years, it may be a few days, will bring us to our end here; and in whatever state death finds us, in the same will the last judgment find us, also. For there is no device, nor wisdom in the grave;^b but where the tree falleth, there shall it be.^c Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged,^d either with the pleasures and amusements, or the cares and labors of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come on all them, that dwell on the whole earth.^e The evil servant that shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come, in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.^f Watch ye, therefore, and be ready; blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.^g

4. The things, for which we shall be judged, are our voluntary deeds, words, and thoughts. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body.^h Now, what we say, and what we think, designedly, is as truly part of our doings, as what we act. Our discourse may be of as much service or harm to others; and even our inward imaginations, may as much prove us to be good, or bad in ourselves, and contribute to make us yet better or worse. Often, indeed, we cannot help wicked fancies coming into our minds; and that alone will never be imputed to us as a sin. But we can help inviting, indulging, and delighting in them; and if we do not, it is just, that we should account for our fault. And on the other hand, it is fit and reasonable, that every good

^a Heb. ix. 27. ^b Ecc. ix. 10. ^c Eccl. xi. 3. ^d Luke xxi. 34, 35.

^e Matt. xxiv, 48—51.

^f Ibid. 42, 44, 46. ^g 2 Cor. v. 10.

person should be rewarded, not only for the religious and worthy actions that he hath performed; but for every good word, that hath proceeded from his good heart; for his pious and virtuous purposes and affections. For God sees the one, just as clearly as the other: 'there is no creature, that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.'^a And certainly what he sees, and sees to be proper for his notice, he will not fail to take suitable notice of it.—The Scripture, therefore, assures us, with the utmost reason, not only, that 'by our words we shall be justified, and by our words condemned;' giving account for the very idlest and slightest of them, either with grief or joy, according as its tendency was right or wrong:^b but, also, that 'God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ:'^c 'that there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.'^d 'For God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing; whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'^e

Therefore, with respect to other persons, let us be charitable, and 'judge nothing, needlessly, before the time; until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.'^f And, with respect to ourselves, let us be easy under human censures, if we have given no occasion for them; for in that case, 'it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment:'^g but let us carefully prepare for the divine sentence, by 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God;'^h and after all our care, let us be thoroughly humble: for though 'we know nothing of ourselves, yet we are not hereby justified,' if it be through partiality, or forgetfulness, as possibly it may; 'but he that judgeth us, is the Lord.'ⁱ

5. As to the manner of the judgment, it will be with the greatest solemnity and awfulness, and with

^a Heb. iv. 13.

^b Matt. xii. 36, 37.

^c Rom. ii. 16.

^d Mat t.x. 26.

^e Eccl. xii. 14.

^f 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^g Ibid: 3

^h 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ⁱ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

the greatest justice and equity. ‘The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven,’^a ‘with his mighty angels, in flaming fire;’^b ‘and the trumpet shall sound,’^c and ‘all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth.’^d ‘Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory,’^e ‘and the books shall be opened, and they shall be judged out of those things, which are written in the books, according to their works.’^f As ‘many as have sinned without a revealed law, shall perish without a revealed law: and as many as have sinned in the law,’ whether Jewish or Christian, ‘shall be judged by the law.’^g ‘Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom much is committed, of him will the more be asked.’^h ‘He which hath sowed sparingly, shall reap, also, sparingly; and he which hath sowed bountifully, shall reap, also, bountifully.’ⁱ ‘Whatsoever a man hath sowed, that shall he also reap.’^j

‘What manner of persons ought we to be, then, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God; wherein the Heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless: grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.’^k

^a 1 Thess. iv. 16.

^b 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

^c 1 Cor. xv. 52.

^d John v. 28, 29.

^e Matt. xxv. 31.

^f Rev. xx. 12.

^g Rom. ii. 12.

^h Luke xii. 48.

ⁱ 2 Cor. ix. 6.

^j Gal. vi. 7.

^k 2 Pet. iii. 11--14. 18.

LECTURE XIII.

CREED.

Article VIII. *I believe in the Holy Ghost.*

The former Articles having expressed the belief of Christians, concerning the two first persons of the sacred trinity, the Father and the Son; our Creed proceeds in this to the third object of our baptismal faith, the Holy Ghost. And to explain it properly, there will be need to speak, first, of his nature; secondly, of his peculiar office in the work of our redemption; thirdly, of the duties owing to him; fourthly, of the sins, which we are liable to commit against him.

I. Of the nature of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit. For Ghost, in the ancient use of our language, denoted the same thing, which Spirit doth now, a substance different from body or matter. Indeed, we still use it, in expressing the departure of the spirit from the body, which we call ‘giving up the ghost:’ and in speaking of supposed apparitions of the spirits of persons after their decease. Hence, also, the Catechism mentions ‘ghostly dangers;’ and the communion service ‘ghostly counsels;’ meaning such dangers, and such counsels, as relate to our spiritual part.

In like manner, the Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit: concerning whose nature, we can know, as I told you before, concerning that of the Son, only what results from the discoveries made to us in Scripture. And these, though they enlighten us but in part, are both credible and sufficient. For it is no objection against believing what God hath revealed, in relation to any subjects, that many questions may be asked about what he hath not revealed, to which we can give no answer. And he will never expect us, in this or any matter, to apprehend more, than he hath afforded us

the means of apprehending. Now, the chief things revealed in the present case, are the following.

The Holy Ghost is not merely an attribute or power of the Father, but hath a real subsistence, distinct both from the Father and the Son. For the New Testament expressly and repeatedly uses the word he, concerning him: ^a which is never used in that manner of a mere attribute or power. It ascribes to him will and understanding: ^b it speaks of him as being sent by the Father, coming and acting on various occasions, relative both to the Son and to others; nay, as shewing himself 'in a bodily shape, like a dove.' ^c

Further: the Holy Ghost is, truly and strictly speaking, God. For the language of Scripture concerning him is such, as cannot belong to any created being. He is there called, 'the eternal Spirit,' ^d 'the Lord,' ^e is said to 'quicken or give life;' ^f to be every where present with all good christians; ^g 'to search all things, yea, the deep things of God, even as the things of a man are known by his own spirit, which is in him.' ^h Christ, being conceived by him, became 'the Son of God.' ⁱ Christians, by his dwelling in them, become 'the temples of the Holy Ghost,' ^j or as another place expresses it, 'the temples of God.' ^k Ananias, by lying, to him, 'lied not unto men, but unto God.' ^l He is said to distribute spiritual and miraculous gifts 'dividing to every man severally, as he will.' ^m 'And as the disciples ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.' ⁿ He is represented by our Saviour, as able fully to supply the want of his personal presence with the Apostles. ^o And lastly, he is joined with the Father and the Son, on equal terms, both in the form of baptism, where his name and theirs are used alike; ^p

^a John xiv. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 13. ^b Rom. viii. 27. Heb. ii. 4. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 11. ^c Luke iii. 22. ^d Heb. ix. 14. ^e 2 Cor. iii: 17. ^f 1 Pet. iii: 18.
^g John xiv. 16, 17. ^h 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. ⁱ Luke i. 35. ^j 1 Cor. vi. 19.
^k 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. ^l Acts v. 3, 4. ^m 1 Cor. xli. 11: ⁿ Acts xiii. 2
^o John xvi. 7. ^p Matt. xxviii. 19.

and in the solemn form of blessing, where ‘the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,’ is placed on a level with the ‘love of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.’^a

These, and many other Scripture expressions, are surely such, as cannot be used of any creature; but prove the Spirit, as others, already mentioned to you, prove the Son to partake of the same authority and perfections, and, therefore, the same nature, with the Father. Yet we know, that though in Holy Writ, men and angels are, sometimes on account of their extensive power, sometimes as representatives of the Deity, called gods; yet, in literal propriety of speech, there is but one God, and not either three Supreme Beings, or a superior and inferior object of adoration. ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.’^b ‘Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.’^c ‘Before me was no God formed; neither shall there be after me.’^d ‘I am the Lord,—and my glory will I not give to another.’^e ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’^f Since, then, there is not a plurality of gods; and yet the Son and Spirit are each of them God, no less than the Father: it plainly follows, that they are, in a manner by us inconceivable, so united to him, that ‘these three are one;’^g but still, in a manner equally inconceivable, so distinguished from him, that no one of them is the other.

Now, certainly, in general, it is no contradiction, that things should be in one respect the same, and in another different. But the particular and explicit notion of this union and this distinction, the word of God hath not given us. Whether we are capable of apprehending it, we know not: and, therefore, it is no wonder, in the least, that we are incapable of forming one to ourselves. For indeed we are incapable of forming clear notions concerning thousands of other things, which are unspeakably less beyond our

^a 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^b Deut. vi. 4.

^c Isa. lxiv. 8.

^d Isa. xliii. 10.

^e Isa. xliii. 8.

^f Matt. iv. 10.

^g 1 John v. 7.

reach. All that we can do, therefore, is, to use those expressions in relation to it, which either Scripture furnishes, or experience has found useful to guard against false apprehensions: for with very imperfect ones, we must be content. Thus, in speaking of the difference of the Son and Spirit from the Father, and from each other, we say, with our Bible, that the Son is begotten, and the Spirit proceeds, without pretending to know any further, what these two words mean, than that each denotes something different from the other: and both something different from creation out of nothing. And this distinction giving occasion to Scripture to speak of them in somewhat the same manner, as of different persons amongst men; we call them the three persons of the trinity: not at all intending by it to say, that the word, person, suits them in every respect, that it suits us: but only to acknowledge, that, as we find them thus spoken of, we doubt not but there is some sufficient ground for it. And as we find further, that in point of rank, the person of the Father is represented as supreme, the Son as subordinate to him, the Holy Spirit to both; and in point of relation to us, creation is ascribed peculiarly to the first, redemption to the second, sanctification to the third; and yet, in some sense, each of these things to each: we imitate the whole of this, likewise. Still we are very sensible at the same time, that many more doubts and difficulties may be raised, almost about every part of the doctrine, than God, in his unsearchable wisdom, has given us light enough to solve. But we apprehend it is our duty, to believe with humility and simplicity, what the Scripture hath taught us; and to be contentedly ignorant of what it doth not teach us; without indulging speculations and conjectures, which will only perplex the subject more, instead of clearing it. And surely it is our duty, also, to interpret with candor, and use with prudent moderation, whatever well-meant phrases the Church of Christ, especially in its earliest days, hath applied to this subject; to think on matters, which

are both so mysterious in their nature, and so hard to be expressed, with great charity of other persons: and for ourselves, to keep close with great care to so much as is plain and practical. In order to this, I now proceed to lay before you,

II. The peculiar office of the Spirit, in the work of our redemption; on account of which, he is called, in our Catechism, ‘God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us, and all the elect* people of God.’ For probably he is called the Holy Spirit so frequently in Scripture, and ‘the spirit of holiness,’ once,^a not merely as being perfectly holy in himself, which the father and the son are also, but as being the cause of holiness in believers; who are elected by God, to eternal life, on foreseeing that their faith will produce obedience.

To be holy is to be pure from defilement; but particularly, in this case, from the defilement of iniquity; and being sanctified is being made holy: to which blessed change in sinful man, the spirit of God, we are taught, contributes many ways.

In baptism we are ‘born again of water and of the spirit;’^b restored by him to the state of God’s children, and endued with the principles of a new, that is, the christian life. As we grow up, it is through him, that our understandings are enlightened by the knowledge of God’s will. He directed the ancient prophets in what they preached and wrote. For ‘holy men of old time spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:’^c which more especially ‘testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow.’^d Then afterwards, when our saviour became man, the Holy Ghost was upon him, and accompanied him through the whole of his ministration:^e and after his ascension was communicated more fully than before to his apostles; to ‘teach them

*NOTE.—*Elect* is omitted in the American Prayer Book—AMERICAN EDITION.

^a Rom. i. 4. ^b John iii. 3, 5. ^c 2 Pet. i. 21, ^d 1 Pet. i. 11.

^e Matt. ii. 16. Luke iii. 22, iv. 1. Acts i. 2, x. 38. ^e Matt. iii. 16.

Luke iii. 22, 4, 1. Acts 1, 2, x. 31

all things' needful, 'and bring to their remembrance whatever he had said to them:'^a so that in all their discourses for the instruction of mankind, 'it was not so' much 'they who spoke, as the spirit of the Father that spoke in them.'^b Nor can we doubt, but he afforded them equal assistance at least in what they wrote for the use of all future ages. The same spirit was also their comforter under every suffering: and lastly bore witness to the truth of their doctrine and our faith, by a multitude of 'signs and wonders and supernatural gifts:'^c by which means, and the ministry of their successors, whom likewise the 'Holy Ghost made overseers over Christ's flock,'^d the light of his gospel filled the world, and now shines upon us.

Nor is it outwardly alone, that he reveals and confirms to us divine truths: but as the blessed Jesus promised, that 'he should dwell in his disciples, and abide with them for ever;'^e so, by his inward operations, the credibility of which I shall, God willing, prove to you in its proper place, 'he opens our hearts'^f to receive the word of God, influences our affections to delight in it, and excites our wills to act conformably to it: for which reasons good persons are said to be 'led by the spirit;'^g and all christian graces to be 'the fruits of the spirit.'^h With the wicked 'he strives,'ⁱ till they obstinately harden themselves, and then forsakes them. But those, who yield to his motions, he 'renews,'^j and 'strengthens with might in the inner man;^k 'helps their infirmities,' and both directs and animates their prayers, thus making, as it were, intercession^l within them. By this 'one spirit,' being in all christians, they are united into 'one body,'^m and made to love each other. 'By the Holy Ghost,' also, 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts,'ⁿ teaching us to look upon him, not as

^a John xiv. 26.

^d Acts xx. 28.

^g Rom. viii. 14.

^k Eph. iii. 16.

ⁿ Rom. v. 5

^b Matt. x. 20.

^e John xiv. 16.

^h Gal. v. 22. ⁱ Gen. vi. 3.

^l Rom. viii. 26. 27.

^c Heb. ii. 4.

^f Acts xvi. 14.

^j Tit. iii. 5.

^m Eph. iv. 4.

an austere master, but a kind parent: or, in the language of St. Paul, to cry Abba, Father.^a And thus ‘the spirit beareth witness with our spirit,’ joins with our consciences to complete the evidence, ‘that we are the sons of God:’^b from whence arises that ‘joy in the Holy Ghost:’^c which different persons have in very different degrees, and therefore no one should despond, because he feels but little, or at times perhaps nothing, of it, provided he truly honors and serves God. But to some persons, on some occasions, the heavenly comforter vouchsafes, both strong assurances of their good state; (hereby know we, that God abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us;^d) and such lively consolations from it, as amount to a pledge and foretaste of happiness to come. Accordingly they are said to be ‘sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance.’^e

But to prevent wicked persons of enthusiastic tempers from mistaking, as they often have done, their own groundless confidence for the inward testimony of the divine spirit, they should be carefully reminded, that ‘by our fruits we are known,’^f and must know ourselves,^g that ‘the fruit of the spirit is in all righteousness and truth,’^h and only ‘good men are full of the Holy Ghost.’ⁱ ‘For into a malicious soul he will not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit; and remove from thoughts that are without understanding; and will not abide, when unrighteousness cometh in.’^j

III. The next thing proposed was to speak of the duties owing to the Holy Ghost: which, besides the general one of honouring him suitably to his nature as God, are in particular to be baptized in his name, as I have already mentioned; to pray for his graces; for God ‘giveth grace unto the humble,’^k and ‘will

^a Rom. viii. 15.

Gal. iv. 6.

^b Rom. viii. 16.

^c Rom. xiv. 17.

^d 1 John iii. 24.

^e Eph. i. 13, 14.

^f Matt. vii. 16.

^g 1 John ii. 3.

^h Eph. v. 9.

ⁱ Acts xi. 24.

^j Wisd. i. 4, 5.

^k James iv. 6.

give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him:^a to be heartily thankful for all his good motions, and conscientiously to obey them in every instance. By this last I do not mean, that we should ‘believe every spirit;’^b follow every strong imagination of our own, or pretence of light from above in others: but adhere steadily to that rule of life, which the Holy Ghost hath directed the writers of scripture to teach us, and inwardly prompts and disposes us to observe. For other inspiration than this, being now become unnecessary; we have reason to distrust it. But especially, if we be urged, under colour of such authority, to break any one standing precept of the gospel, or add to, or take away from, any single article of our Creed; ‘though an angel from Heaven’^c were to require it, we are not to yield but keep close to the ‘faith and holy commandment, which were once delivered to the saints,’^d and shall never be altered.

These then are our duties to the ever-blessed Spirit. These are likewise mentioned in scripture.

IV. Sins against him. And one of these, not all, as melancholy persons are apt to imagine, but one alone, is said by our Saviour to be unpardonable: which is ‘blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.’^e Now that means only speaking reproachful words, deliberately and maliciously, against the miracles done by the power of the Holy Ghost, or the supernatural gifts proceeding from him, and the only persons, to whom Christ declared, that this should not be forgiven, were those, who had the testimony of their own senses for the reality of these miracles and gifts; and notwithstanding the fullest evidence of their coming from the Spirit of God, obstinately persisted in reviling them, and even ascribed them to the devil. Now here is a plain reason, why this sin, under these circumstances, must be unpardonable. The persons guilty of it, had stood out against all the means,

^a Luke xi. 13.

^b 1 John iv. 1.

^c Gal. i. 8.

^d 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Jude ver. 3.

^e Matt. xii. 31.

Mark iii. 28, 29.

Luke xii. 10.

which heaven had provided for the conviction and conversion of mankind; none more powerful remained to bring them to repentance; and as they could not be forgiven without repenting, there was plainly no way left for their recovery.

But then it is equally plain, that persons, who never were witnesses to any such miraculous powers; but live as we do, many ages after they are ceased, cannot in this respect, sin to the same degree of guilt, since it is not against the same degree of evidence: and that as they, who were guilty of it originally, were unbelievers in Christ, so indeed, no believer in him, continuing such, can possibly design, whilst his thoughts and words are in his own command, to speak evil of the Holy Ghost or his mighty works. Nor therefore can he come under the condemnation of those, whom the epistle to the Hebrews describes, as ‘wilfully doing despite to the spirit of grace;’ and of whom it pronounces, that ‘there remains for them no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment.’^a Believers may indeed rashly and thoughtlessly use profane words concerning the Holy Ghost: but these, though undoubtedly great offences, and too likely to make way for greater still, are very far from the unpardonable sin. And as for what some good persons are often terrified about, the wicked imaginations that come into their minds, and expressions that come out of their mouths, at times, almost whether they will or not; in proportion as they are involuntary, they are not criminal in them, be they in their own nature ever so bad. When therefore poor scrupulous souls affright themselves about such things as these; or when they who have not sinned at all against the Spirit, otherwise than as every ill action is a sin against him; or have sinned in a quite different manner from the Jews in the gospel, and heartily repented of their sin; when they apprehend, that notwith-

^a Heb. x. 26—29.

standing this they cannot be pardoned; they entirely mistake their own case: either through ignorance or false opinions infused into them, or excessive tenderness of mind: or indeed more commonly by reason of some bodily disorder, though perhaps unperceived by themselves, which depresses their spirits, and clouds their understandings, and requires the help of medicine.

Another sin against the Holy Ghost, mentioned in scripture, is ‘lying to him:’^a which means there, asserting falsehoods, being conscious that they are such. to persons inspired by him with the knowledge of men’s hearts, as did *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. But the offences, which we are in danger of committing against him, are ‘resisting’^b and ‘quenching’^c his good motions and influences, and grieving him^d by corrupt communication, evil thoughts, or unholy actions. These things therefore let us diligently avoid: or, if we have fallen into them, sincerely repent of them: the opposite duties let us conscientiously practice, and steadfastly persevere in them: for so shall we ‘commend ourselves to God, and to the spirit of his grace; who is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance amongst them who are sanctified;’^e to which he of his mercy bring us all, for the sake of our redeemer Jesus Christ. Amen.

LECTURE XIV.

CREED.

Article IX. *The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.*

The most ancient Creeds of all went no further than a declaration of faith in the Father, Son, and

^a Acts v. 3 ^b Acts vii. 51. ^c 1 Thess. v. 19. ^d Eph. iv. 29, 30.
^e Acts xx. 32.

Holy Ghost, in whose name we are baptized. For in this profession all those other points of doctrine were understood to be implied, which it was very soon after found most convenient to express by additional articles. And the first of these, is that now to be explained: wherein we declare our belief in 'the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints.

The scripture word, translated 'Church,' originally signifies any regular and orderly assembly of persons, called to meet on any occasion. But in the Bible it signifies, almost always, a religious assembly. And when used in its largest sense there it comprehends the whole number of good persons, in every age: all those who from the beginning of the world, under whatever dispensation of true religion, have believed in God, and served him, according to the degree of their light; and shall in the end of it be gathered together, and rewarded by him according to the degree of their improvement. 'This is 'the general Assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven,' as the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it." And since the salvation of all these is owing to Jesus Christ; the only name by which men can be saved;^b they are all, in that respect, members of the church of Christ, how obscure and imperfect soever their knowledge of a Saviour may have been. But the word is usually taken in a narrower sense. And thus it is sometimes applied to the Jewish Nation; which in the Old Testament is called, by a phrase of just the same meaning, 'the congregation of the Lord,'^c and by St. Stephen, 'the Church which was in the wilderness.'^d But the Church more especially meant here in the Creed, is the christian; which, though in some respects the same with the Jewish, in others differed from it; which therefore our Saviour, in the gospel, speaks of himself as about to build;^e and accordingly, imme-

^a Heb. xii. 23. ^b Acts iv. 12. ^c Num. xvi. 3, &c. ^d Acts vii. 33. ^e Matt. xvi. 18

diately after his ascension, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find it built: that is, we find an assembly of believers in Christ, met together at Jerusalem under their proper teachers and governors, to worship God, and edify one another, in the manner which he appointed.

This was the original Christian Church; small indeed at first: but the Lord, we read, ‘added to the Church daily such as should be saved;’^a till the gospel spreading every way, the number of christians, which in the beginning required no more than one congregation, was of necessity divided into several. And henceforward we find many churches spoken of at some times: yet all these many spoken of as one, at others. For since they all proceeded from the same source; are all, as the Apostle argues, ‘one body;’ and are directed by ‘one spirit;’ even as they are called in one hope of their calling;’ as they ‘have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all:’^b so are they in great propriety of speech, though many, yet ‘one in Christ.’^c His church therefore is the whole number of those, who believe on him. How much soever they may differ in some opinions or practices, yet they are one in all things essential. How wide soever they may be dispersed throughout the world, they shall at last be ‘gathered together unto him.’^d We can judge only according to appearances: and therefore to us all those must be members of Christ’s Church, who make a visible profession of being christians. But God sees every secret thought; and in his eye, they alone belong truly to his Church, who truly serve him in ‘the hidden man of the heart:’^e that inward sincerity, which to human eyes is invisible. And this invisible true Church of Christ, here on earth, is militant: carrying on a continual war, against the outward temptations of the world and the devil, and the in-

^a Acts ii. 47.

^b Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

^c Rom. xii. 5.

^d 2 Thess. ii. 1.

^e 1 Pet. iii. 4

ward struggles of every wrong inclination: till having faithfully 'fought the good fight;' and really though not perfectly, 'gotten the victory' in this life; it shall, in the next, become triumphant, and receive the 'Crown of Righteousness.'^a

Such then being the Church of Christ in its different states: let us proceed to consider the two qualities ascribed to it in the Creed: that it is *Holy*, and that it is *Catholic*.

To be holy, is to be separate from all defilement and impurity, particularly of the moral kind. Thus God is perfectly holy: Angels and good men are so in their different degrees. And because nothing unclean or impure, in any sense, ought to enter into the service of God, therefore whatever is set apart from common use, and dedicated to his worship, is called holy also. Hence the places, times, and things, that are so employed, have that name given them. And the persons, who attend on his ministry, are styled 'holy on account of their outward relation to him, whether they are really and inwardly such as they ought, or not. Now in outward profession, the whole visible church of Christ is holy: separated and distinguished from the rest of the world, by acknowledging his Holy laws, and using the means of holiness which he hath appointed. But in the inward sense, and the only one which will avail hereafter, they alone are indeed members of his holy church, who by the help of these means, do really improve themselves in piety and virtue, becoming 'holy in all manner of conversation, as he which hath called them is holy:'^b and such as are truly so here, shall be made completely so hereafter. For 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water; and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.'^c Ask your hearts then:

^a 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8. Rev. xv. 2

^b 1 Pet. i. 15

^c Eph. v. 25, 26, 27

Are you giving your best diligence to ‘cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?’^a ‘For without it no man shall see the Lord.’^b

The word *Catholic*, applied to the church in our Creed, is no where used in scripture: but frequently in the early christian writers; and it means *universal*, extending to all mankind. The Jewish Church was not universal, but particular; for it consisted only of one Nation; and their law permitted sacrifices only in one temple; nor could several other precepts of it be observed in countries at any considerable distance from thence: but the Christian consists ‘of every kindred, tongue and people’^c equally; and ‘offers unto the name of God in every place, from the rising of the Sun unto the going down of the same, incense and a pure offering.’^d The Catholic church then is the universal Church, spread through the world; and the Catholic faith is the universal faith: ‘that form of doctrine,’ which the Apostles delivered^e to the whole Church, and it received. What this faith was, we may learn from their writings, contained in the New Testament; and, at so great a distance of time, we can learn it with certainty no where else. Every church or society of christians, that preserves this Catholic or universal faith, accompanied with true charity, is a part of the Catholic or universal Church; and because the parts are of the same nature with the whole, it hath been usual to call every Church singly, which is so qualified, a Catholic church. And in this sense, churches, that differ widely in several notions and customs, may, notwithstanding, each of them be truly Catholic churches. But the church of *Rome*, which is one of the most corrupted parts of the Catholic church, both in faith and love, hath presumed to call itself the whole Catholic church, the universal Church: which it no more is, than one diseased limb, though perhaps the larger

^a 2 Cor. vii. 1. ^b Heb. xii. 14. ^c Rev. v. 9. ^d Mal. i. 11. ^e Rom. vi. 17

for being diseased, is the whole body of a man. And by attempting to exclude us, they take the direct way to exclude themselves, unless God impute their uncharitable way of thinking and acting, as we hope he will, to excusable ignorance and mistake. The Church of *England* pretends not indeed, absurdly, to be the whole Catholic Church; but is undoubtedly a sound and excellent member of it. So that we have much better ground to call ourselves Catholics, than they, were such names worth disputing about, which they are not: only one would not flatter and harden them, by giving them a title, which they both claim unjustly, and turn into an argument against us.

In this 'Holy Catholic Church' our Creed professes belief. But the meaning is not, that we engage to believe all things, without exception, of which the majority of the church, at any time, shall be persuaded; and much less, what the rules of it, or, it may be, a small part of them, who may please to call themselves the church, shall at any time require: for then we must believe many plain falsehoods, uncertainties without number, and contrary doctrines, as contrary parties prevail. Our Church doth indeed believe whatever the first and best ages of christianity thought necessary: whatever all the other churches of the present age agree in. But this is more than we declare in the Creed. For there, as believing in God, means only believing that there is a God; and believing in the resurrection, means only that there shall be a resurrection: so believing in the Holy Catholic Church, means only believing that by our Saviour's appointment there was founded, and through his mercy shall ever continue a society of persons, of what nation or nations is indifferent, who have faith in his name, and obey his laws: not indeed without being deformed and disfigured, by mixtures both of sin and error; but still, without being destroyed by either. For as he hath promised, that 'the Gates of Hell,' or of the invisible world, that is, persecution and death, 'shall not prevail against his

Church,^a so neither shall any other power. Nothing shall abolish it: though several things may obscure and corrupt it. That sin doth, we see: why then may not error too? It is certainly not a worse thing; nor is our Saviour's promise a greater security against the one, than the other. He requires us indeed to 'hear the Church.' But in what case? 'If thy brother trespass against thee,' admonish him privately. This relates then, not to disputed speculative opinions, but to known practical transgressions against our neighbour. 'If he neglect' private admonition 'tell it unto the Church.' Not surely to the whole Catholic Church all over the world; that is impossible: but the particular church to which you both belong. Now, all sides allow, that every particular church is fallible; and therefore to be heard no farther, than it appears to be in the right. It follows next: And 'if he neglect to hear the Church:' if he will not reform his injurious behaviour on a public warning, 'let him be unto thee as an Heathen man and a Publican:'^b treat him no longer with the tenderness and regard, that is due to a good christian: but consider him in the same light with an infidel sinner, till he makes reparation. This rule therefore by no means proves the infallibility, even of the universal Church, and much less of the *Romish*, which is far from universal; but relates to a matter entirely different. And it still remains true, that professing to believe in the Holy Catholic Church, is only acknowledging, that Christ hath formed the whole number of his followers, under him their head, into one regular and sacred body, or society, to last forever: the unity and holiness of which is to be carefully preserved by what the latter part of this article specifies.

'The communion of Saints.' The word *Saints*, is of the same meaning with the word holy; and therefore comprehends all christians, in the manner which

^a Matt. xvi. 18.

^b Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

I have just explained. Having *Communion*, is being entitled to partake of benefits and kindnesses, and bound to make suitable returns for them. And thus christians, or saints, have communion or ‘fellowship with the Father from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift: with his son Jesus Christ,’^a through whom forgiveness and mercy are conveyed to us: with the Holy Ghost, whose sanctifying graces are conferred on such as duly qualify their hearts for the reception of them. And for these blessings we owe all thankfulness and all duty in thought, word, and deed. Christians have also communion with the Holy Angels; as these ‘are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation.’^b And undoubtedly we ought to think of what they do for us, with an inward sense of gratitude and love. But as we are unacquainted with particulars, we can make no particular acknowledgments; nor ought we to make any general ones, by outward expressions of respect; since ‘worshiping God alone’ is commanded,^c and ‘worshiping Angels’ condemned^d in Scripture.

With respect to those of our own nature, we are bound so far to hold communion, even with the worst of unbelievers, as not only to do them every kind of justice, but sincerely to wish, and, if occasion offer, heartily endeavour their good, both in body and soul. But to all, ‘who have attained the like precious faith with ourselves,’^e we bear a still nearer relation; as being, in a peculiar sense, children of the same father, disciples of the same master, animated by the same spirit, members of the same body. And these things oblige us to the utmost care of preserving by prudent order and mutual forbearance, as much unity in the Church, as possibly we can. Such indeed, as obstinately deny the fundamental doctrines, or transgress the fundamental precepts of christianity, ought

^a 1 John i. 3.
^d Col. ii. 18.

James i. 17.
^e 2 Pet. i. 1.

^b Heb. i. 14.

^c Matth. iv. 10.

to be rejected from christian communion. But to renounce communicating with any others, who are willing to admit us to it on lawful terms, is the way to cut off ourselves, not them, from the body of Christ: who yet, we doubt not, will allow those on both sides to belong to his church, who, through pardonable passions or mistakes, will not allow one another to do so.

And as we should maintain communion with all proper persons, we should shew our disposition to it in all proper ways: attend on the public instruction, join in the public worship, sacraments and discipline, which our Lord hath appointed; and keep the whole of them pure from all forbidden, or suspicious alterations or mixtures: avoid with great care, both giving and taking needless offence, in respect to these, or any matters: and, by all fit means, 'edify one another in love:'^a obeying those who are set over us; condescending to those who are beneath us; esteeming and honouring the wise and virtuous; teaching and admonishing the ignorant and faulty; bearing with the weak, relieving the poor, and comforting the afflicted.

Nor, have we communion only with the saints on earth; but are of one city, and one family, with such as are already got safe to Heaven. Doubtless they exercise that communion towards us, by loving and praying for their brethren, whom they have left behind them. And we are to exercise it towards them, not by addressing petitions to them, which we are neither authorized to offer, nor have any ground to think they can hear: but by rejoicing in their happiness, thanking God for the grace which he hath bestowed on them, and the examples which they have left us, holding their memories in honor, imitating their virtues, and beseeching the disposer of all things, that having followed them in holiness here, we may meet them in happiness hereafter; and become in

^a Rom. xiv. 19. Eph. iv. 16

the fullest sense, ‘fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:’^a ‘having, with all those that are departed in the true faith of his holy name, our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.’^b

LECTURE XV.

CREED.

Article X. *The forgiveness of sins.*

We are now come to that Article of the Creed, for which all the preceding ones have been preparing the way: a doctrine of the greatest comfort to believe, and the utmost danger to misapprehend. I shall, therefore, endeavor clearly to explain,

I. The nature of sin; its different kinds, and its guilt.

II. The nature and conditions of the forgiveness promised to it.

I. The nature of sin. Both men, and all other beings, endued with sufficient reason, must perceive a difference between different inclinations and actions, of their own and others; in consequence of which, they must approve some, as right and good; and disapprove others, as wrong and evil. Now, this distinction, which we are capable of seeing, God must see as much more clearly, as his understanding is more perfect than ours. Therefore, he must entirely love what is good, and utterly hate what is evil: and his will must be, that all his rational creatures should practice the former, and avoid the latter. This he makes known to be his will, in some degree, to all men, however ignorant, by natural conscience; and

^a Eph. ii. 19.

^b Burial office

hath more fully made known to us, by the revelation of his Holy Word, wherein, also, besides those things, which we, of ourselves, might have known to be fit, he hath signified his pleasure, that we should observe some further rules, which he knew to be useful and requisite, though we should otherwise not have discerned it. Now, the will and pleasure of a person having authority, as God hath absolute authority, is, when sufficiently notified, a law. Those laws of his, which human reason was able to teach us, are called natural or moral laws: those which he hath added to them, are called positive ones. Obedience to both sorts, is our duty: transgression of either, is sin: whether it be by neglecting what the law commands, which is a sin of omission; or doing what it forbids, which is a sin of commission.

Further: as God hath a right to give us laws, he must have a right to punish us, if we break them. And we all of us feel inwardly, that sin deserves this punishment; which feeling is what we call a sense of guilt. Some sins have more guilt, that is, deserve greater punishment, than others; because they are either worse in their own nature, or accompanied with circumstances, that aggravate, instead of alleviating them. Thus, if bad actions, known to be such, are done with previous deliberation and contrivance, which are called wilful or presumptuous sins; they are very highly criminal. But if we do amiss in some smaller matter, through inconsiderateness, or other weakness of mind, or else through a sudden unforeseen attack of temptation; which are called sins of infirmity or surprise: these, though real, are yet less offences. And if, lastly, we act wrong, through invincible ignorance, that is, have no means of knowing better; then the action is not, strictly speaking, a fault in us, though it be in itself. But if we might, with a reasonable attention, have known our duty, and did not attend, we are justly blameable, even for a careless ignorance, and full as much for a designed one, as if we had known ever so well.

Another difference in the kind of sins, is this; that though they be only in smaller instances, yet, if persons take so little pains to guard against them, that they live in a constant or frequent practice of them, which are called habitual sins; the guilt of these may be full as heavy as that of greater transgressors, provided they be less common. But if they be great and habitually indulged, also; that makes the worst of cases.

Committing sin, can never be a slight matter; for it is acting as our own hearts tell us we ought not.— It is likewise, for the most part, injuring, one way or another, our fellow-creatures; and it is always behaving undutifully and ungratefully to our Creator, who hath sovereign power over us, and shews continual goodness to us. We may be sure, therefore, that the punishment due to the least sin, is such as will give us cause to wish from the bottom of our souls, that we had never done it. More enormous ones are of worse desert, according to their degree. And since recompences, proportionable to them, are not, with any constancy, distributed in this world; as certainly as God is just, they will be in the next; unless we obtain forgiveness in the mean time; and all will be made miserable, as long as they are wicked.

This is the main of what human abilities, unassisted, seem capable of discovering to us, concerning sin and its consequences; excepting it be, that as we have a natural approbation of what is good, so we have, along with it, a natural proneness to what is evil; an inconsistency, for which reason finds it hard, if possible, to account.

But here most seasonably revelation comes in; and teaches, not indeed all that we might wish, but all that we need to know of this whole matter, that our first parents were created upright; but soon transgressed a plain and easy command of God, intended for a trial of their obedience; by which they perverted and tainted their minds; forfeited the immortality, which God had designed them; brought diseases and

death on their bodies; and derived to us the same corrupt nature and mortal condition, to which they had reduced themselves. An imperfect illustration of this lamentable change, and I give it for no other, we may have from our daily experience, that wretched poverty, fatal distempers, and even vicious inclinations, that often descend from parents to their children. Now, the sinful dispositions, which our origin from our primitive parents hath produced in us, are called original sin. And this transgression of theirs may, very consistently with divine justice, occasion, as the Scripture shews it hath, our being condemned, as well as they, to temporal sufferings and death. For even innocent creatures have no right to be exempt from them: and to fallen creatures they are peculiarly instructive and medicinal. The same transgression may, also, with equal justice, occasion our being exposed to a more difficult trial of our obedience, than we should else have undergone; indeed, than we should be able, by the strength which remains in us, to support. And thus were we left to ourselves, we must, in consequence of the fall of our first progenitors, become finally miserable. But God is ready to give us more strength, if we will ask it: and he may, undoubtedly, subject us to any difficulties that he pleases, provided he bestows on us, whether naturally or super-naturally, the power of going through them in the manner that he expects from us, which he certainly doth bestow on all men. And if they use it, they will be accepted by him in a proper degree: what that is, we are no judges.

But when, instead of resisting our bad inclinations, as through the grace of God we may, we voluntarily follow and indulge them; then we fall into actual sin; and are in strictness of speech guilty, and deserving of punishment. And this punishment the Scripture frequently expresses by the name of death. For death being the most terrible to human nature, of all the punishments that man inflicts; it is used to signify the most terrible that God inflicts: even those,

which extend beyond death, and are, therefore, called the 'second death.'^a Accordingly, our Saviour directs his followers: 'be not afraid of them that kill the body; and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him.'^b

The nature and duration of the future sufferings, reserved for sinners, are most awfully described in the Word of God: the declarations of which concerning them, I shall soon have occasion to lay before you. But in the mean while, we all know them to be such, as may abundantly suffice to engage us in a most serious inquiry, how we shall obtain, what was proposed to be explained.

II. The forgiveness of sins. Now, thus much our own reason evidently teaches; that when we have done amiss, we are to undo it as far as we can. We are to disapprove it, and be sorry for it, as we have great cause: to beg pardon of God, for having offended him; to make the best amends we are able to our fellow-creatures, if we have injured them; to be very humble in our hearts, and very watchful in our future conduct. These things, through God's help, we can do; and these are all that nature directs us to do. Undoubtedly, he will never accept less; but the question is, whether he will so far accept this, as to be reconciled to us upon it. Since wickedness deserves punishment, it may be justly punished. Being sorry for it, is not being innocent of it. And the most careful obedience afterwards, no more makes a compensation for what went before, than avoiding to run into a new debt, pays off the old one: besides that, we never obey so well, as not to add continually some degree of fresh misbehaviour. God, indeed, is merciful; but he is equally righteous and holy, and abhorrent of sin. And what can the mere light of our own understandings discover to us, with any assur-

^a Rev. *xxi.* 14. *xxi.* 8.

^b Luke *xiii.* 4. 5.

ance, from these attributes joined? We see, that in this world, the most merciful rulers, if they are just and wise, also, which God is, often punish even those offenders, who repent the most heartily. The honor and good order of their government requires it. And why may he not have reasons of the same, or even of a different nature, for doing the same thing?

Still the case of penitents must be more favorable, than that of others. And there is ground for all such to hope, that such pity, as can, will be shewn them in some manner, though they cannot be sure how, or to what effect. And God hath been pleased to confirm this hope, from time to time, by various revelations, gradually unfolding his gracious designs: till, by the coming of our blessed Lord, the whole purpose of his goodness was opened, as far as it is proper, that mortals should be acquainted with it.

From these revelations, contained in the Bible, we learn, that repentance alone, even the completest, would not be sufficient to reinstate us fully in God's favor; much less the poor endeavours towards it, which we of ourselves are capable of using: but that our pardon and salvation depend on the compassionate intercession of a mediator, appointed by our heavenly Father: that a person, who should deliver mankind from the bitter fruits of their transgressions, had in general been promised, and the promise been believed, from the earliest ages; and more particular notices of him, gradually imparted to the successive generations of the chosen people: that at length, in the season, which infinite wisdom saw to be fittest, he appeared on earth, in the character of the only begotten Son of God; taught his followers the precepts, and set them the example, of perfect piety and virtue; and after bearing cheerfully, for this purpose, all the inconveniences of mortal life, submitted to suffer a cruel death from wicked men, provoked by the perfections which they ought to have adored: that this voluntary sacrifice of himself, the Almighty

was pleased to accept from him, whose divine nature, united to the human, gave it unspeakable value, as a reason for entering into a covenant of mercy, with all those, who should be influenced by faith in his doctrines, to obey his laws: that still neither our obedience, nor our faith itself, is at all meritorious, or in any degree the cause of our acceptance: for they are both of them God's gift; and they are both, through our fault, very imperfect; but yet, that thankful belief in Christ, as our Saviour from the power and the punishment of sin, 'working by love'^a to our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our fellow-creatures, is appointed the condition of our obtaining, and the instrument of our receiving pardon.

The reasons of this appointment, 'we see, as through a glass darkly;'^b yet enough of them to convince us of its being 'the wisdom of God,' though 'in a mystery.'^c With respect to ourselves, it hath the most powerful tendency to inspire us with humility, gratitude, and diligence. With respect to the blessed Jesus, it was a fit reward for what he had done and suffered, to take those into favor again, for whom he had interested himself with such inexpressible goodness. And with respect to God, it was a strong demonstration of his concern for the glory of his attributes, and the honor of his government, that he would not be reconciled to sinners on any other terms, than such an interposition of such a person in their behalf: which yet, since he himself provided, as well as accepted, his kindness to us is no less, than if he pardoned us without it. Thus, then, did 'mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and truth kiss each other;'^d and God shew himself 'just, and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.'^e

But then we must always remember, that none will be forgiven and made happy by the means of Christ, but they who are reformed and made holy by his means: that his sacrifice is not to stand instead of our

^a Gal. v. 6. ^b 1 Cor. xiii. 12. ^c 1 Cor. ii. 7. ^d Psal. lxxxv. 10. ^e Rom. iii. 26

repentance and amendment; but is the consideration which induces God first to work in us pious dispositions, then to accept us, if we cultivate and exert them faithfully.

Perhaps the benefit of this sacrifice may extend, in a very valuable, though inferior degree, even to those who have had little or no knowledge of Him who offered it. But in such questions, we have no concern. Our business is to take care that it may extend to us, by embracing, with an active, as well as joyful faith, the gracious tenders of the gospel dispensation.

Indeed, the first advantage that we have from it, is before we are capable of knowing our happiness, at the time of our baptism. For baptism restores the infants of believing parents, as will be proved hereafter, in explaining it, to that assurance of immortal life, which our first parents lost, and we, by consequence. But when administered to persons of riper years, as it conveys a further privilege, the pardon of their former actual sins, it also requires a suitable condition, the exercise of an actual faith, such as will produce future obedience. And as infants are baptized only on presumption of their coming to have this faith in due time; so, if they live, and refuse to be instructed in it, or despise it, their baptism will avail them nothing. For it is a covenant: at first, indeed, made for us; but to be afterwards acknowledged and ratified by us; as it is in confirmation. And in this covenant we engage, on our part, to keep ourselves, with an honest care, free from sin: and God engages on his, to consider us, not because of our care, though on condition of it, but for the sake of Christ, as free from guilt; notwithstanding such infirmities and failings, as may overtake well-meaning persons. He will not look on these as breaches of his covenant, but readily pass them over; provided we make a general confession of them in our daily prayers, and strive against them with a reasonable diligence. For such things we cannot expect to avoid entirely; but greater offences

we may. And, therefore, if we fall into any habitual wickedness, or any single act of gross and deliberate sin; we forfeit the happiness to which our baptism entitles us: and if we continue impenitent, the more privileges we have enjoyed, the more severely we shall be punished. For ‘to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.’^a

But if God allow us time, and we make use of it, not only to be sorry for having lived ill, for this alone is not gospel penitence, but to be sorry from a principle of conscience; and to shew of what sort our sorrow is, by living well afterwards, in all those respects in which we have been faulty, we become entitled again to the divine favor. For though the Scripture declares it ‘impossible to renew’ some sinners ‘to repentance:’^b yet if this be taken strictly, it can mean only ‘blasphemers against the Holy Ghost.’^c Besides, *impossible*, in all languages, often signifies no more than extremely difficult: and ‘with God all things are possible.’^d Experience proves, that great numbers are ‘renewed to repentance: and that they shall not be forgiven, when they repent, is no where said. It is true, ‘there remains no more sacrifice for sin,’^e no other method of salvation, than that, to which they have lost their claim. But still, if they humbly apply for a fresh interest in it; since the Apostle directs all Christians to restore such to their communion, as brethren, ‘in the spirit of meekness:’^f there can be no doubt, but God will receive them, as a Father, with pity and mercy. Indeed the words of St. John alone, would be sufficient to banish all despondency, from the breast of every christian penitent: ‘my little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.’^g

You see, then, the inestimable goodness of God, in providing means, by which we not only shall be par-

^a Luke xii. 48.

^b Heb. x 26

^c Heb. vi. 4, 6

^d Gal. vi 1

^e Matt. xii. 31

^f 1 John ii. 1, 2

^g Matt. xix 26

doned, but have the comfort of knowing beforehand, that we shall. But then you see, also, the only terms on which we are to expect it. And these are, not that we live on in a circle of sinning and repenting; not that we abstain from some sins, and indulge others; but that we so repent of all our sins, as not wilfully to sin again. And till we are arrived at this, we must never think ourselves in a safe condition. For, as on the one hand, ‘if the wicked man turn from his wickedness, he shall live:’^a so on the other, ‘if the righteous man turn from his righteousness, he shall die.’^b ‘Blessed as they, whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed are they, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose Spirit there is no guile.’^c

LECTURE XVI.

CREED.

ARTICLES XI. XII. PART I. *The resurrection of the body and, the life everlasting.*

THE resurrection of the body and life everlasting, being the consequences of the preceding article, the forgiveness of sins, our belief of that comfortable truth, leads us naturally to believe these also. And as they complete the whole of what we are concerned to know; so here the profession of our faith happily concludes, having brought us to the ‘end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.’^d

Though this part of our Creed expresses only two things; yet it implies two more: and so comprehends the four following particulars:

- I. That the souls of all men continue after death.
- II. That their bodies shall at the last day be raised up, and re-united to them.

^a Ezek. xviii. 27.

^b Ibid. 24.

^c Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

^d 1 Pet. i. 9.

III. That both souls and bodies of good persons shall enjoy everlasting happiness.

IV. That those of the wicked shall undergo everlasting punishment.

I. That the souls of all men continue after death. We are every one of us capable of perceiving and thinking, judging and resolving, loving and hating, hoping and fearing, rejoicing and grieving. That part of us, which doth these things, we call the mind or soul. Now plainly this is not the body. Neither our limbs, nor our trunk, nor even our head, is what understands, and reasons, and wills, and likes or dislikes: but something, that hath its abode within the head,^a and is unseen. A little consideration will make any of you sensible of this. Then further: our bodies increase, from an unconceivable smallness, to a very large bulk, and waste away again; and are changing, each part of them, more or less, every day. Our souls, we know, continue all the while the same. Our limbs may be cut off one after another, and perish: yet the soul not be impaired by it in the least. All feeling and motion may be lost almost throughout the body, as in the case of an universal palsy; yet the soul have lost nothing. And though some diseases do indeed disorder the mind; there is no appearance, that any have a tendency to destroy it. On the contrary, the greatest disorders of the understanding, are often accompanied with firm health and strength of body: and the most fatal distempers of the body are attended, to the very moment of death, with all possible vigor and liveliness of understanding. Since therefore these two are plainly different things; though we knew no further, there would be no reason to conclude, that one of them dies, because the other doth. But since we do know further, that it can survive so many changes of the other, this alone affords a fair probability, that it may survive the great change of death. Indeed, whatever is once in being,

^a In quo igitur loco est (mens?) Credo equidem in capite: et cur credam? ad-
 urre possum. Cic. Tusc. Disp. l. i. c. 29.

we are to suppose continues in being, till the contrary appears. Now the body, we perceive becomes at death insensible, and corrupts. But to imagine the same thing of the soul, in which we perceive no change at that time, would be almost as groundless, as if having frequently heard the music of an organ. but never seen the person that played on it, we should suppose him dead, on finding the instrument incapable of playing any more. For the body is an instrument adapted to the soul. The latter is our proper self; the former is but something joined to us for a time. And though, during that time, the connection is very close; yet nothing hinders, but we may be as well after the separation of our soul from our present body, as we were before, if not better.

Then consider further: When the body dies, only the present composition and frame of it is dissolved, and falls in pieces; not the least single particle, of all that make it up, returns to nothing; nor can do, unless God, who gave it being, thinks fit to take that being away. Now we have no reason to imagine the soul made up of parts, though the body is. On the contrary, so far as the acutest reasoners are able to judge, what perceives and wills must be one uncompounded substance. And not being compounded, it cannot be dissolved, and therefore probably cannot die. ^a

God indeed may put an end to it, when he pleases. But since he hath made it of a nature to last forever, we cannot well conceive that he will destroy it after so short a space, as that of this life: especially considering, that he hath planted in our breasts an earnest desire of immortality, and a horror at the thought of ceasing to be. It is true, we dread also the death of our bodies, and yet we own they must die; but then we believe, that they were not at first intended to die; and that they shall live again wonderfully improved. God hath in no case given us natural dis-

^a See Cic. Tusc. Disp. i. 29.

positions and hopes, which he purposed at the same time to disappoint: much less, when they are such, that the wisest and best men feel the most of them, and are made still wiser and better by them.

Besides, there are plainly in our souls capacities for vastly higher improvements, both in knowledge and goodness, than any one arrives at in this life. The best inclined, and most industrious, undeniably have not near time enough to become what they could be. And is it likely, that beings qualified for doing so much, should have so little opportunity for it; and sink into nothing, without ever attaining their proper maturity and perfection? But further: not to urge, that happiness here is very unequally divided between persons equally entitled to it: which yet is hard to reconcile with God's impartial bounty: it hath been already observed, in speaking of the judgment to come, that though, in general, the course of things in this world doth bear witness to God's love of virtue, and hatred of sin: yet, in multitudes of particular cases, nothing of this kind appears. Not only good persons often undergo, in common with others, the largest shares of evil in life: and bad persons enjoy, in common with others, the highest degrees of prosperity in it: but the former are frequently sufferers, and sometimes, even to death, for the very sake of their duty; and the latter gain every sort of worldly advantage by the very means of their wickedness. Yet evidently there is a difference between right behaviour and wrong; and God must see this difference; and his will must be, that mankind should observe it; and accordingly we feel ourselves inwardly bound so to do. Now is it possible, that a being of perfect justice and holiness, of infinite wisdom and power, should have ordered things so, that obeying him and our consciences should ever make us miserable, and disobeying them prove beneficial to us, on the whole? We cannot surely imagine, that he will permit any one such case to happen.

And therefore since in this world such cases do happen, this world is not our final state; but another will come after it, in which every one shall be recompensed according to his works. Without this belief, religion and virtue would often want sufficient motives: with it they never can; and therefore this belief is true.

Strongly as these arguments prove the doctrine of a life after death: yet it receives considerable addition of strength from the universal agreement of all mankind in it, with but few exceptions, from the very beginning. Of the earliest ages indeed we have only short accounts: yet enough to judge, what their notions of this point were. What could they be indeed, when they knew, that Abel, with whom God declared himself pleased, was murdered by his brother for that very reason? Surely his brother's hatred did not do him more harm than God's love of him did him good. That would be thinking lowly indeed of the Almighty. And therefore, since plainly he had not the benefit of his piety here, there must be another place, in which he received it. Again, when 'Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him:'^a could this peculiar favour be only depriving him, before his natural time, of the enjoyments of the present state? Must it not be admitting him to those of a future one? When God called himself, in a distinguished sense, 'the God of Abraham,' and the patriarchs, what had they enjoyed in this life, answerable to so extraordinary a manner of speaking? Many, in all likelihood, both equalled and exceeded them in worldly satisfactions: but therefore, as the epistle to the Hebrews teaches, 'God was not ashamed to be called their God, because he had prepared for them a heavenly city.' When Jacob confessed himself a pilgrim and stranger on earth, he plainly declared, as the same epistle observes, that 'he desired a better country'^b for his home. Again, when mourning

^a Gen. v. 24.

^b Heb. xi. 13—16.

for the supposed death of his son Joseph, he saith, he 'will go down to him:' we translate the next word wrongly, 'into the grave,' ^a as if he meant to have his body laid by him: that could not be; for he thought him devoured by wild beasts: it means, into the invisible state, the state of departed souls. And in this sense it is said of several of the patriarchs, that 'they were gathered un'o their people;' ^b and of *all that generation*, which lived with Joshua, that they 'were gathered unto their fathers.' ^c

In the time of Moses we find, that even the heathens had a strong notion of another life. For they had built a superstitious practice upon it, of seeking to the dead, ^d and enquiring of them concerning things to come. A foolish and wicked custom indeed: but however, it shows the belief was deeply rooted in them. And though future recompences were not, directly and expressly, either promised to good persons, or threatened to bad, in the law of Moses: yet that might be, not because they were unknown, but because God thought them sufficiently known; and for reasons of unsearchable wisdom, did not think proper, that Moses should make any considerable addition to that knowledge: of which there was the less occasion, as temporal rewards and punishments were more equally administered by Providence amongst the Jews, than any other people.— Besides, a life to come is not mentioned in the laws of our own nation neither: though we know, they were made by such, as professed firmly to believe it. And the reason is, partly that national laws are more immediately designed to procure men peace and prosperity on earth, than happiness in heaven: and partly also, that they propose such encouragements, as they are able to bestow; and such penalties, as they are able to inflict: which are those of this world

^a Gen. xxxvii. 35.
^c Judg. ii. 10.

^b Gen. xxv. 8. xxxv. 29. xlix. 29.
^d Deut. xviii. 9—12.

only. *Moses* indeed went beyond the sanctions, which are in man's power: and assured the Jews of God's blessing on their obedience, and curses on their disobedience. But as, in so doing, he spoke not so much to single persons considered singly, as to the whole people in a body; these blessings and curses could be only, what they were, those of the present life: because the division of mankind into nations will subsist no longer; and therefore national good or evil can be enjoyed or suffered only here. But still, since it is evident, through the whole of his law, that the Jews had the most serious belief of a just providence; and also, from the above mentioned proofs, that they believed a future state; surely they must believe in general, that this providence would be so exerted in that state, as to reward the good, and punish the wicked. More and stronger evidences of this will be given under the second particular, 'the resurrection of the body.'

At present I shall go on to observe further, that not only the Jews, but all the nations of the world, whether learned or unlearned, whether known in former times, or discovered of later times, appear to have been persuaded, that the souls of men continue after death. Now this so universal agreement must surely have arisen from an inward principle of nature, dictating to all persons, that they are designed for a future existence; and that as they are plainly creatures accountable for their actions, yet often do not account here, they must expect to do it hereafter. Or should the notion be supposed to have its origin from tradition; that tradition must have been derived from what God himself had taught the first of men; else it had never reached to all men; and it must have found some powerful confirmation in the minds and hearts of men: else in so great a length of time, amidst so many changes of human circumstances, it must have been universally worn out and forgotten.

Indeed, before our Saviour's days, length of time, and folly, and wickedness, had every where obscured

and darkened this great truth, by fabulous additions and absurd alterations; which hindered the good influence of it, on some persons, and discredited the belief of it with others. And had there been none of these obstacles thrown in their way; though reason and conscience teach the doctrine of a future state; yet by the generality of men, reason is little exercised, and conscience little consulted, in relation to unwelcome truths. And though the Old Testament gave some further intimations of it; yet these were neither very clear and explicit, nor known by the greatest part of the world. No wonder then if their conclusions, concerning a matter so entirely out of sight, were often doubtful, and often false: and thus they were misled in a subject of the greatest importance to them of all others. It is therefore one inestimable benefit of the christian revelation, that our blessed Lord had thoroughly removed the preceding uncertainties and errors; and ‘brought life and immortality to perfect light through the gospel:’^a not only confirming by divine authority whatever had been rationally taught before; but adding, by the same authority, several interesting particulars, which human faculties could not discover: and which partly have been mentioned to you, in discoursing on the general judgment: and partly will be, in what I shall further say under the heads now proposed.

All that remains to be said under the first is, that neither the full reward of good persons deceased is as yet bestowed on them, nor the full punishment of the wicked as yet inflicted; these things being to follow the general resurrection; but that still, since our Saviour describes the soul of ‘Lazarus as carried by Angels into Abraham’s bosom,’ and there comforted:^b since he promised the penitent thief, that he should ‘be that day with him in Paradise;’^c and St. Paul speaks of being ‘present with Christ,’ as the immediate consequence of death, and far better than

^a 2 Tim. i. 10.

^b Luke xvi. 22, 25.

^c Luke xxiii. 43.

this life: therefore the state of those, 'who die in the Lord,'^a is now a state, not of insensibility, but happiness: wherein they are 'blessed in resting from their labours;'^b and doubtless 'rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory,'^c in the prospect of that completer felicity, which the righteous judge of all will hereafter give them.

For as to the pretence of a purgatory, where the greatest part of good persons are to suffer grievous temporal punishments, after death, for their sins, though the eternal punishment is remitted: it hath no ground in the least. Our Saviour's saying, 'that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven in this world, or that which is to come;'^d is merely saying, it shall not be forgiven at all, but punished both here and hereafter. 'The prison, out of which,' he saith, the person, who agrees not with his brother, 'shall not come, till he hath paid the last farthing;'^e is either a literal prison of this world, or the prison of hell, in the next, out of which the contentious and uncharitable shall never come, for they can never pay the last farthing. 'The spirits in prison,' to whom St. Peter saith, 'Christ by his spirit preached,' he saith also, were 'the disobedient in the days of Noah,'^f with whom his spirit strove,^g whilst they were on this earth; and who for their disobedience were sent, not to purgatory, but to a worse confinement. When St. Paul bids men 'take heed, how they build on the foundation of christianity;' adding, that the 'fire shall try every man's work and if any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but still shall be saved, yet so as by fire:'^h he means that persons must not mix doctrines of their own invention with the gospel of Christ, which in this instance, amongst others, those of the church of Rome have done: for

^a 2 Cor. v. 8 Phil. i. 23.

^d Matt. xii. 31, 32.

^g Gen. vi. 3.

^b Rev. xiv. 13.

^e Matth. v. 26.

^h 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

^c 1 Pet. i. 8.

^f 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20

when the 'Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire,'^a to judge the world, such notions will not stand the trial: they that hold them will be losers by them; and though still they may be saved, it will be with difficulty and danger; as a person escapes, when his house is burning. When lastly, many of the ancient christians prayed for the dead; besides that they had no warrant for so doing, it was only for the completion of their happiness, whom they apprehended to be already in Paradise: it was for the apostles, saints, and martyrs; for the blessed virgin herself: whom they certainly did not think to be in purgatory. And observe, if they prayed for them, they did not pray to them. Purgatory then is nothing, but an imaginary place, invented by men, to give bad persons hope, and good persons dread of being put into it; that they may get what they can from both, by pretending to deliver them out of it again. Fear not therefore such vain terrors. 'The souls of the righteous are in the hands of the Lord: and there shall no torment touch them.'^b

Those of the wicked, on the contrary, as they are to be hereafter with the devils, we may justly believe are, like them, 'now delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment:'^c and though the worst of their sufferings shall not begin, till the day of judgment comes; yet they are represented by our Saviour, as being, instantly after death, in a place where they are tormented:^d and undoubtedly, the loss of their past pleasures and gains, remorse for their past follies and crimes, despair of pardon, 'and the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour them;'^e cannot but make their intermediate state intensely miserable; and what then will their final one be! God grant, that thinking frequently and seriously of these awful subjects, 'we may know,' and consider, 'in this

^a 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

^b Wisd. iii. 1.

^c 2 Pet. ii. 4.

^d Luke xvi. 25

^e Heb. x. 27.

our day, the things that belong to our peace,' before they are forever hid from our eyes.^a

LECTURE XVII.

CREED.

ARTICLES XI. XII. Part II. *The Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

UNDER the two last articles of the Creed, as I have already observed to you, are comprehended four points of doctrine:

I. That the souls of all men continue after death.

II. That their bodies shall at the last day be raised up, and re-united to them.

III. That both souls and bodies of good persons shall enjoy everlasting happiness.

IV. That those of the wicked shall undergo everlasting punishment.

The first of these being the foundation of all the rest; I choose to enlarge on the proof and explanation of it. Now I proceed to shew,

II. That the bodies of all men shall be raised up again, and re-united, to their souls. This, reason alone cannot prove: and accordingly the Heathen were ignorant of it: but it carries with it no contradiction to reason in the least. For God is infinite, both in power and knowledge: and it is unquestionably as possible to bring together and enliven the scattered parts of our body again, as it was to make them out of nothing, and give them life, at first. And therefore, since we must acknowledge the original formation of our bodies to have been of God, we have abundant cause to be assured, that he can, after death, form them anew whenever he pleases. And that this will be done, was probably implied in that general promise, made to our first parents, that

^a Luke xix. 42.

‘the seed of the woman,’ our blessed Lord ‘should bruise the Serpent’s head;’^a destroy his power and consequently take away the curse, under which he had brought mankind. For as part of that curse consists in the death of the body, it cannot be completely taken away, but by the resurrection of the body. In after-times, *Abraham*, we find, had so strong a belief of the possibility of this article, that he was willing, on the divine command, to sacrifice his son: reasoning, as the epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, ‘that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.’^b And indeed he could not have been induced to this, by any other reasoning. God had promised him, that by his son *Isaac* he should have a numerous posterity: and this promise he firmly believed. Now he must know, it could never be fulfilled, if *Isaac* was to be sacrificed, but by his rising again: and therefore he must be persuaded that he would rise again for that purpose. On proceeding somewhat further in the sacred history, we find *Job* expressing himself on this head, if we at all understand his words, in very strong terms; ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, this body be destroyed; yet in my flesh shall I see God.’^c Again, when *Elijah* was taken up alive into Heaven, this must surely give an expectation, that the body as well as the soul, was to partake of future happiness. And when the several persons, mentioned in the Old Testament, were raised up to life, in this world, it could not but increase the probability of a general resurrection in the next. Then in the book of *Daniel*, we have an express declaration, that a time should come, when, ‘they who slept in the dust of the earth, should awake: some to everlasting life and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.’^d And indeed, when those, whom we commonly call the three chil-

^a Gen. iii. 15.
translated.

^b Heb. xi. 19.
^d Job xix. 25, 26.

^c So, I think, the original should be.
^e Dan. xii. 2.

dren, in the former part of the book, tell the king, that even though it were not the pleasure of God to deliver them from the fiery furnace, yet would they not serve his God;^a on what other principle could they so rationally, or did they so probably say this, as on that, which the brethren in the book of Maccabees explicitly profess? There one of them, stretching forth his hands to the torment saith, ‘these I had from Heaven: and for his laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again.’ Another, ‘it is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him.’ And lastly the mother declares to her children: ‘I neither gave you birth, nor life, nor was it I that formed your members; but doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his mercy give you breath and life again; as you now regard not yourselves for his law’s sake.’^b In the later times indeed of the Jewish Church, not a few denied this doctrine: but much the greater number held it: ‘allowing, as St. Paul acquainted Felix, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.’^c

Yet still, the full confirmation of it was reserved for our Saviour to give; who, having in his life time raised up three several persons, as you may read at large in the Evangelists, raised up himself from the dead, in the last place: to afford us the strongest demonstration possible, that he both can and will raise all at the day of judgment.

This great event will doubtless, when it comes to pass, exhibit to the whole universe an astonishing evidence of the power and the truth of God, who may easily have many reasons for restoring our bodies, which we apprehend not: besides those, which in some measure we do apprehend; that the soul of man being originally, and in the state of innocence, united to a body, is probably capable of completer percep-

^a Dan. iii. 17, 18.

^b 2 Macc. vii. 10—23.

^c Acts xxiv. 15:

tion and action, and consequently of higher degrees of reward or punishment, in that State, than a separate one: or at least will be so, with such a body, as in the next life shall be allotted to it: and likewise that our belief of enjoying happiness, or suffering misery, in both parts of our frame hereafter, must naturally incline us to preserve the purity of both here: abstaining or ‘cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’^a

The truth and reasonableness of the doctrine being thus established; it ought to be no objection, that several particulars relating to it, exceed our comprehension. ‘How the dead are raised,’ it is sufficient that God knows; and by no means wonderful, that we do not: for we scarce know, how any one part of the course of nature is carried on. And as to the inquiry, that follows this in St. Paul, ‘with what body do they come?’^b we are taught they shall be so far the same bodies, that every one shall have properly his own, and be truly, the same person he was before: but so far different, that those of good persons will be subject to none of the sufferings, none of the infirmities, none of the necessities of this life. For, to use the same Apostle’s words, ‘what is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption: what is sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory: what is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.’^c But the particular nature of spiritual bodies, or the distinction that shall be made in them, between the more eminent in goodness and their inferiors, as ‘one Star differeth from another star in Glory;’^d these things we are not qualified, in our present state to understand. And it is some degree of weakness, even to ask questions about them: but would be much greater, to attempt giving answers. I shall therefore only add, that such of the good, as are found ‘alive at the

^a 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 35.

^c 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44

^d Ibid. 41.

coming of the Lord,^a shall not sleep or die, and therefore cannot rise again; 'but shall be changed'^b into the same likeness with those who do: as the scripture hath plainly taught us. But what the appearance and condition of the bodies of wicked persons will be at the resurrection, it hath not, I think, afforded us the least knowledge, further than is implied in the description of their punishment, of which I shall treat before I conclude: and let us be so wise as to dread the terrors, that are thus concealed from us.

Concerning the general judgment, which is to come immediately after the resurrection, I have spoken under the article of the Creed, which relates to it: and therefore proceed now to the consequences of that judgment, by shewing you,

III. That both the souls and bodies of the pious and virtuous, will enjoy 'everlasting life:' that is, in their case, happiness. For a happy life, being the only one, that is a blessing: Life, in scripture, very commonly signifies felicity; and death, misery.

Now that good persons will, sooner or later, be recompensed by a good God, is an undoubted truth. But then as no one is perfectly good, and may have been very bad: there is room for much doubt, who hath a right to apply this comfort to himself, and who not. But, what reason might be at a loss to determine, the scripture hath cleared up: and entitled all to pardon and reward, who truly repent of their sins; and sincerely, though not without mixtures of human frailty, obey God, from a principle of faith in Christ, and in reliance on the grace of the Holy Ghost. Still, after this, reason unassisted, can only guess, of what nature, of what degree, of what duration, this reward will be. And here once more revelation interposes, and most happily enlightens us. 'For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God

^a 1 Thess. iv. 15.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 51.

hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit.^a Not that any exact account is given us, of the particulars, that shall make up our future bliss: for in all probability we are not capable of receiving such a one: our present faculties are not fitted for it.

But however, in general, our Saviour tells us, we shall be ‘as the Angels of God in Heaven.’^b Nay his beloved disciple St. John tells us, that though ‘it doth not yet appear what we shall be, this we know, that when God shall appear, we shall be like him.’^c Now to be like God implies, in few words, every thing desirable, that ever so many words can express. Further yet, a voice from Heaven proclaims, in the Revelation, that we shall be free in that state, from ever thing that is uneasy: For ‘God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.’^d And multitudes of scriptures assure us, that we shall enjoy every thing, that is delightful: for they use the noblest and strongest images, of all that in this world is great and splendid, and capable of giving the most exalted and most refined satisfactions, to represent that happiness figuratively, which cannot be literally described.

Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body^e of our blessed Lord; which in his temporary transfiguration here on earth, ‘shone as the sun, and his raiment was white, as the light.’^f They shall be freed from all tendency to decay or disorder; and become unwearied instruments for every excellent purpose, to that better part, which they used to press down.^g They shall doubtless also have such gratifications allotted to them, as will suit, though not their present gross nature, yet their future spiritual condition: and be adorned with all the dignity and beauty, that ought naturally to accompa-

a 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

d Rev. xxi. 4.

g Wisd. ix. 15.

b Matth. xxii. 30.

e Phil. iii. 21.

c 1 John iii. 2.

f Matth. xvii. 2.

ny absolute innocence, universal love, divine favour, and heavenly joy.

Then for our minds, when once ‘the spirits of just men made perfect,’^a as they shall be in every thing worthy and amiable: what pleasure must we take in meeting again the dear objects of our former affections, now become infinitely more deserving of them; in conversing with all the great and good persons that ever were, concerning the various scenes of this present world, and the blessed exchange that we have made of it for a better: in learning from them, and that innumerable company of Angels,^b which minister to God’s will, continually new instruction, concerning all his works of nature, providence, and grace! What surprising advances must we make by these means in most pleasing knowledge! What rapturous engagements in mutual friendship! nor can it be questioned but such employments too, however beyond our reach to guess at them now, will be assigned to each person, as shall produce him high honour, and equal happiness. But above all happiness will be that of incessantly seeing and loving God, and feeling that we are beloved by him. Thus ‘shall we be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and made to drink of the river of his pleasures: for with him is the fountain of life,^c in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’^d Were we to have a prospect, that our felicity would end: the more exquisite our enjoyments were, the more melancholy our reflections might be. But in the word of God we find repeated assurances, that ‘the righteous shall go into life eternal;’^e that the inheritance, reserved in Heaven for us, is incorruptible, and fadeth not away.’^f Nay indeed, as there will always be room for finite creatures, to advance without end towards him, who is infinite; and as every improvement in

^a Heb. xii. 23.

^b Heb. xii. 22.

^c Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9.

^d Psal. xvi. 11.

^e Matth. xxv. 46. Rom. ii. 7. ^f 1 Pet. i. 4.

perfection must be of itself a fresh delight, and will certainly be rewarded by our Maker with fresh bounties, we have reason to conclude that our happiness far from ever ending, will be continually increasing to all eternity.

It is true the greatest, the ablest, the best of us merit no such blessedness: far from it. But still, what 'God only wise'^a hath not thought too much to promise, the meanest and most ignorant may humbly expect. They are as capable, as others of love and duty to him, good-will to their fellow creatures, and moral government of themselves. Now these are the things which he values: the true seeds of future bliss: and whoever cultivates them faithfully, will be sure to reap their fruit, each in proportion to his improvement. And thus every one shall be happy to the height of his capacity, neither despising those below him: nor envying those above him. But, though we ought to dwell upon this most delightful and useful subject, in our thoughts, much more than we do, we must now turn our eyes from it to a very different view, set before us.

IV. That the souls and bodies of the wicked shall undergo everlasting punishment.

This it must be owned, is not explicitly mentioned in the Creed. And God had rather, that we should be moved to obey him by love, and hope of his favour, than by fear of his anger. But both motives are implied in this article. For though life in scripture more especially means happiness; yet its original sense is only continuance in being, whether happy or miserable: and as the wicked are raised, and judged, in order to suffer what they have deserved, so they must live afterwards for the same purpose.

That disobedience to God can never end well, is the plainest truth in the world: for nothing is hid from his knowledge, nothing can escape his power; he is holy as well as good; besides that goodness it-

^a Rom. xvi. 27.

1 Tim. i. 17.

Jude, ver. 25.

self requires, the incorrigibly bad to be made examples, for the sake of deterring others. Yet lest, after all, they should promise themselves that he will spare them, he hath solemnly and repeatedly declared, that he will not. In this world, however, many such come off, to all appearance, with impunity: committing much evil, and enjoying much good. And they, who are punished, are often but slightly punished; and seldom according to the degree of their crimes; for the deliberate and artful sinners, who are the worst, usually fare best here below. As sure, therefore, as God is just and true, another state remains, in which all this will be set right.

What sufferings, in particular, the divine Justice will then inflict on unpardoned sinners, reason cannot determine; and revelation hath given us only general and figurative descriptions of them; but such descriptions, as are beyond all things terrible; and I shall lay them before you, not in my own words, but those of Holy Writ. The Judge of all shall say unto them, 'depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devils and his angels.'^a There, 'they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day nor night.'^b 'their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.'^c

How severe soever these denunciations may appear to be, assuredly the threatenings of God will not be vain terrors. We are partial and incompetent judges in our own case; prone to flatter and deceive ourselves. But he knows exactly, what sin deserves, and what the honor of his government requires; from his declaration, therefore, we are to learn our fate. 'He hath set before us life and death; and whether we like, shall be given us.'^d If, therefore, the latter be our

^a Matt. xxv. 41.

^b Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

^c Isa. lxvi. 24. Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.

^d Eccles. xv. 17.

wilful choice, in which we obstinately persist; what wonder, if we are left to it? For sin and misery must and will be companions forever. Not that, in any case, the anger of God shall prevail over his justice: but the degree of each person's condemnation shall be so exactly proportioned to that of his guilt, that when the eyes of sinners, which here they endeavor to shut, are opened, as they shall be hereafter, to see what their deeds have merited, 'every mouth shall be stopped,'^a and 'all flesh be silent before the Lord.'^b For every circumstance, that can either aggravate, or excuse, will be impartially weighed; and some be accordingly 'beaten with many stripes, and some with few.'^c But what the lowest degree of the Almighty's final vengeance may amount to, God forbid we should any of us try: for whoever sins, purposely or carelessly, in hopes of a small punishment, will for that very reason deserve a heavy one.

Let us all, therefore, make the use that we ought, both of the terrors and the mercies of the Lord: awing ourselves by the former from transgressing our duty, and encouraging ourselves by the latter, to the utmost diligence in performing it; that so we may pass through life with comfort, meet death with cheerfulness, and having faithfully served God in this world, be externally and abundantly rewarded by him in the next.

LECTURE XVIII.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

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

^a Rom. iii. 19.

^b Zech. ii: 13.

^c Luke xij. 47, 48.

Now, the things which God requires to be done, are of two sorts: either such as have been always the duty of all men; or such, as are peculiarly the duty of christians. And our Catechism very properly treats, of the former sort first, comprehending them under those ten commandments, which were delivered by the Creator of the world, on Mount Sinai, in a most awful manner, as you may read in the 19th and 20th chapters of Exodus. For though, indeed, they were then given to the Jews particularly, yet the things contained in them, are such, as all mankind from the beginning were bound to observe.^a And, therefore, even under the Mosaic dispensation, they, and the tables on which they were engraven, and the Ark in which they were put, were distinguished from the rest of God's ordinances, by a peculiar regard, as containing the covenant of the Lord.^b And though the Mosaic dispensation be now at an end, yet concerning these moral precepts of it, our Saviour declares, that 'one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'^c Accordingly, we find both him and his Apostles, quoting these ten commandments, as matter of perpetual obligation to Christians: who are now, as the Jews were formerly, the Israel of God.^d

Indeed, the whole New Testament, and especially the sermon of our blessed Lord, on the Mount, instructs us to carry their obligation farther, that is, to more points, than either the Jews, a people of gross understanding, and carnal dispositions, commonly took in consideration; or their prophets were commissioned distinctly to represent to them; the wisdom of God foreseeing, that it would only increase their guilt; and further, indeed, than the words of the commandments, if taken strictly, express. But the reason is, that being visibly intended for a summary

Decem sermones illi in fabulis nihil novum docent, sed quod obliteratum fuerat admonent. Novatian de lib. Judaicis, c. 3.

^b Exod. xxxiv. 23. Dent. iv. 13. ix. 9, 11, 15. Josh. iii. 11. 1 Kings, viii. 9, 29. 2 Chron. v. 10. vi. 11. ^c Matt. v. 18. ^d Gal. vi. 16.

of human duty, they both may, and must, be understood, by those who are capable of penetrating into the depth of their meaning, to imply more than they express. And, therefore, to comprehend their full extent, it will be requisite to observe the following rules. Where any sin is forbidden in them, the opposite duty is implicitly enjoined: and where any duty is enjoined, the opposite sin is implicitly forbidden. Where the highest degree of any thing evil is prohibited; whatever is faulty in the same kinds, though in a lower degree, is by consequence prohibited. And where one instance of virtuous behaviour is commanded, every other that hath the same nature, and same reason for it, is understood to be commanded too. What we are expected to abstain from, we are expected to avoid, as far as we can, all temptations to it, and occasions of it: and what we are expected to practice, we are expected to use all fit means, that may better enable us to practice it. All that we are bound to do ourselves, we are bound, on fitting occasions, to exhort and assist others to do, when it belongs to them: and all, that we are bound not to do, we are to tempt nobody else to do, but keep them back from it, as much as we have opportunity. The ten commandments, excepting two that required enlargement, are delivered in few words: which brief manner of speaking, hath great majesty in it. But explaining them according to these rules; which are natural and rational in themselves, favored by ancient Jewish writers, authorized by our blessed Saviour, and certainly designed by the makers of the Catechism to be used in expounding it: we shall find, that there is no part of the moral law, but may be fitly ranked under them; as will appear by what shall be said in speaking separately on each commandment.

Before them all, is placed a general preface, expressing, first, the authority of him who gave them, 'I am the Lord thy God:' secondly, his goodness to those whom he enjoined to observe them; 'who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the

house of bondage.' Now, the authority of God over us Christians, is as great as it could be over the Jews. And his goodness is much greater, in freeing us from the bondage of sin, and opening to us the heavenly land of promise, than it was in leading them, from Egyptian slavery, to the earthly Canaan: though, indeed, this deliverance, having made so fresh and so strong an impression on them, was the fittest to be mentioned at that time.

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

The first commandment is, 'thou shalt have none other Gods but me.'

The same reasons, which prove that God is, prove that there is but one God. The imagination of two, or more beings, each perfect, and each infinite, is at first sight groundless. For one such being is sufficient to produce and govern every thing else: and therefore more than one can never be proved by reason: and yet, if there were more, all men would surely have had some way of knowing it: and till we have, we are not to believe it. Indeed we have strong reasons to believe the contrary. For if there is no difference between these several supposed beings, they are but one and the same. And if there is any difference, one must be less perfect than the other, and therefore imperfect, and therefore not God. Besides, as the whole course of nature appears to proceed uniformly under one direction; there is,

^a Matt. xxii. 37, 39

without question. only one director; not several, thwarting each other.

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

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

I. That we have him for our God:

II. That we have no other.

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

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

Secondly, that we fear him. For such attributes as these, duly considered, must fill the most innocent creatures with reverence and self-abasement. But sinful and guilty ones, as we know ourselves to have been, have cause to feel yet stronger emotions in their souls, from such a meditation: apprehensions of his displeasure, and solicitude for his pardon; leading us naturally to ttha penitent care of our hearts,

^a Heb. xi. 6.

and lives, on which he hath graciously assured us, that, through faith in Christ Jesus, we shall be forgiven. And then, gratitude for his mercy, will prompt us to the

Third duty towards him, which our Catechism specifies, that we 'love him;' 'the fear of the Lord' being, as the Son of Sirach declares, 'the beginning of his love.' " For whenever we come to reflect seriously on that goodness, which hath given us all the comforts that we enjoy; that pity which offers pardon, on most equitable terms, for all the faults that we have committed; that grace, which enables us to perform every duty acceptably; and that infinite bounty, which rewards our imperfect performances with eternal happiness; we cannot but feel ourselves bound to love such a Benefactor, 'with all our heart, and with all our mind, with all our soul, and all our strength;' to rejoice in being under his government; 'make our boast of him all the day long;'^b and choose him for 'our portion forever.'^c A mind thus affected, would be uneasy, without paying the regard set down in the

Fourth place, which is, to 'worship him;' to acknowledge our dependence, and pay our homage to him; both in private, to preserve and improve a sense of religion in ourselves; and in public, to support and spread it in the world. The first part of worship, mentioned in the Catechism, and the first in a natural order of things, is 'giving him thanks.' God originally made and fitted all his creatures for happiness: if any of them have made themselves miserable, this doth not lessen their obligation of thankfulness to him; but his continuing still good, and abounding in forgiveness and liberality, increases that obligation unspeakably. With a grateful sense of his past favors, is closely connected, 'putting our trust in him,' for the time to come. And justly doth the Catechism require it to be 'our whole trust.' For his power and goodness are infinite: those of every creature may fail us:

^a Eccles. xxv. 12.

^b Psal. xliv. 8.

^c Psal. lxxiii. 26.

and all that they can possibly do for us, proceeds ultimately from him. Now a principal expression of reliance on God, is petitioning for his help. For if we 'pray in faith,'^a we shall live so too. And, therefore, trusting in him, which might have been made a separate head, is included in this of worship; and put between the first part of it, 'giving thanks to him;' and the second, 'calling upon him:' according to that of the Psalmist: 'O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.'^b To call upon God is to place ourselves in his presence; and there to beg of him, for ourselves and each other, with unfeigned humility and submission, such assistance in our duty, such provision for our wants, and such defence against our enemies, of every kind, as infinite wisdom sees fit for us all. After this evident obligation, follows a

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

Sixth and last, as it is undoubtedly the greatest, thing; 'to serve him truly all the days of our life.'—Obedience is the end of faith and fear; the proof of love; the foundation of trust; the necessary qualification, to make worship and honor of every kind, acceptable. This, therefore, must complete the whole, that we 'walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless,'^c not thinking any one so difficult, as to despair of it; or so small, as to despise it: and never be 'weary in well doing: for we shall

^a James i. 6. v. 15:

^b Psal. xxxi. 1.

^c Luke i. 6.

reap in due season, if we faint not:’^a and he alone shall be saved, that endureth to the end.’^b But we must now proceed to observe,

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

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

Christians can hardly in words profess a plurality of gods: but in reality they do, if they suppose the divine nature common to more than one Being; or think our Saviour, or the Holy Spirit, mere creatures, and yet pay them divine honors. But besides these, we apprehend the Church of Rome to sin against the present commandments, when they pray to angels, to the holy virgin, and the saints, as being able every where to hear them; and having not only temporal relief, but grace and salvation in their power to bestow. Nay, were the plea, which they sometimes

make, a true one, that they only pray to them to intercede with God; yet it would be an insufficient one. For there is no reason to believe, that they have any knowledge of such prayers; or if they had, 'as there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and man.'^a And we have neither precept, nor allowance, nor example, in the whole Bible, of applying to any other, amongst all the absent inhabitants of the invisible world.

But there are several ways more, of transgressing this commandment. If we ascribe things, which befall us, to fate, or to chance, or to nature; and mean any thing real by these words, different from that order which our Maker's providence hath appointed; we set up in effect other gods, besides him. If we imagine the influence of stars, the power of spirits, in short any power whatever, to be independent of him, and capable of doing the least matter, more than he judges proper to permit that it should; this, also, is having more gods than one. If we set up ourselves, or others, above him, and obey, or expect any one else to obey, man rather than God; here, again, is in practice, though not in speculation, the same crime. If we love, or 'trust in uncertain riches,' more than 'the living God;'^b this is that 'covetousness, which is idolatry.'^c If we pursue unlawful sensual pleasures, instead of delighting in his precepts, this is making a 'god of our own belly.'^d In a word, if we allow ourselves to practice any wickedness whatever, we serve, by so doing, the false 'god of this world,'^e instead of the true God of Heaven, besides whom we ought not to have any other; and, therefore, to whom alone be, as is most due, all honor and obedience, now and forever. Amen.

^a 1 Tim. ii. 5.
^d Phil. iii. 19.

^b 1 Tim. vi. 17.
^e 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^c Col. iii. v

LECTURE XIX.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

We are now come to the second Commandment, which the Church of Rome would persuade men is only part of the first. But they plainly relate to different things. The first appoints, that the object of our worship be the only true God; the next, that we worship not him, under any visible resemblance or form. And besides, if we join these two into one, there will be no tenth left; though the Scripture itself hath called them ten:^a to avoid which absurdity, the Romanists have committed another, by dividing the tenth into two. And they might as well have divided it into six or seven; as I shall shew you, in discoursing upon it. For these reasons, the oldest and most considerable, both of the Jewish and Christian writers, who distinguish the Commandments by their number, distinguish them in the same manner, that we do. Perhaps it may seem of small consequence, how that before us is counted, provided, it be not omitted. And we must own, that some persons before the rise of popery, and some protestants since the reformation, have, without any ill design, reckoned it as the papists do. But what both the former have done, by mere mistake, these last endeavor to defend out of policy; well knowing, that when once they have got the second to be considered as only a part of the first, they can much more easily pass it over, as a part of no great separate meaning or importance, than if it were thought a distinct precept. And

^a Exod. xxxiv. 28. Deut. iv. 13. x. 4.

accordingly, in some of their small books of devotion, they pass it over, and leave it out entirely.^a But it deserves, as I shall now shew you, another sort of regard.

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

Therefore, in the early ages of the world, many of the Heathens themselves had no images of the Deity. Particularly, the ancient Persians had none.^c Nor had the first Romans; Numa, their second king, having, as the philosopher Plutarch, himself a Roman magistrate, though a Greek by birth, tells us, ‘forbidden them to represent God in the form, either of a man or any other animal.’ And accordingly, he saith, ‘they had neither any painted nor engraved

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

^b Isa: xl. 18.

^c Herodot. 1. 1 sec. 131.

figure of him for 170 years; but temples, void of any image of any shape: thinking it impious to liken a superior nature, to inferior ones: and impossible to attain the notion of God otherwise, than by the understanding.^a And Varro, one of the most learned of their own authors, after acknowledging, 'that during more than 170 years, they worshiped the gods without any visible representation,' added, that 'had they never had any, their religion had been the purer: for which opinion, amongst other evidences, he brought that of the Jewish people; and scrupled not to say in conclusion, that they who first set up images of the gods in the several nations, lessened the reverence of their countrymen towards them, and introduced error concerning them.' So much wiser were these Heathen Romans in this point, than the Christian Romans are now.

But when some of the eastern kingdoms had fallen into this corruption; particularly the Egyptians, who claimed the invention as an honor,^b the great care of God was to preserve or free his own people from it. The words of this commandment express that purpose very strongly, and very clearly forbid, not only making and worshiping representations of false gods, but any representation of God at all. And to shew yet more fully, that even those of the true God are prohibited by it, Moses, in Deuteronomy, immediately after mentioning the delivery of the ten Commandments, adds with respect to the second: 'take, therefore, good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude, on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you the similitude of any figure.'^c And when the Israelites made a golden calf in the wilderness, though evidently their design

^a Plut. in Num. p. 65. Ed. Par. 1624.

^b Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 4. c. 31. *Dionysius Halicarnassensis* indeed saith, l. 2. c. 15. p. 87, that *Romulus* erected images. But as he mentions them no otherwise than incidentally, amongst the provisions made by that prince for divine worship, his assertion is not so much to be regarded, as the two contrary more formal ones. Or we may suppose, that *Numa* took them down.

^c Herod. l. 2. §. 4.

^d Deut. iv. 12—15. 16.

to represent by it, not a false object of worship, but the Lord, (in the original it is Jehovah) who brought them out of the land of Egypt; yet they were charged with it, and punished for it, as a breach of their covenant with God: and Moses accordingly broke, on that occasion, the two tables of the Commandments, which were, on their part, the conditions of that covenant. ^a Again, in after times, when the kings of Israel set up the same representation of the same true God, at Dan and Bethel, the Scripture constantly speaks of it, as the leading sin, from which all the rest of their idolatries, and at last their utter destruction, proceeded. For, from worshipping the true God by an image, they soon came to worship the images of false gods, too; and from thence fell into all sorts of superstition and all sorts of wickedness.

Yet the Church of Rome will have it, that we may now very lawfully and commendably practice what the Jews were forbidden. But observe; not only the Jews, but the Heathens, also, who never were subject to the law of Moses, are condemned in Scripture for this mode of worship. For St. Paul's accusation against them, is, that 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imaginations; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man.'^b And in another place he argues with the Athenians, thus: 'forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men, every where, to repent.'^c

Where then is, or can be, the allowance of that image worship in the Bible, for which multitudes of the Romish communion are as earnest, as if it was commanded there? Nor is antiquity more favorable to it, than Scripture. For the primitive Christians abhorred the very mention of images: holding even the

^a Exod. xxxii.

^b Rom. i. 21. 23.

^c Acts xvii. 29. 30.

trade of making them to be utterly unlawful. And indeed pretending to frame a likeness of God the Father Almighty, 'whom no man hath ever seen, or can see,'^a as some of that Church have done, without any censure from the rulers of it, liberal as they are of censures on other occasions, is both a palpable and a heinous breach of this Commandment. For, though we find in the Old Testament, that an angel hath sometimes appeared, representing his person, as an ambassador doth that of his prince; and though in a vision of 'the ancient of days, his garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool;'^b yet these things gave the Jews no right then, and therefore can give us none now, to make other, or even the like representations of him, contrary to his express order.

Our blessed Saviour indeed existed in a human form, but we have not the least knowledge of any one part or feature of his person. And, therefore, all attempts of exhibiting a likeness of him are utterly vain. Besides, he hath appointed a very different memorial of himself, the sacrament of his body and blood: and we ought to think that a sufficient one. These others can serve no good purpose, but what, by due meditation, may be attained as well without them. And there is great and evident danger of evil in them, from that unhappy proneness of mankind, to fix their thoughts and affections on sensible objects, instead of raising them higher: which if any one doth not feel in himself, he must however see in others. But particularly in this case, long experience hath given sad proof, that from setting up images of our gracious Redeemer, the holy virgin, and other saints, to remind persons of them, and their virtues, the world hath run on to pay such imprudent and extravagant honors to the figures themselves, as by degrees have arisen to the grossest idolatry.

^a 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^b Dan. vii. 9.

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

But let us suppose them to pay only an inferior honor to images, and to worship the holy trinity and the saints by them. Having no ground, or permission to pray at all to saints departed, they certainly have none to use images for enlivening their prayers. If any words can forbid the worship of God, his Son and Spirit, by images, this commandment forbids it. And if any excuses or distinctions will acquit the papists of transgressing it, the same will acquit the ancient Jews and Heathens also. For if many of the former mean only, that their adoration should pass through the image, as it were, to the person for whom it was made: so did many of the pagans plead, that the meaning was just the same:^b yet the Scripture accuses them all of idolatry. And if great numbers of the pagans did absolutely pray to the image itself; so do great numbers of the papists too: and some of their own writers honestly confess and lament it.

But farther: had they little or no regard, as they sometimes pretend, to the image; but only to the person represented by it: why is an image of the blessed virgin suppose, in one place, so much more frequented,

^a See Dr. Hicke's collection of controversial discourses, vol. 1. p. 47.

^b See a remarkable proof of this, produced in an epistle to Mr. Warburton, concerning the conformity of Rome, pagan and papal: printed for Roberts, 1743. 8vo. p. 21

than another in a different place, and the prayers made before it thought to have so much more efficacy?

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

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

The second reason for this prohibition is more particular: that God will 'visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.' For, observe, worshipping him irrationally, or in a manner which he hath forbidden, he interprets to be hating him: as it must proceed, wholly or in part, from a dishonourable opinion of him, and tend to spread the like opinion amongst others. Now we are not to understand by this threatening, that God will ever, on account of the sins of parents, punish children, in the strict sense of the word, *punish*, when they deserve it not.^b

^a Rom. 1. 21—32.

^b Against this wrong imagination, Cotta in cic. de Nat. Lect. 1. 3, 6. §. 38, inveighs vehemently.

But in the course of things, established by his Providence, it comes to pass, that the sins of one person, or one generation, lead those who come after, into the same, or other, perhaps greater sins; and so bring upon them double sufferings, partly the fruits of their predecessors' faults, partly of their own. And when successive ages follow one another in crimes, besides the natural bad effects of them, which punish them in some measure, God may justly threaten severer additional corrections, than he would else inflict for their personal transgressions:^a both because it may deter men from propagating wickedness down to their posterity; and because, if it doth not, inveterate evils demand a rougher cure. Accordingly here the Israelites are forewarned, that if they fell into idolatry, they and their children would fall by means of it, into all sorts of abominations: and not only these would of course produce many mischiefs to both, but God would chastise the following generations with heavier strokes, for not taking warning, as they ought to have done, by the misbehaviour and sufferings of the former. Denouncing this intencion beforehand must influence them, if any thing could: because it must give them a concern both for themselves, and their descendants too; for whom, next to themselves, if not equally, men are always interested. And therefore visiting sins upon them to the third and fourth generation seems to be mentioned; because either the life, or however the solicitude, of a person, may be supposed to extend thus far, and seldom further.

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

^a See Sherlock on Providence, p. 382—390.

But if God hath threatened to punish the breach of this precept 'to the third and fourth generation,' he hath promised to 'shew mercy unto thousands,' that is so long as the world shall endure, to 'them that love him and keep his commandments.' To the Jews he fulfilled this engagement, as far as they gave him opportunity, by temporal blessings. And amongst Christians there is ordinarily a fair prospect, that a nation or a family, pious and virtuous through successive ages, will be recompensed with increasing happiness in every age: which is a powerful motive, both for worshiping God in purity ourselves, and educating those, who are placed under our care, to do so too. Yet it must be acknowledged, that neither the rewards foretold, nor the punishments denounced, in this commandment, are so constantly distributed on earth under the Gospel dispensation, as they were under that of the law. But still our maker as certainly requires, as ever he did, since he 'is a spirit to be worshiped in spirit and in truth:'^a and the inducement to it is abundantly sufficient, that the idolaters, amongst other sinners, 'shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.'^b Not that we are to be forward in applying so dreadful a sentence to the case of those, whether christians or others, who in this or any respect, offend through such ignorance or mistake, as, for ought we can tell, is excusable. May our heavenly 'father forgive them: for they know not what they do.'^c But we should be very thankful to him for the light, which he hath caused to shine upon us; and very careful to walk in it as becomes the 'children of light, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.'^d

^a John iv. 24.

^b Rev. xxi. 8.

^c Luke xxiii. 34

^d Ephes. v. 8, 11.

LECTURE XX.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

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

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

Now of this dreadful crime we are guilty, if ever we swear, that we do not know or believe what indeed we do: or that we do know or believe what indeed we do not; if ever, being upon our oaths, we mislead those, whom we ought to inform; and give any other, than the exactest and fairest account that we can,

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

You see then what is perjury. And you must see, it is not only the directest and grossest affront to God; for which reason it is forbidden in the first table of the ten commandments; but the most pernicious injury to our fellow creatures: on which account you will find it again forbidden in the second table. If persons will assert falsely upon oath: no one knows what to believe; no one's property or life is safe. And if persons will promise falsely upon oath: no one can know whom to trust; all security of government and human society; all mutual confidence in trade and commerce, in every relation and condition, is utterly at an end. With the greatest reason there-

fore are perjured wretches abhorred of all the world. And no interest of our own, no kindness or compassion for other persons, no turn or purpose of whatsoever sort to be served by it, can ever justify our swerving at all from truth, either in giving evidence, or entering into engagements. Nor must we think in such cases to come off with equivocations, evasions, and quibbles: and imagine it innocent to deceive this way. On the contrary, the more artful and cunning our falsehoods are, the more deliberate and mischievous, and therefore the wickeder, they are. ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked:’^a and the following are the declarations of his sacred word to the upright man: ‘Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, and rest upon thy holy hill? He that speaketh the truth from his heart, and hath used no deceit with his tongue: he that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance.’^b But to the perjured, seeing he despiseth the oath, by breaking the covenant, thus saith the Lord God: ‘As I live, surely my oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will recompense it upon his head.’^c

[Let us all stand in awe of so dreadful a threatening, and avoid so horrible a guilt. Particularly at present, let all, who have sworn allegiance to the King, faithfully ‘keep it, and that in regard to the oath of God.’^d And let those who have not sworn, remember however, that merely claiming the protection of a government, implies some promise of being dutiful to it in return: and that a successful rebellion would not only tempt multitudes of our fellow subjects to perjury, but lay our country, its laws and religion, at the absolute mercy of a faith-breaking Church.^e]

One thing more should be added here; for it cannot well be mentioned too often, that next to false

^a Gal. vi. 7.

^d Eccl. viii. 2.
 rebellion, 1745.

^b Psal. xv. 1, 2, 3, 5.

^c Ezek. xvii. 18, 19.

^e This paragraph was added in the time of the re-

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

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

One way of doing so, is by rash and inconsiderate vows: for a vow, being a promise made solemnly to God, partakes of the nature of an oath. And there may possibly be sometimes good reasons for entering into this kind of engagement. But vowing to do what there is no use of doing, is trifling with our Creator: making unlawful vows, is directly telling him, we will disobey him: making such without necessity, as are difficult to keep, is leading ourselves into temptation: and indeed making any, without much thought and prudent advice first, usually proves an unhappy snare. One vow we have all made, and were bound to make, that of our baptism, which includes every real good resolution. That therefore let us carefully keep and frequently ratify: and we shall scarce have occasion to make any more.

^a P^sal. xxxi. 5.

^b Prov. xii. 19.

Another very needless, and always sinful, use of God's name, is by oaths, in common discourse. Too many are there, who fill up with them a great part of their most trifling conversation; especially if ever so little warmth rises in talk, then they abound in them. Now it is unavoidable, but persons, who are perpetually swearing, must frequently perjure themselves. But were that otherwise: it is great irreverence, upon every slight thing we say, to invoke God for a witness; and mix 'his holy and reverend name' with the idlest things, that come out of our mouths. And what makes this practice the more inexcusable is, that we cannot have either any advantage from it, or any natural pleasure in it. Sometimes it arises from a hastiness and impatience of temper; which is but increased by giving this vent to it: whereas it is every one's wisdom, not to let it break out in any way, much less in such a way. But generally it is nothing more than a silly and profane custom, inconsiderately taken up: and there are the strongest reasons for laying it down immediately. It will make us disliked and abhorred by good persons, and scarce recommend us to the very worst. No person is the sooner believed for his frequent swearing: on the contrary, a modest serious affirmation is always much more regarded. And if any one's character is so low that his word cannot be taken; he must think of other methods to retrieve it. For he will not at all mend matters, by adding his oath ever so often over. Then if swearing be affected, as becoming; it is certainly quite otherwise, in the highest degree. The very phrases used in it, as well as the occasions on which they are used, are almost constantly absurd and foolish: and surely profaneness can never lessen the folly. Besides they make the conversation of men, shocking and hellish. They are acknowledged to be disrespectful to the company in which they are used: and if regard to their earthly superiors can

restrain persons from swearing; why should not the reverence, owing to our heavenly father, do it much more effectually? But indeed the indulgence of this sin wears off by degrees all sense of religion, and of every thing that is good.

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

If indeed we be required to swear before a magistrate, or public officer, for the discovery of truth, and the doing of justice, this is notwithstanding lawful. For our Saviour forbids it only in ‘our communication;’ our ordinary discourse: and he himself, our great pattern, answered upon oath, to ‘the high priest, who adjured him by the living God.’^b Or though we be not called upon by law, yet if some other weighty and extraordinary occasion should oblige us to call our maker to witness; as St. Paul hath done, in more places than one of his epistles; then also we may allowably do it, provided it be

^a Matth. v. 34, 35, 36, 37.

^b Matth. xxvi. 63

always with sincerity and reverence. For by oaths, thus taken, men are benefited; and the name of God not profaned, but honoured. But in our daily talk, and communication with each other, it is our Saviour's peremptory precept, 'swear not all;' a rule so evidently right and important, that even Heathens have strictly enjoined and followed it, to the shame of too many, who call themselves Christians.

Together with common swearing should be mentioned another sin, very near akin to it, and almost always joined with it, that monstrous custom of cursing; in direct contradiction to all humanity, and to the express words of Scripture, 'bless, and curse not. " To wish the heaviest judgments of God, and even eternal damnation, to a person, for the slightest cause, or none at all; to wish the same to ourselves, if some trifling thing, that we are saying be not true, which frequently after all is not true; amounts to the most desperate impiety, if people at all consider what they say. And though they do not, it is even then thoughtlessly treating God, and his laws, and the awful sanctions of them, with contempt: and blotting out of their minds all serious regard to subjects, that will one day be found most serious things. 'His delight was in cursing,' says the Psalmist, 'and it shall happen unto him: he loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from him.'^b

3. Besides the offences already mentioned, all indecent and unfit use of God's name in our discourse, though it be not in swearing or cursing, comes within the prohibition of this commandment. All irreverent sayings, and even thoughts, concerning his nature, and attributes, his actions and his commands, fall under the same guilt; unless we are tormented with such thoughts, whether we will or not: for then they are only an affliction, not a sin. All sorts of talk, ridiculing, misrepresenting, or inveighing against religion, or whatever is connected with it, in-

^a Rom. xii. 14.

^b Psal. cix. 17.

cur the like condemnation. Nay, even want of attention in God's worship, 'drawing near to him with our mouths, whilst we remove our hearts far from him,'^a if it be wilfully or carelessly indulged, makes us chargable, in its degree, with the sin of taking his name in vain.

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

Let us therefore be watchful to preserve continually such an awe of the Supreme Being upon our own minds, and those of all who belong to us, as may on every occasion effectually influence us to give the glory due unto his name, both in our more solemn addresses to him, and in our daily words and actions. For 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the Saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.'^b

LECTURE XXI.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

If the worship of God were left at large to be performed at any time, too many would be tempted to defer and postpone it, on one pretence or another, till at length it would be performed at no time. And therefore, though he were to be adored only by each person, separately, and in private, it would be very

^a Isa. xxix. 13.

^b Psal. lxxxix. 7.

expedient to fix on some stated returning seasons for that purpose. But reason shews it to be requisite, and the experience of all ages proves it to be natural, that as we are social creatures, we should be social in religion, as well as other things, and honour in common our common Maker: that we should unite in giving thanks to him for the blessings of life: a very great part of which we should be incapable of, without uniting: that we should join in praying forgiveness of the sins, which we too often join in committing: petition him together for the mercies, which we have need of receiving together; and, by assembling to learn and acknowledge our several duties, keep alive in one another, as well as ourselves, that constant regard to piety and virtue, on which our happiness depends, here and hereafter.

Since therefore, on these accounts, there must be public worship and instruction: it is not only expedient, but necessary, that there should be also fixed times appointed for it by sufficient authority. And how much and what time should be devoted to this purpose, every society must have determined for themselves, and would have found it hard enough to agree in determining, if God had given no intimation of his will in the case. But happily we are informed, in the history of the creation, that the maker of the world, having finished his work in six days, (which he could as easily have finished in one moment, had it not been for some valuable reason, probably of instruction to us) ‘blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it:’^a that is, appointed every return of it to be religiously kept, as a solemn memorial, that ‘of him, and therefore to him are all things.’^b It is much the most natural to apprehend, that this appointment took place from the time, when it is mentioned; from the time when the reason of it took place. And it is no wonder at all, that, in so short a history, notice should not be taken of the actual

^a Gen. ii. 3.

^b Rom. xi. 36.

observation of it before Moses: for notice is not taken of it in 500 years after Moses. Yet we know of a certainty, that in his time, at least, it was ordered to be observed, both in this fourth commandment, and in other parts of the law, which direct more particularly the manner of keeping it.

The thing, most expressly enjoined the Jews, in each of these passages, is, resting from all manner of work; and not suffering their families, their cattle, nor even the strangers that lived amongst them, to labour on that day. And the reason of this rest, given in the commandment, as you have it in the book of Exodus, is, that ‘the Lord rested on the seventh day’ from his work of creation. Not that this, or any thing, could be a fatigue to him. For ‘the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary.’^a But the expression means, that having then finished the formation of the world, he ceased from it; and required men also to cease from their labours every seventh day; in memory of that fundamental article of all religion, that the heavens and earth were made, and therefore are governed, by one infinitely wise, powerful, and good being. And thus was the Sabbath, which word means the day of rest, a sign, as the Scripture calls it, ‘between God and the children of Israel;’^b a mark to distinguish them from all worshipers of false deities.

But besides this principal reason for the repose of every seventh day, two others are mentioned in the law: that it might remind them of that deliverance from heavy bondage, which God hath granted them; ‘remember, that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence: therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day:’^c and likewise that their servants and cattle might not be worn out with incessant toil; ‘that thine ox and thine ass may rest; and the son of

^a Isa. xl. 29.
^c Deut. v. 15.

^b Exod. xxxi. 13, 17. Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

thine handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.^a Such mercy indeed is little more than common prudence: but there are in the world, multitudes of hard hearted wretches, who would pay small regard to that consideration, were they left to their own liberty.

Now merely abstaining from common work on this day, in obedience to God's command, for such religious and moral ends as these, was undoubtedly sanctifying, or keeping it holy. But then we are not to suppose that the leisure, thus provided for men, was to be thrown away just as they pleased, instead of being usefully employed. God directed the Jews: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy might; and the words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'^b Now, as he required them to attend so constantly to these duties; he could not but expect, they should attend more especially to them on that day, when the great foundation of all duty, his creating the world, was appointed to be commemorated; and when they had nothing to take off their thoughts from what they owed to God their maker. There was a peculiar sacrifice appointed for that day; there is a peculiar Psalm composed for it, the ninety-second: and these things are surely further intimations to us, that it must have been a time, peculiarly intended for the offering up of prayers and thanksgivings to Heaven.

Few indeed, or none, of God's laws were well observed in the days of the Old Testament. But still, as the priests and Levites were dispersed through the Jewish nation that they might teach the people religion; so we read, that in good times they did teach it accordingly: and when could this be, but on

^a Exod. xxiii. 12.

^b Deut. vi. 5, 6, 7.

the Sabbath day? We see it was the custom of religious persons, on that day, to resort to the prophets, that were in Israel; doubtless to hear the word of God from their mouths.^a We see public happiness promised on this condition, that men should 'honour the Sabbath of the Lord, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words.'^b We see absolute ruin threatened for the profanation of it.^c We see a time foretold, when 'from one Sabbath to another all flesh should come to worship before the Lord.'^d And in consequence of this, when their captivity had taught the Jews a stricter regard to their duty, Synagogues, and houses of prayer, were erected 'in every City:' where the maker of all things was publicly adored, and his law 'read and preached, every Sabbath day.'^e

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

And that no one may doubt the lawfulness of this change of the day; it plainly appears, from several

^a 2 Kings iv. 23.

^d Isa. lxvi. 23.

^b Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

^e Acts xv. 21.

^c Jer. xvii. 27.

^f Rev. i. 10.

passages of St. Paul, that we are bound to observe the day of the Jewish Sabbath: and it still more plainly appears, in the Scripture history of the Apostles, that they did observe, and direct the observation of our present Christian Sabbath; as the whole Church hath constantly done since, from their times to this, though it doth not appear, that they called it the Sabbath day, for many hundreds of years. One day in seven being still kept, the memory of the creation is as well preserved, and the intent of this commandment as fully answered, as before: and that one day in seven being chosen, on which our Saviour rose again, the memory of the redemption wrought by him, and called in Scripture ‘a new creation,’^a is, in the properest manner, as well as with the greatest reason, perpetuated along with the former.

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

1. It must be a day of rest, in order to commemorate God’s *resting*, as the Scripture expresses it, ‘from all his work, which he created and made;’^b and to allow that ease and refreshment, which, with so great humanity, the commandment requires should be given, not only to servants, but to the very cattle. Besides, it cannot be a day of religion to mankind, without such vacation from the ordinary labours of life, as may give sufficient leisure to distinguish it by exercises of piety. But then, as Christians are not under a dispensation so rigorous in outward observances, as that of Moses; they are not bound to so strict and scrupulous a rest, as the Jews were. Though, indeed, the Jews themselves became, at last, much more scrupulous in this matter, than they needed; and are accordingly reproved by our blessed Saviour: from whom we learn this general rule, that ‘the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath:’^c and therefore all works of great necessity, or great

^a 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.

^b Gen. ii. 3.

^c Mark ii. 27.

goodness and mercy, if they cannot be deferred to another time, be they ever so laborious, may very allowably be done then. Only so far as the public wisdom of the laws of the land hath restrained us, we ought certainly to restrain ourselves, even from such things, as, in our private opinion, we might otherwise think innocent. As to matters of less labour, what propriety and decency, and reasonable convenience require, we surely need not omit. And what the practice of the more religious and considerate part of those, amongst whom we live, allows, hath without question no small title to our favourable opinion. But the liberties, taken by thoughtless or profane persons, are not of any authority in the least. And the safest general rule to go by, is to omit whatever may be sinful, and is needless: and neither to require, nor suffer, those who belong to us, to do, on this day, what we apprehend is unlawful to do ourselves.

2. A reasonable part of our day of holy rest, must be employed in the public worship of God. This, you have seen, the Jews understood to be requisite on their Sabbath: and the earliest accounts, which we have of ours, inform us, that ‘on the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread:’^a which means to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. That with this was joined ‘the Apostle’s doctrine and prayer,’ we learn from another place of the same book of Scripture.^b And that every Lord’s day was dedicated to the public offices of piety, the history of the Church fully shews from the beginning. To strengthen the obligation of attending on these offices, the laws of the land also enjoin it. And as all persons need instruction in their duty both to God and man, and the generality have scarce any other season for it, than the leisure of the Sunday; if this most valuable time, be either taken from them, or thrown away by them, they must become ignorant

^a Acts xx. 7.

^b Acts ii. 42.

and vicious; and of consequence miserable in this world and the next. How wicked then, and how unwise, is it, either to throw contempt on such an institution, or on frivolous pretences to neglect improving by it!

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

When once persons have brought themselves to spend so much of the Sunday as is fitting in this manner; it will then, and not before, be time for them to ask, how the remainder of it may be spent. For it is a very bad sign to be careless of observing what is commanded; and zealous of extending to the utmost, what at best is only permitted. Over-great strictness however must be avoided. And therefore decent civility and friendly conversation, may both innocently and usefully have a place in the vacant part of our Lord's day: of which it is really one valuable benefit, that it gives even the lowest persons an opportunity of appearing to each other in the most

^a 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

agreeable light they can, and thus promotes mutual good will. Nor is it necessary at all to banish cheerfulness from our conversation on this day; which being a festival, though a religious one, we should partake of all God's blessings upon it with joyful hearts. But then such instances of freedom and levity, in talk and behaviour, as would scarce be proper at any time, are doubly improper at this: and tend very fatally to undo whatever good the preceding part of the day may have done.

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

And if this be the case of merely unseasonable diversions; imprudent and unlawful ones are still more blamable on this day: but most of all, that

crying sin of debauchery and intemperance, which perverts it from the service of God, to the service of the Devil; and leads persons more directly than almost any thing else, to utter destruction of body and soul. Therefore let us be careful, first to guard ourselves against these transgressions, then to keep our children, servants, and dependents from the like, if we make any conscience of doing well by them, or would have any prospect of comfort in them. Nor let us think it sufficient, to restrain them from spending the day ill: but to the best of our power and understanding, encourage and assist them to spend it well. And God grant, we may all employ in so right a manner, the few Sabbaths and few days, which we have to come on earth; that we may enter, at the conclusion of them, into that eternal Sabbath, ‘that rest, which remaineth for the people of God,’^a in Heaven.

LECTURE XXII.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

PART I.

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

Now the whole law, concerning these matters, ‘is briefly comprehended,’ as St. Paul very justly observes, ‘in this one saying, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’^b Our neighbour, is every one, with whom we have at any time any concern, or on whose welfare our actions can have any influence. For whoever is thus within our reach, is in the most impor-

^a Heb. iv. 3, 9.

^b Ro. x. xiii. 9.

tant sense near to us, however distant in other respects. To 'love our neighbor,' is to bear him good will, which of course will dispose us to think favorably of him, and behave properly to him. And to 'love him as ourselves, is to have not only a real, but a strong and active good will towards him; with a tenderness for his interests, duly proportioned to that which we naturally feel for our own. Such a temper would most powerfully restrain us from every thing wrong, and prompt us to every thing right: and, therefore, is the 'fulfilling of the law,'^a so far as it relates to our mutual behaviour.

But because, on some occasions, we may either not see, or not confess we see, what is right, and what otherwise; our Saviour hath put the same duty in a light somewhat different, which gives the safest, and fullest, and clearest direction for practice, that any one precept can give. 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.'^b Behaving properly depends on judging truly; and that, in cases of any doubt, depends on hearing with due attention both sides. To our own side we never fail attending. The rule therefore is, give the other side the same attention, by supposing it your own; and after considering carefully and fairly, what, if it were indeed your own, you should not only desire, (for desires may be unreasonable,) but think you had an equitable claim to, and well-grounded expectation of, from the other party, that do in regard to him. Would we but honestly take this method, our mistakes would be so exceeding few, and slight and innocent, that well might our blessed Lord add, 'for this is the law and the prophets.'

Yet, after all, there might be difficulty sometimes, especially to some persons, in the application of a rule so very general. And therefore we have, in the Commandments, the reciprocal duties of man to man branched out into six particulars: the first of which,

^a Rom. xiii. 10.

^b Matth. vii. 12.

contained in the fifth Commandment, relates to the mutual obligations of superiors and inferiors: the rest to those points in which all men are considered as equals.

It is true, the precept now to be explained, mentions only one kind of superiors. 'Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.' But the case of other superiors is so like that of fathers, that most of them have occasionally the very name of father given them in most languages; and therefore the regard due to them, also, may be very properly comprehended, and laid before you, under the same head. It is likewise true, that the duty of the inferior alone is expressed in the Commandment; but the corresponding duty of the superior is, at the same time, of necessity implied: for which reason I shall discourse of both; beginning with the mutual obligations of children and parents, properly so called, which will be a sufficient employment for the present time.

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

1. Love to those, of whose flesh and blood we are, is what nature dictates to us, in the very first place. Children have not only received from their parents, as instruments in the hand of God, the original of their being; but the preservation of it through all the years of helpless infancy, which the needful care of them gave much trouble, took up much time, required much expense; all which, parents usually go through with so cheerful a diligence, and so self-denying a tenderness, that no return of affection, on the children's part, can possibly repay it to the full; though children's affection is what, above all things, makes parents happy. Then, as life goes on, it is their parents that give or procure for them such instruction of all kinds, as qualifies them, both to do well in this world, and be forever blessed in another; that watch over them con

tinually with never-ceasing attention, consulting their inclinations in a multitude of obliging instances, and bearing with their perverseness in a multitude of provoking ones; kindly restraining them from a thousand pernicious follies, into which they would otherwise fall; and directing their heedless footsteps into the right way, encouraging, rewarding, and, which indeed is no less a benefit, correcting them also, as the case requires; full of solicitude all the while for their happiness, and consuming themselves with labor and thoughtfulness for their dear objects, to improve, support, and advance them in their lives, and provide for them at their deaths. Even those parents, who perform these duties but imperfectly, who perhaps do some very wrong things, do notwithstanding, almost all of them so many right and meritorious ones; that though the more such they do, the better they should be loved; yet they that do least, do enough to be loved sincerely for it, as long as they live.^a

2. And with love must ever be joined, secondly, due respect, inward and outward. For parents are not only the benefactors, but in rank, the betters, and in right the governors of their children; whose dependence is upon them, in point of interest, generally; in point of duty, always. They ought therefore to think of them with great reverence, and treat them with every mark of submission, in gesture, in speech, in the whole of their behaviour; which the practice of wise and good persons hath established, as proper instances of filial regard. And though the parents be mean in station, or low in understanding; still the relation continues, and the duty that belongs to it. Nay, suppose they be faulty in some part of their conduct or character, yet children should be very backward to see this; and it can very seldom be allowable for them to shew that they see it: from the world they should always conceal it, as far as they can: for it is shocking beyond measure in *them* to

^a See Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates, l. 2. c.

publish it. And if ever any thing of this nature must be mentioned to the parents themselves, which nothing but great necessity can warrant or excuse; it should be with all possible gentleness and modesty, and the most real concern at being obliged to so unnatural an office.

3. Love and respect to parents will always produce obedience to them: a third duty of the highest importance. Children, for a considerable time, are utterly unqualified to govern themselves; and so long as this continues to be the case, must be absolutely and implicitly governed by those, who alone can claim a title to it. As they grow up to the use of understanding, indeed, reason should be gradually mixed with authority, in every thing that is required of them. But at the same time, children should observe, what they may easily find to be true in daily instances, that they are apt to think they know how to direct themselves, much sooner than they really do; and should therefore submit to be directed by their friends in more points, and for a longer time, than perhaps they would naturally be tempted to wish.— Suppose, in that part of your lives which is already past, you had your own way in every thing, what would have been the consequences? You yourselves must see, very bad ones. Why, other persons see, what you will see also in time, that it would be full as bad, were you to have your way now. And what all who are likely to know, agree in, you should believe, and submit to. Your parents and governors have at least more knowledge and experience, if they have no more capacity, than you. And the trouble which they take, and the concern which they feel about you, plainly shew that your good is the thing which they have at heart. The only reason why they do not indulge you in the particulars that you wish, is, that they see it would hurt you. And it is a dreadful venture for you, to think, as yet, of trusting yourselves. Trust therefore to those, whom you have all manner of reason to trust; and obey them willingly, who by

the laws of God and man, have a right to rule you: and generally speaking, a power to make you obey at last, be you ever so unwilling.

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

In proportion as young persons approach to that age, when the law allows them to be capable of governing themselves, they become by degrees less and less subject to the government of their parents; especially in smaller matters: for, in the more important concerns of life, and above all, in the very important one of marriage, not only daughters, concerning whom the very phrase of 'giving them in marriage,' shews.

^a See Taylor's Elements of Civil Law, p. 367, 393, 399.

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

4. The last thing, which in Scripture the phrase of honoring parents comprehends, is affording them decent relief and support, if they are reduced to want it. For thus our Saviour explains the word, in his reproof of the pharisees, for ‘making this Commandment of no effect by their tradition. God commanded, honor thy father and thy mother: but ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me:’ that is, what should have relieved you, I have devoted to religious uses; whosoever should say this, ‘and honouresth not his father or his mother, he shall be free.’^a In St. Mark it is, ‘ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother.’^b And in other places of Scripture, besides this, honoring a person signifies contributing to his maintenance: as 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. ‘Let the elders that rule, be counted worthy of double honor; especially they who labor in the word and doctrine; for the Scripture saith, the laborer is worthy of his reward.’

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

^a Matth. xv. 4, 5 6.

^b Mark vii. 12.

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

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

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

^a 1 Tim. v. 4. ^b Pietas parentibus, etsi inæqualis est eorum potestas, æqua, debetur. D. 27. 10. 4.

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

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

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

LECTURE XXIII.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

PART II.

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

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

But more particularly, the duty of subjects, is, to obey the laws of whatever government Providence hath placed us under, in every thing which is not contrary to the laws of God; and to contribute willingly

to its support, every thing that is legally required, or may be reasonably expected of us: to be faithful and true to the interest of that society, of which we are members; and to the persons of those, who govern it; paying both to the Supreme Power, and all subordinate magistrates every part of that submission and respect, both in speech and behaviour, which is their due: and making all those allowances in their favor, which the difficulty of their office, and the frailty of our common nature demand: to love and wish well to all our fellow-subjects, without exception; think of them charitably, and treat them kindly; to be peaceable and quiet, each minding diligently the duties of his own station; not factious and turbulent, intruding into the concerns of others: to be modest and humble, 'not exercising ourselves in matters too high for us;'^a but leaving such things to the care of our superiors, and the providence of God: to be thankful for the blessings and advantages of government, in proportion as we enjoy them: and reasonable and patient under the burdens and inconveniences of it, which at any time we may suffer.

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

^a Psal. cxxxi. 1.

^b Exod. xviii. 21.

^c Communion office.

* *Note.*—This prayer is omitted in the Amer. Edit. of the Prayer Book. Amer. Edit.

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

The duty of us who have undertaken the important work of spiritual guides and teachers, is, to deliver the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, in the plainest and strongest terms that we can; insisting on such things, chiefly, as will be most conducive to the real and inward benefit of our hearers: and recommending them in the most prudent and persuasive manner: * seeking to please all men for their good, to edification; ^a but fearing no man in the discharge of our consciences, and neither saying or omitting any thing for the sake of applause from the many, or the few; or of promoting either our own wealth, and power, or that of our order; to instruct, exhort and comfort, all that are placed under our care, with sincerity, discretion, and tenderness, privately as well as publicly, so far as they give us opportunity, or we discern hope of doing service; † watching for their souls, as they that must give account; ^b to rule in the church of God with vigilance, humility, and meekness, † shewing ourselves in all things, patterns of good works. ^c

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

A third relation, is, that between masters or mistresses of schools and their scholars. The duty of the

^a Rom. xv. 2. 1 Cor. x. 33.

^b Heb. xiii. 17.

^c Tit. ii. 7.

former is, diligently to instruct the children committed to them, in all the things which they are put to learn, suiting their manner of teaching, as well as they can, to the temper and capacity of each: and to take effectual care that they apply themselves to what is taught them, and to do their best: to watch over their behaviour, especially in the great points of religion and truth, modesty and good humor; shew countenance to such as are well-behaved and promising; correct the faulty, with needful, yet not with excessive severity; and get the incorrigible removed out of the way, before they corrupt others. And the duty of the scholars is, to reverence and obey their master or mistress, as if they were their parents; to live friendly and lovingly with one another, as brethren or sisters; to be heartily thankful to all, that give or procure them so valuable a blessing as useful knowledge; and industrious to improve in it; considering how greatly their happiness here and hereafter, depends upon it.

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

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

Now from servants is due, in the first place, obedience. Indeed, if they are commanded what is plainly

unlawful, they 'ought to obey God rather than man; ^a but still must excuse themselves decently, though resolutely. And even lawful things, which they have not bargained to do, they are not obliged to do; nor any thing indeed, which is clearly and greatly unsuitable to their place and station, and improper to be required of them. But whatever they engaged, or knew they were expected to do; or what, though they did not know of it beforehand, is usual and reasonable, or even not very unreasonable, they must submit to. For if they may, on every small pretence refuse to do this, and question, whether that belong to their place, it is most evident, that all authority and order in families must be at an end; and they themselves will have much more trouble in disputing about their business, than they would have in performing it.

Servants therefore should obey: and they should do it respectfully and readily: not murmuring, behaving gloomily and sullenly, as if their work was not due for their wages; but, as the Apostle exhorts, 'with good will doing service; ^b not answering again, ^c and contradicting, as if those, whom they serve, were their equals; but paying all fit honour to their master or mistress, and to every one in the family.

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

^a Acts v. 29.

^b Eph. vi. 7.

^c Tit. ii. 9.

^d Eph. vi. 6.

Col. iii. 22.

With diligence must always be joined care, that no business be neglected, or delayed beyond its proper season: Nothing mismanaged for want of thinking about it: Nothing heedlessly, much less designedly, wasted and squandered; but all reasonable frugality and good contrivance shewn; and all fair advantages taken, yet no other, for the benefit of those who employ them. Every servant would think this but common justice in his own case; and therefore should do it as common justice in his master's case. Some perhaps may imagine that their master's estate or income is well able to afford them to be careless or extravagant. But the truth is, few or no incomes can afford this. For if it be practiced in one thing, why not in another? And what must follow, if it be practiced in all? That certainly which we daily see that persons of the greatest estates are distressed and ruined by it. Or though it would not distress them at all, yet a master's wealth is no more a justification of servants wasting what belongs to him, than of their stealing it: And if one be dishonest, the other must.

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

Another sort of dishonesty is speaking falsehoods: against which I have already, in the course of these

Lectures, given some cautions, and shall give more: therefore at present I shall only say, that whether servants are guilty of it amongst themselves, or to their masters or mistresses, whether against or in favour of one another, or even in their own favour, there are few things, by which they may both do and suffer more harm than a lying tongue.

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

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

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

These are the duties of servants; and as the faithful performance of them is the surest way of serving themselves, and being happy in this world: so, if it

proceed from a true principle of conscience, God will accept it, as a service done to himself, and make them eternally happy for it in the next: whereas wilfully transgressing, or negligently slighting the things which they ought to do, whatever pleasure or whatever advantage it may promise or produce to them for a while, will seldom fail of bringing them at last to shame and ruin even here, and will certainly bring them, unless they repent and amend, to misery hereafter.

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

To behave towards them with meekness and gentleness, not imperiously and with contempt: and to restrain them, as far as may be, from giving bad usage one to another; never to accuse, threaten, or suspect them, without or beyond reason; to hear patiently their defences and complaints; and bear with due moderation, their mistakes and faults; neither to make them, when in health, work or fare harder than is fitting; nor suffer them, when in sickness, to want any thing requisite for their comfort and relief: if they be hired servants, to pay their wages fully and punctually at the time agreed: if they are put to learn any business or profession, to instruct them in it carefully and thoroughly: not only to give them time for the exercises of religion; but assistance to understand, and encouragement to practice, every part of their duty: To keep them, as much as possible, both from sin and temptation, and particularly from corrupting each other: To shew displeasure when they do amiss, as far, and no farther than the case requires; and to countenance and reward them, when they serve well, in proportion to the merit and length of such service. For all these things are natural dictates of reason and humanity; and clearly implied in that comprehensive rule of Scripture:

‘masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing, that ye also have a master in Heaven.’^a

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

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

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

^a Col. iv. 1.

^b Phil. iv. 11.

^c Rom. xiv. 10.

^d Col. iii. 25.

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

LECTURE XXIV.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

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

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

1. It is not murder, unless it be with design. He who is duly careful to avoid doing harm, and unhappily notwithstanding that, kills another, though he hath cause to be extremely sorry for it, yet is entirely void of guilt on account of it. For his will having

no share in the action, it is not, in a moral sense, his. But if he doth the mischief through heedlessness, or levity of mind, or inconsiderate vehemence, here is a fault. If the likelihood of mischief could be foreseen, the fault is greater; and the highest degree of such negligence, or impetuous rashness, comes near to bad intention.

2. It is not murder, unless it be without authority. Now a person hath authority, from the law both of God and man, to defend his own life, if he cannot do it otherwise, by the death of whoever attacks it unjustly: whose destruction in that case, is of his own seeking, and 'his blood on his own head.'^a But nothing short of the most imminent danger, ought ever to carry us to such an extremity: and a good person will spare ever so bad a one, as far as he can with any prospect of safety. Again, proper magistrates have authority to sentence offenders to death on sufficient proof of such crimes as the welfare of the community requires to be thus punished: and to employ others in the execution of that sentence. And private persons have authority, and in proper circumstances are obliged, to seize and prosecute such offenders: for all this is only another sort of self-defence: defending the public from what else would be pernicious to it. And the Scripture hath said, that the sovereign power 'beareth not the sword in vain.'^b But in whatever cases gentler punishments would sufficiently answer the ends of government, surely capital ones are forbidden by this commandment.—Self-defence, in the last place, authorizes whole nations to make war upon other nations, when it is the only way to obtain redress of injuries, which cannot be supported; or security against impending ruin. To determine whether the state is indeed in these unhappy circumstances, belongs to the supreme jurisdiction: and the question ought to be considered very conscientiously. For wars, begun or continued with-

^a 2 Sam. i. 16. 1 Kings ii. 37. Ezek. xxxiii. 4.

^b Rom. xiii. 4.

out necessity, are unchristian and inhuman: as many murders are committed, as lives are lost in them; besides the innumerable sins and miseries of other sorts, with which they are always attended. But subjects, in their private capacity, are incompetent judges of what is requisite for the public weal: nor can the guardians of it permit them to act upon their judgment, were they to make one. Therefore they may lawfully serve in wars, which their superiors have unlawfully undertaken, excepting perhaps such offensive wars, as are notoriously unjust. In others, it is no more the business of the soldiery to consider the grounds of their sovereign's taking up arms, than it is the business of the executioner to examine whether the magistrate hath passed a right sentence.

You see then, in what cases killing is not murder; in all, but these, it is. And you cannot fail of seeing the guilt of this crime to be singularly great and heinous. It brings designedly upon one of our brethren, without cause, what human nature abhors and dreads most. It cuts him off from all the enjoyments of this life at once, and sends him into another for which possibly he was not yet prepared. It defaces the image, and defeats the design of God. It overturns the great purpose of government and laws, mutual safety. It robs the society of a member, and consequently of part of its strength. It robs the relations, friends and dependents, of the person destroyed, of every benefit and pleasure, which else they might have had from him. And the injury done, in all these respects, hath the terrible aggravation, that it cannot be recalled. Most wisely therefore hath our Creator surrounded murder with a peculiar horror; that nature, as well as reason, may deter from it every one, who is not utterly abandoned to the worst of wickedness; and most justly hath he appointed the sons of Noah, that is, all mankind, to punish death with death. 'Who-so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.'^a And

^a Gen. ix. 6.

that nothing may protect so daring an offender, he enjoined the Jews, in the chapter which follows the ten Commandments, 'if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die.'^a But supposing, what seldom happens, that the murderer may escape judicial vengeance; yet what piercing reflections, what continual terrors and alarms, must he carry about with him! And could he be hardened against these, it would only subject him the more inevitably to that future condemnation, from which nothing but the deepest repentance can possibly exempt him. For 'no murderer hath eternal life:'^b but they 'shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'^c

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

^a Exod. xxi. 14.

^b 1 John iii. 15.

^c Rev. xxi. 8.

Nor doth it materially alter the nature, or lessen at all the degree of the sin, if, whilst we attack another, we give him an opportunity to defend himself, and attack us: as in dueling. Still taking away his life is murder: exposing our own is so likewise: as I shall quickly shew you. And an appointment of two persons to meet for this purpose, under pretence of being bound to it by their honor, is an agreement in form to commit, for the sake of an absurd notion, or rather an unmeaning word, the most capital offence against each other, and their Maker; of which, if their intention succeed, they cannot have time to repent.

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

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

Farther yet: if it be criminal to contribute in any manner towards taking away a person's life immediately; it must be criminal also to contribute any thing towards shortening it, which is taking it away after a

time: whether by bringing any bodily disease upon him, or causing him any grief or anxiety of mind, or by what indeed will produce both, distressing him in his circumstances: concerning which the son of Sirach saith: ‘He that taketh away his neighbour’s living, slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, is a blood-shedder.’^a

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

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

Nor even yet have I carried the explanation of this commandment to the extent of our duty. Whoever doth not, as far as can be reasonably expected

^a Ecclus. xxxiv. 22.

^b 1 John iii. 15.

^c Matth. v. 21, 22.

from him, endeavour to guard his neighbour from harm, to make peace, to relieve distress and want, fails of what love to human kind certainly requires. Now 'love is the fulfilling of the law:'^a and he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.'^b

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

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

^a Rom. xiii. 10.

^d Job. xiv. 14.

^b 1 John iii. 14.

^c Rev. ii. 21.

^e Rom. xiv. 15.

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

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

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

LECTURE XXV.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

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

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

Not only the Scripture account of the creation of mankind is a proof to as many as believe in Scripture, that the union of one man with one woman was the original design and will of Heaven; but the remarkable equality of males and females born into the world is an evidence of it to all men. Yet notwithstanding it must be owned, the cohabitation of one man with several wives at the same time, was practiced very anciently in the darker ages, even by some of the patriarchs, who were otherwise good persons; but, having no explicit revealed rule con-

cerning this matter, failed of discerning the above mentioned purpose of God, and both this error and that of divorce on slight occasions, were tolerated by the law of Moses. But that was only as the laws of other countries often connive at what the lawgiver is far from approving. Accordingly God expressed, particularly by the prophet Malachi,^a his dislike of these things. And our Saviour both tells the Jews, that Moses permitted divorces at pleasure, merely ‘because of the hardness of their hearts,’ and peremptorily declares, that ‘whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.’^b Now certainly it cannot be less adulterous to marry a second without putting away the first.

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

^a Mal. ii. 14, 15, 16.

^b Matt. xix. 8, 9.

how can they be at liberty in this, where public good, and private happiness are so deeply interested?

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

These are fruits which unfaithfulness in either party may produce. In one it may produce yet more. A woman guilty of this crime, who to use the words

^a Cant. viii. 6.

of Scripture, 'forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God,'^a brings peculiar disgrace on her husband, her children, and friends: and may bring an illegitimate offspring to inherit what is the right of others; nor is the infamy and punishment, to which she exposes herself, a less dreadful evil for being a deserved one. And if falsehood on the men's part hath not all the same aggravations, it hath very great ones in their stead. They are almost constantly, the tempters: they often carry on their wicked designs for a long time together: they too commonly use the vilest means to accomplish them. And as they claim the strictest fidelity, it is ungenerous, as well as unjust, to fail of paying it. All men must feel how bitter it would be to them to be injured in this respect; let them think then what it is to be injurious in it: and since the crime is the same when committed by them, as when committed against them, let them own that it deserves the same condemnation from the judge of the world. 'The Lord hath been witness' saith the Prophet, 'between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou dealest treacherously; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. Therefore take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.'^b

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

^a Prov. ii. 17.

^b Mal. ii. 14, 15.

all; and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.^a

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

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

Supposing that only such as live single were to be guilty with each other: yet by means even of this licentiousness, in proportion as it prevails, the regularity and good order of society is overturned, the credit and peace of families destroyed, the proper disposal of young people in marriage prevented, the due education of children and provision for them neglected, the keenest animosities perpetually excited, and the most shocking murders frequently committed, of the parties themselves, their rivals, their

^a Heb. xiii. 4.

innocent babes: in short every enormity follows from hence, that lawless passion can introduce.. For all sins indeed, but especially this, lead persons on to more and greater; to all manner of falsehood to secure their success, all manner of dishonesty to provide for the expensiveness of these courses, all manner of barbarity to hide the shame or lighten the inconveniences of them: till thus they become abandoned to every crime, by indulging this one.

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

cularly exposed to the reproaches and the jealousy of their husbands ever after.

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

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

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

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

^a Wisd. ii. 1.

^b Prov. v. 8—13, 21, 22.

bolden and incite them to new and more flagitious attempts: and by appetites thus indulged, and habits contracted, they are carried on perpetually further and further, till they come to be guilty, and sometimes merely for the sake and the name of being guilty, of what they would once have trembled to hear proposed.

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

But further yet: if it be argued, that offences of this nature may by circumstances be rendered excusable, why not others also? why may not robbery, why may not murder be defended, by saying, that though undoubtedly in general they are very wrong, yet in such and such particular occurrences, there is on the whole very little hurt, or none at all, done by them, but perhaps good? And what would become of the human race, were such pleas admitted? The ends of government can be attained by no other than by plain, determinate, comprehensive laws, to be steadily observed: and no one's inclinations, or fanciful theories, are to decide, when they bind, and when not: but deviations from them are criminal, if on no other account, yet because they are deviations: though differently criminal indeed according to their different degrees. Thus in the matter before us, what approaches nearer to marriage is, ordinarily speaking, so far less blameable, than what is mere

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

But the sins already mentioned, are by no means the only ones to be avoided in consequence of this commandment: whatever invites to them, whatever approaches towards them, whatever is contrary to decency and honour, whatever taints the purity of the mind, inflames the passions, and wears off the impressions of virtuous shame; all immodesty of appearance or behaviour; all entertainment, books, pictures, conversations, tending to excite, or excuse the indulgence of irregular desires, are in their proportion prohibited and criminal. And unless we prudently guard against the smaller offences of this kind, the more heinous will be too likely to force their way: as our Lord very strongly warns us. "Ye have heard, it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that

whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' ^a And although vicious inclinations were never to go further than the heart: yet, if instead of merely intruding against our will, they are designedly encouraged to dwell there, they corrupt the very fountain of spiritual life, and none but 'the pure in heart shall see God.'^b

All persons therefore should be very careful to turn their minds from forbidden objects, to fix their attention so constantly and steadily on useful and commendable employments as to have no leisure for vices, and to govern themselves by such rules of temperance and prudence, that every sensual appetite may be kept in subjection to the dictates of reason and the laws of religion; always remembering that christianity both delivers to us the strictest precepts of holiness, and sets before us the strongest motives to it; our peculiar relation to a holy God and Saviour; our being 'the temples of the Holy Ghost,' which 'temple if any man defile, him will God destroy;' ^d our being 'Pilgrims and strangers on earth,' ^e not intended to have our portion here, but to inherit a spiritual happiness hereafter; and 'every one that hath this hope, must purify himself, even as God is pure.'^f I shall conclude therefore with St. Paul's exhortation: 'Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them: walk as children of light, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.'^g

^a Matth. v. 27, 28.

^b Matth. v. 8.

^c 1 Cor. vi. 19.

^d 1 Cor. iii. 17.

^e 1 Pet. ii. 11.

^f 1 John iii. 3.

^g Eph. v. 3—11.

LECTURE XXVI.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Under the eighth Commandment is comprehended our duty to our neighbor, in respect of his worldly substance. And, to explain it distinctly, I shall endeavor to shew,

I. What it forbids: and

II. What, by consequence, it requires.

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

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

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

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

But, besides, what every body calls theft, there are many practices, which amount indirectly to much the same thing, however disguised in the world under gentler names. Thus in the way of trade and business: if the seller puts off any thing for better than it is, by false assertions, or deceitful arts: if he takes advantage of the buyer's ignorance, or particular necessities, or good opinion of him, to insist on a larger price for it than the current value; or if he gives less in quantity than he professes, or is understood to give, the frequency of some of these things cannot alter the nature of any of them: no one can be ignorant, that they are wrong, but such as are wilfully or very carelessly ignorant: and the declaration of Scripture against the last of them is extended, in the same place, to every one of the rest. 'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small: thou shalt not have in thy house divers measures, a great and a small. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.'^a

On the other hand: if the buyer takes advantage of his own wealth; and the poverty or present distress of the seller, to beat down the price of his merchandize beyond reason: or if he buys up the whole of a commodity, especially if it be a necessary one, to make immediate gain of it; or if he refuses or delays his payments beyond the time within which, by agree-

^a Deut. xxv. 13—16.

ment or the known course of traffic, they ought to be made: all such behaviour is downright injustice and breach of God's Law. For the rule is, 'if thou sellest aught unto thy neighbor, or buyest aught of thy neighbor's hand, ye shall not oppress one another.'^a

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

Another crying iniquity is, when hired servants, laborers, or workmen of any sort, are ill used in their wages: whether by giving them too little: or, which is often full as bad, deferring it too long. The word of God forbids the last in very strong terms. 'Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee,' meaning if demanded, or wanted, 'all night until the

^a Lev. xxv. 14^b Lev. xxv. 35, &c.^c Psal. xxxvii. 21.

morning.'^a 'At his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it; for^b he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.'^c Nay, the son of Sirach carries it, with reason, (as I observed to you on the sixth commandment,) further still. 'The bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire, is a blood-shedder.'^d

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

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

^a Lev. xix. 13.

^b For—or, when.

^c Deut. xxiv. 15.

^d Ecclus. xxxiv. 21, 22

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

It surely needs to be added, that whatever things it is unlawful to do, it is also unlawful to advise, encourage, help, or protect others in doing; that buying, receiving, or concealing stolen goods, knowing them to be such, is becoming a partner in the stealth: and that being any way a patron, assistant, or tool of injustice, is no less evidently wrong, than being the immediate and principal agent in it.

And as the wrongness of all these things is very plain, so is the folly of them. Common robbers and thieves are the most miserable set of wretches upon earth: in perpetual danger, perpetual frights and alarms; obliged to support their spirits by continual excesses, which, after the gay madness of a few hours,

^a Prov. xxviii. 3.

^b 1 Thess. iv. 6.

depress them to the most painful lowness; confined to the most hateful and hellish society; very soon, generally speaking, betrayed by their dearest companions, or hunted out by vigilant officers; then shut up in horror, condemned to open shame, if not to an untimely death; and the more surely undone forever in the next life, the more insensible they are of their sufferings and their sins in this.

Nor do they, of whose guilt the law can take little or no cognizance, escape a heavy and bitter self-condemnation, from time to time: nor usually the bad opinion of the world: which last alone will frequently do them more harm, than any unfair practices will do them good. But especially this holds in the middle and lower, which is vastly the larger, part of mankind. Their livelihood depends chiefly on their character; and their character depends upon their honesty. This will make amends for many other defects; but nothing will make amends for the want of this. Deceitful craft may seem perhaps a shorter method of gain, than uprightness and diligence. But they, who get wickedly, spend for the most part, foolishly, perhaps wickedly too: and so all that stays by them is their guilt. Or let them be ever so cunning, and appear for a while to thrive ever so fast; yet remember the sayings of the wise king: ‘an inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning: but the end thereof shall not be blessed.’^a ‘Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.’^b ‘Wealth, gotten by vanity, shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labor, shall increase.’^c Or, should the prosperity of persons who raise themselves by ill means, last as long as their lives; yet their lives may be cut short. For what the prophet threatens, often comes to pass, and is always to be feared: ‘He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.’^d But should his days on earth be extended to the utmost, yet ‘the sinner,

^a Prov. xx. 21. ^b Prov. x. 2. ^c Prov. xii. 11 ^d Jer. xvii. 11.

an hundred years old, shall be accursed.'^a 'For the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God:'^b but 'the Lord is the avenger of all such.'^c

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

But let us now proceed to consider,

II. What the Commandment before us, by consequence, requires. And

I. It requires restitution of whatever we have, at any time, unjustly taken or detained. For, that being in right not our own, but another's, keeping it is continuing and carrying on the injustice. Therefore, the prophet Ezekiel makes it an express condition of forgiveness: 'if the wicked restore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed; then he shall surely live, he shall not die.'^d Nor was it till Zaccheus had engaged to restore amply what he had extorted from any one, that our Saviour declared, 'This day is salvation come to this house.'^e So that to think of raising wealth by fraud, and then growing honest, is the silliest scheme in the world: for till we have returned, or offered to return, as far as we can, all that we have got by our fraud, we are not honest. Nay, suppose we have spent and squandered it, still we remain debtors for it. Nay suppose we got nothing, suppose we meant to get nothing, by any wicked contrivances, in which we have been concerned; yet if we have caused another's loss, any loss for which money is a proper compensation; what we ought never to have done, we ought to undo as soon and as completely as we are able, however we straighten ourselves by it; otherwise we come short of making the amends which

^a Isa. lxx. 29. ^b 1 Cor. vi. 9. ^c 1 Thess. iv. 6. ^d Ezek. xxxiii. 15.

^e Luke xix. 9.

may justly be expected from us: and while so important a part of repentance is wanting, to demonstrate the sincerity of the rest, we cannot hope to be accepted with God.

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

In order to be just, therefore, be industrious: and doubt not but you will find it, after a while at least, by much the most comfortable, as well as christian way of getting a livelihood. It is a way, that no one ought to think beneath him. For 'better is he that laboreth, and aboundeth in all things; than he that boasteth himself, and wanteth bread.'^c It is the best preservative, that can be, from bad company, and bad courses. It procures the good will and good word of mankind. It exempts persons from the contempt and reproach of which those have bitter experience who make a dependant state their choice. 'Begging is sweet in the mouth of the shameless: but in his belly there shall burn a fire.'^d Very different from this, is the case of the industrious. Their minds

^a Eph. iv. 28. ^b 2 Thess. iii. 10. ^c Eccus. x. 27. ^d Eccus. xl. 30.

are at ease: their bodies are usually healthy: their time is employed as they know it should: what they get they enjoy with a good conscience, and it wears well. Nor do only the fruits of their labor delight them: but even labor itself becomes pleasant to them.

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

3. To observe it well, frugality must be joined with industry: else it will all be labor in vain. For unwise expensiveness will dissipate whatever the utmost diligence can acquire. But if idleness be added to extravagance, that brings on quick ruin. And if intemperance and debauchery go along with them, the case is then come to its extremity. Every one therefore, who desires to approve himself honest, should be careful to live within the bounds of his income, so as to have something in readiness against the time of inability and unforeseen events. But they who have, or design to have families, should endeavor to live a good deal within those bounds. And whoever spends upon himself, or throws away upon any other person or thing, more than he can prudently afford, (whatever false names of praise, as elegance, generosity, goodness, may be given to this indiscretion) will be led, before he is aware, to distress himself, perhaps many

more; and be too probably driven at last to repair, as well as he can, by wickedness, the breaches, which he hath made by folly.

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

And now, having finished the two heads proposed, I shall only add, that by observing these directions from a principle of christian faith; and teaching all under our care to observe them from the same; the poor in this world may be 'rich towards God:'^b and the rich may 'treasure up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,' which will enable them to 'lay hold on eternal life.'^c

LECTURE XXVII.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

The ninth Commandment is connected with every one of the four which precede it. For neither the

^a Prov. iii. 27

^b Luke xli. 21:

^c 1 Tim. vi. 19.

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

The crime, at which these words principally and most expressly point, is giving false evidence in any cause or trial. And as, in such cases, evidence hath always been given upon oath; this Commandment, so far, is the same with the third: only there, perjury is forbidden, as impiety against God: here, as injurious to men. Now we are guilty of this sin, if, in bearing witness, we affirm that we know or believe any thing which we do not; or deny that we know or believe any thing, which we do; or either affirm or deny more positively, than we have good grounds. Nay, if we only stifle, by our silence, any fact, which is material, though we are not examined particularly about it; still when we have sworn in general to speak the whole truth, we bear false witness, if we designedly avoid it; especially after being asked, if we are able to say any thing besides, relative to the point in question. For hiding the truth may as totally mislead those who are to judge, as telling an untruth. Indeed, if by any means whatever we disguise the real state of the case, instead of relating it in the fairest and plainest manner that we can; we evidently transgress the intent of this Commandment. And by doing it, the good name, the property, the liveli-

hood, the life of an innocent person may be taken away; the advantages of society defeated, nay, perverted into mischiefs, and the very bonds of it dissolved. Therefore the rule of the Mosaic law is: 'if a false witness rise up against any man, and testify against his brother that which is wrong; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother, and thine eye shall not pity.'^a With us, indeed, the punishment extends not so far. But however mild such persons may find the penalties of human laws to be, or how artfully soever they may evade them; God hath declared: 'a false witness shall not be unpunished: and he that speaketh lies, shall not escape.'^b

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

It being thus criminal to bear false witness; it must be criminal also to draw persons into the commission of so great a sin, by gifts, or promise, or threatenings, or any other method. And in its degree, it must be criminal to bring a false accusation, or false action, against any one: or to make any sort of demand, for which there is no reasonable ground.

Nay, further, however favourably persons are apt to think of the defendant's side; yet to defend ourselves against justice, or even to deny it by unfair methods, is very wicked. For it ought to take place; and the sooner the better. Still, both the professors of the law, and others may unquestionably say and do, for a doubtful or a bad cause, whatever can be

^a Deut. xix. 16--21.

^b Prov. xxv. 5.

said with truth, or done with equity: for otherwise it might be thought still worse than it is; and treated worse than it deserves. But if they do, in any cause, what in reason ought not to be done; if they use or suggest indirect methods of defeating the intent of the law: if by false colours and glosses, by terrifying or confounding witnesses, by calumniating or ridiculing the adverse party, they endeavour to make justice itself an instrument for patronizing injustice; this is 'turning judgment into gall,' as the Scripture expresses it, 'and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.'^a

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

But persons may break this commandment, not only in judicial proceedings; but, often full as grievously, in common discourse: by raising, spreading, or countenancing false reports against others; or such, as they have no sufficient cause to think true; which is the case, in part at least, of most reports: by misrepresenting their circumstances in the world to their prejudice; or speaking, without foundation, to the disadvantage of their persons, understandings, accomplishments, temper, or conduct: whether charging them with faults and imperfections, which do not belong to them; or taking from them good qualities and recommendations, which do; or aggravating the former, or diminishing the latter: determining their

^a Amos vi. 12.

characters from a single bad action or two; fixing ill names on things, which are really virtuous or innocent in them; imputing their laudable behaviour to blameable or worthless motives; making no allowance for the depravity or weakness of human nature, strength of temptation, want of instruction, wicked insinuations, vicious examples. And in all these ways, persons may be injured, either by open public assertions; or more dangerously perhaps, by secret whispers, which they have no opportunity of contradicting. The scandal may be accompanied with strong expressions of hoping it is not true, or being very sorry for it; and warm declarations of great good will to the party, whom it concerns: all which may serve only to give it a more unsuspected credit. Nay, it may be conveyed very effectually in dark hints, expressive gestures, or even affected silence. And these, as they may be equally mischievous, are not less wicked, for being more cowardly and more artful methods of defamation.

Further yet: speaking or intimating things to any person's disadvantage, though they be true, is seldom innocent. For it usually proceeds from bad principles: revenge, envy, malice, pride, consoriosisness; unfair zeal for some private or party interest: or at best, from a desire of appearing to know more than others, or mere impertinent fondness of talking. Now these are wretched motives for publishing what will be hurtful to one of our brethren. Sometimes, indeed, bad characters and bad actions ought to be known: but much oftener not, or not to all the world, or not by our means. And we have need to be very careful from what inducements we act in such a case. Sometimes again things are known already; or soon will be known, let us be ever so silent about them: and then, to be sure, we are at more liberty. But even then, to take a pleasure in relating the faults of others is by no means right. And to reveal them, when they can be hid, unless a very considerable reason require it, is extremely wrong.

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

We all think it an injury, in the tenderest part, when bad impressions are made on others concerning us; and therefore should conscientiously avoid doing the same injury to others: making them designedly, without a cause, is inexcusable wickedness. And even where we intend no harm, we may do a great deal. Whatever hurts in any respect, the reputation of persons, always gives them great pain, and often doth them great prejudice, even in their most important concerns. For indeed almost every thing in this world depends on character: And when once that hath suffered an imputation; for the most part, neither the persons calumniated, be they ever so innocent, can recover it completely by their own endeavours, nor the persons who have wronged them, be they ever so desirous, restore it fully to its former state: though certainly they, who rob others of their good name, or even without design asperse it, are full as much bound to make restitution for that, as for any other damage which they cause. But were they not to hurt at all the person against whom they speak, still they hurt themselves, and lessen the power of doing good in the world; they often hurt their innocent families by the provocations which they give: they grieve their friends; they set a mischievous example in society; and, if they profess any religion, bring a dreadful reproach upon it, by a temper and behaviour so justly hateful to mankind.

It will be easily understood, that, next to the raisers and spreaders of ill reports, they who encourage

persons of that kind, by hearkening to them with pleasure, and by readiness of belief in what they say, contradict the intention of this commandment. Indeed we ought, far from countenancing scandal and detraction, to express, in all proper ways, our dislike of it: shew the uncertainty, the improbability, the falsehood, if we can, of injurious rumours; oppose the divulging even of truths that are uncharitable; and set a pattern of giving every one his just praise.

It must now be observed further, that though undoubtedly those falsehoods are the worst, which hurt others the most directly, yet falsehoods in general are hurtful and wrong. And therefore lying; all use either of words or actions of known settled import, with purpose to deceive; is unlawful. And those offences of this kind, which may seem the most harmless, have yet commonly great evil in them. Lying destroys the very end of speech, and leads us into perpetual mistakes, by the very means which God intended should lead us into truth. It puts an end to all the pleasure, all the benefit, all the safety of conversation. Nobody can know, on what or whom to depend. For if one person may lie, why not another? And at this rate, no justice can be done, no wickedness be prevented or punished, no business go forward. All these mischiefs will equally follow, whether untruths be told in a gross barefaced manner, or disguised under equivocations, quibbles, and evasions. The sin therefore is as great in one case as the other. And it is so great in both, that no sufficient excuses can ever be made for it in either, though several are often pleaded.

Many persons imagine, that when they have committed a fault, it is very pardonable to conceal it under a lie. But some faults ought not to be concealed at all; and none by this method: which is committing two, instead of one: and the second not uncommonly worse than the first. An ingenuous confession will be likely, in most cases, to procure an easy pardon: but a lie is a monstrous aggravation of an offence;

and persisting in a lie can very hardly be forgiven. But above all, if any persons, to hide what they have done amiss themselves, are so vile as to throw the blame or the suspicion of it upon another; this is the height of wickedness. And therefore particularly all children and servants, who are chiefly tempted to excuse themselves by telling falsehoods, ought to undergo any thing, rather than be guilty of such a sin. And on the other hand, all parents, masters, and mistresses, ought to beware, of punishing them too severely for their other offences; lest they drive them into a habit of this terrible one.

Some again plead for making free with truth, that they do it only in jest. But these jests of theirs often occasion great uneasiness and disquiet; and sometimes other very serious bad consequences. The Scripture therefore hath passed a severe censure upon them. 'As a madman, who casteth fire brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, am I not in sport?'^a To give another person vexation, or make him appear contemptible, though in a slight instance, is by no means innocent sport. And besides, to speak falsehood on any occasion is a dangerous introduction to speaking it on more, if not all, occasions. For if so trifling a motive, as a jest will prevail on us to violate truth, how can we be expected to withstand more weighty temptations?

However, it may perhaps at the least be thought, that lying to prevent mischief and do good, must be permitted. But the Scripture expressly forbids us to 'do evil that good may come.'^b And they, who allow themselves in it, will usually be discovered and lose their end: or, if not, will never know where to stop. They will be enticed by degrees to think every thing good, that serves their turn, let others think it ever so bad: those others again will think themselves authorized by such examples to take the same liber-

^a Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

^b Rom. iii. 8.

ties: and thus all trust and probity will be lost among men: a much greater evil, than any good, which falsehood may do now and then, will ever compensate.

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

Nor is the practice less imprudent, than it is unlawful. Some indeed lie to raise their characters, as others do to gain their points. But both act very absurdly. For they miss of their purpose entirely, as soon as they are found out: and all liars are found out, immediately, for the most part; but in a while, without fail. And after that, every body despises and hates them: even when they speak truth, nobody knows how to credit them: and so, by aiming wickedly at some little advantage for the present, they put themselves foolishly under the greatest disadvantage in the world ever after. • The lip of truth should be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.^c Beware then of the least beginning of a practice that will be sure to end ill. For if you venture upon falsehood at all, it will grow upon you, and entangle you; and bring you to shame, to punishment, to ruin. And, besides what you will suffer by it here, your portion, unless you repent very deeply, and amend very thoroughly, will be with the father of lies hereafter. For into the heavenly • Jerusalem shall in no wise enter whosoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.^b Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.^c

There is yet another sort of falsehood, often full as bad as affirming what we do not think: I mean, pro-

^a Prov. xii. 19. 22

^b Rev. xxi. 27.

^c Prov. xii. 22

missing what we do not intend: or what we neglect afterwards to perform, so soon, or so fully, as we ought. Whoever hath promised, hath made himself a debtor: and, unless he be punctual in his payment, commits an injustice; which in many cases may be of very pernicious consequence.

Now in order to secure this great point of speaking truth; besides considering carefully and frequently the before-mentioned evils of departing from it, we should be attentive also to moderate the quantity of our discourse, lest we fall into falsehood unawares. For ‘in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.’^a Persons, who suffer themselves to run on heedlessly in talk, just as their present humour disposes them, or the present company will be best pleased; or who will say almost any thing, rather than say nothing; must be perpetually transgressing some of the duties comprehended under this commandment; which yet is of the utmost importance not to transgress. For, with respect to the concerns of this world, ‘he that loveth life, and would see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil; and his lips that they speak no guile.’^b And, as to our eternal state, in the next, ‘If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man’s religion is vain.’^c

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

WE are now come to the tenth and last commandment; which is by the Church of Rome absurdly divided into two, to keep up the number after joining

^a Prov. x. 19

^b Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13

^c James i. 26

the first and second into one, contrary to ancient authority, Jewish and christian. How the mistake was originally made, is hard to say: but undoubtedly they retain and defend it the more earnestly, in order to pass over the second commandment, as only part of the first, without a distinct meaning of its own. And accordingly many of their devotional books omit it entirely. But that these two ought not to be thus joined and confounded, I have shewn you already. And that this, now before us ought not to be divided, is extremely evident: for it is one single prohibition of all unjust desires. And if reckoning up the several prohibited objects of desire makes it more than one commandment; for the same reason it will be more than two. For there are six things forbidden in general. And moreover, if this be two commandments, which is the first of them? For in Exodus it begins, 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house:' but in Deuteronomy, 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.' And accordingly some of their books of devotion make the former, some the latter of these, the ninth.^a Surely the order of the words would never have been changed thus in Scripture, had there been two commandments in them:^b but being one, it is no way material, which part is named first. I say no more therefore on so clear a point: but proceed to explain this precept, of 'not coveting what is our neighbour's.

The good things of this life being the gifts of God

^a Their Manual of Prayers in English, 1725, puts 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,' for the ninth. But in the office of the virgin both Latin and English, called the Primer, 1717, 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,' is the ninth.

^b Indeed the Vatican copy of the Septuagint, in Exodus, places 'thou shalt not commit adultery,' before 'thou shalt do no murder.' And so do Mark x. 19. Luke xviii. 20. Rom. xiii. 9. And Philo, and part of the Fathers. But the Hebrew and Samaritan, and all translations excepting the Septuagint, and even that in Deuteronomy, and I believe most copies of it in Exodus, and Mattii. xix. 18, and Josephus, and another part of the fathers, keep the now common order. And the Evangelists did not intend to observe the original order; for they put 'honour thy Father, &c.' last. And St. Paul doth not say, that he intended to observe it. This therefore is not a parallel case to that of the tenth Commandment.

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

Not every sort of desires therefore, but unfit and immoderate desires only, are forbidden by the words, 'thou shalt not covet.' And these are such as follow. First, if our neighbour cannot lawfully part with his property, nor we lawfully receive it; and yet we want to have it. One instance of this kind is expressed, 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.' Another is, if we want a person who possesses any thing in trust, or under certain limitations, to give or sell it in breach of that trust or those limitations. Or if he can part with it, but is not willing; and we entertain thoughts of acquiring it by force and fraud, or of being revenged on him for his refusal; this is also highly blamable: for why should he not be left quietly free master of his own? Indeed barely pressing and importuning persons, contrary to their interest, or even their inclination only, is in some degree wrong: for it is one way of extorting things from them; or however of giving them trouble, where we have no right to give it.

But though we keep our desires ever so much to ourselves, they may notwithstanding be very sinful.

And such they are particularly, if they induce us to envy others: that is, to be uneasy at their imagined superior happiness, to wish them ill, or take pleasure in any harm which befalls them. For this turn of mind will prompt us to do them ill, if we can: as indeed a great part of the mischief that is done in the world, and some of the worst of it, arises from hence. 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous: but who is able to stand against envy?'^a Accordingly we find it joined in the New Testament, with 'strife, railing, variance, sedition, murder, confusion, and every evil work.'^b But were it to produce no mischief to our neighbour, yet it is the directly opposite disposition to that love of him, which is the second great precept of Christ's religion. Nay, indeed it deserves, in some respects, to be reckoned the worst of ill-natured sins. The revengeful man pleads for himself some injury attempted against him: but the envious person bears unprovoked malice to those, who have done him neither wrong nor harm, solely because he fancies them to be, in this or that instance, very happy. And why should they not, if they can; as he certainly would, if he could? For the prosperity of bad people, it must be confessed, we have reason to be so far sorry, as they are likely to do hurt by it. But to desire their fall, rather than their amendment; to desire what may be grievous to any persons, not from good will to mankind, but from ill will to them; to wish any misfortune even to our competitors and rivals, merely because they are such; or, because they have succeeded, and enjoy what we aimed at; is extremely uncharitable and inhuman. It is a temper that will give us perpetual disquiet in this world, (for there will always be somebody to envy,) and bring a heavy sentence upon us in the next, unless we repent of it, and subdue it first.

But though our selfish desires were to raise in us no malignity against our fellow-creatures; yet if they

^a Prov. xxvii. 4.

^b Rom. i. 29. xiii. 13. 1 Cor. iii. 3.

2 Cor. xii. 20. Gal. v. 20, 21. 1 Tim. vi. 4. James iii. 14, 16.

tempt us to murmur against our creator; and either to speak or think ill of that distribution of things, which his Providence hath made; this is great impiety, and rebellion of the heart against God: who hath an absolute right to dispose of the works of his hands as he pleases; and uses it always both with justice and with goodness to us. Were we innocent, we could none of us demand more advantages of any sort, than he thought fit to give us: but as we are guilty wretches; far from having a claim to this or or that degree of happiness, we are every one liable to severe punishment. And therefore, with the many comforts and blessings which we have now, and the eternal felicity, which, through the mercy of our heavenly father, the merits of our blessed redeemer, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may, if we will, have hereafter, surely we have no ground to complain of our condition. For what if things be unequally divided here? we may be certain the disposer of them hath wise reasons for it, whether we can see them or not: and may be as certain, that, unless it be our own fault, we shall be no losers by it: for 'all things work together for good to them that love God.'^a Therefore, how little soever we enjoy, we have cause to be thankful for it: and how much soever we suffer, we have cause to be resigned; nay, thankful too even for that: as we may be the happier in this world for many of our sufferings; and shall, if we bear them as we ought, be improved in goodness by them all, and made happier to eternity.

But further yet: though we may not be conscious of what we shall study to hide from ourselves, that our desires carry us either to behave or wish ill to our neighbours; or to repine against God; still, if they disturb and agitate our minds: if we are eager and vehement about the objects of them: we are not arrived at the state, in which we should be found. Some feeling of this inward tumult, especially on

^a Rom. viii. 28.

trying occasions, may be unavoidable by fallen man; and more of it natural to one person than another: but, after all, it is voluntary indulgence, that gives our appetites, and passions, and fancies, the far greatest share of their dominion. We inflame them, when else they would be moderate: we affect things, for which we have really no liking, merely because they are fashionable: we create imaginary wants to ourselves; and then grow as earnest for what we might do perfectly well without, as if the whole of our felicity consisted in it. This is a very immoral state of mind: and hurries persons, almost irresistably, into as immoral a course of life. In proportion as worldly inclinations of any kind engage the heart, they exclude from it social affection, compassion, generosity, integrity; and yet more effectually love to God and attention to the concerns of our future state. Nor do they almost ever fail to make us at present miserable, as well as wicked. They prey upon our spirits, torment us with perpetual self-dislike, waste our health, sink our character, drive us into a thousand foolish actions to gratify them; and when all is done, can never be gratified, so as to give us any lasting satisfaction. First, we shall be full of anxieties and fears; when we have got over these and obtained our wish, we shall quickly find it comes very short of our expectation: then we shall be cloyed, and tired, and wretchedly languid, till some new craving sets us on work to as little purpose as the former did; or till we are wise enough to see, that such pursuits are not the way to happiness.

But supposing persons are not violent in pursuing the imagined good things of this world; yet if they be dejected and grieved, that no more of them have fallen to their lot; if they mourn over the inferiority of their condition, and live in a perpetual feeling of affliction (be it ever so calm) on that account; or indeed on account of any cross or disadvantage whatever, belonging to the present life: this also is a degree, though the lowest and least, yet still a degree, of in-

ordinate desire. For we are not grateful, if, instead of taking our portion of happiness here with cheerfulness, and due acknowledgments for it, we only lament, that it is not, in this or that respect, more considerable; and we are not wise, if we embitter it, be it ever so small, by a fruitless sorrow, instead of making the best of it.

These then being the excesses, which this Commandment forbids; the duty which of course it requires, is, that we learn, like St. Paul, 'in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.'^a This virtue every body practices in some cases: for who is there that could not mention several things which he should be glad to have, yet is perfectly well satisfied to go without them? And would we but strive to be of the same disposition in all cases, the self-enjoyment, that we should reap from it, is inexpressible. The worldly condition of multitudes is really quite as good as it needs to be; and of many others, (who do not think so,) as good as it well can be. Now for such to be anxious about mending it, is only being miserable for nothing. And in whatever we may have cause to wish our circumstances were better, moderate wishes will be sufficient to excite a reasonable industry to improve them, as far as we can; and immoderate eagerness will give us no assistance, but only disquiet. More than a few consume themselves with longing for what indolence and despondency will not suffer them to try if they can obtain. 'The desire of the slothful killeth him: for his hands refuse to labor.'^b And sometimes, on the contrary, the precipitance with which we aim at a favorite point, is the very reason that we overshoot the mark and miss it.

But supposing the most solicitous were always the most likely to gain their ends: yet this likelihood will be often crossed, both by delays and disappointments; which to impatient tempers will be extremely grievous: and the saddest disappointment of all will be,

^a Phil. iv. 11.

^b Prov. xxi. 25

that they will find the most perfect accomplishment of their wishes, after a very small time, to be little or no increase of their happiness. Persons uneasy in their present situation, or intent on some darling object, imagine that could they but succeed in such a pursuit, or had they but such a person's good fortune or accomplishments, then they should be perfectly at ease, and lastingly delighted. But they utterly mistake. Every enjoyment palls and deadens quickly: every condition hath its unseen inconveniences and sufferings, as well as its visible advantages. And happiness depends scarce at all on the pre eminence commonly admired. For the noble, the powerful, the rich, the learned, the ingenious, the beautiful, the gay, the voluptuous, are usually to the full as far from it, and by turns own they are, as any of the wretches, whom they severally despise. Indeed, when every thing is tried round, we shall experience at last, what we had much better see at first, as we easily may, that the cheerful composure of a reasonable and religious, and therefore contented mind, is the only solid felicity that this world affords; the great blessing of Heaven here below: that will enable us to relish the rest, if we have them: and to be satisfied, if we have them not. What Solomon hath said of wealth, he found to be equally true of every thing else beneath the sun. 'God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travel, to gather and heap up—this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.'^a

Contentment therefore being the gift of God, we should earnestly pray to him for it. And in order to become objects of his favor, we should frequently and thankfully recollect the many undeserved comforts of our condition, that we may bear the afflictions of it more patiently; reasoning with Job, 'shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil.'^b Nor should we fail to join with our meditations

^a Eccl. ii. 26.

^b Job ii. 10.

on his past and present mercies, the firm assurance, which both his attributes and his promises furnish, that the same ‘loving kindness should follow us all the days of our life;’^a and be exerted, though sometimes for our correction or trial, yet always for our benefit; and so as to make our lot supportable, in every variety of our outward circumstances ‘Let your conversation, therefore, be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’^b Another very important consideration, and necessary to be often brought to mind, is, that the season both of enjoying the advantages, and bearing the inconveniencies of life is short: but the reward of enjoying and bearing each, as we ought, is eternal and inconceivably great.

Together with these reflections, let us exercise a steady care to check every faulty inclination in its earliest rise. For it is chiefly indulging them at first, that makes them so hard to conquer afterwards. And yet we shall always find the bad consequences of yielding to outweigh vastly the trouble of resisting: and that to bring our desires, when they are the strongest, down to our condition, is a much easier work, than to raise our condition to our desires, which will only grow the more ungovernable, the more they are pampered. Further: whatever share we possess of worldly plenty, let us bestow it on ourselves with decent moderation, and impart of it to others with prudent liberality: for thus ‘knowing how to abound, we shall know the better how to suffer need,’^c if Providence call us to it. And lastly, instead of ‘setting our affections on any things on earth,’^d which would be a fatal neglect of the great end that we are made for, let us exalt our views to that blessed place, where ‘godliness with contentment will be unspeakable gain:’^e and they who have restrained the inferior principles of their nature by

^a Psalm xxiii. 6.
^d Col. iii. 2.

^b Heb. xiii. 5.
^e 1 Tim. vi. 6.

^c Phil. iv. 12

the rules of religion, shall have the highest faculties of their souls ‘ abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God’s house, and be made to drink of the river of of his pleasures.’^a

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

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

LECTURE XXIX.

Of man’s inability, God’s grace, and prayer to him for it.

I have now proceeded, in the course of these Lectures, to the end of the Commandments; and explained the nature of that repentance, faith, and obedience, which were promised for us in our baptism, and which we are bound to exercise, in proportion as we come to understand the obligations incumbent on us. You cannot but see by this time, that the duties, which God enjoins us, are not only very important, but very extensive. And therefore a consideration will almost unavoidably present itself to your minds in the next place, what abilities we have to perform them. Now this question our Catechism decides,

^a Psalm xxxvi 8.

^b Col. i. 12.

^c 2 Cor. xii. 9.

without asking it, by a declaration, extremely discouraging in appearance; that ‘we are not able, of ourselves, to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him.’

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

1. As to the first, we all give proofs, greater or less, of an inbred disorder and wrongness in our understandings, will and affections. Possibly one proof, that some may give of it, may be a backwardness to own it. But they little consider, how severe a sentence they would pass, by denying it, on themselves, and all mankind. Even with our natural bad inclinations for some excuse, we are blamable enough for the ill things that we do. But how much more should we be so, if we did them all, without the solicitation of any inward depravity to plead afterwards in our favor? In point of interest, therefore, as well as truth, we are concerned to admit an original proneness to evil in our frame: while yet reason plainly teaches, at the same time, that whatever God created was originally, in its kind, perfect and good.

To reconcile these two things would have been a great difficulty, had not revelation pointed out the way, by informing us, that man was indeed ‘made upright.’^b but that the very first of human race lost their innocence and their happiness together; and tainting by willful transgression, their own nature, tainted by consequence, that of their whole posterity. Thus, ‘by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by

^a Rom. vii. 14.

^b Eccles. vii. 29.

sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' ^a We find in fact, however difficult it may be to account for it in speculation, that the dispositions of parents, both in body and mind, very commonly descend, in some degree, to their children. And therefore it is entirely credible, that so great a change in the minds of our first parents from absolute rightness of temper to presumptuous wickedness: accompanied with an equal change of body, from an immortal condition to a mortal one, produced perhaps, in part, by the physical effects of the forbidden fruit; that these things, I say, should derive their fatal influences to every succeeding generation. For though God will never impute any thing to us, as our personal fault, which is not our doing, yet he may very justly withhold from us those privileges, which he granted to our first parents only on condition of their faultless obedience, and leave us subject to those inconveniences, which followed of course from their disobedience: as, in multitudes of other cases, we see children in far worse circumstances, by the faults of their distant forefathers, than they otherwise would have been. And most evidently it is no more a hardship upon us, to become such as we are by means of Adam's transgression, than to suffer what we often do for the transgressions of our other ancestors; or to have been created such as we are, without any one's transgression: which last, all who disbelieve original sin, must affirm to be our case.

But unhappy for us, as the failure of the first man was, we should be happy in comparison, if this were all that we had to lament. Great as the native disorder of our frame is; yet either the fall of Adam left in it, or God restored to it, some degree of disposition to obedience, and of strength against sin: so that though 'in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing;' ^b yet 'after the inward man, (the mind,) we delight in the law of God;' ^c and there are occasions,

^a Rom. v. 12.

^b Rom. vii. 18.

^c Ver. 22 23:

on which even 'the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law.'^d though neither all, nor any, without fault. And on us Christians our heavenly Father confers in our baptism, the assurance of much greater strength, to obey his commands, than they have. But then, if we consider,

2. What we have made our condition since, we shall find, that instead of using well the abilities which we had, and taking the methods which our Maker hath appointed for the increase of them, we have often carelessly, and too often willfully, misemployed the former, and neglected the latter. Now by every instance of such behaviour, we displease God, weaken our right affections, and add new strength to wrong passions: and by habits of such behaviour, corrupting our hearts, and blinding our understandings, we bring ourselves into a much worse condition than that in which we were born: and thus become doubly incapable of doing our duty. This, experience proves but too plainly, though Scripture did not teach, as it doth, that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth:'^b that 'we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us:'^c that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God:'^d that 'without Christ we can do nothing:'^e 'and that we are not sufficient to think any thing, as of ourselves.'^f

Yet, notwithstanding this, we feel within us an obligation of conscience to do every thing that is right and good. For that obligation is in its nature unchangeable: and we cannot be made happy otherwise than by endeavoring to fulfill it; though God, for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, will make fit allowances for our coming short of it. But then we must not hope for such allowances as would really be unfit. Our original weakness indeed, is not our fault; but our neglect of being relieved from it, and the additions that we have made to it, are. And

^a Rom. ii. 14.

^d Rom. viii. 7.

^b Gen. viii. 21.

^e John xv. 5.

^c Ps. li. 5.

^f 2 Cor. iii. 5.

whatever we might have had the power of doing, if we would; it is no injustice to punish us for not doing: especially when the means of enabling ourselves continue to be offered to us through our lives. Now, in fact, the whole race of mankind, I charitably hope and believe, have, by the general grace, or favour of God, the means of doing so much, at least, as may exempt them from future sufferings. But Christians, by the special grace mentioned in this part of the Catechism, are qualified to do so much more, as will entitle them, not for their own worthiness, but that of the holy Jesus, to a distinguishing share of future reward.

Now the special grace of the Gospel consists, partly in the outward revelation, which it makes to us, of divine truths; partly in the inward assistance, which it bestows on us for obeying the divine will. The latter is the point here to be considered.

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

^a Rom. xi. 33.

sufficient for us:^a his Holy Spirit shall enable us effectually to do every thing which his word requires.

We may resist^b his motions: or we may receive them into our souls, and act in consequence of them. Every one hath power enough to do right: Scripture as well as reason, shews it: only we have it not resident in us by nature; but bestowed on us continually by our maker, as we want it. In all good actions that we perform, 'the preparation of the heart is from the Lord.'^c And that faith, which is the fountain of all actions truly good, is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.^d But he giveth liberally to all^e who ask him: and therefore no one hath cause of complaint.

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

Our natural freedom of will is no more impaired by these secret admonitions of our Maker, than by the open persuasions of our fellow creatures. And the advantage of having God's help, far from making it unnecessary to help ourselves, obliges us to it peculiarly. We are therefore to 'work out our own salvation,' because 'He worketh in us both to will and to do.'^f For it is a great aggravation of every sin, that, in committing it, we quench the pious motions excited by 'the spirit'^g of God in our hearts: and a great incitement to our endeavours of performing every duty, that with such aid we may be sure of success. Our own natural strength cannot increase, as temptations and difficulties do: but that which we receive from Heaven can. And thus it is, that we

^a 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^d Eph. ii. 8.

^g 1 Thess. v. 19.

^b Acts vii. 51.

^e James i. 5.

^c Prov. xvi. 1.

^f Phil. ii. 12, 13.

learn courage and humility at once; by knowing that 'we can do all things,' but only 'through Christ which strengtheneth us;'^a and therefore 'not we, but the grace of God, which is with us.'^b

This grace therefore being of such importance to us, our Catechism, with great reason, directs us 'at all times to call for it by diligent prayer.' For our heavenly Father hath not promised, nor can we hope, that He 'will give the Holy Spirit to them who' proudly disdain or negligently omit, to 'ask Him.'^c And hence it becomes peculiarly necessary, that we should understand how to pray to Him: a duty mentioned in the former part of the Catechism, but reserved to be explained more fully in this.

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

Now, if these sentiments ought to be felt, they ought also to be some way expressed: not only that others may see we have them, and be excited to them by our example: but that we ourselves may receive both the comfort and the improvement, which must naturally flow from exercising such valuable affections. And unquestionably the most lively and most respectful manner of exercising them is, that we direct them to Him who is the object of them; and pour out our hearts before Him in suitable acts of homage, thanksgiving, and confession: in humble petitions for ourselves, and intercessions for all mankind. Not that God is ignorant, till we inform Him,

^a Phil iv. 13.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 10.

^c Luke xi. 13.

either of our outward circumstances, or the inward temper of our hearts. If He were, our prayers would give Him but very imperfect knowledge of either: for we are greatly ignorant of both ourselves. But the design of prayer is, to bring our minds into a right frame; and so make ourselves fit for those blessings, for which we are very unfit, while we are too vain or too careless to ask them of God.

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

^a Matt. xxi. 22.

^b Luke xviii. 1.

may be assured that nothing but an injurious disbelief can prevent our obtaining it; on which account St. James requires, that we 'ask in faith, nothing wavering.'^a

Indeed, without the encouragement given us in Scripture, it might well be with some diffidence, and it should still be with the utmost reverence, that 'we take upon us to speak unto the Lord, who are but dust and ashes.'^b The heathens therefore addressed their prayers to imaginary deities of an inferior rank, as judging themselves unworthy to approach the supreme One. But our rule is, 'thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'^c The affected humility of worshiping even Angels, and therefore much more Saints, (who, if really such, are yet 'lower than Angels,'^d) may, as we are taught, 'beguile us of our reward:'^e whereas we may 'come boldly to the throne of our Maker's grace,'^f though not in our own right, yet through the Mediator whom he hath appointed; and who hath both procured us the privilege, and instructed us how to use it, by delivering to us a prayer of his own composition; which might be at once a form for us frequently to repeat, and a pattern for us always to imitate.

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

^a Jam. i. 6.

^d Psal. viii. 5.

^g Matth. vi. 9.

^b Gen. xviii. 27.

^e Col. ii. 18.

^h Luke xi. 2.

^c Matth. iv. 10.

^f Heb. iv. 16.

ⁱ Ver. 1.

Yet our Saviour's design was not, that this should be the only prayer of christians: as it appears both from the precepts and the practice of the Apostles, as well as from the nature and reason of the thing. But when it is not used as a form, it is however of unspeakable advantage as a model. He proposes it indeed more particularly as an example of shortness. Not that we are never to make longer prayers: for He himself 'continued all night in prayer to God:'^a and we have a much longer, made by the Apostles, in the fourth chapter of the Acts. But his intention was, to teach by this instance, that we are not to affect unmeaning repetitions, or any needless multiplicity of words, as if we 'thought that we should be heard for our much speaking.'^b And not only in this respect, but every other, is our Lord's prayer an admirable institution and direction for praying aright: as will abundantly appear, when the several parts of it come to be distinctly explained. But though such explanation will shew, both the purport and the excellency of it, more fully; yet they are to every eye visible in the main, without any explanation at all. And therefore let us conclude at present with devoutly offering it up to God.

'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespases, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

^a Luke vi. 12.

^b Matth. vi. 7.

LECTURE XXX.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.

THE prayer, which our blessed Saviour, taught his disciples, doth not need to be explained, as being, in itself, and originally, obscure. For no words could be more intelligible to his Apostles, than all those, which he hath used throughout it. And even to us now, there is nothing that deserves the name of difficult: notwithstanding the distance of time, the change of circumstance, and the different nature and turn of the Jewish tongue from our own. But still in order to apprehend it sufficiently, there is requisite some knowledge of religion, and the language of religion. Besides, as we all learnt it when we were young, whilst we had but little understanding, and less attention; it is not impossible, but some of us may have gone on repeating it to an advanced age, without considering it near so carefully as we ought. And this very thing, that the words are so familiar to us, may have been the main occasion, that we have scarce ever thought of their import. Now we are sensible it would be a great unhappiness to have our devotions as the Church of Rome have the principal part of theirs, in a language that we could not understand. But surely it is as great a fault, if, when we may so easily understand them, we do not; or if, though we do understand them, when we think of the matter, we think about it so little, that, as to all good purposes, it is much the same with praying in an unknown tongue. The Lord's prayer, in itself, is very clear, very expressive, very comprehensive. But all this is nothing to us, if we say it without knowing, or with-

out minding, what we say. For how excellent words soever we use, if we add no meaning to them, this can be no praying. And therefore, to make it really beneficial to us, we must fix deeply in our thoughts, what it was intended by its author to contain.

Now it consists, you may observe, of three parts. I. An invocation, or calling upon God. II. Petitions offered. III. Praises ascribed to Him.

The invocation is in these words, 'Our Father who art in Heaven.' And, few as they are, they express very fully the grounds on which divine worship stands.

As the whole world derives its being from God, He is on that account styled, 'the Father of all.'^a But as rational creatures are produced, not only by Him, but in his image and likeness, He is in a stricter sense the Father of these. And therefore angels and men are called in Scripture, what the angels beneath them never are, the 'Sons,'^b and the 'offspring of God:'^c in which sense the prophet saith, 'O Lord, thou art our Father, and we are all the work of thy hand.'^d Now as our creator, he is evidently not only our Father, but also our sovereign Lord.

A second title God hath to this name, from that fatherly providence and goodness, which he exercises every where continually: and of which mankind hath large experience; not only in the many enjoyments, comforts, and deliverances, that He grants us, but even in the afflictions which He sends us, always for our benefit: then more especially 'dealing with us as with children whom He loveth.'^e

But there is yet a third reason, why we call Him 'Our Father,' peculiar to us as christians; and founded on our being united by faith to his Son 'our head,'^f and 'begotten again, through his Gospel, to a lively hope, to an inheritance reserved in Heaven for us:'^g

^a Eph. iv. 6.

^d Isa. lxiv. 8.

Eph. i. 22.

^b Job i. 6. ii. 1. xxxviii. 7.

^e Heb. xii. 5, &c.

^g 1 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

^c Acts xvii. 29.

^f 1 Cor. xi. 3.

Privileges so invaluable, that though He is doubtless a Father, and a tender one, to our whole species, yet his word speaks of us, as the only persons, in comparison, that have a right to consider him in this view. ‘As many as received him,’ that is, our blessed Saviour; ‘to them gave He power to become the Sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.’^a ‘The Lord is good to all:’^b but singularly good to those, who become, by the influences of the christian covenant, singularly fit objects of his goodness. They have promises of the greatest blessings, to which nothing, but promise, can entitle: pardon of sin, assistance of the Holy Spirit, and life eternal; by which last they are made, in the happiest sense, the ‘Children of God, being the children of the resurrection.’^c Let us learn then, as often as we say, ‘Our Father,’ to magnify in our souls, that gracious Redeemer, who hath made him so to us, more than he is to others. Let us often repeat the thankful reflection of St. John, ‘Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the Sons of God,’^d and joyfully argue, as St. Paul doth, ‘If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.’^e

Thus then the words, ‘Our Father,’ express not only the absolute authority, but the unspeakable goodness of God: and the next, ‘who art in Heaven,’ acknowledge his glory and power.

I have already observed to you, in explaining the sixth article of the Creed, that as God cannot but be, so he cannot but be every where: for there is nothing in any one part of space to confine his presence to that, rather than to any other. Besides, his providence is continually acting every where: and wherever He acts, He is. Therefore Solomon justly declares, ‘The Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee.’^f But still the Scriptures represent Him as manifesting the more visible tokens of

^a John i. 12.

^b Psalm cxlv. 9.

^c Luke xx. 36.

^d 1 John iii. 1.

^e Rom. viii. 17.

^f 1 Kings viii. 27.

2 Chron. ii. 6. vi. 18.

his inexpressible majesty in one peculiar place: where He receives the homage of his holy angels, and issues forth his commands for the government of the world. This they call his 'Throne,'^a and 'Tabernacle in Heaven:'^b of which the earthly tabernacle of Moses was designed to be a figure; being directed to be 'made according to the pattern, shewed him in the Mount.'^c That earthly tabernacle was honoured for a long time with splendid marks of the divine residence: on which account, even after they were withdrawn, the Jews would be apt to consider God as dwelling at Jerusalem in his temple, 'and sitting between the Cherubim.'^d But our blessed Lord, being about to abolish the Mosaic ordinances, enlarges the views of his disciples, and raises them to that higher habitation of inconceivable glory, to which they should hereafter be admitted; and on which they were in the mean while to set their hearts, as the seat of all blessedness.

But further, being in Heaven denotes likewise the almighty power of God: agreeably to that of the Psalmist, 'Our God is in the Heaven: He hath done whatsoever He pleased.'^e For as a higher situation gives a superior strength and command: and accordingly in all languages, being exalted or brought low, signifies an increase or lessening of dominion or influence: so representing God, as placed above all, is designed to express, in the strongest manner, that His kingdom ruleth over all.^f

When therefore we call upon 'Our Father, who is in Heaven,' we profess to God our belief, that He is the author and preserver of the universe, who governs all things with paternal care; but extends his favours especially to those, who by imitating and obeying Him shew themselves his true children; and therefore most especially to such, as having acquired, by the merits and grace of his Son, the nearest relation and resemblance to Him, have thereby a cove-

^a Psalm xi. 4.

^d Psalm xcix. 1.

^b Heb. viii. 1. 2.

^e Psalm cxv. 3.

^c Heb. viii. 5.

^f Psalm cii. 19.

nant-right to an eternal inheritance in that blessed place, where He exhibits his glory, and reigns, possessed of sovereign authority, and boundless glory.

Now applying thus to God, under the notion of 'our Father,' is excellently fitted to remind us, both of the dutiful regard, which we ought to have for him, as He himself pleads, 'If I be a Father, where is mine honour?'^a and also, of the kindness, which we may expect from him, according to our Saviour's reasoning, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'^b Nor is this expression less fitted to admonish us of copying the goodness, which we adore; and exercising mercy and bounty towards all our fellow creatures, as far as we can, 'that we may be,' in this excellent sense, 'the children of our Father, which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'^c And this admonition is greatly strengthened, as each of us is directed to address himself to God, not as to his own father merely, but as to 'our Father,' the common parent of mankind. For there is inexpressible force in that argument, 'Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously,' or in any respect unjustly or unkindly, 'every man against his brother?'^d And yet with greater force still doth it hold, to prevent mutual injuries or unkindness among christians: who being in a much closer and more endearing sense, children of God, and brethren one to another, than the rest of the world; surely ought never to be, what they are too often remarkably deficient in, that reciprocal affection, which was intended as the token whereby 'all men should know them.'^e

Then, at the same time, the consideration, that this 'our father is in heaven,' possessed of infinite

^a Mal. i. 6.

^b Luke xi. 13.

^c Matt. v. 45.

^d Mal. ii. 10.

^e John xiii. 35.

power and glory, tends greatly to inspire us with reverence towards him, at all times, and in all places, but in our devotions peculiarly. And to this end it is pleaded by the wise king, 'keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God; be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth.'^a It also tends no less to remind us, what the great end of our prayers and our lives should be: to obtain admittance into that blessed place, 'where God is, and Christ sits on his right hand.'^b 'For in his presence is the fullness of joy; and at his right hand there is pleasure for evermore.'^c

You see then, how many important truths and admonitions, these few words, which begin the Lord's Prayer, include: every thing indeed, which can encourage us to pray, or dispose us to pray as we ought.

The petition, which immediately follows, 'hallowed be thy name,' is perhaps more liable to be repeated without being understood, than any of the rest; but when understood, as it easily may be, appears highly proper to stand in the very first part of a christian's prayer. The name of God means here God himself, his person and attributes: as it doth in many other places of scripture, where 'fearing, or blessing, or calling upon the name of the Lord, is mentioned. And to 'hallow his name' signifies to think of him as a holy being, and behave towards him accordingly. Now the word 'holy' hath been already more than once, in the course of these Lectures, explained to mean whatever is worthy of being distinguished with serious respect. And therefore all such persons, places, things, and times as are set apart from vulgar uses, and devoted to religious ones, are said in scripture to be holy, and commanded to be hallowed. Now these being generally preserved with great care, as they always ought, from whatever may defile and pollute them; hence the

^a Eccl. v. 1, 2.

^b Col. iii. 1.

^c Psalm xvi. 11.

term holy, came to signify what is clean and pure. And the most valuable purity, beyond comparison, being that of a mind untainted by sin, and secure from tendencies towards it; holiness more especially denotes this; and may in various degrees be ascribed to men and angels; but in absolute perfection in none, but God. For he, and he alone, is infinitely removed from all possibility of doing or thinking, or approving evil.

This then is the sense, in which we are to acknowledge, that 'holy and reverend is his name:'^a this conception of him is the manner in which we are to 'hallow' it, and 'sanctify the Lord God in our hearts:'^b a matter of unspeakable importance, and the very foundation of all true religion. For if we are not fully persuaded, that he is 'of purer eyes, than to behold evil'^c with indifference; if we imagine that he can ever act unrighteously himself, or allow others to do so: that he is in any case the author of sin: or esteems and loves any thing in his creatures, but uprightness and goodness; or show himself to be other, than a perfectly great, and wise, and just, and gracious being; so far as we do this, we mistake his nature, and dishonor him; and set up an idol of our own Fancy, instead of the true God. The consequence of which will be, that in proportion as our notions of him are false, our worship, imitation, and obedience will be erroneous also: our piety and our morals will both be corrupted: we shall neglect what alone can recommend us to him: we shall hope to please him by performances of no value, perhaps by wicked deeds; and 'the light, that is in us, will become darkness.'^d

No wonder, then, if we are directed to make it our first petition, that we and all men may 'hallow God's name,' as we ought: that so a right sense of his nature and attributes, especially his wisdom, justice, and goodness may prevail through the world, as may

^a Psalm cxi. 9. ^b 1 Pet. iii. 15. ^c Hab. i. 13. ^d Matth. vi. 23.

banish at once both profaneness and superstition, and engage us all to fear and love him equally: that we may entertain such notions of christianity, as will promote its honor; and allow ourselves in nothing, that may bring disgrace upon it, or tempt any to 'blaspheme,' instead of sanctifying, 'that worthy name by which they are called:'^a but that each of us in our stations, may, with all diligence, and all prudence, propagate the belief of 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the father.'^b This is the way, and the only way possible, for us truly to honor him, and be truly good and happy; happy in ourselves, and in each other; in the present world, and that which is to come. With this petition, therefore, our blessed Lord most rationally directs us to begin. And let us all remember, that what he bids us pray for in the first place, he will expect that we should endeavor after in the first place, and as we acknowledge 'him, who hath called us to be holy,' that we should 'be holy also, in all manner of conversation.'^c

LECTURE XXXI.

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE.

THE second petition of the Lord's prayer, 'thy kingdom come,' follows very naturally after the first, 'hallowed be thy name.' For hallowing the name of God, that is, entertaining just notions, and being possessed with a deep sense, of the holiness of his nature, his abhorrence of sin, his justice and goodness: is the necessary preparative for submitting to, and being faithful subjects of that kingdom, for the coming of which we are directed to pray.

God indeed is, ever was, and cannot but be, Lord and King of the whole world, possessed of all right and all dominion over all things: as the plainest rea-

^a James ii. 7.

^b James i. 27.

^c 1 Pet. i. 15.

son shews, and the conclusion of this very prayer, in conformity to the rest of scripture, acknowledges. In this sense therefore we cannot pray for his kingdom, as something future, but only rejoice in its being actually present: for what can be greater joy, than to live under the government of infinite mercy, Wisdom, and power? 'The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.'^a

But besides this natural kingdom of God, there is a moral and spiritual one, founded on the willing obedience of reasonable creatures to those laws of righteousness, which he hath given them. Now this, we have too plain evidence, is not yet come amongst men so fully as it ought. The very first of human race revolted from their maker; and their descendants, as both scripture and other history shews, grew, age after age, yet more and more disobedient: till at length, the inhabitants of the whole earth, instead of being the happy subjects of God's rightful empire, became, by immoral lives, and idolatrous worship, most wretched slaves to the usurped dominion of the wicked one. The wisdom and goodness of God made immediate provision, through his only son our Lord, to oppose this kingdom of darkness, as soon as it appeared in the world: not by his absolute power: for obedience loses its value, unless it proceeds from choice; but by the rational method of instructions, promises, and warnings from heaven, superadded to what nature taught, and suited to the circumstances of every age.

These he gave at first by the Patriarchs to all men promiscuously; and whoever acknowledged his authority and obeyed his laws, was a good subject and true member of his kingdom. But when afterwards, notwithstanding this care, the corruption of mankind was become general, he chose the posterity of his servant Abraham, and distinguished them by his espe-

^a Psalm xcvi. 1.

cial favor: not as casting off the rest of the world; for 'in every nation,' at all times, 'they that fear God and work righteousness, are accepted with him,'^a but that, in this people, at least, the profession of faith in him, and subjection to him, might be kept alive; not merely for their own benefit, but the information of others also. With them therefore was the kingdom of God, in a peculiar degree, for 1500 years.—While they flourished in their own land, they held forth the light of truth to all the nations round them. And when they were led captive, or dispersed into other lands, they spread it yet farther: and thus were great instruments in preparing the rest of mankind for that general re-establishment of obedience to the true God, as King and Lord of all, which our blessed saviour came to effect.

The gospel dispensation therefore having this for its end, and being much more perfectly fitted to attain it, than any preceding manifestation of religion had been; the scripture, in a distinguished manner, calls it 'the kingdom of God, or of Heaven:' both which words denote in exactly the same view, that dominion, which in Daniel it is foretold the God of heaven should set up, and which should never be destroyed.^b Our saviour was then after John the Baptist, only giving notice of its approach, and opening the way for setting it up, when he first directed his disciples to pray, that it might come. By his death he raised it on the ruins of the Devil's usurpation, over whom he triumphed on his Cross:^c and now it hath been many ages in the world. But still it is by no means come, in that extent, and to that good effect, which we have reason to beg that it may, and to believe that it will. The largest part of mankind hath not, so much as in profession, entered into this kingdom: but lies overwhelmed in Pagan idolatry, Jewish unbelief, or Mahometan delusion. The largest part of Christians have corrupted the doctrines

^a Acts x. 35.

^b Dan. ii. 44.

^c Col. ii. 15.

of Christ with grievous errors: and those who preserve the purest faith, too generally live such impure and wicked lives; that, though the kingdom of God hath indeed taken place amongst them in outward appearance, yet in that sense, which will prove at least the only important one, they are still far from it. ‘For the kingdom of God,’ saith our saviour, ‘is within you:’^a and consists, as the apostle further explains it, ‘in righteousness and peace, and joy in the graces of the Holy Ghost.’^b

Here then is great room, and great need, for praying; that the ‘Heathen’ may become the ‘inheritance’ of Christ, ‘and the uttermost part of the Mahometan world in his possession:’^c that the Jews, ‘from whom,’ for their unbelief, ‘the kingdom of God hath been so long taken’^d away may be restored to a share in it; as the prophets, both of the Old and New Testament, have foretold they shall: and lastly, ‘that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may not only be led into the way of truth, but hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.’^e How little prospect soever there may be a present of such happiness as this, yet ‘we have a sure word of prophecy,’^f for the ground of our prayers, that the time shall come, when ‘the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ,’^g in a degree that they have never been yet; when ‘all the people shall be righteous,’^h and ‘know the Lord from the greatest unto the least.’ⁱ

But the kingdom of God upon earth, even in its best estate, is comparatively but short-lived, and imperfect, indeed a mere introduction to that glorious and eternal manifestation of it in heaven, which ought ever to be the object of our most ardent desires and requests. For as the governor, and the

a Luke xvii. 21.

d Matth. xxi. 43.

f 2 Pet. i. 19.

i Jer. xxxi. 34.

b Rom. xiv. 17

c Prayer for all conditions of men.

g Rev. xi. 15.

e Psalm ii. 3.

h Isa. lx. 21.

governed, and the great fundamental laws of government, are, still to be the same, in the present state of trial, and the future one of recompense, they both make up together but one kingdom of God. And therefore, when we pray for the coming of it, we pray in the last place, for the arrival of that time, when the king and judge of all 'shall sit upon the throne of his glory,'^a and reward every man according to his works;^b when 'the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father';^c even that 'kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world,'^d and 'shall reign with him in it for ever and ever.'^e

But then as we pray for this time, we must prepare for it also: else we do nothing but ask our own condemnation; as the prophet Amos has most awfully warned us: 'wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord. To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.'^f

To instruct us therefore, on what 't is, that our share in the kingdom of God depends, our Saviour immediately subjoins another petition, expressing it very clearly: 'thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.' For 'not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven:'^g but they only who 'do the will of God, shall receive his promise.'^h

Indeed what God 'wills' to do himself, that 'he doth accordingly, both in the army of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand.'ⁱ But what he wills us to do, that he only requires of us, as we value his favor, or fear his displeasure; leaving us designedly that power of not doing what he bids us, without which, doing it were no virtue. But though disobedience to his will is in our power; yet obedience is not so, without the assistance of his grace: which therefore, in these words,

^a Matth. xxv. 31.

^d Matth. xxv. 34.

^g Matth. vii. 21.

^b Matth. xvi. 27.

^e Rev. xx. 6. xxii. 5.

^h Heb. x. 36.

^c Matth. xiii. 43.

^f Amos v. 18.

ⁱ Dan. iv. 35.

we desire for ourselves, and for all men. And since by the means of prayer we may have strength to obey his will granted us; we are certainly with as much justice, expected to obey it, as if we had the power already of our own.

Now the will of God consists in these two things; that we suffer patiently what he lays upon us, and perform faithfully what he commands us. The former of these: to bear with resignation whatever, in any kind, God sees proper to inflict; and though we may wish and pray for the prevention or removal of sufferings, yet to be content, nay desirous that 'his will should be done, not ours;'^a may often prove a difficult, but is also an evident and necessary duty. For to indulge a contrary disposition, is to set up ourselves above our Maker; to rebel against his authority, deny his wisdom and distrust his goodness. The ability therefore of submitting meekly to his pleasure, is undoubtedly one great thing that we are to request, and endeavor to obtain.

But still, as the blessed inhabitants of heaven surely have little or no occasion for this kind of obedience, we have reason to think that the other, the active sort, is the point which our Saviour designed we should principally have in view, when we beg, that God's will may be done by us, as it is by them: by his 'Angels that fulfill his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his words; those ministers of his, that do his pleasure.'^b Not that we can hope to equal the services of beings placed so much above us: but only aspire to such resemblance of them, that our obedience may bear the same proportion to our abilities, which that of the heavenly spirits doth to theirs. Their knowledge of God's will is clear and distinct: on which account the highest character given of human wisdom is, to be 'as an Angel of God to discern good and bad.'^c It should therefore, when we make use of this petition, be our desire that we also, in

^a Luke xxii. 42.

^b Psal. ciii. 20, 21.

^c 2 Sam. xiv. 17.

our degree, may 'be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is;'^a 'and may abound more and more, in knowledge and all judgment.'^b They do every thing, without exception, which they know to be God's pleasure: whereas we are very apt to omit part, and perform the rest but imperfectly. They do it with alacrity and cheerfulness; whereas we too often shew great backwardness and reluctance. They do it also from a real principle of duty: whereas were the truth but known, as to God it is known, a great share of the good actions upon which we value ourselves, are perhaps only good appearances: proceeding, some from constitution, some from worldly prudence, some from vanity; few it may be doubted, principally, and fewer yet, entirely, from the love or fear of God, from esteem of virtue, or hatred of sin. In these respects then we must earnestly pray, and diligently endeavor, to be like the holy angels; and were we but like them in one thing more, that they all, without exception, do the will of God, and have none amongst them disobedient to it; then would our earth resemble heaven indeed. How far this is from being the case, we know too well. But notwithstanding, let us comfort ourselves with considering that as the time was, when even these blessed spirits had a mixture of evil ones amongst them; so the time will be, when we shall have no such mixture amongst us, but shall become in this and all respects 'as the angels of God in heaven.'^c

LECTURE XXXII.

Give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

THE three former of the six petitions of the Lord's prayer express our earnest desires that we, and all

^a Eph. v. 17.

^b Phil. i. 9.

^c Matth. xxii. 30.

our fellow creatures, may attain the great end of our creation; that is, may understand, receive, and practice, true religion, to God's honour, and our own eternal happiness: after which we proceed, in the three last, to ask of Him the means to this end; such supplies of our wants, as will be needful for the performance of our duties. And they are comprehended under three heads more: the relief of our temporal necessities, the forgiveness of our past sins, and the assistance of his grace against future temptations.

The first of these blessings we request, by saying 'Give us this day our daily bread.' All the good things of life, and all our capacity of receiving support and comfort from them, proceed, as every thing doth, from God's free gift; and therefore depend, as every thing doth, on his free pleasure: for what He hath bestowed, He can, with just the same ease, at any time, take away. He hath placed things indeed in a regular, and what we call a natural course and order. But this order is not only of his own appointing, but his own preserving too. He it is, 'that maketh the sun to rise;'^a that 'giveth us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'^b Were He only thus kind to us all in general, it would certainly be our duty to acknowledge his kindness, and pray for the continuance of it. But as we learn from Scripture further, that his providence extends, even in the minutest instances, to each of us in particular; and that not the smallest thing comes to pass, but by his appointment, or wise permission;^c that his continual superintendency may be ever exercised towards us for our good. We know not indeed, with certainty, in these matters, what will be good for us. But still, since He hath given us desires, inseparable from our frame, of enjoying life to its ordinary term: with a competent share of the several accommodations which contribute to make it agreeable; it must be

^a Matth. v. 45.

^b Acts xiv. 17.

^c Matth. x. 29, 30. Luke xii. 6. 7.

lawful to express those desires to Him in a proper manner. And this our Saviour directs us how to do, when He bids us petition for 'our daily bread.'

The word 'bread,' as it frequently signifies in Scripture all sorts of food, so it may very naturally signify, what it doth in this prayer, all sorts of things requisite in human life. This Agur meant, when he prayed, that God would 'feed him with food;' in the original it is 'Bread convenient for him.'^a And this we mean in common discourse, as often as we speak of persons getting their bread. But then it must by no means, be extended beyond things requisite; those, without which we are unable either to subsist at all, or however conveniently and comfortably. Not that desires of further advantages in the world are universally unlawful. But they are so apt to enlarge, and swell into extravagant and sinful passions; into schemes of luxury, or vanity, or covetousness; that we have usually much more need to restrain and check, than authorize them, by asking the accomplishment of them from God; lest we be guilty of what St. James condemns, 'asking amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts.'^b

It is therefore only for such a share of worldly good, as to a reasonable and moderate mind will appear sufficient, that our Saviour allows us here to pray; in the spirit which Agur in the prayer just mentioned, expresses, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'^c For indeed, though the temptations of extreme poverty are very great; yet the tendency of wealth and ease and power, to sensuality and pride and forgetfulness of God, is so exceeding strong, that a well instructed and considerate mind would rather submit, than choose to be placed in a condition of abundance and eminence. For preserving

^a Prov. xxx. 8.

^b James iv. 3.

^c Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

the order, and conducting the affairs of the world, some must be in such stations: but let those who are, look well to their ways; and let none of their inferiours envy them.

It ought to be further observed here, that our blessed Lord hath not only confined us to pray for our bread, but ‘our daily bread;’ to be given us, as we ask for it, day by day; intending, doubtless, to make us remember and acknowledge that our dependence on God is continued, from one moment to another: that they who have the most of this world, have it only during his pleasure; and are bound, both to ask, and receive, every day’s enjoyment of it, as a new gift from Him: while, at the same time, they who have least may be assured, that what He hath commanded them to pray for, He will ordinarily not fail to bestow upon them; by blessing their endeavours, if they are able to use endeavours; or by stirring up the charity of others towards them, if they are not.

But as to those who can labour, industry is the method by which God hath thought fit to give them their bread; and, therefore, by which they ought to seek it. They have no title to it any other way; St. Paul having directed, ‘that if any one will not work, neither should he eat.’^a Nor must they work only to supply their present necessities: but by diligence and frugality, lay up something, if possible, for future exigencies also; learning of the ‘Ant, which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.’^b

So that applying for our daily bread to God, is far from excluding a proper care to use the appointed means of procuring it for ourselves. But if our care be a presumptuous one, and void of regard to the disposer of all things; we provoke him to blast our fairest hopes. And if it be an anxious and distrustful one, we think injuriously of him to whom we pray; who can as easily give us the bread of to-mor-

^a 2 Thess. iii. 10.

^b Prov. vi. 8.

row, as he gave us that of yesterday. Nay, if our worldly cares, though they do not disquiet our minds, yet engross them: if we carry our attention to this world so far as to forget the next; or imagine ourselves to be securer in stores, 'laid up for many years,'^a than in God's good providence; this also is very unsuitable to the spirit, both of our Lord's prayer, and of his whole religion; which commands us to 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,'^b and 'not to trust in uncertain riches, but in Him, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.'^c

I shall only add two observations more, which have been made very justly on this petition:^d that since we ask our bread from God, we ought not to accept it from the devil; that is, to gain our subsistence by any unlawful means: and that, since we do not say, 'Give me my daily bread;' but 'Give us ours;' we entreat God to supply the wants of others, as well as our own. Now the means which He hath provided for supplying the wants of the helpless poor, is the charity of the rich, and to pray Him, that they may be relieved, and yet withhold from them what he hath designed for their relief, is just that piece of inconsistency or hypocrisy which St. James so strongly exposes. 'If a brother, or sister, be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?'^e

From our temporal wants, we proceed next to a much more important concern, our spiritual ones: and here we ask in the first place, what it is very fit we should, pardon and mercy. 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.' The forgiveness of sins having been already explained, under that article of the creed which relates to it, I shall only take notice at present of the argument, which we are directed to use in pleading

^a Luke xii. 19.

^b Matth. vi. 33.

^c 1 Tim. vi. 17.

^d By Bishop Blackhall, ^e James ii. 15, 16.

for it, which is likewise the especial condition of our obtaining it; 'that we also forgive,'^a as we hope to be forgiven. And concerning this, two things ought to be understood: what that forgiveness is, to which we are bound; and how far the exercise of it will avail us.

Now the obligation to forgiveness means, not that the magistrate is to omit punishing malefactors; 'for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil:'^b not that the rulers of the church are to forbear spiritual censures against notorious offenders; for the Scripture hath appointed them for the amendment of sinners, and the preservation of the innocent, when they are likely to have these good effects: not that private persons do amiss in bringing transgressors to justice; for neglecting it would be in general only a seeming kindness to them, and a real mischief to human society: not that we are forbid to make reasonable demands on such, as withhold our dues, or do us any damage; for recovering a debt is a very different thing from revenging an injury: nor lastly, that we are always bound, when persons have behaved ill to us, either to think as well of them as before, which may be impossible: or to trust and favour them as much; which may be unwise. But our obligation to forgive doth mean and absolutely require, that civil governors be moderate and merciful: and ecclesiastical ones make use of discipline 'to edification, not to destruction:'^c that in our private capacity, we pass by all offences, which with safety to ourselves, and the public, we can: that where we must punish, we do it with reluctance; and as gently, as the case will permit; and where we must defend or recover our rights, we do it with the least expense, and the least uneasiness to the adverse party, that may be: that we never be guilty of injustice to others, because they have been guilty of it to us; and never refuse them proper favours mere-

^a Luke xi. 4

^b Rom. xiii. 4

^c 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 10.

ly because we have been refused such favours by them; much less because we have not obtained from them what it was not fit that we should: that we look upon little provocations, as trifles; and be careful, not to think great ones greater than they are: that we be willing to make those, who have displeased us, all such allowance to the full, as our common frailty and ignorance demand: that we always wish well to them; and be ready, as soon as ever we have real cause, to think well of them; to believe their repentance; and, how great or many soever their faults may have been, to accept it; and restore them to as large a share of our kindness and friendship, as any wise and good person, uninterested in the question, would think safe and right: always remembering, in every case of injury, how very apt we are to err on the severe side; and how very much better it is, to err on the merciful one.

This is the temper of forgiveness to our fellow-creatures; and it is plainly a good and fit temper. Let us therefore now consider further, what influence it will have towards our Maker's forgiving us. Our Saviour undoubtedly lays a peculiar stress on it for this purpose; both by inserting it, as a condition, into the body of his prayer; and insisting on it, as a necessary one, in his words immediately after the prayer. But still, we must observe, He doth not mention it as the cause, that procures our forgiveness? for 'God saveth us not by' this, or any other 'works of righteousness, which we do, but according to his mercy, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ; that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs of eternal life.'^a Our pardoning others is no more than a qualification, requisite to our receiving that final pardon from God, which our Saviour, through the divine goodness, hath merited by his death, on that condition. Nor is it the only qualification necessary, though it be a principal one. For the rest of God's laws were given in vain,

^a Tit. iii. 5, 6, 7

if observing this one would secure his favour: and Christ would be found 'the minister of sin,'^a if He had taught, that the single good disposition of forgiveness would be sufficient, let a person have ever so many bad ones. But it is plain, that throughout the whole sermon on the mount, on which this prayer is delivered, He makes the performance of every part of our duty the condition of our acceptance. In the very beginning of it, he hath promised Heaven to several other virtues, as well as here to this; and the meaning is, not that persons may get thither by any one that they will, for nobody sure is so bad as to have none at all, but that each of them shall have its proper share, in fitting us for that mercy and reward, which however with less than all of them, we shall never obtain. Our imperfections in all will indeed be pardoned: but not our continuance in a willful neglect of any.

Still, though a spirit of forgiveness to our brother is by no means the whole that God requires in order to forgive us; yet it is a quality, often so difficult, always so important, and so peculiarly needful to be exercised by us when we are entreating our Maker to exercise it towards us, that our Saviour had great reason to place it in the strong light which he hath done: and even to place it single: since his design could not easily be understood to be any other, than to engage our particular attention to what deserves it so much. For if we will not, for the love of God, and in obedience to his command, pardon our fellow-creatures the few and small injuries, which they are able to do us; (when perhaps we may have done many things to provoke them, and comparatively can have done little to oblige or serve them) how should we ever expect, that He will forgive us the numerous and heinous offences, which we have committed against Him; from whom we have received all that we have, on whom we depend for all that we can

^a Gal. ii. 17.

hope for, to whom therefore we owe the most unre-served duty, and the most affectionate gratitude!

Let us remember then, that since we pray to be forgiven, only as we forgive; so often as we use these words, we pray in effect for God's vengeance upon ourselves, instead of his mercy, if we forgive not. And therefore let us apply to Him continually for grace to do in earnest, what we profess to do in this petition; let us carefully examine our hearts and our conduct, that we may not cheat ourselves, for we cannot cheat God with false pretences of observing this duty, while indeed we transgress it: let us utterly put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as we hope, that God, 'for Christ's sake, will forgive us.'^a

LECTURE XXXIII.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

WE should be very unfit to ask for the pardon of our past sins: and could neither hope to obtain it, nor indeed continue long the better for it; if we did not earnestly desire, at the same time, to avoid sin for the future. And therefore, after the petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' most properly follows, 'and lead us not into temptation.'

The word 'temptation' very often signifies no more, than trial; any opposition or difficulty, that may call forth our virtues into vigorous practice; and, by so doing, both strengthen and make them known: not indeed to God, who always knows our hearts; but to ourselves and others; to those around us at present,

^a Eph. iv. 31, 32.

to all mankind, and the holy Angels hereafter. Now in this general sense, our whole life on earth is, and was intended to be, a state of temptation: in which as the Scriptures express it, God himself tempts, men;^a that is, proves and exercises them. And accordingly, St. James directs us 'to count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations;' adding a very good reason for it; 'Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life; which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.'^b The more love to God we thus shew; the more we exert our inward good principles and habits, and by exerting, improve them; the greater reward we shall obtain. When therefore we say 'Lead us not into temptation;' we do not pray, that we may not be tried at all; for we know, that we must, even for our own good.

But the word here stands for dangerous trials, provocations and enticements to sin; under which we are likely to sink, instead of overcoming them. Now there is indeed scarce any thing in life, that may not be a temptation to us, in this bad sense. Our tempers, our ages, our stations and employments in the world, be they ever so different, may, each in their different ways, risk our innocence. They that are poor, are grievously tempted, either to repine against God; or take unlawful methods of relieving themselves. And 'they, that will be rich,' experience, as well as the Apostle, may teach us, 'fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts.'^c Both adversity and prosperity, business and leisure, company and solitude, have their respective hazards. And sometimes these hazards are so dreadfully heightened by particular circumstances; and, at others, trying incidents, totally unforeseen, happen so unseasonable; that though they may only rouse and animate our virtue; yet they may also, more probably, overbear and destroy it. And therefore

^a Gen. xxvii 1. Deut. iv. 34. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.
1 Tim. vi. 9.

^b James i. 2. 12.

we must know very little of our natural frailty, the strength of our passions, and the 'deceitfulness of sin;'^a if we do not think it the more prudent, as well as modester part, to declare, than venture the conflict, if it be God's will: and do not accordingly beg of Him, that He would 'not lead us into such temptation.'

'God,' indeed, 'tempts no man,'^b in the sense of alluring and inviting him to sin; as the devil, and wicked people, and our own bad hearts do. And therefore to pray, in this sense, that he would 'not lead us into temptation,' would be great irreverence, instead of piety: for it is inconsistent with the holiness of his nature, that He should. But as nothing comes to pass, but with his knowledge and sufferance; and every thing is subject to his direction and superintendency; the Scripture speaks, as if every thing was done by Him, when the meaning, as appears by other passages of it, is only to acknowledge, that nothing is done without Him; and, agreeably to the manner of speaking in the eastern countries, things are ascribed to Him, which He only permits, and afterwards turns to the furtherance of his own good purposes. Now God may very justly permit us to be led into the severest temptations, if we do not pray to Him against it: because a great part of the danger proceeds from that weakness, which we have willfully, or carelessly brought upon ourselves; and prayer is one of the means, that He hath appointed for our preservation and relief: which means if we use as we ought, 'He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.'^c

But if, through pride or negligence, we will not ask for his help, we must not expect it. And though we do for form's sake ask it, if we have little faith in it, or dependence on it, St. James hath foretold

^a Heb. iii. 13.

^b James i. 13.

^c 1 Cor. x. 13.

the event: 'Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.'^a Yet on the other hand, if we carry our dependence so far, as presumptuously to run into those dangers, out of which we beg Him to keep us; or at least, will do little or nothing to keep ourselves out of them, instead of doing every thing that we can; or if in the dangers, in which He may think fit to place us, we will not use our best endeavours to stand, as well as pray that we may not fall; such prayers can never be likely to avail for our protection. But fervent devotion, hearty resolution, and prudent care, united and continued, will do any thing. By whatever difficulties we are surrounded, and how little possibility soever we may see of getting through them: still 'commit thy way unto the Lord, put thy trust in Him, and he shall bring it to pass.'^b

In the second part of this petition, 'but deliver us from evil;' the word 'evil' may signify, either sin and its consequences; or the great tempter to sin, the 'evil' or 'wicked one;' for by that name the devil is often called in the New Testament.^c The number indeed of wicked spirits is probably very great: but notwithstanding this, being united under one head, in one design of obstructing our salvation, they are all comprehended under one name. And since, in our present state of trial, we have not only as experience shews, 'Flesh and blood to wrestle against;' our own bad dispositions, and the solicitations of a bad world, to resist; but also, as the word of God informs us, 'Principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places,'^d an army of invisible enemies, employing to overcome us, and not less formidably because imperceptibly, all the stratagems, that Heaven allows them to use; this, as it increases our danger, may well quicken our prayers for safety and deliverance. That there should be evil angels, as well as evil men, of the greatest abilities and accom-

^a James i. 7.

^b Psalm xxxvii. 5.

^c Matt. xviii. 19, 39.

¹ John ii. 13, 14. iii. 12. v. 18.

^d Eph. vi. 11, 12.

plishments, is, if rightly considered, no great wonder: and that both should incite us to sin, is no reasonable discouragement: for let us but apply to God, and we shall not be left in the power of either. What the power of wicked spirits is, we are not told in Scripture, and it is no part of religion, in the least, to believe idle stories about them. Of this we are sure, that they have no power but what God permits, and He will never permit them to do, what shall prove in the end, any hurt to those, who serve and fear Him. More especially we are sure, that they cannot in the least, either force us into sinning, or hinder us from repenting. Invite or dissuade us they may, by suggesting false notions of the pleasure, or profit, or harmlessness of sin, by representing God, as too good to be angry, or too severe to be reconciled: by describing to our imaginations, repentance to be so easy at any time, that it is needless now: or so difficult now, that it is too late and impossible; by putting it into our thoughts, that we are so good, we may be confident and careless; or so wicked, we must absolutely despair. It concerns us therefore greatly, ‘not to be ignorant of their devices.’^a But provided we keep on our guard; earnestly apply to God, and are true to ourselves; neither their temptations, nor those of the whole world, shall prevail against us. For then only, as St. James gives us to understand, is ‘every man tempted’ dangerously ‘when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.’^b The enemy within therefore is the most formidable one; and against this it is chiefly, that we are to ‘watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation:’ remembering always, that how willing soever the spirit may be, yet ‘the flesh is weak.’^c

And now let us observe, in the last place, under this head, that as we are to pray against being led into temptation ourselves, we should be very careful, never to lead others into it; but do every thing that

^a 2 Cor. ii. 11.

^b James i. 14.

^c Matth. xxvi. 41.

we can, to keep them out of it, and deliver them from it; and that, as begging God's help that we may stand, must be grounded on a strong sense of our proneness to fall: we should shew great compassion towards them, who, through the same proneness, have fallen. 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault; ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'^a

Thus we have gone through the six petitions, which compose the second part of the Lord's prayer; and shewn it to be worthy of its Author, by distinctly comprehending, in so little room, whatever is necessary for the honour of God, and our own good, both temporal and spiritual. What remains further, is, to speak briefly of the third part, which concludes the whole, by ascribing to our heavenly Father, the praise 'due unto his name:'^b acknowledging here more expressly, what indeed hath been throughout implied, that His is the kingdom, the rightful authority and supreme dominion over all: His the power, by which every thing just and good is brought to pass; His therefore the glory of whatever we his creatures do, or enjoy, or hope for; of whatever this universe, and the whole scheme of things which it comprehends, hath had, or now hath, or ever shall have in it, awful or gracious, and worthy of the admiration of men and angels. And as all dignity and might and honours are His; so they are His for ever and ever: originally, independently, and unchangeably. 'From everlasting to everlasting He is God:'^c the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.'^d

These words then are, at once, an act of homage to his greatness, and thanksgiving to his goodness: both which ought ever to have a place in our prayers, and the conclusion is a very proper place. For the infinite perfections of God our Maker, which we thus celebrate, are the best reason possible for every pe-

^a Gal. vi. 1.

^d Heb. xiii. 8.

^b Psalm xxix. 2.

^c Psalm xc. 2.

tition that we have offered to Him; and therefore our blessed Lord introduces them as the reason. 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.' Besides, ending with these acknowledgments will leave them fresh and strong upon our minds: especially as we finish all with that solemn asseveration, Amen; which is a word used in Scripture, only upon serious and important occasions, to confirm the truth and sincerity of what is promised, wished, or affirmed. It relates therefore equally to the whole of the prayer, and is in effect declaring, that we do heartily believe whatever we have said, and heartily desire whatever we have asked.

This expression therefore may remind us, that our prayers should always be composed, both in such a language, and in such words in that language, as all that are to use or join in them, are well acquainted with. For else, as St. Paul argues, 'How shall he, that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say, Amen: seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?'

And it should likewise remind us very strongly of another thing, if possible, yet more important: that we should never say to God, what we cannot say with the utmost truth of heart. Now with what truth, or what face, can any person, that lives in any sin repeat the prayer which our Lord hath taught us, and say Amen to it; when every sentence in it, if well considered, is inconsistent with a bad life? Let us therefore consider both it and ourselves very carefully, that we may offer up our devotions always in an acceptable manner. For 'the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.'

^a 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

^b Prov. xv. 8.

LECTURE XXXIV.

The nature and number of the Sacraments.

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

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

^a Eden Elem. Jur. Civ. p. 238. Gronov. in Plaut. Rud. 5. 3. 21

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

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

3. In order to entitle any thing to the name of sacrament, a further requisite is, that it be 'ordained by Christ himself.' We may indeed use, on the foot of human authority alone, actions, that set forth either our sense of any duty, or our belief in God's grace. For it is certainly as lawful to express a good meaning by any other proper sign as by words. But then, such marks as these, which we commonly call ceremonies, as they are taken up at pleasure, may be laid aside again at pleasure; and ought to be laid aside, whenever they grow too numerous, or abuses are made of them, which cannot easily be reformed; and this hath frequently been the case. But sacraments are of perpetual obligation: for they stand on the authority of Christ, who hath certainly appointed nothing to be for ever observed in his church, but what he saw would be forever useful. Nor doth every appointment of Christ, though it be of perpetual ob-

ligation, deserve the name of a sacrament: but those, and no other, which are,

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

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

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

5. A sacrament is not only a sign or representation of some heavenly favor, and a means whereby we receive it, but also 'a pledge to assure us thereof.' Not that any thing can give us a greater assurance, in point of reason, of any blessing from God, than

his bare promise can do: but that such observances, appointed in token of his promises, affect our imaginations with a stronger sense of them, and make a deeper and more lasting and therefore more useful, impression on our minds. For this cause, in all nations of the world, representations by actions have ever been used, as well as words, upon solemn occasions: especially upon entering into and renewing treaties and covenants with each other. And therefore, in condescension to a practice, which, being so universal among men, appears to be founded in the nature of man: God hath graciously added to his Covenant also, the solemnity of certain outward instructive performances; by which he declares to us, that as surely as our bodies are washed by water, and nourished by bread broken, and wine poured fourth and received; so surely are our souls purified from sin by the baptism of repentance; and strengthened in all goodness, by partaking of that mercy, which the wounding of the body of Christ, and the shedding of his blood, hath obtained for us. And thus these religious actions, so far as they are performed by God's minister, in pursuance of his appointment, are an earnest and pledge on his part, which (as I observed to you) was one ancient signification of the word Sacrament: and so far as we join in them, they are an obligation, binding like an oath, on our part, as shall be hereafter shewn you: which was the other primitive meaning of the word.

Having thus explained to you the description of a Sacrament, given in the Catechism; let us now consider, what things we have in our religion that answer to it. For the Papists reckon no less than seven Sacraments. And though this number was not named for above 1000 years after Christ; nor fixed by the authority of even their own church, till 200 years ago, that is, since the reformation; yet now they accuse us, for not agreeing with them in it, but acknowledging only two.

The first of their five is Confirmation. And if

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

Another Sacrament of the church of Rome is Penance: which they make to consist of particular confession to the priest of every deadly sin, particular absolution from him, and such acts of devotion, mortification, or charity, as he shall think fit to enjoin. But no one part of this being required in Scripture, much less any outward sign of it appointed, or any inward grace annexed to it; there is nothing in the whole that hath any appearance of a Sacrament; but too much suspicion of a contrivance to gain an undue influence and power.

A third Sacrament of theirs is, extreme Unction.

^a Mark x. 16.

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

Another thing, which they esteem a christian Sacrament, is Matrimony: though it was ordained, not by Christ, but long before his appearance on earth, in the time of man’s innocency; and hath no outward sign appointed in it, as a means and pledge of inward grace. But the whole matter is, that they have happened most ridiculously to mistake their own Latin translation of the New Testament; where St. Paul, having compared the union between the first married pair, Adam and Eve, to that between

^a Jam. v. 14, 15.
Mark xi. 23.

^b Mark vi. 13.

^c Matth. xvii. 20. xxi. 21.

Christ, the second Adam, and his spouse the Church; and having said that ‘this is a great mystery;’^a a figure, or comparison, not fully and commonly understood: the old interpreter, whose version they use, for ‘Mystery’ hath put ‘Sacrament:’ which in his days, as I said before, signified any thing in religion that carried a hidden meaning: and they have understood him of what we now call a Sacrament.—Whereas if every thing, that once had that name in the larger sense of the word, were at present to have it in the stricter sense; there would be an hundred Sacraments, instead of the seven, which they pretend there are.

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

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

^a Eph. v. 32.

LECTURE XXXV.

Of Baptism.

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

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

As to the former: Baptism being intended for the sign and means of our purification from sin; water, the proper element for purifying and cleansing, is appointed to be used in it. There is indeed a sect, sprung up amongst us within a little more than a hundred years, that deny this appointment: and

make the christian Baptism signify only the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon a person. But our Saviour expressly requires that we be ‘born of water,’ as well as ‘of the spirit, to enter into the kingdom of God.’^a And not only John, his forerunner, ‘Baptized with water;’^b but his disciples also, by his direction, Baptized in the same manner, even ‘more than John.’^c When therefore He bade them afterwards ‘teach all nations, baptizing them;’^d what Baptism could they understand, but that, in which he had employed them before? And accordingly, we find they did understand that. Philip, we read, Baptized the Samaritans:^e not with the Holy Ghost, for the apostles went down some time after to do that themselves:^f but with water undoubtedly, as we find, in the same chapter, he did the Eunuch; where the words are, ‘here is water: what doth hinder me to be Baptized? And they went down to the water: and he Baptized him.’^g Again, after Cornelius, and his friends, had received the Holy Ghost, and so were already Baptized in that sense, Peter asks, ‘can any man forbid water that these should not be Baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?’^h When therefore John says, that ‘he Baptized with water, but Christ should Baptize with the Holy Ghost;’ⁱ he means, not that christians should not be Baptized with water, but that they should have the Holy Ghost poured out upon them also, in a degree that John’s disciples had not. When St. Peter says, ‘the Baptism, which saveth us, is not the washing away the filth of the flesh;’^j he means, it is not the mere outward act, unaccompanied by a suitable inward disposition. When St. Paul says, that ‘Christ sent him not to Baptize, but to preach the gospel;’^k he means, that preaching was the principal thing he was to do in person: to baptize, he might appoint others under him: and it seems, commonly did: as

^a John iii. 5. ^b Matth. iii. 11. ^c John iv. 1, 2. ^d Matth. xxviii. 19.
^e Acts viii. 12. ^f Verse 14, &c. ^g Verse 36, 38. ^h Acts x. 47.
ⁱ Matth. iii. 11. ^j 1 Pet. iii. 21. ^k 1 Cor. i. 17.

St. Peter did not Baptize Cornelius and his friends himself, but ‘commanded them to be Baptized:’^a and we read in St. John, that ‘Jesus Baptized not, but his disciples.’^b

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

The precise manner in which water shall be applied in Baptism, Scripture hath not determined.— For the word, Baptize, means only to wash; whether that be done by plunging a thing under water, or pouring the water upon it. The former of these; burying as it were, the person Baptized, in the water, and raising him out of it again, without question was anciently the more usual method: on account of which, St. Paul speaks of Baptism, as representing both the death, and burial, and resurrection of Christ, and what is grounded on them, our being ‘dead and buried to sin; renouncing it, and being acquitted of it; and our rising again, to ‘walk in newness of life;’^c being both obliged and enabled to practice for the future, every duty of piety and virtue. But still the other manner of washing, by pouring or sprinkling of water, sufficiently expresses the same two things: our being by this ordinance purified from the guilt of sin, and bound and qualified to keep ourselves pure from the defilement of it. Besides, it very naturally represents that ‘sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ,’^d to which our salvation is owing. And the use of it seems not only to be foretold by the prophet Isaiah, speaking of our Saviour, ‘He shall sprinkle many nations,’^e that is, many shall receive his baptism; and by the prophet Ezekiel, ‘then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:’^f but to be had in view also by the apostle, where he speaks of

^a Acts x. 48.

^b John iv. 2

^c Rom. vi. 4, 11. Col. ii. 12.

^d 1 Pet. i. 2.

^e Isaiah lii. 15.

^f Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

‘having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.’^a And though it was less frequently used in the first ages, it must almost of necessity have been sometimes used: for instance, when baptism was administered, as we read in the Acts, it was, to several thousands at once;^b when it was administered on a sudden in private houses, as we find it, in the same book, to the gaoler and all his family the very night in which they were converted:^c or when sick persons received it; in which last case, the present method was always taken, because the other, of dipping them, might have been dangerous. And from the same apprehension of danger in these colder countries, pouring the water is allowed, even when the person baptized is in health. And the particular manner being left at liberty, that is now universally chosen, which is looked on as safer: because were there more to be said for the other than there is; God ‘will have mercy, and not sacrifice.’^d

But washing with water is not the whole outward part of this Sacrament. For our Saviour commanded his apostles, not only to ‘baptize all nations,’ but to ‘baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’^e Sometimes indeed the Scripture speaks of Baptism, as if it were administered only ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus.’^f But it fully appears,^g that the name of the Holy Ghost was used at the same time; and therefore that of the Father, we may be sure. Now being baptized ‘in the name’ of these three, may signify, being baptized by virtue of their authority. But the exacter translation is, ‘into the name:’ and the fuller import of the expression is, by this solemn action taking upon us their name; (for servants are known by the name of their master) and professing ourselves devoted to the faith, and worship, and obedience of these

^a Heb. x. 22.

^b Acts ii. 41.

^c Acts xvi. 33.

^d Hos. vi. 6. Matth. ix. 13. xii. 7.

^e Matth. xxviii. 19.

^f Acts ii. 38. x. 48, xix. 5.

^g Acts xix. 2, 3.

three; our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier.— In this profession the whole of christianity is briefly comprehended, and on this foundation therefore the ancient Creeds are all built.

The second and principal thing in Baptism, ‘the inward and spiritual grace,’ is said in the Catechism to be, ‘a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for that being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.’ The former part of these words refers to the old custom of baptizing by dipping, just now mentioned: and the meaning of the whole is this: our first parents having by disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, corrupted their own nature; ours, being derived from them, received of necessity an original taint of the same disorder: and therefore coming into the world, under the ill effects of their sin: and being from the time of our entering into it, prone to sin ourselves: we are said to be ‘born in sin.’ And they having also, by the same disobedience, forfeited their immortality: we, as descended from them, became mortal of course: and inheriting by way of natural consequence, what they suffered as a mark of God’s wrath; we, their children, are said to be ‘children of wrath.’ Not that God, with whatever disapprobation he must view our native depravity, is, or, properly speaking, can be, angry with us personally, for what was not our personal fault. But he might undoubtedly both refuse us that immortality, which our first parents had forfeited, and to which we have no right; and leave us without help, to the poor degree of strength, that remained to us in our fallen condition; the effect of which must have been that had we done our best, as we were entitled to no reward from his justice, so it had been such a nothing, that we could have hoped for little, if any, from his bounty; and had we not done our best, as no man hath, we had no assurance, that even repentance would secure us from punishment. But what in strict justice he might have done, in his infinite goodness

he hath not done. For the first covenant being broken by Adam, he hath entered into a new one with mankind, through Jesus Christ: in which he hath promised to free us, both from the mortality, which our first parents had brought upon us, by restoring us to life again; and from the inability, by the powerful assistance of his holy spirit. Nay, further yet, he hath promised, (and without it the rest would have been of small use) that should we, notwithstanding his assistance, fail in our duty, when we might have performed it; as we have all failed, and made ourselves, by that means, 'children of wrath,' in the strictest and worst sense: yet, on most equitable terms, he would still receive us to mercy anew, and thus the christian covenant, delivering us, if we are faithful to it, from every thing we had to fear, and bestowing on us every thing we could hope, brings us into a state so unspeakably different from our former; that it is justly expressed by being dead to that and born into another. And this new birth being effected by the grace or goodness of God external and internal, we, the children of it, are properly called 'the children of grace.' Now Baptism is not only a sign of this grace: (as indeed it signifies very naturally the washing off both of our original corruption, and our actual guilt) by the appointed way of entering into the covenant that entitles us to such grace; but the 'means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.'

Indeed the mere outward act of being baptized is, as St. Peter, in the words already mentioned, very truly expresses it, the mere 'putting away of the filth of the flesh;' unless it be made effectual to save us, as he teaches in the same place it must, by the 'answer of a good conscience towards God;'^a that is, by the sincere stipulation and engagement of 'repentance, whereby we forsake sin; and faith, whereby we believe the promises of God made to us in that

^a 1 Pct. iii. 21.

Sacrament. For it is impossible that he should forgive our past sins, unless we are sorry for them, and resolved to quit them; and it is as impossible that we should quit them effectually, unless a firm persuasion of his helping and rewarding us, excite and support our endeavors. These two things therefore we see our Catechism justly mentions as necessary, in answer to the question, 'What is required of persons to be baptized?' Both having been explained in their proper place, and therefore I enlarge on neither here.

But hence arises immediately another question: if these conditions are necessary, 'why are infants baptized when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?' And as this difficulty appears to some a great one, I shall give a fuller solution of it than the shortness of a Catechism would easily permit. Repentance and faith are requisite, not before they are possible, but when they are possible. Repentance is what infants need not as yet, being clear of personal guilt: and happy would it be, were they never to need it. Faith, it may be reasonably presumed, by the security given for their christian education, they will have, as soon as they have occasion to exert it. And in the mean time, Baptism may very fitly be administered: because God, on his part, can certainly express by it, both his removing at present the disadvantages which they lie under by the sin of Adam: and his removing hereafter, on proper conditions, the disadvantages which they may come to lie under by their own sins. And though they cannot, on their parts, expressly promise to perform these conditions; yet they are not only bound to perform them, whether they promise it or not: but (which is the point that our Catechism insists on) their sureties promise for them, that they shall be made sensible, as soon as may be, that they are so bound; and ratify the engagement in their own persons: which when they do, it then becomes complete. For it is by no means necessary, that a covenant should

be executed by both the parties to it, at just the same time: and as the christian covenant is one of the greatest equity and favour, we cannot 'doubt', to speak in the language of our Liturgy, 'but that God favorably alloweth the charitable work of bringing infants to his holy baptism.' For the promise of the covenant being expressly said to belong 'to us and to our children,'^a without any limitation of age; why should they not all, since they are to partake of the promise, partake also of the sign of it? especially since the infants of the Jews were, by a solemn sign, entered into their covenant: and the infants of proselytes to the Jews, by this very sign, amongst others of baptism. So that supposing the Apostles to imitate either of these examples, as they naturally would unless they were forbid, which they were not; when they baptized (as the Scripture, without making any exception, tells us they did) whole families at once; ^b we cannot question but they baptized (as we know the primitive christians, their successors, did) little children amongst the rest; concerning whom our Saviour says, that 'of such is the kingdom of God,' ^c and St. Paul says, 'they are holy;'^d which they cannot be reputed, without entering into the gospel covenant: and the only appointed way of entering into it is by baptism: which therefore is constantly represented in the New Testament as necessary to salvation.

Not that such converts, in ancient times, as were put to death for their faith, before they could be baptized, lost their reward for want of it. Not that such children of believers now as die unbaptized by sudden illness, or unexpected accidents, or even by neglect, (since it is none of their own neglect) shall forfeit the advantages of baptism. This would be very contrary to that mercy and grace, which abounds through the whole of the gospel dispensation. Nay, where the persons themselves do de-

^a Acts ii. 39.

^b Acts xvi. 15, 33.

^c Mark x. 14.

^d 1 Cor. vii. 14.

signedly, through mistaken notions, either delay their baptism, as the Anabaptists; or omit it entirely, as the Quakers, even of these it belongs to christian charity not to judge hardly, as excluded from the gospel covenant, if they die unbaptized; but to leave them to the equitable judgment of God. Both of them indeed err: and the latter especially have, one should think, as little excuse for their error as well can be: for surely there is no duty of christianity which stands on a plainer foundation, than that of baptizing with water in the name of the holy trinity. But still, since they solemnly declare, that they believe in Christ, and desire to obey his commands; and omit water-baptism only because they cannot see it is commanded; we ought (if we have cause to think they speak truth) by no means to consider them in the same light with total unbelievers.

But the willful and the careless despisers of this ordinance: who, admitting it to be of God's appointment, neglect it notwithstanding: these are not to be looked on as within this covenant. And such as, though they do observe it for form's sake, treat it as an empty insignificant ceremony, as very unworthy of the benefits which it was intended to convey. And, bad as these things are, little better, if not worse, will be the case of those, who, acknowledging the solemn engagements into which they have entered by this sacrament, live without care to make them good. For to the only valuable purpose, of Gods favor and eternal happiness, he is not a christian, which is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh: but he is a christian, who is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.^a

^a Rom. ii. 28, 29.

LECTURE XXXVI.

OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

PART I.

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

Indeed every act, both of worship and obedience, is in some sense a sacrifice to God, humbly offered up to Him for his acceptance. And this sacrament in particular, being a memorial and representation of the sacrifice of Christ, solemnly and religiously made, may well enough be called, in a figurative way of speaking, by the same name with what it commemorates and represents. But that he should be really and literally offered up in it, is the directest contradiction that can be, not only to common sense, but also to Scripture, which expressly says, that He was not to be 'offered often, for then must He often have suffered; but hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,'^a and after that, 'for ever sat down on the right hand of God: for by one

^a Heb. ix. 25, 26.

offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.^b

This ordinance then was appointed, not to repeat, but to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ; which though we are required to, and do accordingly, more or less explicitly, in all our acts of devotion, yet we are not required to do it by any visible representation but that of the Lord's Supper: of which therefore our Catechism teaches, in the second answer, that 'the outward part, or sign, is bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.' And indeed He hath so clearly commanded both to be received, that no reasonable defence in the least can be made, either for the sect usually called Quakers, who omit this sacrament entirely: or for the Church of Rome, who deprive the laity of one half of it, the cup; and forbid all but the priest to do, what Christ hath appointed all without exception to do. They plead indeed, that all, whom Christ appointed to receive the cup, that is, the Apostles, were priests. But their church forbids the priests themselves to receive it, excepting those who perform the service: which the Apostles did not perform but their Master. And besides, if the appointment of receiving the cup belongs only to priests, that of receiving the bread too must relate only to priests: for our Saviour hath more expressly directed all to drink of the one, than to eat of the other. But they own that his appointment obliges the laity to receive the bread: and therefore it obliges them to receive the cup also: which that they did accordingly, I. Cor. xi. makes as plain as words can make any thing: nor was it refused them for 1200 years after. They plead farther, that administering the holy sacrament is called in Scripture 'breaking of bread,' without mentioning the cup at all. And we allow it. But when common feasts are expressed in Scripture by the single phrase of 'eating bread,' surely this doth not

^b Heb. x. 12, 14.

prove, that the guests drank nothing: and if in this religious feast, the like phrase could prove, that the laity did not partake of the cup, it will prove equally, that the priests did not partake of it either. They plead in the last place, that by receiving the bread, which is the body of Christ, we receive in effect the cup, which is the blood at the same time; for the blood is contained in the body. But here, besides that our Saviour, who was surely the best judge, appointed both, they quite forget, that this sacrament is a memorial of his blood being shed out of his body: of which, without the cup, there can be no commemoration: or if there could, the cup would be as needless for the clergy as for the laity.

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

^a 1 Cor. v. 7.

teaches, are ‘the inward part’ of this sacrament, ‘or the thing signified.’

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

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

doctrines. For no reasonings are ever to be minded against plain common sense.

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

We own that our Saviour says, 'This is my body which is broken;'^a and 'This is my blood which is shed.'^b But He could not mean literally. For as yet his body was not broken, nor his blood shed: nor is either of them in that condition now. And therefore the bread and wine neither could then, nor can now, be turned into them, as such. Besides our Saviour said at the same time, 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood.'^c Was the substance of the cup then changed into the New Testament? And if not, why are we to think the substance of the bread and wine changed into his body and blood? The Apostle says, the rock, that supplied the Israelites with water in the wilderness, was Christ:^d that is, represented Him. Every body says, such a picture is such a person, meaning the representation of Him. Why then may not our Saviour's words mean so too?

The Romanists object, that though what represents a thing naturally, or by virtue of a preceding institution, may be called by its name, yet such a figure as this, in the words of a new institution, would not be intelligible.^e But the representation here is

^a 1 Cor. xi. 24.

^b Matth. xxvi. 28.

^c Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25.

^d 1 Cor. x. 4.

^e Preuves de la Religion, vol. iv. p. 166.

natural enough; and though the institution was new, figurative speech was old. And the Apostles would certainly rather interpret their Master's words by a very usual figure, than put the absurdest sense upon them that could be. They object further, that if He had not meant literally, He would have said, not *this*, but *this bread*, is my body.^a But we may better argue, that if He had meant literally, He would have said in the strongest terms, that he did. For there was great need, surely, of such a declaration. But we acknowledge, that the bread and wine are more than a representation of his body and blood: they are the means, by which the benefits, arising from them, are conveyed to us; and have thence a further title to be called by their name. For so the instrument, by which a prince forgives an offender, is called his pardon, because it conveys his pardon: the delivery of a writing is called giving possession of an estate;^b and a security for a sum of money, is called the sum itself; and is so in virtue and in effect, though it is not in the strictness of speech, and reality of substance. Again: our Saviour, we own, says in St. John that 'He is the bread of life;' that 'His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed;' that 'whoso eateth the one and drinketh the other, hath eternal life:' and that, without doing it, 'we have no life in us.'^c But this, if understood literally, would prove, not that the bread in the sacrament was turned into his flesh, but that his flesh was turned into bread. And therefore it is not to be understood literally, as indeed he himself gives notice: 'The flesh profiteth nothing; the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;' ^d it is not the gross and literal, but the figurative and spiritual, eating and drinking; the partaking by a lively faith of an union with me, and being inwardly nourished by the fruits of my offering up my flesh

^a Preuves de la Religion, vol. iv. p. 163.

^c John vi. 48, 53, 54, 55.

^b See Cod. 8, 54, 1.

^d Ver. 63.

and blood for you, that alone can be of benefit to the soul.

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

This real presence of Christ in the sacrament, his church hath always believed. But the monstrous notion of his bodily presence was started seven hundred years after his death: and arose chiefly from the indiscretion of preachers and writers of warm imaginations, who instead of explaining judiciously the

^a Eph. v. 30.

lofty figures of Scripture language, heightened them, and went beyond them; till both it and they had their meaning mistaken most astonishingly. And when once an opinion had taken root, that seemed to exalt the holy sacrament so much, it easily grew and spread: and the more for its wonderful absurdity, in those ignorant and superstitious ages: till at length, five hundred years ago, and twelve hundred years after our Saviour's birth, it was established for a gospel truth by the pretended authority of the Romish church. And even this had been tolerable in comparison, if they had not added idolatrous practice to erroneous belief; worshipping, on their knees, a bit of bread for the Son of God. Nor are they content to do this themselves, but with most unchristian cruelty, curse and murder those, who refuse it.

It is true, we also kneel at the sacrament, as they do: but for a very different purpose; not to acknowledge 'any corporeal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood;' as our church, to prevent all possibility of misconstruction expressly declares; adding, that 'His body is in Heaven, and not here:' but to worship Him, who is every where present, the invisible God. And this posture of kneeling we by no means look upon, as in itself, necessary: but as a very becoming appointment; and very fit to accompany the prayers and praises, which we offer up at the instant of receiving; and to express that inward spirit of piety and humility, on which our partaking worthily of this ordinance, and receiving benefit from it, depend. But the benefits of the holy sacrament, and the qualifications for it, shall, God willing, be the subject of two other discourses. In the mean time 'consider what hath been said; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.'^a

^a 2 Tim. ii. 7.

LECTURE XXXVII.

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART II.

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

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

Indeed the due preparation for it, the self examination required in order to it, and the religious exercises which that examination will of course point

out to us, must previously be of great service: as you will see, when I come to that head. And the actual participation will add further advantages of unspeakable value.

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

^a Gal. iii. 1.

^b 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

mandments;^a he knew the motive was no less engaging, than it is reasonable. And therefore, he adds, very soon after, ‘if a man love me, he will keep my words.’^b

But this institution carries in it a yet further tie upon us; being, as our blessed Lord himself declared, ‘the New Testament in his blood:’^c the memorial and acknowledgment of the second covenant between God and Man, which was founded on his death; and requires a sincere faith and obedience on our part, as the condition of grace and mercy on his. ‘Every one that nameth the name of Christ,’ is bound to ‘depart from iniquity.’^d But the obligation is redoubled on them who come to his table as friends, and ‘make a covenant with him, by partaking of his ‘sacrifice.’^e If these live wickedly, it is declaring with the boldest contempt, that they consider ‘Christ as the minister of sin;’^f and ‘count the blood of the covenant,’ wherewith they profess to be ‘sanctified, an unholy thing.’^g Partaking therefore of this holy ordinance is renewing, in the most awful manner, our engagements to the service which we owe, as well as our claims to the favors, that God hath promised. It is our sacrament, our oath, to be faithful ‘soldiers’^h under the great ‘captain of our salvation:’ which surely we cannot take thus, without being efficaciously influenced to the religious observance of it, in every part of a christian life.

But there is one part especially, and one of the utmost importance, to which this institution peculiarly binds us, that of universal good-will and charity. For commemorating, in so solemn an action, the love of Christ to us all, cannot but move us to that mutual imitation of his love, which, just before his appointing this holy Sacrament, he so earnestly and affectionately enjoined his followers, as the distinguishing badge of their profession. ‘This is my command-

^a John xiv. 15.

^b Psalm l. 5.

^c Heb. ii. 10.

^d Ver. 23.

^e Gal. ii. 17.

^f Luke xxii. 20.

^g Heb. x. 29.

^h 2 Tim. ii. 19.

ⁱ 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

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

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

And as this Sacrament will naturally strengthen us in all these good dispositions, we cannot doubt but God will add his blessing to the use of such proper means, especially being appointed means. For since he hath threatened punishment to unworthy receivers, he will certainly bestow rewards on worthy ones. Our Saviour hath told us, that 'his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed:'^e sustenance and refreshment to the souls of men. When he blessed

^a John xv. 12, 13, 14.

^b John xiii. 35.

^c 1 Cor. x. 17.

^d Tit. iii. 3, 5, 6.

^e John vi. 55.

the bread and wine, he undoubtedly prayed, and not in vain, that they might be effectual for the good purposes, which he designed should be attained by this holy rite. And St. Paul hath told us, if it needs, more expressly, that ‘the cup which we bless, is the communion,’ that is, the communication to us, ‘of the blood of Christ; and the bread, which we break, of the body of Christ:’^a that is, of a saving union with him, and therefore of the benefits procured us by his death; which are, forgiveness of our offences; for he hath said, ‘this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins:’^b increase of the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost; for the apostle hath said, plainly speaking of this ordinance, that ‘we are all made to drink into one spirit:’^c and everlasting life: for ‘whoso eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him, and He will raise him up at the last day:’^d whence a Father of the apostolic age, Ignatius, calls the Eucharist, ‘the medicine of immortality; a preservative, that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ.’^e

But then what hath been already hinted to you must be always carefully observed; that these benefits are to be expected only from partaking worthily of it: ‘for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,’ St. Paul hath told us, ‘is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,’^f that is, guilty of irreverence towards it, ‘and eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.’^g Our translation indeed hath it, ‘damnation to himself.’ But there is so great danger of this last word being understood here in too strong a sense, that it would be much safer, and exacter, to translate it, (as it is often translated elsewhere, and once in a few verses after this passage, and from what follows ought undeniably to be translated here) judgment or condemnation: not to certain punishment in another life, but

^a 1 Cor. x. 16.

^b Matth. xxvi. 28.

^c 1 Cor. xii. 13.

^d John vi. 54, 56. ^e Ign. ad Eph. c. 20. See Waterland on the Euch. p. 217.

^f 1 Cor. xi. 27.

^g 1 Cor. xi. 29.

to such marks of God's displeasure as he sees fit; which will be confined to this world, or extended to the next, as the case requires. For 'receiving unworthily' may, according to the kind and degree of it, be either a very great sin, or comparatively a small one. But all dangerous kinds and degrees may with ease be avoided, if we only take care to come to the Sacrament with proper dispositions, and which will follow of course, to behave at it in a proper manner.

To these dispositions our Catechism proceeds. But more is needful to be known concerning them than can well be laid before you now. Therefore I shall conclude at present by desiring you to observe, that no unworthiness, but our own, can possibly endanger us, or prevent our receiving benefit. Doubtless it would both be more pleasing and more edifying, to come to 'the table of the Lord'^a in company with such only as are qualified for a place at it: and they who are unqualified, ought when they properly can, to be restrained from it. But we have neither direction nor permission to stay away, because others come who should not: nor can they ever be so effectually excluded, but that 'tares' will be mixed 'among the wheat:' and attempting to 'root them up' may often be more hurtful than 'letting both grow together until the harvest.'^b Nay, should even the 'stewards' and dispensers 'of God's mysteries'^c be unholy persons, though it be a grievous temptation to others to 'abhor the offering of the Lord,'^d yet that is holy still. 'They shall bear their iniquity:' but, notwithstanding, 'all the promises' of all God's ordinances 'are yea and amen,' sure and certain, 'in Jesus Christ'^e to as many as 'worship him in spirit and in truth.'^f

^a 1 Cor. x. 21.

^d 1 Sam. ii. 17.

^b Matth. xiii. 29, 30.

^e 2 Cor. i. 20.

^c 1 Cor. iv. 2.

^f John iv. 23.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART III.

WHAT qualifications and dispositions are required of them who come to the Lord's Supper, the Scripture hath not particularly expressed: for they are easily collected from the nature of this ordinance. But our Catechism, in its fifth and last answer concerning it, hath reduced them very justly to three: Repentance, Faith, and Charity.

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

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

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

^a 1 John i. 6.

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

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

^a Rom. xiv. 1.
^d Luke xvii. 5.

^b Mark ix. 24.
^e Col. ii. 7.

^c Rom. iv. 20.
^f James ii. 17.

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

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

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

III. That we 'be in charity with all men.' For we can have no share in the love of our creator, our redeemer, and sanctifier, unless, in imitation of it, we love one another: and, as the goodness of God is universal, so must ours. Receiving the holy communion was indeed intended to increase the degree of it: but the reality we must have, before we are worthy to receive. And we must shew it is real, by 'forgiving them who trespass against us;' by assisting, as far as can be reasonably expected, those who need assistance of any kind; by our hearty prayers for those, whom we can help no other way; by faithfully

^a 1 John v. 3.

performing the duties of our several stations and relations in life; and by condescension, mildness, and humanity, towards every person, as occasion offers: all which duties, and particularly that of forgiveness, have been explained to you in their proper places.

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

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

^a 1 Cor. xi. 28

tions, resolutions, and devotions. But then in the whole of this work, we must be careful, neither to hurry over any part thoughtlessly, nor lengthen it wearisomely. And in our examination we must be especially careful, neither to flatter nor yet to affright ourselves; but observe impartially what is right in us, thank God, and take the comfort of it; acknowledge what is wrong, beg pardon, and amend it. For without amendment, being ever so sorry will avail nothing.

The last thing, to be mentioned in relation to this holy sacrament, is our behaviour at it; which ought to be very serious and reverent; such as may shew, in the properest manner, that to use the Apostle's words, we discern or distinguish 'the Lord's body;' ^a look on the action of receiving it, as one of no common nature, but as the religious memorial of our blessed Saviour's dying for us, and by his death establishing with us a covenant of pardon, grace, and everlasting felicity on God's part, and of faith and holiness on ours. With this important consideration, we should endeavor to affect our hearts deeply and tenderly: yet neither to force our minds, if we could, into immoderate transports, by which we shall only bewilder and lose, instead of benefiting ourselves; nor express even what we ought to feel, by any improper singularities of gesture; nor yet be dejected, if we have less feeling, and even less attention to the service, than we have reason to wish. For such things may be, in a great measure at least, natural and unavoidable. Or, supposing them faults; they may be, and often are, the faults of such persons, as notwithstanding are, on the whole, very worthy communicants. They may be, for a time, useful means of keeping us humble and watchful: after that, God may deliver us from them; and should we continue all our lives afflicted with them, it would never hinder our receiving all the necessary benefits of this ordinance.

^a 1 Cor. xi. 29.

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

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE CONCLUSION.

HAVING now, through God's mercy, carried on these Lectures to the end of the Catechism, and in some measure explained to you every part of christian faith, and duty comprehended in it, I have only one instruction more to add, but the most important of all for you to remember and consider well: that 'if ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them;'^b and miserable are ye, if ye do them not.

We all know indeed by nature, in a great degree, what manner of persons we ought to be in this world: and therefore, if we fail of being such, are in a great degree inexcusable. For how little teaching soever some may have had; yet our Saviour's home question will reach even them: 'Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?'^c 'The work of the law is written in the hearts' (of men,) 'their conscience also bearing witness.'^d Being reasonable creatures, we are evidently bound to govern our passions, appetites, fancies, and whole behaviour, by the rules of reason. And who doth not see, that sobriety, temperance, and modesty, are things perfectly reasonable; and excess, and dissoluteness, and indecency, mischievous and shameful? Being social creatures, we are as evidently bound to whatever will make society happy. And since we are very sensi-

^a Jude, ver. 20, 21:

^b John xiii. 17.

^c Luke xii. 57.

^d Rom. ii. 15.

ble, that others ought to treat us with justice and kindness, peaceably mind their own business, and diligently provide for their own maintenance, we cannot but be sensible, that we ought to do the same things. Then lastly, being creatures capable of knowing our Creator, who 'is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being:'^a it follows very clearly, that we are not to forget Him, but worship and obey him as the all-mighty, all-wise, and all-good Maker and Lord of the universe; acknowledge our dependence on Him, be thankful to Him for his mercies, and resign ourselves to his disposal.

Thus much, one should have thought, all men must have known, without supernatural teaching: and certainly they might, and therefore are justly blamable and punishable, if they do not. But still it hath appeared in fact wherever men have been left to their own reason, neither every one hath taught himself, nor the wiser part of the world taught the rest, even these plain things: so as to produce any steady regard to them, as duties, or even any settled conviction of them, as truths. And for want of it, sin and misery have prevailed every where. Men have made others and themselves wretched in numberless ways: and often doubly wretched by the reflections of their own hearts; knowing they had done ill, and not knowing how to be sure of pardon.

Foreseeing from eternity these dreadful consequences of human ignorance and wickedness, God provided suitable remedies of instruction and grace: which he notified to the world from time to time, as his own unsearchable wisdom saw would be fittest; increasing the light gradually, till it shone out in the full day of christianity. But revelation, as well as reason, hath been given in vain to a great part of mankind. The propagation of it through the earth hath been strangely neglected: in many places,

^a Acts xvii. 27, 28.

where it hath been received, it hath been lost again: and in too many, where it is retained, it is grievously corrupted and obscured. Without question, we ought to judge as charitably as we can of all who are in any of these conditions: but at the same time we ought, from the bottom of our hearts, to thank God that none of them is our own. Undoubtedly He is and will be gracious to all his creatures, as far as they are fit objects: but it is ‘the riches of his grace,’^a that He hath bestowed on us, and as, with justice, He might dispose of his own free gifts as He pleased: so, in mercy, He hath conferred a large proportion of them on this nation and age. Blessings, that are common and familiar, though indeed much the greater for that, are usually but little regarded. And thus, amongst other things, the opportunities, that we enjoy of religious knowledge, it may be feared, are often very lightly esteemed. But would we reflect how much less means of being acquainted with the duties of this life, and the rewards of another, not only the unenlightened heathen world, but the Jews, the people of God, had formerly; and much the greatest part even of christians have had for numbers of successive generations, and have still, than we: it would make us feel, that our Saviour’s words belong to us also: ‘Verily, I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.’^b

But then, and for the sake of God and our souls, let us observe it; if, ‘seeing we see not, and hearing we hear not;’^c to the only good purpose of life, that of becoming in heart and in practice, such as we ought; ‘better had it been for us, not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered

^a Eph. i. 7. ii. 7.

^b Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

^c Matth. xiii. 13.

unto us.^a ‘For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required. The servant, that knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: he that knew it not, with few.’^b But take notice: he that in comparison with others, may be said not to know the will of God, knows enough of it however to subject him, if he fails of doing it, to future punishment: ‘to be beaten with stripes.’ Not even a heathen sinner therefore shall escape entirely by his ignorance: much less will that plea excuse a christian: but least of all can those christians hope for mercy, who hear the word of God preached to them weekly; have it in their hands, and may read it daily: and yet transgress it. ‘Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment,^c than for such persons.

Let no one argue from hence, that knowledge then is no blessing. For the more we know of our Maker and our duty, the better we are qualified to be good in this world, and happy in the next. And we can never be worse for it, unless we will, by making either no use or a bad use of it. Nor let any one imagine, that, though we need not be the worse for our knowledge, yet since we may, ignorance is the safer choice; as what will excuse our sins, if not entirely, yet in a great measure. But let us all remember, it is not pretended, but real ignorance: nor even that, unless we could not help it, that will be any plea in our favor. Willful, or even careless ignorance, is a great sin itself: and therefore can never procure us pardon for the other sins which it may occasion. What should any of us think of a servant who kept out of the way of receiving his master’s orders, purposely because he had no mind to do them? Nay, supposing him only through negligence not to understand the business that he was required to learn and follow: would this justify him? Would it not be said,

^a 2 Pet. ii. 21^b Luke xii. 47, 48.^c Mark vi. 11.

that what he might and ought to have known, it was his own fault if he did not know? And what do we think of God, if we hope to impose on Him with pleas that will not pass amongst ourselves?

Fix it in your hearts then: the first indispensable duty of man is to learn the will of his Maker; the next, to do it; and nothing can excuse you from either. Attend therefore diligently on all such means of instruction as God's providence gives you; especially the public instruction of the church, which, having expressly appointed for you, he will assuredly bless to you; provided you observe our Saviour's most important direction, 'take heed how ye hear.'^a For on that it depends, whether the preaching of the gospel shall be 'life or death to you.'^b One it must be: and these very lectures, amongst other things, which have been truly intended for your eternal good, will prove, if you apply them not to that end, what God forbid they should, a means of increasing your future condemnation. Be entreated therefore, to consider very seriously what you are taught: for be there ever so much of the weakness of man in it, there is the power of God unto salvation, unless you hinder it yourselves. Never despise then the meanest of your instructors; and never think of admiring the ablest: but remember that your business is, neither to applaud nor censure other persons' performances: but to improve your own hearts, and mend your own lives. Barely coming and hearing, is nothing. Barely being pleased, and moved, and affected is nothing. It is only minding and doing the whole of your duty, not some part of it alone, that is any thing.

Knowing the words of your Catechism is of no other use, than to preserve in your memories the things which those words express. Knowing the meaning of your Catechism ever so well, in every part, is of no other use than to put you on the performance of what it teaches. And performing some

^a Luke viii. 18.

^b 2 Cor. ii. 16.

things ever so constantly or zealously, will not avail, without a faithful endeavor to perform every thing. Have it always in your thoughts, therefore, that practice, uniform practice, is the one thing needful. Your knowledge may be very low and imperfect, your faith not very clear and distinct: but however poorly you are capable of furnishing your heads, if your hearts and lives be good, all is well.

But here, I pray you, observe further, that as it is not in understanding and believing, so it is not in devotion merely, that religion consists. The common duties of common life make far the greatest part of what our Maker expects of us. To be honest and sober, and modest and humble, and good-tempered and mild, and industrious and useful in our several stations, are things to which all persons are as much bound as they can be to any thing: and when they proceed from a principle of conscience towards God, and are offered up to him, as our bounden duty, through Jesus Christ, are as true and as acceptable a service to him, as either our attendance at Church, or our prayers in retirement at home. And they who abound in these latter duties, and neglect any of the former, only disgrace religion, and deceive themselves.

Yet understand me not, I beg of you, to speak slightly of devotion, either private or public. On the contrary, I recommend both to you most earnestly: for our immediate duty to God is the highest of all duties, 'the first and great commandment'^a of natural religion and the payment of due and distinct regards to the father Almighty, to his blessed Son, and holy Spirit, of course obtains an equal rank in revelation. In particular I recommend it to you not to omit coming to evening prayers, because now these lectures will be discontinued. Joining in God's worship and hearing his holy word read to you, is always a sufficient, and should always be the principal motive to bring you. For 'neither is he that planteth,

^a Matth. xxii. 33.

any thing; neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.^a And we may be sure he will give it to those, who attend on his ordinances with pious minds: and we may justly expect, that he will withhold it from those who, instead of coming, because it is their duty, come to hear this or that man discourse.

But then I must beseech you to observe at the same time, that as neither piety without morals, nor morals without piety, nor Heathen piety without Christian, will suffice; so neither will the outward acts of any thing, without an inward principle of it; and the true principle is a reverend esteem and love of God. Other inducements may allowably be joined with this; but if this be not also joined with them, what we do may be prudence, may be virtue, but is not religion; and therefore, however right, so far as it goes, doth not go far enough to entitle us to reward, or even to secure us from punishment; which nothing can more justly deserve, than to have little or no sense of filial affection to our heavenly father, and of thankful love to our crucified redeemer and gracious sanctifier, who have the highest right to the utmost regard that our souls are capable of feeling.

You must resolve therefore, not only to be christians externally in your lives, but internally in your hearts. And let me remind you further, you will resolve on neither, to good purpose, if you trust to yourselves alone for the performance. You will contrive, perhaps, great schemes of amendment and goodness, but you will execute very little of them; or you will do a good deal, it may be, in some particulars, and leave others, equally necessary, undone; or you will go on a while, and then fall, when you thought you were surest of standing; or what seeming progress soever you make, you will ruin it all by thinking too highly of yourselves for it; or some way or another you will certainly fall, unless the grace of God enable you, first to be deeply sensible of your

a 1 Cor. iii. 7.

own guilt and weakness; then to lay hold, by faith in Christ, on his promised mercy and help; in the strength of that help to obey his commands; and after all, to know, that you are still ‘unprofitable servants.’^a Now this grace you may certainly have, in whatever measure you want it, by earnest prayer for it, humble dependence upon it, and such honest and diligent use of the lower degrees of it, as he hath promised to reward with higher degrees, and you can have it in no other way. If ever therefore, when we exhort you to duties, moral or religious, we omit to mention the great duty of applying for strength from above to be given you, not for your own sakes but that of your blessed redeemer, in order to practice them; it is by no means because we think such application unnecessary; but because we hope you know it so well to be absolutely necessary, that we need not always remind you of it. But if we are at any time wanting to you in this respect, or any other, be not you therefore wanting to yourselves; but ‘work out your own salvation’ from this motive, which alone will procure you success, that ‘God worketh in you both to will and to do.’^b ‘And I pray God to sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, soul and body blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’^c

Having said thus much to you all in general, I desire you, children, to take notice of what I am going to say, in the last place, to you in particular. Your condition is of the lower kind: but your instruction hath been better than many of your superiors have had. If therefore, your behaviour be bad, your condemnation will be heavy; and if it be good, you may be to the full as happy, in this world and the next, as if you were of ever so high a rank. For true happiness comes only from doing our duty; and none will ever come from transgressing it: but, whatever pleasure or profit sin may promise, they will soon turn into

^a Luke xvii. 10.^b Phil. ii. 12, 13,^c 1 Thess. v. 23.

pain and loss. Remember therefore as long as you live, what you have been taught here. Remember particularly the answers to those two main questions: 'What is thy duty towards God;' and 'What is thy duty towards thy neighbor?' And be assured, that unless you practice both, when you go hence to services and apprenticeships, all the money and labor that hath been spent on you, will be spent in vain; you will be a disgrace to the education and teaching that you have had; you will probably be very miserable here, and certainly forever hereafter. But if you practice both, you will make an honest and grateful return for the kindness that you have received from your benefactors; which I hope you will never forget, but imitate, if God enables you to do it: you will be loved of your Maker and fellow-creatures; you will live in peace of mind; you will die with comfort, and be received into everlasting bliss.

Think then, I entreat and charge you, seriously and often of these things. And to remind yourselves of them more effectually, be diligent in reading such good books as are given you at your leaving school, or otherwise put into your hands; be constant in coming to Church on the Lord's day at least; such of you as go away before you are confirmed, take the first opportunity, after you are fourteen, to apply to your Minister, wherever you are, that you may be well instructed for that holy Ordinance, and then admitted to it. Within a reasonable time after this, prepare yourselves, and desire him and yourselves to assist in preparing you, to receive the Lord's Supper: concerning which, you have heard very lately, how expressly it is required of all Christians, (a name that comprehends young as well as old) for the means of improving them in every thing that is good. And may God give his grace to you, and to us all, that by the help of those means, with which he hath so plentifully favored us, we may each of us improve daily in the knowledge of his truth, and the love of our

duty, 'till at length we come unto a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'^a

^a Eph. iv. 13.

A
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C O N F I R M A T I O N .

ACTS viii. 17.

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

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

From this and the like instances of the practice of the apostles, is derived, what Bishops, their successors, though every way beyond comparison inferior to them, have practiced ever since, and which we now call Confirmation. Preaching was common to all ranks of Ministers; baptizing was performed usually by the lower rank: but, perhaps to maintain a due subordination, it was reserved to the highest, by prayer and laying on of hands, to communicate further measures of the Holy Ghost. It was indeed peculiar to the Apostles, that on their intercession, his extraordinary and miraculous gifts were bestowed; which continued in the Church no longer than the

need of them did; nor can we suppose that all were partakers of them. But unquestionably by their petitions they procured, for every sincere convert, a much more valuable, though less remarkable blessing, of universal and perpetual necessity, his ordinary and saving graces.

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

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

Prayers may be offered up for infants with very good effect. Promises may be made in their name by such as are authorized to act for them: especially when the things promised are for their interest, and will be their duty; which is the case of those in baptism. But no persons ought to make promises for themselves, till they reasonably well understand the

nature of them, and are capable of forming serious purposes. Therefore, in the present case, being able to say the words of the Catechism, is by no means enough, without a competent general knowledge of their meaning, and intention of behaving as it requires them; which doubtless they are supposed to have at the same time. And if they have not, making a profession of it, is declaring with their mouths what they feel not in their hearts at the instant, and will much less reflect upon afterwards; it is hoping to please God by the empty outward performance of a religious rite, from which, if they had been withheld till they were duly qualified, their souls might have been affected, and their conduct influenced by it, as long as they lived.

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

But as there are some too young for confirmation, some also may be thought too old: especially, if they have received the holy Sacrament without it. Now there are not indeed all the same reasons, for the confirmation of such, as of others: nor hath the church I believe, determined any thing about their case, as it might be thought unlikely to happen. But still, since it doth happen too frequently, that persons were not able, or have neglected, to apply for this purpose: so whenever they apply, as by doing it they express a desire to 'fulfil all righteousness;^a and may certainly receive benefit, both from the profession and the prayers, appointed in the office; my judgment is, that they should not be rejected, but encouraged.

^a Matth. lili. 15.

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

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

Now the things promised in our name, were to renounce whatever God hath forbidden, to believe what he hath taught, and to practice what he hath commanded. Nobody can promise for infants absolutely, that they shall do these things; but only, that they shall be instructed and admonished to do them: and, it is hoped, not in vain. This instruction and admonition, parents are obliged by nature to give; and, if they do it effectually, God-Fathers and God-Mothers have no further concern, than to be heartily glad of it. But if the former fail, the latter must supply the failure, as far as they have opportunity of doing it with any reasonable prospect of success. For they were intended, not to release the parents from the care of their children, which nothing can: but for a double security, in a case of such importance.

If nothing at all had been promised in our names, we had still been bound, as soon as we were capable of it, to believe in God, and obey him. But we are more early and more firmly bound, as not only this hath been promised for us, but care hath been taken to make us sensible of our obligation to perform it: which obligation, therefore, persons are called upon, in the question under consideration, to ratify and

confirm, And great cause have they to answer, that they do. For doing it is a duty, on which their eternal felicity peculiarly depends; as a little attention to what I am about to say will clearly shew you.

Our first parents, even while they were innocent, had no title to happiness, or to existence, but from God's notification of his good pleasure: which being conditional, when they fell, they lost it; and derived to us a corrupt and mortal nature, entitled to nothing, as both the diseases and the poverty of ancestors often descend to their distant posterity. This bad condition we fail not, from our first use of reason, to make worse, in a greater or less degree, by actual transgressions: and so personally deserve the displeasure, instead of favor of him, who made us. Yet we may hope, that, as he is good, he will on our repentance forgive us. But then, as he is also just and wise, and the ruler of the world; we could never know with certainty, of ourselves, what his justice and wisdom, and the honor of his government, might require of him with respect to sinners: whether he would pardon greater offences at all; and whether he would reward those, whom he might be pleased not to punish. But most happily the revelation of his holy word hath cleared up all these doubts of unassisted reason: and offered to the worst of sinners, on the condition of faith in Christ, added to repentance, and productive of good works, (for all which he is ready to enable us) a covenant of pardon for sins past, assistance against sin for the future, and eternal life in return for a sincere, though imperfect, and totally undeserving obedience.

The method of entering into this covenant is, being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: that is, into the acknowledgment of the mysterious union and joint authority of these three; and of the distinct offices, which they have undertaken for our salvation; together with a faithful engagement of paying suitable regard to each of them. In this appointment of Baptism, the washing

with water aptly signifies, both our promise to preserve ourselves, with the best care we can, pure from the defilement of sin, and God's promise to consider us, as free from the guilt of it. Baptism then, through his mercy, secures infants from the bad consequences of Adam's transgression, giving them a new title to the immortality which he lost. It also secures, to persons grown up, the entire forgiveness of their own transgressions, on the terms just mentioned. But then, in order to receive these benefits, we must lay our claim to the covenant, which conveys them: we must ratify, as soon as we are able, what was promised in our name by others before we were able: and done for us then, only on presumption that we should make it our own deed afterwards. For if we neglect, and appear to renounce our part of the covenant, we have plainly not the least right to God's performing his: but we remain in our sins, and 'Christ shall profit us nothing.'^a

You see then of what unspeakable importance it is, that we take on ourselves the vow of our baptism. And it is very fit and useful, that we should take it in such form and manner as the office prescribes. It is fit, that when persons have been properly instructed, by the care of their parents, friends and ministers, they should with joyful gratitude acknowledge them to have faithfully performed that kindest duty. It is fit, that before they were admitted by the church of Christ to the holy communion, they should give public assurance to the church of their christian belief and christian purposes. This may also be extremely useful to themselves. For consider: young persons are just entering into a world of temptations, with no experience, and little knowledge to guard them; and much youthful rashness, to expose them. The authority of others over them is beginning to lessen, their own passions to increase, 'Evil communication' to have great opportunities of 'corrupting

^a Gal. v. 2.

good manners:^a and strong impressions, of one kind or another, will be made on them very soon. What can then be more necessary, or more likely to preserve their innocence, than to form the most deliberate resolutions of acting right; and to declare them in a manner, thus adapted to move them at the time, and be remembered by them afterwards: in the presence of God, of a number of his ministers, and of a large congregation of his people, assembled with more than ordinary solemnity for that very purpose?

But then you, that are to be confirmed, must either do your own part, or the whole of this preparation will be utterly thrown away upon you. If you make the answer, which is directed, without sincerity, it is lying to God: if you make it without attention, it is trifling with Him. Watch over your hearts therefore, and let them go along with your lips. The two short words, 'I do,' are soon said: but they comprehend much in them. Whoever uses them on this occasion, saith in effect as follows: 'I do heartily renounce all the temptations of the devil; all the unlawful pleasures, profits, and honors of the world; all the immoral gratifications of the flesh. I do sincerely believe, and will constantly profess, all the articles of the christian faith. I do firmly resolve to keep all God's commandments all the days of my life; to love and honor Him; to pray to Him and praise Him daily in private; to attend conscientiously on the public worship and instruction, which He hath appointed; to approach His holy table, as soon as I can qualify myself for doing it worthily; to submit to His blessed will meekly and patiently in all things: to set Him ever before my eyes, and acknowledge Him in all my ways. I do further resolve in the whole course of my behaviour amongst my fellow creatures, to 'do justly, love mercy,'^b speak truth, be diligent and useful in my station, dutiful to my superiors, condescending to those beneath me,

^a 1 Cor. xv. 33.

^b Mic. vi. 8.

friendly to my equals; careful, through all the relations of life, to act as the nature of them requires, and conduct myself so to all men, as I should think it reasonable that they should do to me in the like case. Further yet: I do resolve, in the government of myself, to be modest, sober, temperate, mild, humble, contented; to restrain every passion and appetite within due bounds; and to set my heart chiefly, not on the sensual enjoyments of this transitory world, but the spiritual happiness of the future endless one. Lastly, I do resolve, whenever I fail in any of these duties, as I am sensible I have, and must fear I shall, to confess it before God with unfeigned concern, to apply for his promised pardon in the name of His blessed Son, to beg the promised assistance of His Holy Spirit; and in that strength, not my own, to strive against my faults, and watch over my steps with redoubled care.⁷

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

^a Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 19.

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

Scripture teaches, and sad experience proves, that of ‘ourselves we can do nothing: are not sufficient’^a for the discharge of our duty, without God’s continual aid: by which He can certainly influence our minds, without hurting our natural freedom of will, and even without our perceiving it; for we can influence our fellow creatures so. Nor is it any injustice in Him to require of us what exceeds our ability, since He is ready to supply the want of it. Indeed, on the contrary, as this method of treating us is excellently fitted both to keep us humble, and yet to give us courage, using it is evidently worthy of God. But then, as none can have reason to expect his help, but those who earnestly desire it, so he hath promised to ‘give the Holy Spirit,’ only ‘to them that ask Him.’^b And to unite christians more in love to each other, and incline them more to assemble for public worship, our blessed Redeemer hath especially promised, that ‘where two or three’ of them ‘are gathered together in his name, He will be in the midst of them.’^c And further still, to promote a due regard in his people to their teachers and rulers, the sacred writings ascribe a peculiar efficacy to their praying over those who are committed to their charge. Even under the Jewish dispensation, the family of Aaron were told, that ‘them the Lord had separated to minister unto Him, and to bless in the name of the Lord;’^d ‘and they shall put my name,’ saith God, ‘upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.’^e No wonder then, if under the christian dispensation we read, but just before the text, that the Apostles,

^a John xv. 5, 2 Cor. iii. 5.
^d Deut. x. 8. xxi. 5.

^b Luke xi. 13.
^e Numb. vi. 27.

^c Matth. xviii. 20.

when they were come down to Samaria, prayed for the new-baptized converts, 'that they might receive the Holy Ghost;' and in the text that they did receive it accordingly.

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

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

After these preparatory ejaculations, and the usual admonition to be attentive, 'Let us pray;' comes a longer act of devotion, which first commemorates God's mercy already bestowed, then petitions for an increase of it. The commemoration sets forth, that He 'hath regenerated these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost: that is, entitled them by baptism to the enlivening influences of the Spirit, and so, as it were, begotten them again into a state inexpressibly happier than their natural one; a covenant-state in which God will consider them, whilst they keep their engagements, with peculiar love, as his dear children. It follows that He 'hath given unto them forgiveness of all their sins;' meaning, that He

a Psal. cxxiv. 8.

b Jer. x. 23.

c Psal. ciii. 1.

hath given them assurance of it, on the gracious terms of the gospel. But that every one of them hath actually received it, by complying with those terms since he sinned last, though we may charitably hope, we cannot presume to affirm: nor were these words intended to affirm it; as the known doctrine of the Church of England fully proves. And therefore let no one misunderstand this expression in the office, which hath parallel ones in the New Testament,^a so as either to censure it, or delude himself with a fatal imagination, that any thing said over him can possibly convey to him a pardon of sins, for which he is not truly penitent. We only acknowledge, with due thankfulness, that God hath done his part, but which of the congregation have done theirs, their own consciences must tell them.

After this commemoration, we go on to request for the persons before us, that God would strengthen them against all temptation, and support them under all affliction, by ‘the Holy Ghost the comforter, and daily increase in them his manifold gifts of grace;’ which gifts we proceed to enumerate in seven particulars, taken from the prophet Isaiah;^b by whom they are ascribed to our blessed redeemer: but as ‘the same mind’ ought to ‘be in us as was in Christ Jesus,’^c a petition for them was used in the office of confirmation, fourteen hundred years ago, if not sooner. The separate meaning of each of the seven, it is neither easy nor needful to determine with certainty. For indeed, if no more was designed, than to express very fully and strongly, by various words of nearly the same import, a pious and moral temper of mind: this is a manner of speaking both common and emphatical. But each of them may be taken in a distinct sense of its own. And thus we may beg for these our fellow christians, a spirit of wisdom, to aim at the right end, the salvation of their souls; and of understanding, to pursue it by right means: of counsel, to form good purposes: and of ghostly or

^a Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14.

^b Isa. xi. 2.

^c Phil. ii. 5.

spiritual strength, to execute them: of useful knowledge in the doctrines of religion: and true godliness, disposing them to a proper use of it. But chiefly, though lastly, we pray, that they may be ‘filled with the spirit of God’s holy fear;’ with that reverence of Him, as the greatest and purest and best of beings, the rightful proprietor and just judge of all, which will effectually excite them to whatever they are concerned to believe or do. For the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’^a

Having concluded this prayer for them all in general, the bishop implores the divine protection and grace for each one, or each part of them, in particular: that as he is already God’s professed child and servant, by the recognition which he hath just made of his baptismal covenant, so ‘he may continue his before,’ by faithfully keeping it: and far from decaying, ‘daily increase in his holy Spirit,’ that is, in the fruits of the Spirit, piety and virtue, ‘more and more;’ making greater and quicker advances in them, as life goes on, until he comes to that decisive hour, when his portion shall be unchangable ‘in God’s everlasting kingdom.’

And along with the utterance of these solemn words he lays his hand on each of their heads, a ceremony used from the earliest ages by religious persons; when they prayed for God’s blessing on any one; used by our Saviour, who, when ‘Children were brought to Him, that He should put his hands on them, and pray, and bless them, was much displeas’d’^b with those who forbad it; used by the Apostles, after converts were baptized, as the text plainly shews; reckoned in the Epistle to the Hebrews among the foundations of the christian profession;^c constantly practiced, and highly esteemed in the Church from that time to this; and so far from being a popish ceremony, that the Papists administer confirmation by other ceremonies of their own devising, and have

^a Psal. cxi. 10.

^b Matth. xix. 13—15. Mark x. 13—16.

^c Heb. vi. 1, 2.

laid aside this primitive one: which therefore our Church very prudently restored. And the custom of it is approved, as apostolical both by Luther and Calvin, and several of their followers, though they rashly abolish it, as having been abused.^a But I am credibly informed, that at Geneva it hath lately been restored.

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

And now, the imposition of hands being finished, the Bishop and Congregation mutually recommend

^a See Camfield's two discourses on Episcopal Confirmation, 8vo. 1682. p. 23—36.

each other to God, and return to such joint and public devotions as are suitable to the solemnity. The first of these is the Lord's Prayer: a form seasonable always, but peculiarly now: as every petition in it will shew to every one who considers it. In the next place, more especial supplications are poured forth, for the persons particularly concerned, to him who alone can enable them 'both to will and to do what is good;' that, as the hand of his minister hath been laid upon them, 'so his fatherly hand may ever be over them, and lead them in' the only way, 'the knowledge and obedience of his word, to everlasting life.' After this, a more general prayer is offered up for them and the rest of the congregation together, that God would vouchsafe, unworthy as we all are, so 'to direct and govern both our hearts and bodies,' our inclinations and actions, (for neither will suffice without the other,) 'in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments,' that 'through his most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul: having the former, in his good time, raised up from the dead, and the latter made happy, in conjunction with it, to all eternity.

These requests being thus made, it only remains, that all be dismissed with a solemn blessing: which will certainly abide with you, unless by willful sin or gross negligence, you drive it away. And in that case, you must not hope, that your baptism, or your confirmation, or the prayers of the Bishop, or the church, or the whole world, will do you any service.

On the contrary, every thing which you might have been the better for, if you had made a good use of it, you will be the worse for, if you make a bad one. You do well to renew the covenant of your baptism in confirmation: but if you break it, you forfeit the benefit of it. You do well to repeat your vows in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper: it is what all christians are commanded by their dying Saviour, 'for the strengthening and refreshing of their

souls: it is what I beg all, who are confirmed, will remember, and their friends and ministers remind them of: the sooner they are prepared for it, the happier; and by stopping short, the benefit of what preceded will be lost. But if you are admitted to this privilege, also, and live wickedly, you do 'but eat and drink your own condemnation.' So that all depends on a thoroughly honest care of your hearts and behaviour in all respects.

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

^a Psal. lvi. 12.

surely remember: or hope to be safe in neglecting what he expects us to do. But let us use proper diligence; and he will infallibly give us proper assistance, and 'confirm us all unto the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'^a

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

^a 1 Cor. i. 8.

^b Jude, 24, 25.

THE END.









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