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SERMONS

Saml. Miller.

BY THE

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OF

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SERMON I.

On the extraordinary perfections of Christ as a teacher.

JOHN, CHAP. 7, VERSE 46.

“Never man spake like this man.”

JESUS Christ is, in every respect, the most wonderful personage that ever appeared upon the theatre of the world. The personal grandeur of his character, the innocence of his life, the noble generosity of his actions, the severity of his sufferings, the sublimity and wisdom of his discourses and instructions, taken either separately or in connection, have never been equalled in the history of mankind. In him we behold the *Deity* made flesh and dwelling among men. In him we see a *man*, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. In him we admire a great philanthropist continually going about doing good. In

him we see a martyr suffering in the best of causes and with unexampled fortitude and resignation. In him we listen to a great *teacher* speaking as never man spake—declaring truths of infinite importance, in a manner the most admirably adapted to the understanding of his hearers, with infinite wisdom and irresistible persuasion.

Such a bright constellation of excellencies dazzles the sight, and can only be viewed separately and in detail. The text, (which is not the language of encomium, or the panegyric of a friend, but the confession of his enemies, extorted by the irresistible force of truth,) leads us to consider him as a publick teacher, and to point out his great superiority, not only to the philosophers and orators of ancient heathenism, but also to all the former messengers and prophets of the Most High. And the truth of the assertion of the officers in the text will fully appear, if we consider the *matter*, the *manner*, and the *effect* of our Saviour's preachings, and shew that never man spake truths of such importance—never man spake in such a *manner*—never man spake with such *authority* and *power*.

These three things constitute the excellence

of every discourse : that the matter be important and worthy of attention ; that the manner be interesting, well adapted to the subject, and suited to the hearers—and lastly, that the intended effect may be produced, and a due impression made on the audience.

I. The matter of our Saviour's discourses is superiour to that of any other teacher either heathen or Jew ; for none of them ever declared truths of such infinite importance to the world.

The subject matter of our Saviour's discourses comprehends either such things as had been handled by former teachers, or such things as were altogether new, and of which the world are indebted to him for the discovery. Many things indeed had engaged the attention of former teachers, which were altogether below his notice, which were too trifling to consume one moment of his precious time. For this purpose came he into the world, " that he might bear witness unto the " truth,"—not to indulge in the false glosses and absurd commentaries of the scribes and pharisees, the quibbles of the sophist, the vain conceits of the philosopher, the profane babblings and oppositions of science falsely so

called. The most finished compositions of ancient times treat of subjects comparatively mean and insignificant: the rise and fall of states and empires, the debates of a faction, the petty interests and competitions of the present life. Jesus came with a message of infinitely greater extent and importance. He was in truth the orator of the human race—his discourses were big with the fate of all mankind. He performed a work and declared truths which were devised before the foundations of the earth were laid, and which reached into the remotest ages of eternity. The ancient philosophers and orators had chiefly in view the display of their own talents, or of the powers of their art. Jesus sought only to deliver truths useful and instructive to his hearers. Their lectures were employed in inquiring into the origin of all things, in describing the courses of the planets, the laws of the material world, the properties of an animal or a plant. Such barren speculations were foreign to the design of our Saviour's mission—he had a grander and more profitable object in view, even to make men wise unto salvation, to teach them to be pious and virtuous and happy.

Even where he happened to tread in the same path with others, he improved so much upon his predecessors that he is justly entitled to the praise of an original. The existence and attributes of God, for instance, had been previously discussed by the Heathen philosophers and the Jewish lawgiver. But none of them spake on this subject like Jesus of Nazareth. The polytheism of the ancients; the imperfections and even shocking vices which they ascribed to their imaginary deities, make them unworthy of comparison. The errors of the heathen indeed, were excluded from the Jewish system. Moses taught expressly the unity of God, "Hear now, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord." But the ritual service which he prescribed, represented the Deity rather in a corporeal light; the severity of his laws obscured the Divine benignity; the terrour accompanying their delivery inspired fear rather than hope. How just and sublime were the words of Jesus on this subject. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. God so loved the world that he

“ gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever
“ believeth on him might not perish but have
“ everlasting life.”

The same superiority is discernible in the morality of Jesus. How much more pure, perfect, and certain than the vague speculations of the heathen moralists? How much more extensive and universal than the ceremonial system of the Jews? Above all, how much more powerful motives did he furnish for the discharge of the duties which he commanded?

Thus did Jesus improve upon every subject which he handled; thus did he far outstrip all who had gone before him in what related to God, to morals, and to a future life. But this is not all. Many doctrines were taught by the Saviour of the world which no ear had ever heard and no human heart had ever conceived. Among these we may rank the doctrine of his own divinity; the mystery of his own incarnation and assumption of our nature; his appearance in a world overspread with misery and vice, to proclaim pardon and peace in this life, and everlasting happiness in the future, to all who with penitent hearts and true faith returned unto him; his humiliation, sufferings

and death in our room ; his victory over death by virtue of his atoning sacrifice, and his bringing life and immortality to light. These are the great things of which Christ spake ; these were the amazing topicks which filled his discourses. Who ever uttered such things ? who ever presumed to raise their thoughts to mysteries so grand and sublime ? Without controversy great and unequalled is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

II. The *manner* in which our Saviour spake was equally incomparable with the *matter* of which he treated. Under this head, I do not mean to assert that Jesus was a most consummate orator in the common acceptation of the word ; that he was a perfect master of the rules of art ; and that he knew how to employ to the best advantage the various tropes and figures of rhetorick. Were it indeed a circumstance of much importance, or in which there was room for exultation, it would be easy to shew that the sacred writings afford specimens altogether unrivalled in every species of composition.

But Jesus, though he had formed the mind of man, and knew every human art and science better than the most enlightened oratour or philosopher, yet he used not the arts of eloquence and the flowers of language as necessary aids to his instruction. He spake with a simplicity, gravity, and dignity well suited to the character of the speaker, to the nature of the doctrines, and to the capacity of his hearers. He did not deliver his doctrines, at once, in an abstract, systematick manner, and then set about to explain, defend and support them. His sublime system was not delivered in the gross, but gradually unfolded in proportion to the state of preparation in which he found the minds of his disciples or of the multitude. His sermons were not the effect of previous study, but arose from the incidents and occurrences of his life. His discourses were not delivered on set occasions, but as opportunity offered, and no opportunity did he ever neglect of instilling knowledge and heavenly wisdom into his hearers. None who wished to hear the wisdom of Jesus were ever disappointed. Many who came with a captious intention, and from motives of curiosity, went away edified and improved. No particular place was appointed for the de-

livery of his instructions. He lifted up his voice in the temple and in the desert ; in the city and in the field. He ever sought out the lost sheep in his wanderings, dragged the wretched from his miserable haunt, conversed with publicans and sinners, practised every species of condescension for the benefit of mankind, and insinuated himself into the good opinion of all, that, happily, some might be gained.

The method which our Saviour generally followed in his instructions, was that of parable or allegory ; in which the speaker, by an allusion to sensible objects, or by some natural story, conveys to the mind of the hearer moral and spiritual instruction. This was a method of instruction extremely common among the oriental nations, and it was attended with the peculiar advantage of impressing the truth deeply upon the mind, and of facilitating the recollection of it. What propriety, beauty and force are discernible in all the parables and allegories of Jesus ! No writing, ancient or modern, can produce any thing worthy to be compared with the parable of the sower and his seed ; the allegory of the marriage supper ; the histories of the prodigal son and the good

Samaritan. With Jesus no occurrence of life passed away unimproved ; there was no surrounding object that did not afford him an occasion of uttering something to instruct, reprove, comfort or encourage his hearers. The lilies of the field which grew under his feet, and the birds of heaven which flew over his head, led him to remind his disciples of the paternal care and protection of their heavenly Father. The barren fig-tree led him to caution his disciples against the neglect and abuse of their talents. The different kinds of fruit, and the value put upon them, suggested to his mind that rule of equity which judges every man according to his works. When present at the feast of the passover, he took occasion, from the objects at that time familiar to the people, to point out to them that true bread of life, and that living water, of which whosoever eateth and drinketh shall never hunger or thirst any more. The sea-side, which he often frequented, and the former employment of some of his disciples, afforded emblems, extremely fit and proper, for representing the nature of that mission on which they were sent. The great increase of so small a grain as mustard-seed, suggested the rapid advancement of his

kingdom from such small beginnings as the world then saw before them, and the spreading of his doctrines to the uttermost ends of the earth.

But to multiply particular instances of this mode of teaching, would be endless. I shall only add, that, it is infinitely superiour in beauty and effect to the most studied refinement, and the most scrupulous observance of rules. A comparison will render this perfectly obvious. In discoursing of a particular providence, and the folly of anxiety about futurity, the reasoner of this world would thus address his hearers, in the terms of art and according to the rules of logick : “ All anxiety about futurity is unnecessary and ill-founded. A wise, omnipotent, and benevolent being will not forget that creature to which he has been pleased to give existence, or refuse an inconsiderable favour, after he has conferred others so important. Is it not obvious that the animal creation, which are incapable of foresight, are yet provided for by the bounty of heaven ; and that many vegetable productions, which are destitute of motion, and incapable of exertion, are yet more splendidly adorned than the most lofty monarchs ?

“ If such care is taken of the inferiour crea-
 “ tures, it is a just and obvious inference that
 “ a wise and just being, who values every thing
 “ in proportion to its true worth, will bestow
 “ much more attention upon the first of his
 “ creatures on this globe.”

All this is very fine ; but it requires little
 skill in criticism, indeed it requires only an
 unprejudiced mind, to perceive its great inferi-
 ority, and its insipidity, when compared with
 the beautiful discourse of Jesus on the same
 subject : “ Therefore I say unto you, take no
 “ thought for your life, what ye shall eat or
 “ what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body,
 “ what ye shall put on. Is not the life more
 “ than the meat, and the body than the rai-
 “ ment ? Behold the fowls of the air ; for they
 “ sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather
 “ into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth
 “ them : are ye not much better than they ?
 “ Which of you by taking thought can add
 “ one cubit unto his stature ? and why take
 “ ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies
 “ of the field, how they grow ; they toil not
 “ neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto
 “ you, that even Solomon in all his glory was
 “ not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore,

“ if God so clothe the grass of the field,
“ which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into
“ the oven, shall he not much more clothe
“ you, O ye of little faith.”*

III. Thirdly. Never man spake with such authority and power as Jesus of Nazareth. Former teachers advanced what they taught with much uncertainty, frequently as mere conjecture, in the way of speculation, and for the sake of debate; Jesus taught mankind without any degree of doubt and hesitation, with the air of one who knew the truth of what he said, and who was perfectly assured of all that he spake. “ Verily, verily I say unto thee, we
“ speak that we do know, and testify that we
“ have seen.” Former messengers merely delivered what they had received, and spoke as coming from another. Jesus delivered his doctrine in his own name, and supported it by his own authority. *I say unto you* was the form in which he introduced his precepts and instructions.

The effect of his preaching corresponded with the power and energy with which he spoke. Nothing could resist his divine elo-

* Matthew, chap. vi. verse 25. 30.

quence. His friends were persuaded, his enemies were confounded, and all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. In the language of ancient prophecy “ he made the crooked places straight, “ he broke in pieces the gates of brass and “ cut in sunder the bars of iron.” Very early did he give proofs of the power with which he spake; for at the age of twelve years, he reasoned with the doctors in the temple, to such effect, that all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. The first discourse which he delivered to the world, after entering upon his publick office, was no less effectual than sublime. “ It came to pass, we are told, when “ Jesus had ended these sayings, the people “ were astonished at his doctrine, for he “ taught them as one having authority, and “ not as the scribes.”

It was the same energetick eloquence that confounded the officers who had been sent to apprehend Jesus, and drew from them the confession in the text, “ that never man “ spake like this man.” Though armed, and invested with a legal commission they shrunk back at his discourse, and were afraid

to lay hands upon him or to do him any harm. A word or a look from him produced a much greater effect than the most eloquent discourses from the tongue of another. This we can only account for from the intimate knowledge which, as God, he had of the human character. He knew what was in man, he traced the silent current of thought as it rose in the mind; he saw the most secret designs of those with whom he conversed; he was intimately acquainted with the workings of the several passions, and how they were to be moved and actuated. And what resistance, do we imagine, could be made to a speaker who had the hearts of all men in his hands, and could turn them whithersoever he would? What effect, indeed, is still produced in the ordinary preaching of the word, when Jesus speaks by his spirit to the hearts and consciences of men? The gospel then becomes a two-edged sword, sharp and piercing, dividing between the joints and marrow, reaching to the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

I have given you but a very imperfect sketch of the superiour excellency of Jesus as a preacher. But enough has been said to

render the pious and well-disposed grateful to God, who has favoured the world with so admirable an instructor. Enough has been said to make us esteem and value the Christian system, and to search the scriptures which contain the words of eternal life, the sublime doctrines of which we have been speaking. Enough has been said to make every good man reverence and obey the precepts of him, “who spoke as never man spake.”

SERMON II.



The state of humility, in which Christ appeared on earth, perfectly fitted to the discharge of his duties as a mediator, and a source of comfort and joy to his disciples.



MATTHEW, CHAP. xiii. VERSE 55, 56.

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.”

A PROPHET is not without honour, save in his own country. Recollection of his early life, familiar acquaintance with his relations and friends, envy at his success, and the mean jealousy of those around him, that one taken from among themselves should form great pretensions and aspire to superiour eminence, all conspire to check his rising greatness, and to rob him of that respect to which his merits might seem to entitle him. In no instance

has this been so fully verified as in the case of our Saviour. Though chosen of God the chief corner stone, yet was he despised and rejected by the foolish builders of this world. His neighbours were offended at the fame of his superiour merit, and thought that it did not exist because they could not account for it. The great and proud were offended at the meanness of his descent, and could not possibly condescend to receive instruction from him whose father and mother and brothers and sisters they all knew, and saw occupying the lowest and least honourable stations in life.—The whole Jewish nation, deluded by their mistaken expectation of a temporal Saviour, were offended at his humble appearance, so destitute of pomp and show, so ill calculated to draw the attention of the multitude, or gain adherents by means of authority and power. In short, the sufferings and persecutions which he endured, the ignominious death which he at last suffered, formed an insurmountable stumbling-block of offence, and completed their conviction, that a person so meanly descended, placed in so low a station, and so persecuted and despised, could not be the

messenger of heaven, nor the Saviour of mankind.

Yet if we analyze this celebrated objection, we find it to be merely a compound of envy, pride and ignorance. Had not the neighbours of Jesus been blinded by envy, they would have reasoned in a very different manner, and, instead of being offended at him, because they could not tell whence he had all the wonderful gifts of which they saw him possessed, they would have said, “With this man’s birth, education, and fortune we are well acquainted. “It is impossible that he should do those things “which we see and hear, by any skill of his “own; he has had no opportunities of instruction “in those sublime truths which he delivers— “to him the stores of learning and science have “never been opened. It is evident, therefore, “that he is taught from on high; that he is endowed with supernatural and divine power, “for no man could work the works which he “hath wrought, unless the father had sent him.”

Had not the rulers and pharisees been puffed up with pride and vain glory, they would have listened to the voice of truth, from whatever quarter it proceeded; they would have been more attentive to it, as proceeding from

a quarter from which they least expected it ; they would have acknowledged that true worth is confined to no one situation of life ; that the greater the disproportion between the instrument and the work, the more certain an indication does it afford of the interference of God, who frequently chooses the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are.

In short, they were ignorant of the true character of the divine ways, of the predictions concerning the Messiah, of the great ends of our Saviour's appearance, or they would have perceived that it was necessary that the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through sufferings, and should undergo humiliation before he could enter into his glory.

1. The divine ways are not as our ways, and we shall certainly err if we apply the same reasoning to both. The weakness of man renders necessary a long train of vain ceremonies, and requires much pomp and parade to hide it from the view of others. A prince clothes his ambassadours with all the trappings

of state, and all the pageantry of office, in order to inspire men with awe and reverence for what might otherwise be entitled to no respect. A greater share of inherent dignity and power would render unnecessary all this external pomp and grandeur. For as true beauty when unadorned is most conspicuous, so real merit shines forth with greatest lustre in the humblest state. The meanness of our Saviour's appearance, instead of detracting from the majesty and glory of God, as if an ambassadour so humble and unattended, were unworthy of so great a sovereign, is thus a proof of the contrary; and is of a piece with all the other works of God. He who said at first, "Let there be light, and there was light"—at whose presence Jordan fled back; who declared, "I will, be thou clean"—the same it was who determined to save the world by weak, and in the eye of human reason, incompetent instruments: by the agency of a poor, humble and despised Nazarene. In this respect it truly might be said, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God, stronger than men. For though no outward beauty shone in our Saviour to draw the carnal eye, though there was in him

no form nor comeliness for which he should be desired ; yet still we behold in him such marks of greatness and power as throw into the shade all the little efforts of human vanity and pride, to gain the attention and applause of the world. Doth not the meek and humble Saviour of mankind, who healed the sick, raised the dead, and stilled the stormy wave, appear in the eye of unprejudiced reason, infinitely greater and more exalted, even though clothed in poverty, than the mightiest monarch of the earth surrounded with his attendants and courtiers, or the greatest conquerour at the head of his victorious army. All human glory fades away when compared with that heavenly glory which is everlasting.

2. It was, further, necessary that the Saviour of men should appear in a low and humble state, that he might fulfil the predictions delivered concerning him by the prophets. Nothing can be more evident than that the Messiah promised to the fathers, was foretold as one whose first appearance was to be accompanied by poverty, distress and suffering. Glorious things were indeed told of him, but these things were to be preceded by a state of humiliation and abasement. He was not to be

born of a great and noble family, but was to grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. Instead of enjoying the honours, riches and pleasures of this world, he was to be oppressed and afflicted, despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was not to exercise temporal dominion, and hold all the nations of the earth subject to him; but was to be taken from prison and from judgment, and to be cut off out of the land of the living. The Jews therefore, instead of being offended at Jesus, for his mean birth and humble station, ought to have acknowledged the fulfilment of the predictions concerning him, and to have said, truly, this is the Messiah promised to our fathers. In him all the enigmas and apparent contradictions of the prophets are explained and reconciled. The wonderful works which he performs, the sublime truths which issue from his lips, the meekness and innocence of his conduct, the spiritual dominion which he exercises over the hearts of men, all these declare him to be the **WONDERFUL**, the **COUNSELLOR**, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government there shall be no

end; and who, in a moral sense, shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. And on the other hand, the abject condition in which he appears, the reproach, persecution and suffering to which he is exposed, clearly announce that he is no other than him whose visage, it was foretold, was to be marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. The wise and discerning, had Christ appeared in any other than a humble and suffering condition, would have had good reason to consider him as an impostor, whose character and appearance did not correspond with what had been predicted of him in the writings of the prophets.

3. But the propriety of our Saviour's appearing in a humble and suffering state, will be farther evident if we consider him as the authour and teacher of a new religion. His weakness and sufferings demonstrate the intrinsic excellence and divine authority of his doctrines. He could not be an impostor who gained nothing himself by his labours but ignominy and persecution. He was very unlikely to impose upon others; he, whose sit-

uation far from commanding respect was more calculated to create contempt, who had no visible power to enforce his laws and no apparent reward to bestow upon his followers. The heathen religions were invented or taught by princes and emperours, whose authority gained adherents to a system of absurdity and superstition, who allured some by the hope of reward, and terrified others by the fear of punishment, into a belief at which their unbiassed reason revolted. And had our Saviour appeared in all that temporal splendour and authority which the Jews expected, and which the men of this world seem to desire, long ere now would we have been told, that our religion was merely an engine of state, was propagated by force, and believed from necessity, not conviction. Instead of asking, is not this the carpenter's son? Are not these men of the sect of the Nazarenes? This is he, they would have said, whose triumphs filled the world with widows and with orphans; who dragged the unwilling proselytes of his religion captive at the wheels of his chariot, and compelled the world by violence to accept his absurd system of superstition. Would not the inaccessible greatness and tyrannical power of such

a teacher, have given greater and more just cause of offence than the poverty and humility of our Redeemer can now do? Would not the proud minions of the conquerour's court, enriched by the spoils of the poor and the needy, have been more abhorred than the handmaid Mary, and Christ's simple brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas were despised? Would not the sword have been a greater stumbling block than the cross, and have been an unequivocal proof that our religion was of man and not of God? The humiliation of our Saviour is thus a proof to mankind in every age of the excellence of his doctrines, of the certainty of their evidence, and that they are not a contrivance of human policy, imposed on men by undue influence.

4. The propriety and necessity of our Saviour's appearing in an humble and suffering state must be still more evident, if we consider him as exhibiting a pattern for the imitation of mankind. He came into the world not only to bear witness unto the truth, and to teach mankind their duty, but also to leave us an example that we might follow his steps. And this example was not to be limited to one class of men, or one condition of life, but was

intended to be universally useful, and fitted to the case of the poor as well as of the rich, and to the dark hour of adversity and suffering as well as to the gayer scenes of prosperity and enjoyment. From this it follows, that, our Saviour's situation in life must be that which is the general lot of humanity. And who is ignorant, that, while a few are favoured with the gifts of fortune and the sunshine of prosperity, the great bulk of mankind, the uncounted millions of the human race, are doomed to perpetual poverty, obscurity and wretchedness? That while a few moments of our life are allotted to enjoyment the greater portion of our days is appropriated to labour and suffering? Had Jesus Christ appeared in a state of great temporal prosperity, as a prince or an emperour, the history of his life might have dazzled the fancy and attracted the admiration of mankind, but would have been of very limited use as a general pattern of conduct. It would have served for the imitation of the few, the very few, who might be his equals in rank and condition, but what lessons could the poor and the wretched have derived from it? Would his contentment in the midst of plenty calm the anxiety of their

minds when threatened with want and ruin? Would his confidence in the hour of success inspire them with fortitude when ready to be overwhelmed with calamities and opposition? Would his serenity and possession of soul in the midst of enjoyment, and surrounded with applause, teach them patience when exposed to suffering and reproach? But while the example of Jesus Christ, had he been placed in an elevated station far above the generality of mankind, would have given little or no light except to the few who approached nearer to his own level, the low and suffering condition in which he appeared renders his example universally useful, and pregnant with instruction and comfort to men of all ranks and all characters. To the rich it exhibits a striking pattern of humility, moderation, self-denial and a contempt of the world. To the poor, every virtue suitable to their condition, is preached in the most effectual manner: contentment, industry, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, fortitude in danger and superiority to temptation. Well might the carpenter's son, the despised Nazarene, say "learn of me for I am meek and lowly
" in heart."

The humble appearance of Jesus not only rendered his life a pattern of such virtues as were useful for the imitation of mankind, but even displayed his virtues with greater lustre. The light of virtue always shines brightest in the night of affliction. It is in the school of adversity that the best lessons are acquired. The path of suffering has ever been the road to honour. In the field of danger the noblest laurels are reaped. Who are the the characters that have attracted the admiration of the world, and have been held forth as patterns for the imitation of future ages? Not they who have been born in affluence, who have been nurtured in the lap of prosperity, who have spent their days in ease and indolence : but they who after passing their youth in obscurity and amid hardships, who after struggling with fortitude against the evils of life, have, through their own merit, risen superior to the disadvantages of fortune and situation, and exhibited that perfection of character, which the school of adversity alone can produce ; which men are ambitious to imitate, and God himself beholds with complacency. In like manner the Captain of our salvation, the authour and finisher of our faith, was

made perfect through sufferings. And having learned obedience by the things which he suffered he is now highly exalted and crowned with glory and honour; a glory which is exceedingly increased by comparison with his former state of humiliation and abasement.

5. The humiliation of our Saviour was absolutely necessary in order to the discharge of his mediatorial office: whether we consider him as the substitute or the intercessor of sinners.

The penalty threatened against sin was death; which included not only the separation of soul and body, but also the various temporal evils; such as pain, disease and want, which since the commission of sin, have fallen upon our race. To deliver mankind from this dreadful sentence was the end for which a Saviour was appointed. The very name of our Lord implied this; “thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” This being the end of his coming into the world, it was indispensably requisite that he should appear in a suffering and not in a triumphant state; that he should humble himself, and be found

in fashion as a man, and become obedient unto death. For all the attributes of deity required to be vindicated by such a procedure, Justice declared that the sinner could not escape unless the punishment due to his offence was endured either by himself or by a substitute; and therefore the substitute must endure all the pains and miseries of this life and at last undergo the sentence of death denounced against sin. The holiness of God required that he should testify his hatred and indignation against sin, in the most striking manner. The divine wisdom saw it proper to hold forth to all his subjects an awful example of the evil consequences of transgression. Therefore did he send his only begotten and well beloved Son into these regions of pain and misery, in a condition which ill accorded with that glory which he had with him before the world was. For this cause did Jesus leave the abodes of happiness, to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. For this cause did he lead a life of poverty and distress, reproach and persecution, and at last submit to a painful, an accursed and an ignominious death upon the cross. But being thus made perfect through sufferings, he is become the

authour of eternal salvation to all those who are sanctified. By this humiliation he has procured what could not have been obtained by an act of power and authority. He has satisfied the divine justice, and expiated the guilt of sin. He has vindicated the holiness of God and made honourable the law. He has exhibited an awful proof of the evil nature of sin, which could not be blotted out without so costly a sacrifice as the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the beloved Son of God.

In a word, the humiliation and sufferings of Christ were necessary in order to the due discharge of that part of his priestly office which consists in interceding for sinners. The reasoning of St. Paul on this subject, will render every other unnecessary. “ Every high-
“ priest taken from among men, he tells us,
“ must be such as can have compassion on the
“ ignorant and on them that are out of the
“ way, for that he himself also is compassed
“ with infirmity. For as much then as the
“ children are partakers of flesh and blood,
“ Christ also took part of the same. For it be-
“ haved him to be made in all things like un-
“ to his brethren, that he might be a merciful

“ and faithful high priest, and that having suffered being tempted he might be able and willing to succour them that are tempted.” Ought then the humble, afflicted and suffering condition in which our Saviour appeared to excite shame or regret? Ought it not rather to administer consolation, when we reflect, that, we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are; that, he who holds in his hands the sceptre of the universe, and intercedes for us with his father, once appeared in our nature, and sojourned among us; that, in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with bitter crying and tears; that, he was subjected to the pains, diseases and infirmities of life, and even experienced the horrors of death and the grave. What assurance does not this give us that our wants and desires are well known to him; that he sympathizes with all our sorrows, and that he will at all times grant us a speedy relief? With what confidence may we now approach unto a throne of grace, knowing that through the intercession of our compassionate high priest, we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need!

SERMON III.

PART I.



The character of Christ considered under the allegory of a Shepherd; his pastoral care to embrace and gather in all nations to his fold.



JOHN. CHAP. 10, VERSE 16.

“ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”

JESUS Christ is the sum and substance of the gospel. To describe his offices, to delineate his character, and to display his excellence, seems to be the great object of every inspired writer. Nature and art have been exhausted for images to represent his personal dignity and glory. He has been styled the sun of righteousness, the bright and the morning star, a covert from the tempest and the shadow of a rock in a weary land ; a fortress and a strong tower ; a rock ; a precious corner stone ; a

tree of life; the bread of life, and a well of water springing up into everlasting life. To represent the near and endearing relation in which he stands to his followers; to show the care which he takes of them, and the benefits which they derive from him, every relation known among men, every office of dignity and respect, have been employed. Whatever be the situation of his followers, however manifold and great their wants and necessities, they will find in him something suited to their several cases and desires; they will be supplied with grace sufficient for them in every vicissitude of life. If misled by error, or involved in ignorance, he is their prophet to instruct, enlighten and guide them. If guilty and alienated from God, he is their priest to atone for, and to expiate their offences. If lawless and disobedient, he is their king to subdue them unto himself, to teach them his laws, and to reward their obedience. If oppressed with sickness and sorrow, he is their physician to heal and relieve them. If terrified by the threatenings of the law and the accusations of their own conscience, he is their advocate and intercessor with the Father. When held in bondage by Sin and Satan he is their redee-

mer to pay their ransom and procure their deliverance. If beset with dangers, and surrounded with enemies, he is the captain of their salvation, under whose banners they shall go forth to victory and to conquest. In short, he is their father, their elder brother, their friend and their husband.

But throughout the whole scripture, of which the language is so highly figurative, no metaphor is more beautiful and natural, more frequently repeated, more finely wrought, more descriptive of the thing signified, than that which represents our Saviour as a shepherd, his people as his flock, and the visible church as his sheep-fold.

In the writings of every people, we find frequent allusions to their peculiar manners and customs, to the natural productions of the soil and climate, to the external face of the country, as diversified with hills and valleys, woods, and lakes, and rivers; and to the various appearances presented by the heavens and the earth at different seasons of the year. To understand, therefore, and to relish the beauties of any writer due attention must be paid to the nature of the country where he lived, and the state of society at the time when he

wrote. Without this the finest and most expressive imagery will produce no effect on the mind, but will be deemed barren and unentertaining. In no instance is this truth more obvious than in the writings of the ancient Jews, more especially the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament. To a person acquainted with the manners, customs and opinions only of modern times; who judges of works of fancy and inspiration by the cold rules of criticism; who has no idea of a country or state of society different from his own, no force or beauty will appear in these writings: on the contrary, the simple narrative of the historian will seem rude and barbarous, the sublime imagery of the poets to be rhapsody and bombast, and the enigmatical predictions of the prophets to be unintelligible jargon. But whoever reads the scriptures with the eye of an enlightened critick, making at the same time proper allowance for the simplicity of ancient manners and customs, for the peculiar rites and institutions of the Jews, for the bold and figurative style of writing prevalent among all eastern nations, will discern a beauty and sublimity in the sacred books far superiour to the best human compositions.

The Jewish nation, in the early period of their history, though distinguished by the divine favour, and enlightened by revelation, were still in a rude and uncultivated state, as far as regarded civil society. Even in the days of David, they had scarcely advanced farther than the state of shepherds and husbandmen. Arts, manufactures and commerce, began to flourish in a later period. Their flocks and herds constituted their riches. Milk and honey were the terms which conveyed to them the idea of plenty and fertility. To tend the flocks and herds was the honourable employment of princes and nobles; and the greatest king, the sublimest writer, and the best man which this or perhaps any other nation ever saw, was taken from the sheepfolds and from following the ewes “great with young.” From this circumstance it undoubtedly arises that the sacred writings abound so much with images borrowed from the pastoral life. For in whatever stage of society a nation commences it’s literary career, the future style of writing will always retain a resemblance to the original model. The manners and customs may change, the taste may improve, but the national authours

will, from habit and imitation, still employ similar images and expressions to those which were invented by the first composers. Hence we find our Lord and his apostles, (who lived in a very different state of society from that in which the psalmist composed that admirable pastoral the 23d psalm, and Isaiah uttered his sublime predictions concerning the great Shepherd of the flock) illustrating moral and spiritual ideas by the very same sensible images.

The beginning of that chapter which I have now read, contains a beautiful allegorical description of the relation subsisting between Jesus and his followers. The weak, helpless, blind, and wandering state of man by nature, and even while the work of sanctification is incomplete, is well represented under the notion of sheep without a shepherd. And the restoration, nourishment, guidance, protection and comfort which we derive from Christ are equally well expressed by that care which a shepherd exercises with regard to the sheep of his pasture. I mean not to deform this beautiful allegory, by pushing the comparison too far, but, as it is a favourite image with the sacred writers, as the ideas it

suggests to the mind are tender, affecting and comfortable, as, consequently, it will elucidate the scripture language, and impress upon our hearts a deep sense of the ties and relations by which we are bound to our Redeemer. I cannot, but deem it deserving of your attention :

I. To consider the character of Christ as a shepherd, and illustrate the language of scripture on that subject.

II. To inquire who are those other sheep, whom Jesus says in the text he must bring in?

III. To consider the happy effects which would result from bringing in those other sheep; “ there would be one fold, and one “ shepherd.”

1. The situation and character of sheep represent, in a striking and lively manner, the situation and character of mankind. Like sheep in a pasture we are placed in this world, in the midst of every thing which can contribute to our happiness, by a beneficent Creator, whose property we are, whose pasture we eat, on whose bounty we live, to whose will and pleasure we are wholly subservient. As sheep annually repay their keeper's care and attention by the fruit of their substance, and by

sparing a part of their own covering for their owner's clothing and defence, so we, who are the people of God's flock, should, in token of those obligations which we are under, dedicate to him ourselves, our talents, and our substance. As sheep are led to the slaughter, and doomed to bleed for their owner's convenience or luxury, so we, like sheep, are laid in the grave, and become the prey of worms which riot over us in the tomb. No animal is more timid and helpless, or has more enemies than the sheep. So we are altogether weak and dependent, exposed continually to evils which we can neither foresee nor prevent; beset with enemies who wait for our halting; temptations, like raving wolves, watch to make us their prey; our adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion, continually goeth about seeking to devour us. Our inward passions and desires, worse than wild beasts, would tear us in pieces, did not the great shepherd of the flock help and preserve us. No animal is so stupid or so much disposed to wander from the flock as the sheep. So we all, like lost sheep, blinded by temptation and stupified by sin, had gone astray; we had departed every one into his own way; we had wandered from

the rich pasture which God had provided for us, in quest of forbidden pleasures, as sheep scattered on the mountains, without a shepherd; and in a deplorable situation like this were we, when he who made us had mercy upon us, and sent the great shepherd and bishop of souls, to seek and save that which was lost.

But though all mankind are represented in scripture under the image of sheep, yet the genuine disciples of Christ are more frequently and with greater propriety spoken of as his flock, because they are a chosen people selected from the herd of mankind, and collected into his church, which is his fold; because they are distinguished by him above others; he knoweth them and calleth them by name—others, who are not of his fold, he knoweth and acknowledgeth not—in short, because they hear and know his voice and follow him—they are, like the lamb of God, meek, harmless, patient and resigned.

But wherein consists that pastoral care which Christ exercises over his flock? First of all, he is the shepherd of his people because he feeds them with spiritual and divine food. Thus says the Psalmist, “the Lord is my shep-

“herd, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie
“down in green pastures, he leadeth me by
“the still waters.” The word of God and
the ordinances of religion form to every sin-
cere Christian a rich repast; a pasture which
is ever green. This pasture is, moreover,
watered with the dew of heaven, which makes
it spring up and yield abundant nourishment.
They who frequent the ordinances of Christ’s
religion, who read his word by day and me-
ditate on it by night, who hold communion
with him in the exercises of devotion, who
walk with him in the ways of holiness and
peace, shall not want; they shall not want
light and instruction; they shall not want
comfort and joy; they shall not want grace
sufficient for them in every time of trial. They
shall go out and in and find pasture.

The reason why men make so little progress
in religion, why they do not grow more ra-
pidly in grace and in knowledge is, that, they
reject the food which is presented to them.
Their vitiated appetite loathes every thing
which is not seasoned with sin or sensual plea-
sure. But would they only open this sacred
book of God, and peruse it with sincere and
upright hearts, they would there find an un-

speakable and inexhaustible feast to the soul ; they would find a table constantly furnished with the richest dainties, even in the presence of their enemies ; they would receive an entertainment sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. When the Christain, after searching through the wilderness of the world, and finding every thing barren and insipid, retires into the house of God, and joins in the exercises of his worship, he sees green pastures arise ; the desert crowned with herbage, nature smiles, and refreshing streams are heard to murmur all around. Nor does this part of Christ's pastoral office, like many others, cease with the present life. For even in the future world, where faith shall be swallowed up in vision ; where every want shall be supplied ; where there shall be no ordinances whence the flock of the Redeemer may draw nourishment ; where shall be no temple to worship in ; where the people of God shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of those rivers of pleasure which flow at his right hand—still the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Christ is the shepherd of his people, because he leads and directs them. Thus says the Psalmist, “ he leadeth me in the paths of “righteousness for his name’s sake.” His word is a light to their feet and a lamp to their path; he leads them by his spirit to the richest and the best pastures; he directs them into the right way by his precepts and by his example; he warns them by his servants of those paths where the nets of the destroyer are spread, where the wild beasts of prey have their haunts, where danger and temptation abound. When the road is steep and difficult, he takes them by the hand, and carries them safely through every trial. When the path is uncertain his voice is heard before them, “ This is the way, walk ye in “it.” When the noon-tide of affliction burns, he maketh his flock to rest under the cool and refreshing shade of his grace. When the storm approaches, he removes them to a place of shelter, and takes them away from the evil to come. And when the shadows of the everlasting evening descend, as a shepherd counteth his flock, separateth the sheep from the goats, and shutteth them up in his fold, so Jesus receiveth his lambs into his bosom, where enfolded in his arms they sleep the

long sleep of death, secure from every danger and beyond the reach of every foe.

Christ is the shepherd of his people, because he restoreth their soul, recalleveth them from their wanderings, healeth their backslidings, and receiveth them graciously into favour. Such is the prevalence of indwelling corruption, the force of temptation and the subtlety of the destroyer, that even they who have been recovered from the ways of folly and destruction, are still apt to wander from the flock, to feed on forbidden pastures; or, by frequenting the company of the wicked, to expose themselves to be entangled by temptation or devoured by some of their numerous foes. The shepherd may for a time permit them to wander bewildered in darkness and uncertainty, perplexed with doubts and fears whether they shall ever discover the right road or be again admitted into the fold, in order to make them more sensible of their danger, and more humble and watchful and attentive to his voice in future. But none of his little ones shall perish. He knows how frail they are. He pities and reclaims those who are gone astray. He seeks the lost sheep in his wanderings, and when he findeth it, he re-

joiceth more over it than over those who went not astray. It is impossible that they who are preserved and restored by this good shepherd shall finally fall away. In the hour of reckoning, none shall be missing. When the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall present to his Father a glorious and perfect flock, without spot or blemish, with these joyful words, “those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.” Fear not then, ye who are of the flock of Jesus, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Christ is the shepherd of his people because he protects them from danger; so strong and sincere was his love for his sheep, that he laid down his life for them. But by so doing he has vanquished all those who seek to make their souls a prey; and he now liveth and reigneth for ever, to guard his flock from every danger. And not only is he a powerful but also a watchful shepherd. He that keepeth Israel slumbers not nor sleeps; his eye is ever upon his beloved sheep; he sees all the attempts and plots of their subtle and relentless enemies, and defeats their counsels before they are put into execution. Dangers may threaten, temptations may surround, the adversary may

rage and roar for his prey, but he who leadeth Joseph like a flock of sheep is mightier far than they who conspire their ruin. He shall preserve them from all evil. He is their shade on their right hand. The sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night. He shall preserve their going out and their coming in. They may lie down in peace and sleep in security ; for the Lord maketh them to dwell in safety. He stills the raging of the seas, and represses the fury of the enemy and the avenger. He sends his angel and shuts the lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt those whom the wickedness of man has exposed to their devouring jaws. The burning fiery furnace cannot injure when the Son of God is present. Even the dark valley of the shadow of death loses all its horror, and ceases to inspire fear, when the Shepherd of Israel is with us as our guardian and support. "Yea, though
" I walk through the valley of the shadow of
" death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with
" me ; thy rod and staff comfort and support
" me." "I give unto my sheep eternal life," says our Lord, "and they shall never perish,
" neither shall any be able to pluck them out
" of my hand."

In short Christ is the shepherd of his people, because he comforts and relieves them. How beautiful and affecting a description is given us by the prophet, of the care, attention and compassion with which Jesus exercises this part of his pastoral office! "He shall feed his flock, like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." In Christ's fold there are sheep of all ages and conditions. But according to their circumstances and exigencies such is the care of their compassionate shepherd. As their days are, so shall their strength be. They that are young in grace and cannot walk shall be carried; and that too in a place which equally denotes safety and endearment, in the bosom of the good Shepherd. They cannot sink, under whom are the everlasting arms. They that are heavy laden shall be gently led. Comfort yourselves Christians, with this, that none shall be left behind. Whatever hardships and difficulties you may meet with on the way, however inadequate your strength may seem for the burden you are called to bear, yet fear not, you shall all appear before God in Zion. To the faint the Shepherd of

Israel giveth power, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. He strengtheneth the diseased; he healeth the sick, he bindeth up the broken, he seeketh the lost, he bringeth back that which was driven away. Wherever his sheep are scattered in the cloudy and dark day, into whatever fold they may have strayed, he searcheth them out, he bringeth them from among the people, and gathereth them from the countries, and bringeth them again to his flock; there shall they lie down in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed on the mountains of Israel.

SERMON IV,

PART II.

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The same subject continued.

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MY brethren, in a former discourse from these words, I endeavoured to illustrate the character of Christ as a shepherd, and to show that he is thus denominated with the greatest propriety and beauty; because he *feeds, leads, restores, protects* and *comforts* his people.

I now proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to inquire who are those other sheep, whom Jesus says in the text, he must bring in, and who shall hear his voice.

I am the good shepherd, says Jesus, *and know my sheep.* The followers of the Lamb are all enrolled in his book of life. From that divine omniscience and foreknowledge of which he is possessed, he knew from the beginning who shall believe and be saved, and who shall reject the counsel of God to their own condemnation. The heirs of grace, chosen to

be partakers of Christ's redemption, shall not be forgotten, or left to perish. In whatever nation or region of the earth they may live ; however far removed from the means of salvation ; however improbable it may be that the sound of the gospel should ever reach them ; yet the great Shepherd of the flock knoweth where they are to be found, and at the time and in the way which he hath appointed they shall be brought in. As faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, by means which we cannot foresee or explain, but which are doubtless within the reach of almighty power and infinite wisdom, wherever Christ has sheep the light of the gospel shall either shine upon the whole nation to which they belong, or the dews of heaven shall distil upon them in secret, or they shall in the course of providence be removed to a place where the gospel is known and professed. The conversion of Ethiopia to the faith was an event which, at the time it happened, was of all others the most improbable ; but in that nation Jesus had sheep to bring in, and their bringing in he accomplished by the accidental meeting, as it would appear to us, of a great man of that country with one of our

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Lord's disciples. To Cornelius, a private messenger was dispatched from heaven, that he and his household might be brought into the fold of the Redeemer. On the other hand, those Jews who had been scattered abroad throughout every nation under heaven, and who consequently had no opportunity of hearing Christ's voice in those unenlightened countries, yet being among the number of his sheep, they were providentially brought up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, and were there converted by the powerful preaching of St. Peter, seconded by the wonderful works of God. And so it was, so it is, and so it will be, in every age. The Shepherd of Israel is constantly carrying on that plan, devised from the beginning, for bringing all whom the Father has given him to a knowledge of himself. The objects, the time and the means are all fixed in his mind, and form a part of one great chain, no link of which shall be broken. But they are necessarily unknown to us. We cannot tell who are the sheep of Jesus. No human foresight, observing even with the greatest care the signs of the times, can ascertain when or how the light of the glorious gospel shall shine either to na-

tions or individuals. That book, which contains the catalogue of Christ's chosen ones, no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth is able to open or to read. In this inquiry, therefore, we presume not to determine the objects of the divine favour, or to fix upon the times and the seasons which God hath reserved in his own power. But from the declarations made in other passages of scripture; from the general tenour of the gospel, and from the analogy of providence, to illustrate the meaning of our Saviour, when he says, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice."

1. By the expression, *this fold*, it is evident that the Jewish nation, was primarily intended by our Lord; and by his *other sheep* the Gentile nations. The Jews were particularly distinguished by the title of God's flock. They had been chosen by the Almighty, out of all the nations of the earth. To them alone a revelation was granted; to them were committed the oracles of the living God. These instances of the divine favour, however, were not occasioned by any merit on their part; but were designed by God in order to make with

them a deposit of his revealed will, to preserve alive in the earth the knowledge of himself, and by degrees to prepare the world more effectually for that grand dispensation which was not to be confined to one nation or country, but to be published to the whole race of man. That the revelation intrusted to them might not be lost or corrupted, by any intercourse or union with the professors of heathenism it was ordained, that, no strangers or foreigners should be admitted into the bosom of their church. If any who resided among them were willing to embrace their religion, they were admitted no farther than the outer court. The Jews were farther distinguished from all other nations of the earth by peculiar rites and ceremonies. They were forbidden to intermarry, or even to eat or to drink with strangers. In short, every method was adopted which policy could suggest to preserve them a separate and distinct people. A wall was erected between the Jew and the Gentile, which was the parent of many odious distinctions and of many mistaken opinions, highly injurious to the character of the Supreme Being. In the days of our Saviour, the most extravagant national pride, joined to an unjustifiable con-

tempt of all other nations, religious bigotry, self-conceit, the meanest and most illiberal prejudices, formed the prominent features in the Jewish character. Puffed up with a sense of their supposed superiority over others, their constant boast was, that, they were born of the circumcision, that they were Abraham's seed, and Moses's disciples. Ignorant of the true intention of the Almighty in selecting them from the rest of the world, they foolishly imagined that God was a local deity, confined to the Jewish nation, and to the land of Judea. In their opinion there was no salvation to the Gentiles; they of the uncircumcision who knew not the law were accursed. And though, in the days of the Messiah, they expected that Tarshish and the Isles should acknowledge his sway, they were far from supposing that they would be admitted to equal privileges with their own favoured nation, but, that they would be nothing else than subjects and tributaries to the Jews.

How different from all this were the general spirit and declared intention of Christianity. Within its wide embrace it comprehended both Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, Roman and Scythian, bond and free. Chris-

Christianity does not require us to worship God, at any stated season or in any particular place, but allows us to worship *when* and *where* and *how* we please, provided we worship him in spirit and in truth. The perfection of the Christian service consists not in the strict observance of outward rites and ceremonies, but in that which every man has it in his power to attain, the due regulation of his heart and conduct. The rites it prescribes are few and simple, the forms it requires are plain and easy to be observed. Its maxims and precepts are not adapted to the taste of any particular age or nation; but are of that general, universal and immutable nature which is calculated for all ranks and professions, for all ages and nations, and for every mode of government and every state of society. Jesus was not the teacher and lawgiver of the Jewish nation alone, but of the whole human race. He broke down the middle wall of partition which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, and united them in one body by his cross. He abolished the law of ordinances, which was obligatory only on one people, and delivered a new commandment which all nations were required to obey. He threw open the door of that fold which

the Scribes and Pharisees had been so careful to keep shut, and invited all the people of the earth to assemble therein. He was a light to lighten the Gentiles and to guide into the way of peace those who sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. His sound was destined to go into all the earth, and his words unto the ends of the world.

By the other sheep mentioned in the text, is therefore meant those believers among the Gentiles, who were not of the Jewish nation or church. These, Jesus tells his hearers, should hear the glad tidings of the gospel of peace, and should be admitted into his fold, should hear his voice and follow him. The bringing in of these sheep, in other words, the conversion of the Gentiles, had been long ago predicted by the prophets, and spoken of in terms of rapture and sublimity, as an event which was to take place in the reign of the Messiah. To correct the inveterate prejudices of the Jews ; to destroy that narrow spirit of bigotry wherewith they were animated ; to expand their minds to more liberal views of the divine ways, was the object of our Lord in many conversations which he held with the Scribes and Pharisees. His own ministrations indeed were in

a great measure confined to the Jews; for as he himself says, he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That he might not violently shock their prejudices and unnecessarily lay a stumbling block in their way, he did not at first openly teach their rejection, and the admission of the Gentiles to the same rights and privileges, but wrapped up his doctrines on that head in allegories and parables. But when he had finished the work which was given him to do; when he had come to his own, and his own received him not; then he determined to bring in his other sheep, to try if they would hear his voice, and he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Through their instrumentality salvation was brought to the Gentiles. In obedience to their Master's command, they dispersed themselves into the various regions of the earth, seeking and bringing in Christ's sheep, teaching that circumcision or uncircumcision availed nothing, that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. And such was their success; so great was the number of sheep whom they brought into the Re-

deemer's fold, that it might be truly said, that, they became a people who were *no people*; that a little one became a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. In short, the change was so great, and the revolution so complete, that they who before were excluded from God's flock now became the only true flock, and the ancient flock were rejected from the fold.

2. As at the time when our Lord addressed the Jews he meant by *this fold*, the Jewish church, and by his *other sheep*, the Gentiles—and by saying that these other sheep should hear his voice and be brought in, he meant that the Gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and that many of them would believe and receive it; so in the present days, when we say that Christ has other sheep, who are not of this fold, but who shall hear his voice and shall be brought in, we mean, by *this fold*, the Christian church—by his other sheep; 1. The Jews who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah; 2. The Mahometans who acknowledge Jesus to have been a great prophet, but yet have suffered themselves to be deluded by the vain pretensions of an enthusiastick impostor; and 3. The heathen nations, of whom we may say with Isaiah.

“ darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness
“ the people.” And when we say, that, these
other sheep shall hear his voice, and be brought
in, we mean that the Jews shall at last yield to
the force of truth, lay aside their prejudices,
and believe that Jesus is the Messiah; that the
Mahometans shall perceive their errors, and
acknowledge no other prophet but Jesus of
Nazareth; in short, that, the glory of the Lord
shall yet arise upon those who now sit in dark-
ness, and their light shall come.

The conversion of the Jews to the faith of
Christ, is an event generally expected to take
place in the latter days. For this they seem
to be miraculously reserved by divine provi-
dence. For notwithstanding innumerable
persecutions, captivities, changes and revolu-
tions; in spite of many attempts to incorpo-
rate them with the nations among whom
they have lived, they still remain a separate
and distinct people, professing their ancient
national faith, and governed by their own pe-
culiar customs and manners; and this unfortu-
nate nation still remains separate and distinct
from all the nations of the earth, a dispersed,
persecuted and despised race, a standing proof
of the truth of revelation, a striking instance of

the divine vengeance against infidelity and disobedience, and we trust, a fit subject for the display of the divine glory in their conversion and restoration. For that the rejection of the Jews is not final and perpetual we have the authority of many plain and certain predictions interpreted by an infallible apostle. The prophet Isaiah, after foretelling the advent of the Messiah and the glories of his reign, thus describes the conversion of the Gentiles and the subsequent restoration of the Jews. “ In that
“ day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall
“ stand for an ensign to the people: to it shall
“ the Gentiles seek ; and his rest shall be glori-
“ ous. And it shall come to pass in that day,
“ that the Lord shall set his hand again, the
“ second time, to recover the remnant of his
“ people which shall be left. And he shall set
“ up an ensign to the nations, and shall assem-
“ ble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together
“ the dispersed of Judah from the corners of
“ the earth.” The apostle Paul likewise says,
“ I would not that ye were ignorant of this,
“ that blindness in part has happened to Israel
“ until the fulness of the Gentiles be come
“ in, and then all Israel shall be saved.”
When or how this desirable event shall take

place, we are not told, and therefore are not authorized to conjecture: whether the conversion of the Jews shall be previous or subsequent to the conversion of those other nations who still refuse the yoke of Jesus. Whether they shall be brought in by degrees separately and individually, or at once in one great body, and with the consent of the whole nation, are points which no man can, with certainty, determine. Their opinion is the most probable in itself, and most consonant to the prophecies on this subject, who suppose, that, after they have endured the various curses pronounced on their infidelity, the Lord, in his own time and way, will gather them, as their great Legislator predicts, from among the nations whither he had scattered them, and with an outstretched arm will lead them in triumph to take possession of the land of their fathers. This will be an event of such magnitude and splendour, it will be so decided a proof of the truth of Christianity, that none can possibly avoid conviction—all the nations of the earth, shall hasten into the Redeemer's fold—the sheep of Jesus shall be brought from afar; they shall fly as a cloud driven by the

wind, and flock together as doves to their windows.

The conversion of the followers of Mohammed to the Christian faith is also an event which, though not in particular and express, yet in general language, we are taught by the sacred oracles to expect. As I had occasion to observe and illustrate in a former discourse, though we may justly lament that Christianity has not been equally successful, yet the extensive propagation of Mahomedan faith ought not to excite much regret; because in many respects it is a proper forerunner to the gospel, and well calculated to pave the way for its introduction. By means which Christianity does not allow its professors to employ, Mohammed diffused knowledge and civilization among nations formerly rude and barbarous. He taught, together with an excellent system of morals, the belief of one God, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, which are the necessary foundations of every system of religion. The Mohammedans are fettered with fewer prejudices than the Jews. They have a high respect for Jesus, and believe his divine mission; and should the time arrive when, delivered from the shackles of despot-

ism, they shall enjoy the privilege of calm discussion and free inquiry, error and imposture will speedily disappear before the light of truth. This period, moreover, appears to be at no great distance. The general weakness and decay which are apparent in all Mohammedan States; the rapid progress which a Christian Princess, seconded by the hardy sons of the north, has lately made towards the universal empire of Asia; the extensive settlements made by another great commercial nation in an opposite quarter of that populous and extensive country, all indicate the speedy overthrow of the temporal power of Mohammed; and with this the spiritual dominion will fall of course. Christianity was propagated by argument, its evidence rests on sound and immutable reason; and, therefore, it cannot fall as long as human nature continues the same. But the religion of Mohammed was propagated by the sword; it is still interwoven with the political constitution; and, therefore, when the power of the sword shall, with whatever views of ambition or of policy, be wrested from its professors, it will have no support, the whole system will tumble into ruins, like a building whose foundation is removed. There is no religion but

the Gospel that can bear the fiery trial of persecution and affliction.

But not only do we expect that the Jews and Mahometans shall hear Christ's voice, and be brought into his fold, the Sacred Oracles mention other sheep besides these which shall also be brought in. They predict an era when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth; when the heathen and unenlightened nations shall enjoy with us the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To an event so wonderful and so glorious, we dare scarcely lift our imagination, much less can we pretend to point out the means by which it may be accomplished. We rest with confidence in this, that he who hath foretold it is able to bring it to pass, and we believe that the Lord will hasten it in his good time. At the time when our Lord uttered the sentiment in the text, the conversion of the Gentiles was an event equally as improbable as the farther propagation of the Gospel is, in the present days, to nations barbarous and uncivilized, whom the foot of the traveller has never visited; on whom the day of science and religion has not yet dawned. Who could have supposed that Jesus, addressing a company of Jews in the

land of Judea, alluded even to a country which was then undiscovered, and meant that he had sheep on these distant shores, who, eighteen hundred years after his crucifixion should hear his voice and be brought into his fold? The numerous discoveries which of late years have been made; the regular and easy intercourse which by means of navigation may be carried on between the most distant regions; the spirit of adventure which, in this commercial age, prevails in many Christian countries; furnish advantages which could not have been found in any preceding period. To the honour of the British nation and of human nature I mention, that the most strenuous exertions are making among that people to improve the present favourable circumstances; that many, animated with a noble zeal for the cause of truth and of Christianity, have formed themselves into societies for the propagation of the Gospel; and that missions are actually instituted for the conversion of the South-Sea Islanders, of the Hindoos, and of the American Indians.

It is our duty to co-operate with them, as far as lies in our power in advancing the common cause of Christianity. It is our duty, and it is also in our power, to recommend religion by

our example; to show, by the influence which it has on our heart and conduct, that it is worthy of all acceptance; and to offer up our prayers to heaven, that the gospel may have free course and be glorified, that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; that there may be one fold and one shepherd.

Note—The illustration of the third division of this subject, as projected by the authour, was not found among his manuscripts.

SERMON V.

PART I.



On the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



LUKE, CHAP. 22, VERSE 15.

“ With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.”

THE passover was an anniversary festival celebrated by the Jews, in commemoration of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Jesus, who came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, had always set before his followers an example of all-righteousness, and had been punctual therefore in discharging even those ritual and ceremonial observances which were imposed on the Jews by the law of Moses. We find him attending the publick worship in the synagogues; we find him making the customary offerings and oblations in the temple, and we read of him, on former occasions, regularly and zealously going up to Jerusalem

to celebrate with his countrymen this grand feast of the passover. But we learn, from the preceding part of the history, that the approach of this particular festival, here alluded to, was accompanied with more important preparation than had ever been the case on any former occasion. The reason was, that the baptism wherewith he was to be baptized drew near, and he was straitened 'till it was accomplished. He foresaw, that, on this occasion, his soul was to be offered up unto God; that his enemies would triumph over him; and that his life of trouble was to be finished by an ignominious death. This was the last time that he should eat the passover with his disciples, until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God. But though these gloomy prospects lay before him, and he felt with the deepest sensibility of soul the wounds which they inflicted, yet we do not find that he was at all discouraged or dismayed. On the contrary, he went up to Jerusalem not merely with resignation, but even with boldness, alacrity and cheerfulness. Instead of shrinking from the conflict, and seeking to avoid by flight or concealment the place or the occasion of his troubles and persecution, he went up in a more open and

magnificent manner than heretofore; and even vehemently desired to eat this passover with his disciples. With a generosity, of which he is the only example, he was less affected by the consideration of his own sufferings than he was encouraged and elevated by the happiness he was to secure to his followers. For the joy that was set before him he cheerfully endured the cross, despising the shame.

But what, no doubt, chiefly occupied his thoughts on occasion of this passover, and which was the cause of that desire which he had to celebrate it, was the favourable opportunity which it presented of instituting a simple, but significative and solemn service, which would tend to recall the remembrance of him, when he was gone from them; which would be a token and memorial of the familiarity and friendship which they had enjoyed with him for several years; and which would be a distinguishing badge of his followers in all succeeding ages.

This appears to be the meaning and scope of the verse. But what seems no less worthy of attention, is the contrast which may be remarked between the disposition and conduct of our Saviour on this occasion, and those of his

professed followers when the Christian passover, which is the substitute of the Jewish, is about to be celebrated. With whatever bitter herbs this festival was accompanied to our Lord, he not only cheerfully partook of it, in obedience to his father's will, and in conformity to the great design of his mission into the world, but he even felt an anxious desire to be present at this feast, though he knew that bonds and imprisonment and death awaited him. How different this from the conduct of his followers, who, notwithstanding it is their express duty to partake of the Christian passover, notwithstanding it is a most delightful feast to every worthy partaker, notwithstanding it is accompanied with unspeakable advantages, not only to individuals but to the Church in general, do yet either perform this duty with lukewarmness and indifference, or are found to be absent when this ordinance is to be celebrated, or perhaps absolutely refuse to perform it, consider it as a duty of slight obligation and trifling importance, and thus trample under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith we are *sanctified*.

This, my brethren, is a conduct which I have often had occasion to mention with aston-

ishment, regret and disapprobation. I have from time to time addressed to you such exhortations as I thought would have some weight, at least, with the serious and well disposed; and I had begun to hope, that my remonstrances had, at last, awakened some to a sense of the obligation and importance of this solemn ordinance. But alas! the righteousness of many among us is as the morning cloud and the early dew which soon pass away. Some who heretofore were punctual in discharging this duty do now regularly absent themselves from church on a communion Sabbath. Others who do communicate are not sufficiently attentive to recommend this necessary duty to others, especially their children, relatives and dependents. The young and rising generation are thus left ignorant in religious things, and, if we may judge from outward appearances, scarcely reflect that they have immortal spirits to be saved; that they are sinful creatures who need a Saviour; or that they came into the world for any other purpose than to prosecute the gaieties and frivolities of fashion and amusement, or, at best, to pursue the trifling and short-lived objects of the present life. As we have the prospect

of celebrating next Sabbath the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, I think it my duty once more to return to the charge, and endeavour to excite in the members of this congregation a more general desire than has hitherto been manifested of eating the Christian passover.

For this purpose I propose to dedicate this day to a preparatory service for the more solemn service of next Sabbath: and by the number of applications for admission to the communion which shall be made, in the course of the week, I shall be able to determine whether there is yet remaining sufficient religion and virtue to be operated upon by motives of duty and even interest, or whether it will be of any avail ever to renew this subject again. In this and the following discourse therefore I shall endeavour;

In the first place, to point out the obligations which all Christians are under to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's supper:

Secondly, in order to shew you that it is your interest as well as your duty, and in order to convince you that to eat the Christian passover is an honour and privilege which we ought earnestly to desire, I will endeavour to point

out some of those innumerable advantages which are derived from partaking of the Lord's supper;

And lastly, I shall endeavour, briefly, to describe the preparation which is most suitable on such an occasion, that you may discharge this duty in a good and acceptable manner.

I. In the first place, I am to point out the obligations which Christians are under to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And

First, we are bound to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by the express command of our Lord enjoining us to do so. It is a common but gross and fatal mistake to suppose that the sacrament, though a proper and good thing, is not a strict duty binding indiscriminately on all who profess the gospel, that it is left to our own option whether we shall partake of it or not, that by receiving it we indeed perform an important act of virtue and are entitled to exalted praise, but that no positive guilt is incurred by absenting ourselves from the ordinance. But what constitutes moral obligation? It is the authority of the lawgiver by whom the action is commanded or forbidden. The distinction of moral and

positive precepts lessens not the strictness of the obligation of either. If the former are made known to us by the dictates of reason and conscience, the latter proceed from a source no less pure and infallible, from God himself speaking to us in his word. If moral precepts are consistent with the eternal rectitude and fitness of things, it is no less so for creatures to obey the will of their Creator in whatever he is pleased to command. Who ever violates a positive precept acts in direct opposition to the eternal fitness of things, which laid him under an obligation to obey that positive precept. He is guilty of sin, no less than he who violates a moral precept, because he equally insults the authority of the lawgiver and infringes his right to obedience. To get rid therefore of the obligation which we are under to celebrate the sacrament of the supper, we must either disavow the authority of Jesus as a lawgiver or deny the existence of the precept. The former will be a bold and difficult step—to reject the authority of him whom winds and waves obey, who hath the keys of hell and of death, who shutteth and none can open, who openeth and none can shut. Or if we might possibly be foolish and unhappy enough now to con-

deal from our own minds this interesting truth, that, Jesus is our lawgiver and will be our judge, yet we shall not be able to do so in that day, when, seated on a tribunal of justice, his language shall be “ those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.”

The other evasion is equally impossible. For though too many are but little acquainted with their Bible, there is none who can read or who has ever frequented the house of God who knows not, that, the Lord Jesus, *the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner he took the cup when he had supped, and said, This cup is the new testament of my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.*

Let no man then pretend to suppose, that, it is a matter of indifference whether he communicate or not. For, from what has been now said, it appears to be as much your duty to communicate as it is to remember the Sab-

bath day to keep it holy, or to honour your father and mother. You are equally guilty of sin in neglecting to communicate as if you took the name of the Lord your God in vain; or were guilty of murder, adultery and theft. For the same Lawgiver who says remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and honour your father and your mother, also says, do this in remembrance of me. He who has forbidden profane swearing and murder, has also pronounced accursed every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. And not only is the omission of communicating sinful, but it is, moreover, a sin of the deepest dye and of the most aggravated nature.

For, in the second place, we are bound to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's supper, by the strongest of all ties, those of gratitude and love. Consider the occasion and design of the institution. It was appointed to assist us in recalling to mind one whom, were it not for our corrupt and treacherous hearts, we could never forget, him who is the greatest and best friend of the human race; to commemorate an event the most striking that occurs in the annals of mankind, an event de-

monstrative of love and grace unparalleled, and productive of unspeakable benefits to the human race. Viewed in this light every principle in our nature calls upon us to draw near and contemplate this wonderful thing.

Do this in remembrance of me—said our blessed Saviour when he instituted this ordinance. How impressive and significant are these words! The circumstances in which they were uttered, might serve instead of comment and paraphrase to those who heard them, but to us at this distance of time, who are moreover slow of heart to believe, and still slower to obey, some farther illustration may be requisite. “ My beloved disciples, would
“ he have said, you have already been wit-
“ nesses to the unrelenting malice of my ene-
“ mies, to the persecution of the Scribes and
“ Pharisees, and to the violent opposition
“ which I have been forced to encounter in
“ the prosecution of the great design of re-
“ deeming the human race. But whatever
“ difficulties I have hitherto met with, how-
“ ever great my past sufferings have been, yet
“ they bear no proportion to those which I
“ am shortly to suffer. For I must now be ex-
“ posed not only to the relentless rage of the

“ Scribes and Pharisees, and to the insatiable
“ fury of an incensed multitude, but also to
“ the united strength and attacks of all the
“ powers of darkness. But this is not all. I
“ have a severer baptism to be baptized with;
“ I am not only forced to fight with men and
“ devils; but, as Jacob contended and wrest-
“ led with the angel till he obtained a bles-
“ sing, so must I this night wrestle and strive
“ in prayer with God, till I obtain pardon and
“ blessing for the fallen sons of Adam. I am
“ now to feel the whole weight of my father’s
“ dreadful wrath and indignation for all the
“ sins of the world. Your zeal and affection
“ for me have hitherto kept you closely at-
“ tached to me, but the time is at hand, when
“ I must be deprived even of this consolation,
“ and shall be left alone, to sustain the whole
“ shock of divine displeasure at human guilt.
“ like sheep without a shepherd, you will all
“ of you be soon scattered, every one to his
“ own home: and I shall be left in a situation
“ so deserted and forlorn that even God himself
“ shall, for a while, seem to forsake me. Then
“ shall I be delivered up into the power of
“ mine enemies to be abused and evil intreated,
“ to be mocked and scourged, to be crucified

“ and slain. But all this will I readily and
“ cheerfully undergo for the benefit of man-
“ kind, that I may turn my Father’s just indig-
“ nation from his guilty offspring, that I may
“ redeem the captive sinner from the guilt
“ and the dominion of sin, and that I may thus
“ reconcile all the redeemed unto God in one
“ body by the cross.

“ But while I do and suffer so much for you,
“ all that I require in return for such love and
“ kindness is, that, you affectionately remem-
“ ber and gratefully commemorate what I
“ have already suffered and am still farther to
“ suffer in your room, and for your benefit.
“ I therefore leave it, as my last and dying
“ order to you all, and to all who shall come
“ after you, that you do, by the constant cele-
“ bration of this holy sacrament, perpetuate
“ and keep up a continual remembrance of
“ my sufferings and death, until the time of
“ my second coming. By breaking of bread,
“ as you see me do, you will, in a lively man-
“ er, represent and set forth the wounding and
“ bruising of my body by the Jews. By
“ eating it, you will naturally be put in mind
“ of those benefits which are procured by my
“ death. The pouring out of the wine will

“ naturally remind you of my blood, which
“ is soon to be shed for the remission of sins.
“ The drinking of it will serve to shew the
“ efficacy of my blood in cleansing and puri-
“ fying the soul. And your partaking of
“ both will be sufficient to signify that as your
“ bodies are strengthened and refreshed by
“ bread and wine, so your souls are comforted
“ and sustained by the power and efficacy of
“ my death, and by those heavenly influences
“ and constant supplies of divine grace which,
“ for my sake, are conveyed and imparted to
“ you, and to all Christians, in the due and
“ faithful receiving of this holy sacrament.”

Who, now, that considers Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and views the communion in this light, does not perceive the obligation he is under to celebrate it? While we stand in need of a Saviour, we are bound to commemorate what that Saviour has done for us. While we want a faithful Mediator to stand in the breach for us, we ought, unquestionably, to remember the inestimable blessings which are purchased and secured by his death and intercession. For how can we lay any claim to the merits of the Saviour, if we do not follow his directions or obey his commands. Will the

despised and neglected Jesus remember those ungrateful, disobedient servants of his, when they shall appear before him, in his kingdom of glory hereafter, who would never vouchsafe, in his kingdom of grace here on earth, to do so small a matter in remembrance of him as to receive the sacrament of his body broken and blood shed for their sakes? What can such a neglect proceed from but a disregard for this merciful Saviour, a forgetfulness of his love and compassion, a base ingratitude to his memory, and a shameful disobedience to his commands? What rudeness and incivility, to say no worse, must it be to turn our backs, with coldness and indifference, on the Lord's table, when we would reckon it a breach of good-manners to slight a civil invitation from a neighbour or a friend? What blindness and stupidity must it be to refuse the gracious invitation of our Saviour to partake of this heavenly banquet? to spurn at the offer of pardon and peace freely made us in this sacrament? If love be naturally productive of love, if friendship merit a correspondence in kindness, what is not due to him whose love was stronger than death, who is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother?

3. We are bound to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's supper by a regard to the honour of Christianity. The gospel is a system of religion accompanied with less outward ceremony and show than any other system which was ever disclosed to the world. Among the few simple rites which it prescribes this is by much the most important. It may in truth be called the distinguishing badge of Christianity. By adopting this badge we acknowledge the society to which we belong: we profess to glory in the cross of Christ. Prayer and praise, and the duties of morality are common to every religion. We might attend the church, practise devotion, and live outwardly a good moral life, and yet disbelieve the whole revelation of God. For in these things what do we more than others. Do not even the Jew, the Mahometan and the Infidel do likewise? If we would be thought followers of Christ we must practise those duties which he has, more particularly, prescribed as the badges of our calling. Hereby shall all men know that we are his disciples, if we zealously and regularly perform the solemn act of eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

I do not mean to affirm that all who absent

themselves from communion are enemies of the the gospel. I know that many would be greivously offended at such a supposition. But I must say, that, if you really believe the awful truths of religion, your principles and your practice are much at variance. In times of danger and division, every man must choose a side openly, and abide by it firmly. In an age when the love of many waxes cold, when the most open and lamentable defection from the cause of Christianity prevails, when its enemies are numerous and daring beyond example or precedent, he that is not for us is against us. If he be not, absolutely, ranked with the enemies of God, his friendship will certainly be regarded with suspicion and jealousy. Luke-warmness and indifference are often more fatal to a cause than avowed enmity and opposition. The disregard of religious ordinances emboldens the infidel and discourages the friends of religion. As therefore you regard the interest and glory of your Redeemer; as you would wish his religion to spread and flourish in the world; nay as you would not wish that Christianity, government, morality and law should be blotted out from the face of

the earth, step forward, show that you are not ashamed to own your Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; prove by the observance of this solemn act which I now recommend, that the number of Christ's friends is not so small as the enemy may be ready to suppose. Blessed indeed would be the consequences, if a whole people would with one heart and one voice thus avow their principles. It would strike terror and dismay into the enemies of our faith; it would awaken the most thoughtless and unconcerned; it would decide the doubtful and wavering to the cause of truth; it would encourage the young and timorous; it would revive decayed religion and godliness, and the glory of the Lord would yet dwell in our land. But, on the contrary, if the same disregard of the ordinances of religion which characterizes this age still continue or proceed any farther, the only conclusion I can perceive will be, that the knowledge and practice of Christianity will gradually disappear from among men. Then assuredly you may not only bid adieu to every thing good and valuable in the present life, but you may extend your views to the future, and reflect on that declaration of our Lord,

“ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of
“ my words, in this adulterous and sinful gen-
“ eration, of him also shall the Son of man
“ be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory
“ of his Father with his holy angels.”

4. All Christians are bound to celebrate the sacrament of the supper, by their baptismal vows. Some may suppose that being baptized at a period when they were incapable of entering personally into any engagements, they are not at all bound by any thing done by their parents or sponsors. This however is certainly an error; at least it is not consistent with what happens every day in common life. The engagements of the representative are binding on those who are represented; the heir is bound to fulfil the contracts of the testator; the offspring are unavoidably affected by the conduct of the progenitor. And if the children or persons represented are bound by the act of their substitute, much more are the parents who themselves entered into the engagement; more especially until they are in some measure exonerated by the children's coming to the table of the Lord, and there assuming upon themselves those honourable and beneficial engagements which their parents

formed for them at a period when they had not understanding sufficiently mature to perceive these advantages. It is the business of parents, then, as they regard their own obligations or those of their children, to instruct them early in the nature of the Christian doctrines and duties, more especially of this solemn ordinance, and to urge them by argument and authority to discharge so pressing a duty. There are few parents who do not think themselves guilty of a great omission if they do not, as soon as convenient, present their children by baptism unto God. If death overtake them before they have been admitted into the bosom of the Christian society, the recollection of their neglect must press heavy on the minds of the parents. But yet you have done only half your duty unless you also bring them with you to the table of the Lord, and a second time present them, a ripened, reasonable, and acceptable offering unto God. How early this second dedication of your offspring should be made, it is impossible to determine. If you have been at due pains to endow their infant minds with the rudiments of religious knowledge, the fit season of communicating is earlier than may be imagined.

They that are taught to seek God early shall find him. Certain it is, that many think themselves capable of acting for themselves, and of forming some of the most important engagements in life, who yet pretend that they are too young to perform this indispensable duty. But these I cannot rank with the wise and the worthy—they are destitute of a sense of duty; they cannot possibly feel any regard for the Master they pretend to serve, or put any value on what he has done for them—they are indifferent to the interests of religion—they are faithless even to their baptismal vows.

These important truths I have thought it my duty to lay before you, with the hope, that they will yet have some effect upon such as are not lost to all the holy precepts of our religion: and with all others it were vain to argue, because success is desperate.

SERMON VI.

PART II.

On the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper.

LUKE, CHAP. 22, VERSE 15.

“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.”

IN a former discourse from these words, after endeavouring to explain their occasion and import, I directed your attention to a subject which, though not expressly pointed out in the text, has at least an intimate connection with it; I mean the general neglect of that holy ordinance instituted by our Lord when he uttered the words of the text. With a view to excite in you an eager desire to eat the Christian passover which is to be celebrated among us, I proposed,

1. To point out the obligations which Christians are under to celebrate the holy sacrament of the supper.

2. To point out some of those innumerable advantages which are derived from the worthily receiving of the Lord's supper. And

3. To describe the preparation which is necessary in order to discharge this duty in an acceptable manner.

I. The first head of discourse we have already illustrated, and shewn, that all Christians are bound to celebrate the holy sacrament by our Lord's express command—by love and gratitude for what he has done for us, and for the benefits which we derive from his death—by a regard for the honour and success of religion—and by our baptismal vows. When these considerations are duly weighed, I am altogether at a loss to comprehend what it is that prevents so many from cheerfully embracing every opportunity to discharge a duty so important. I cannot possibly suppose that rational beings will suffer themselves to be influenced by false shame, or by fashion, or evil example, in a matter of such infinite moment. “For it is not a vain thing which we now declare unto you: it is even your life.” Neither will they who weigh the objects of time and those of eternity in a fair balance, who impartially estimate pleasure and duty, be satis-

fied in their own minds with the excuse of too much business or worldly engagement. Much less will this excuse be accepted by the great Judge, in whose estimation duty is paramount to every other obligation: whose language is This oughtest thou to have done, and not to leave the other done. The reason therefore which prevents serious and considerate persons from discharging so indispensable and obvious a duty is, either, that they are conscious of their being engaged in a sinful course of life inconsistent with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, or they entertain such an enthusiastick and conceited opinion of their own righteousness and devotion, as to despise the elements of ordinances, and to be above the necessity of outward acts of religion. Or perhaps they are far removed from either of these extremes, but have not attained a full assurance of faith, and are filled with doubts and fears about their want of preparation, and unfitness to make so solemn an approach unto God.

With regard to those, who do not approach the communion because they are engaged in such vicious courses as render them unfit for so solemn a service, it may be observed, that,

they might as well on this account cease their attendance on the Church, because they cannot tread God's courts or offer up prayers to him in an acceptable manner. For the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord at all times and in all places, in private and in publick, in the ordinary as well as in the more solemn exercises of religion. But then you would do well to consider, that, if you are unfit for the Church, you are also unfit for heaven; if your vices prevent you from appearing among the friends of Jesus at his table they will also exclude you from the blessed society of his followers above. And what a dreadful situation is this, when every moment your fate may be decided either for happiness or misery? Every person of common sense, who for a moment reflects on this, must instantly resolve to remove this cause of his neglect of the communion by sincere repentance for his past sins, and a complete desertion of his vicious courses for the future.

With regard to those who presume upon their own righteousness for acceptance with God, who think that they live good lives and therefore have no occasion for the help of ordinances to repair their falls or excite them to

greater zeal and diligence, I must remind them of the declaration of our Saviour, “that “we are at best unprofitable servants.” And of the assertion of St. John, “if we say that “we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and “the truth is not in us.” Nay, so far from being free from sin, in how many things will not a candid man confess that he daily offends? If we should avoid the more gross transgressions of the law, yet how many failures and omissions, how many vain thoughts, and foolish irregular desires, how many rash and sinful expressions have we not all to answer for? If, then, when we have done all that man can do, we are still unprofitable servants, if we are all very far from doing what God might in strict justice demand of us, then tell me, ye who call yourselves, and who would be thought by others, good moral men, whether you do not want a Saviour and a Mediator? one who may interpose between God and you? one who may turn away his fierce anger, and screen you from the dreadful effects of his indignation? one who may, by his own merit, supply the deficiency of your imperfect services? one that may intercede with God to forgive your manifold sins and offences?

one who may pour on you the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, to enable you to discharge your duty for the time to come? If then you do want such a Saviour, you must carefully and conscientiously obey all that Saviour's commands, before you can possibly be saved by him ; and as he has commanded you to receive the holy sacrament, you must, without any longer delay, shew your love for his memory, and your obedience to his command, by doing this in remembrance of him.

With regard to those who go to neither of these extremes, who are not conscious of indulging in vicious courses, nor vainly presume upon their own righteousness, but who are compassed about with many cares and infirmities, and therefore think themselves unfit for so solemn an approach to God, it may be observed, that, the Gospel always leaves room for reconciliation and restoration upon repentance and amendment of life. Nothing can make us unworthy to receive the sacrament, but our resolving to continue unworthy. If we repent sincerely of our past sins and resolve to lead a new life for the future, then we may safely go to the sacrament. " For Christ
" came not to call the righteous, but sinners

“to repentance.” The fountain of his blood was purposely opened to wash away and cleanse the guilt of those sins and that uncleanness which is sincerely repented of and forsaken. Therefore if we are truly sincere, if we seriously and earnestly desire to serve God to the best of our power, we need not forbear going to the sacrament from an apprehension of our unworthiness; because this sense of our unworthiness, with a serious and sincere desire to become better, an humble and thankful remembrance of Christ’s death, a lively faith in God’s mercies through him, and love and charity for all the world, are the best qualifications which we can possibly bring with us to the holy sacrament.

Thus, my brethren, have I pointed out the indispensable obligations you are under to celebrate the Lord’s supper, and have shewn that in no case are you excusable for neglecting this ordinance. And here I leave the matter to God and to your own conscience. I have set before you life and death; and my words will not return empty, whether you hear or whether you forbear.

II. I now proceed to the second head of discourse, which is, to point out some of those

innumerable advantages which are derived from the worthily receiving of the Lord's supper.

The benefits derived from the proper performance of this duty are of two kinds; such as naturally flow from it, and such as are inseparably annexed to it.

Among the former we may reckon first a sincere sorrow for sin, an utter abhorrence of it, and a determination to forsake it for ever. When we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and handle with our hands its bitter fruits, in the sufferings of our Redeemer, it is impossible not to feel compunction of soul and self-condemnation for having been the cause of so much wo to our greatest and best friend. When we behold how abominable sin is in the sight of God, so as to draw down his indignation even on the son of his love, how can we any longer dare to continue therein? The very solemnity of the approach to the table must tend powerfully to make us stand in awe and sin not. The consideration of the public profession we have made to live blameless and without guile will ever afterwards be present to our minds, as a salutary check, when we are tempted to commit sin. Our language will

be, "how can I do this great wickedness who "have been at the table of the Lord." In short, the very preparation requisite for this ordinance, the self-examination implied in it, must have a happy tendency to shew us our true state and character, to guard us against sin and to excite us to greater purity and diligence.

Further, the sacrament has a natural tendency to strengthen and confirm our faith. It subjects what is distant and unseen to the testimony of our senses. It brings the wonderful scenes transacted on Calvary full in our view. It shews us the accomplishment of the divine predictions. It assures us of the immutability of the divine love, and of God's fidelity to his promises; for if he spared not his own son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? In short, it shews us by the most lively emblems the ability and willingness of our Saviour to save us to the uttermost. What will not he do for us who humbled himself for our sakes even unto death? And must not he be an all-sufficient Saviour who was made perfect through sufferings? Who learned obedience by the things which he endured? Who having suffered being tempted is both able and willing to succour those who are tempted?

Again, the holy sacrament is naturally calculated to awaken our love and gratitude to our God and Redeemer. While we hold in our hands the visible emblems of our Saviour's body broken and blood shed for our sins, we cannot possibly be so insensible as not to feel our hearts burn within us at the recollection of what he has done for us. While we are actually partaking of the benefits derived from his death, we cannot but feel emotions of gratitude and thankfulness. We will then feel the love of Christ *constraining* us to love him who first loved us. We will then think nothing too much to do, or too much to suffer, for so generous and beneficent a Saviour. It is wonderful to observe the mighty influence which tokens or memorials of love and friendship have over the human mind. A ring or a picture will call up a remembrance on which the heart delights to dwell, and will revive a love or friendship which distance of time or place, or the interruptions of pleasure and connections, had well nigh erased from the heart. And shall the memorials of the most wonderful love and friendship which ever existed among men have no effect on the hearts of those who are the objects of it?

A natural effect of communicating must be the strengthening of that love and charity which we ought to entertain for our brethren, especially those of the household of faith. The sacrament is a bond of union among all true believers. While it unites them all to Christ, it unites them also to one another ; for we are required to keep the feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, and to be reconciled to our brother, before we offer sacrifice at God's altar. While we are seated at the same table, and partakers of the same feast, we cannot possibly look upon one another as enemies, "for how can two sit together, unless they be agreed?" Nay we must necessarily look upon all our fellow-communicants as brethren and friends, as serving the same master, believing the same truths, walking by the same rule, entertaining the same hopes, and journeying to the same country. And how comely is it for brethren to dwell together in unity ? How unseemly for fellow-travellers to quarrel by the way ? How natural for those who have similar interests and pursuits to maintain kindness and concord ?

The second kind of advantages derived from

this ordinance, are such as are inseparably annexed to it when worthily received. Among these, the first is, the confirmation of the pardon of our sins. For to those who receive the outward elements with true faith, they signify, seal and apply Christ and all the benefits of his death; of which forgiveness and reconciliation to God are the principal. Not that the performance of this outward act, or even that faith which accompanies it and renders it acceptable in the sight of God, will entitle us to pardon as a matter of right. We all know that the meritorious cause of justification is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Faith is merely an instrument which appropriates his merits to ourselves. But as our receiving the symbols of his body and blood in the holy sacrament is an outward sign, on our part, of our inwardly accepting him by faith, so the celebration of this ordinance is a sign on God's part of that inward act of justification which is already passed, in virtue of Christ's merit, on all who sincerely believe. As the bow in the cloud in the day of rain is not the reason why God will not destroy the world by a deluge any more, but merely a memorial of God's promise to that effect, and therefore a con-

firmation and assurance to men that the world will not be destroyed as heretofore, so the sacred rite of the Lord's supper is a declaration, a token, a proof that an expiation has been made for the sins of men, that God is now appeased and reconciled to his offending offspring, that the hand writing against us is destroyed, that we are now brought near by the blood of the cross, and may approach unto God as children to a father. And what an unspeakable advantage is this, to have the testimony of our senses corresponding to the witness of our spirits, that we are the children of God? That as our bodies are refreshed by bread, so our souls are healed by the stripes laid on Christ's body, and as the wine restores the sick and invigorates the whole, so our souls, dead in trespasses and sins, are revived and sanctified by Christ's blood? The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? "I am the living bread," said our Saviour, "which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the

“life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh
“and drinketh my blood hath eternal life,
“and I will raise him up at the last day, for
“my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is
“drink indeed.”

Another advantage enjoyed by the worthy receivers of the Lord's supper, is the confirmation of their union with Jesus Christ, and a more intimate communion with God. The sacrament is the nearest approach to God that we can make on this side the grave : in it he is not only essentially present, as he is in every place, and graciously present, as he is in all the assemblies of his saints, but here he is present in an especial manner, he is even present, in some respect, to the senses of the worshippers. For though we shall not be so impious and absurd as to say that the outward elements are converted into the real body and blood of Christ, yet there can be no doubt that they who rightly discern the Lord, elevate their thoughts from the bread and wine to that divine being whom they represent and signify. They see him who is invisible. They feel that solemn awe which the presence of divinity inspires. They are filled with that holy rapture which Jacob felt when he awoke from a

dream wherein he had been favoured with heavenly manifestations : “ How awful is this place ! surely the Lord is here, and I knew it not ; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” In like manner frequent participation of the holy sacrament tends to unite us more closely to our Redeemer. For, as the bread and wine which we eat and drink become our own, and are incorporated with our bodies, so, if, in a spiritual and metaphorical sense, we feed upon Christ by faith, he is, as it were, formed within us ; we imbibe his spirit, we copy his example, we derive life, and nourishment, and strength from him ; we become united to him as the wife is to the husband, we become flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. “ He that eateth my flesh and drinketh by blood,” saith our Lord, “ dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living father hath sent me, and I live by the father ; so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

A farther advantage, inseparably attached to the worthy receiving of the Lord’s supper, is the communication of the Holy Spirit. The bread and wine are no more than the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual

grace ; and these signs were ordained by Christ himself, as the means by which we receive this grace, and as pledges to assure us of its fulness : what our daily food is to our bodies, that the grace of God is to our souls. As the former contributes to increase our stature, and to repair the decays of nature, so does the latter contribute to make us grow in grace and knowledge, to proceed from one degree of holiness to another, till we come to the stature of perfect men, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. This communication of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is universally represented in scripture as a feast to the soul, as the mean by which the Christian life is maintained, revived and invigorated. It is also, invariably, promised to those who are found in the way of duty, who seek it in the ordinances of God's appointment, who, clothed with the wedding garment, partake of that sumptuous banquet, that *feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined*, which is provided for us in the sacrament of the supper. To prove this we need not search with much diligence the volume of revelation, the language of which is every where express to this purpose. It will be sufficient to appeal

to every devout worshipper, and ask whether, at the table of the Lord, he has not actually felt the gracious presence of the Divinity, and the rich communications of his grace? While you handle the emblems of your Saviour's broken body and shed blood, has not your sorrow for your past sins and failings been wonderfully awakened and increased? has not your faith been strengthened and confirmed? has not your love to God glowed with a stronger flame? have not your minds been refreshed and comforted? have not the clouds of ignorance and doubt been dispelled? have not pious thoughts and virtuous resolutions sprung up within you? has not your wish been, that, you could continue for ever in such delightful company and exercise? and have you not arisen from this table more fortified against temptation, more vigorous for the discharge of your duty, more joyful in your own minds, more elevated above the vain pursuits of earth, and more desirous of the exercises and joys of heaven?

This leads me to observe, in the last place, that, the worthy partakers of the Lord's supper, enjoy peace of mind, in this life, and the comfortable assurance of happiness in the

future. “ My peace I leave with you,” says our Lord ; “ my peace I give unto you ; not “ as the world giveth, give I unto you.” This solemn approach unto God diffuses over the mind a calm serenity of temper, a dignified superiority to the world and all its enjoyments, to which the children of the earth are strangers. As the blood sprinkled on the lintels and the door-posts of the Israelites freed them from all apprehension of the visits of the destroying angel, so the sacrament of the supper gives rest to the weary and heavy laden, speaks peace to the troubled conscience, and silences the accusations of the guilty, by signifying and sealing the application of Christ’s blood to our soul. It teaches us to look upon ourselves as the sons of God, and therefore to consider all the calamities and afflictions of life as the merciful chastisements of a kind father. It teaches them that they are the friends of the most high, and therefore they need fear no evil. It teaches them to consider themselves as candidates for heaven, and therefore to keep on their way rejoicing, undisturbed by the hopes or fears, the successes or disappointments of this transitory life. It even disarms death of its sting, for it shews our Lord

as experiencing the horrors of death and the grave, and therefore as ready to compassionate and succour his followers. It teaches us that as he died and rose again, so all those who sleep in Jesus shall awake from the sleep of death, and rise and live for ever. Being commanded to be observed 'till he shall come again, it is particularly calculated to impress on our minds the expectation of that awful and glorious day when he shall come in the glory of his father, and attended by his holy angels. For as he was once offered to bear the sins of many, so to those who look for him (and we cannot do so in a better manner than by frequent commemoration of his death) he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. In a word, at this feast there is fulness of joy and rivers of pleasure. None ever came to it duly prepared who was sent empty away. None who ever partook thereof with suitable affections of soul, arose from this table dissatisfied, or with an ungratified desire. All worthy receivers sit under the shadow of this tree of life with great delight, and find the fruit thereof sweet to their taste. Greater joy is diffused through their soul, by the light of God's countenance, than the wicked know

when their corn and wine do most abound. Nor is their joy transitory and deceitful like that of the world. To endless ages shall they have cause to bless the time when they retired from the vanities of earth and learned to meditate at the table of the Lord.

III. I should now proceed to the third head of discourse, which is to point out the preparation necessary to make us acceptable guests at the table of the Lord. But feeling that I am already exhausted in strength, and that the time allotted for this day's duty is well nigh spent, I shall defer this interesting subject for the present : we shall at another season, my brethren, discourse on this topick at large. I shall therefore conclude with a reflection or two relating to the subject. Nor can I state them in a more comprehensive or correct manner, than by repeating the answer given in that complete and admirable system of divinity, our larger catechism, to this question ; “ How
“ are they that receive the sacrament of the
“ Lord's supper to prepare themselves before
“ they come unto it ? ” “ They that receive
“ the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are, be-
“ fore they come, to prepare themselves there-
“ unto, by examining themselves of their being

“ in Christ, of their sins and wants, of the truth
“ and measure of their knowledge, faith, re-
“ pentance ; love to God and the brethren ;
“ charity to all men ; forgiving those that have
“ done them wrong ; of their desires after
“ Christ, and of their new obedience ; and by
“ renewing the exercises of these graces by
“ serious meditation and fervent prayer.” Let
a man examine himself, says St. Paul, and
so let him eat of that bread and drink of that
cup. Examine yourselves, whether ye be
in the faith ; prove your own selves. Purge
out the old leaven that ye may be as a new
lump : let no contentions or divisions be among
you, for we being many are one bread and
one body ; for we are all partakers of that one
bread. Let us keep the feast, not with old
leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and
wickedness, but with the unleavened bread
of sincerity and truth. “ If thou bring thy
“ gift to the altar,” said our Lord, “ and there
“ rememberest that thy brother hath ought
“ against thee, leave there thy gift before the
“ altar, and go thy way : first be reconciled to
“ thy brother, and then come and offer thy
“ gift.” “ I will wash mine hands in inno-
“ cence,” said the Psalmist, “ so will I com-

“ pass thine altar, O Lord.” “ Let us draw
“ near,” says St. Paul, “ with a true heart, in
“ full assurance of faith, having our hearts
“ sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our
“ bodies washed with pure water.” And the
good Lord pardon every one that prepareth
his heart to seek God, though he be not cleansed
according to the purification of the sanctuary.

SERMON VII.



On Charity ; the obligations, sanctions and motives to the discharge of its numerous duties.



I. CORIN. CHAP. 14, VERSE 1.

“ Follow after charity.”

HOW misery and pain were introduced into a world framed by infinite goodness, and governed with perfect wisdom, is a question which has presented itself to the mind of every reflecting man. Whether the sorrows and sufferings which abound in the universe, originally formed a part of the divine plan, and are a necessary ingredient in a probationary state ; or whether they are a derangement of the original system, and the consequence of a deviation from the laws which the Creator appointed to the moral beings on whom they are inflicted ; or whether they are not partly the effect of both these causes, appears beyond the limits of human sagacity to determine.

The fact, however, is not the less certain because we are unable to discover the cause. Proceeding in this journey of human life, we, here and there, meet with a few scattered spots where the fruit of enjoyment grows ; but the far greater part of our road presents to our view nothing but a bleak and desert wilderness, where no beauty or verdure is to be seen. Happy are we if briars and thorns do not obstruct our path, if rocks and precipices do not beset us on every hand.

But a question of more practical importance occurs ; Does this diminution of our enjoyment add nothing to our virtue ? Yes, certainly. If no dangers were to be avoided, and no wants to be supplied, feeble would be the motives to industry and exertion, which are the great laws of our nature, and the chief sources of our improvement. Were no suffering to be endured, patience could not have its perfect work. If we were mutually independent, friendship, the balm of life, and love, the sweetener of society, would be unknown in the world. Were there no objects of distress, compassion would be an useless principle in the human frame. If, by an equal distribution of fortune, the poor were removed

out of the land, we could have no opportunity of practising works of charity and mercy.

When, therefore, we peruse the page of history and read the details of the various calamities, miseries and disasters, which, in every age, have happened, at one time to individuals, at another time to nations ; when, in our own days, we behold in one quarter of the earth the horrors of war and famine, in another multitudes flying from their homes to avoid the assassin and the murderer, wandering in exile and pining in poverty ; when we see, in a third, fair and flourishing cities laid in ashes by the devouring element of fire, their inhabitants cast upon the wide world without habitation, and the industry of many years blasted in a moment : when around us and among us we behold many labouring under disease, when we hear the cry of the needy and the oppressed, and see the tears of the widow and the fatherless, let us not idly spend our time in inquiring how all this comes to pass, in reasoning about its consistency with the attributes of God, or in speculation concerning the causes and purposes of such an arrangement. On the contrary, let us encourage sentiments of pity and

compassion ; let us consider the miseries and distresses of our fellow-men as the best lessons which our great preceptor in holiness can give us for the improvement of our social virtues ; let us cheerfully embrace the opportunity presented to us of promoting the happiness of the world, by relieving the distressed, consoling the wretched, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. We shall thus convert the unavoidable calamities of life into a nurse of the most pleasing and amiable feeling of the heart, *Compassion*, and its fairest daughter, *Charity*.

In the language of sacred writ, charity has for the most part a different meaning from its usual acceptation in common language. In the former, it expresses that general principle of love to our neighbour, which leads us to benevolent thoughts and beneficent actions of every kind. In common language it is more limited, being applied only to a particular exertion of this general principle, and denotes either that disposition which leads us to entertain a candid and favourable opinion of others ; or that good will which is expressed in relieving the distresses and supplying the wants of the poor and the wretched.

Having, on a former occasion, discoursed to you of charity in its more general and extensive sense, as signifying the same thing with the love of our neighbour. I shall now endeavour to prevail upon all who hear me to *follow after charity* in its more limited sense, “to deal their bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out to their house, when they see the naked to cover them, and not to hide themselves from their own flesh.”

In discussing this subject I propose

I. To explain the *obligations* we are under to *follow after charity*.

II. To consider the *excuses* which men employ to justify themselves to the world, and to satisfy their own minds, for the neglect of this duty.

III. To suggest some *directions* for the exercise of this duty; and

IV. Lastly, to state those *motives* which should induce you to *follow after charity*:

A plan, you will easily perceive, too extensive to be fully discussed in one discourse; but you have so often heard and are all so well acquainted with topicks of this nature, that it would be an affront to you to consider the

matter too minutely ; and you will readily excuse me for saving you the trouble of listening to familiar truths.

I. The *obligation* of this duty will require only a very short discussion ; for however men may excuse themselves in particular cases, and differ about the extent in which charity ought to be practised, few are disposed to dispute the duty itself.

That charity is a duty will appear with the fullest evidence, if we listen to the voice of *nature*, of *conscience*, and of *revelation*.

In a state of nature it is evident that all men have an equal right to the earth and its productions. But this state, if it ever existed, could only be momentary. Possession itself would constitute an exclusive right, and every man would consider as his own the spot which his body occupied, and the tree under the shade of which he reclined. Superiour wisdom, strength and industry, in conjunction with the kind aspect of providence, would soon procure to those who possessed them a larger share of the good things of this life. The skilful and diligent would become rich ; the idle and ignorant, unable to avail themselves of their natural rights, would sink into

poverty and want. Thus would things proceed, until the present complicated fabrick of society was reared: 'till that distinction of ranks, that inequality of fortune and condition commenced, in consequence of which we behold some clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, while others can scarcely procure rags sufficient to defend them against the severities of the season, and are glad to feed on the crumbs that fall from the tables of the great.

In such a state of society are we placed. Let us, then, inquire what claim the poor, in this situation, have on the bounty of the rich. I am far from saying that men are not entitled to the fruit of their industry and good fortune; and that they ought to deny themselves the conveniences of life till all their neighbours have an equal share. But one thing you must allow, namely, that whatever you possess, properly speaking, belongs to the Almighty; for as you derive all things, even life itself, from his bounty, you can only consider yourselves as stewards of what he has given you. If you obtained your possessions by inheritance, it certainly was not owing to your own merit that you were born in affluence. If

your riches have been acquired by the exertion of your talents and industry, yet remember that these are the gift of God, and that, without the blessing of heaven, the best directed exertions will prove ineffectual. You may plant and water, but God alone giveth the increase. It is he who sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, filling us with food and gladness. It is the dew of heaven which maketh grass to grow for the cattle, and corn for the food of man. The wind bloweth where it listeth ; and, without the orders of him whom winds and waves obey, it will not waft your vessel to its destined port. Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it : except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wake but in vain. If therefore those good things which for a time are intrusted to your management are not your own, but the property of heaven, the obvious inference is, that you are bound to employ them in the manner which heaven has pointed out.

Another thing which you must allow is, that the poor as well as the rich are the children of their common father in heaven. But where is the father who does not allow his children food and raiment ? Has a wise and good being

brought into existence creatures for whose subsistence he has not provided? By an arrangement the most admirable and perfect, ample provision is made by the Almighty for the support of all his works. He clothes the lilies of the field; he feeds the fowls of the air: he gives to the beasts of the forest their meat in due season. And is his rational creation, who are much better than they, and on whom he has stamped his own image, to be alone neglected and left a prey to misery and want? No, certainly. The most poor and wretched have provision made for them. It is the will of heaven that they should subsist. And where is this provision made but in the abundance and superfluity of the rich? To this therefore they have a claim; it is provided for them. If the bounty of the rich be the only means of their subsistence, it is plainly the will of God that they should partake of it. And the *will* of God is the *duty* of man.

It thus appears to be the law of nature, that the rich should bestow a part of their goods to relieve the poor. It is likewise the law of *conscience*, which is nothing but the voice of God speaking within us, with no less certainty and efficacy than his works speak without.

For every man, who has not entirely eradicated all the sentiments of humanity, must be conscious, that there is a principle of compassion in our frame which leads us to weep with those who weep, and to sympathize with our neighbour in distress. He who can contemplate the miseries of others without concern, who, like the priest and levite in the gospel, can behold with indifference his sick and wounded and needy brother, and pass by unmoved, is a monster in human shape, and instead of obeying, he drowns that voice which would inform him of his duty.

But though we may suppress the feelings of nature, we cannot silence the voice of *revelation*, the commands of which are equally positive on this subject, and occur in numberless passages both of the Old and New Testament. What says Moses, and what says Jesus Christ with regard to the poor and the afflicted? Thus spake the Lord to his people the Jews :
“ If there be among you a poor man, of one
“ of thy brethren, within any of the gates of
“ the land which the Lord thy God giveth
“ thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor
“ shut thine hand from thy poor brother.
“ Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart

“ shall not be grieved when thou givest unto
“ him, because that for this thing the Lord thy
“ God shall bless thee in all thy works and in
“ all thou puttest thine hand unto. For the
“ poor shall never cease out of the land :
“ therefore I command thee saying, thou
“ shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother,
“ to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land.”

Throughout the New Testament, charity holds the first rank among all the virtues, and is recommended on a liberal and extensive plan ; not being confined to our own kindred and nation, but comprehending within its wide embrace the whole race of man. It is called the bond of perfection ; it is considered as the only infallible test of our character, without which the possession of every other virtue is unavailing, or indeed unattainable. “ Though I speak with the tongue of men and
“ of angels,” says St. Paul, “ though I have
“ the gift of prophecy, and understand all
“ mysteries and all knowledge, and though
“ I have all faith, so that I could remove
“ mountains, and have not charity, I am
“ nothing.” “ Whoso hath this world’s
“ goods,” says St. John, “ and seeth his broth-
“ er have need, and shutteth up his bowels of

“ compassion from him, how dwelleth the “ love of God in him ?” In short, our Saviour has expressly taught us that by works of charity and mercy our fate shall be determined at the last day.

II. From what has been now said, the obligation of charity clearly appears ; but while men allow the obligation in general, they are always inventing pretences and excuses for neglecting it in particular cases. The validity of these I now proceed to consider.

1. The majority of mankind apologize for refusing to relieve the distressed, by saying that charity is a duty incumbent only on the rich ; their income is sufficient for the support only of themselves and their families, and after their necessary expenses are paid, they have nothing to spare for objects of distress. This excuse, when made with sincerity and truth, is so far good that no man is required to give beyond his ability. But you cannot be ignorant that the smallness of the sum you can afford to give, does not diminish the obligation or lessen your merit. You are bound to give your little, as much as the rich to give out of their abundance ; and if you give with a willing mind, you will be accepted according to

what you have, and not according to what you have not. You remember the poor widow, who cast all her living into the treasury for the poor, and whose two mites were of more value in the sight of God than all the gifts of the rich.

But, farther, let me ask you, by what rule you determine that which is necessary, or that which is competent? If you are directed by the maxims and opinions of the world, you follow a very erroneous guide. Nay more, be your riches what they may, they will never exceed competence, and of course you will never be rich enough to give any thing away. If you follow your own inclinations in this matter, and suppose every thing necessary, which is necessary to feed your vanity and pride, to gratify your love of pleasure and amusement, to satisfy every whim and caprice, then, to get rid of this duty, you have only to become voluptuous and ostentatious, dissolute and profuse. In proportion as the passions you have to gratify increase, your obligation to works of goodness will diminish, and that multitude of sins and follies, which we are told charity will cover, will only prove an apology for neglecting its performance.

How inconsistent are the opinions and conduct of men. On every other occasion, how unwilling are they to confess their poverty. How often, to keep up the reputation of being wealthy, do they endeavour to conceal a real derangement of affairs by expensive appearances of pomp and show. Their vanity forsakes them only when reminded of the duties of charity and mercy; then they not only confess, but exaggerate their poverty; their hardness of heart gets the better not only of their *virtue*, but even of their *vanity* itself. Now will any one be imposed on by so shallow an excuse as that which is thus proposed, when he considers your manner of life? You are too poor to spare a rag to cover the nakedness of your brother, but you are rich enough to spend immense sums in the decoration of your own person. You are too poor to bestow a trifle to purchase a crutch for the lame, but you are rich enough to keep a splendid equipage for your own convenience and indulgence. You are too poor to give a morsel of bread to him who is ready to perish, but you are rich enough to spend in a single entertainment for your friends, who stand in no need of your bounty, what would have dif-

fused happiness through a helpless family for a whole year. You have money enough to stake at the gaming table, and have you none to lay out for the prize of the high-calling of God in Jesus Christ?

2. Some men complain of the waywardness of the times, of losses and misfortunes which they have sustained, of unsuccessful trade, and of unprofitable seasons, which make it difficult for themselves to live in their former style, and consequently exempt them from every obligation to charity. But if such men would duly examine their own character and conduct, in them, perhaps, they would discover the source of such disastrous events. They would, perhaps, discern the hand of God lifted up to avenge the cause of the poor, (whose cries ascend to heaven against the illiberal and hard-hearted,) to punish the rich for their want of compassion, and to convince them that they ought not to be so sparing of what does not properly belong to them, and of which they may so easily be deprived. Such events, then, are intended to promote and not to extinguish charity. Endeavour, therefore, by works of charity and mercy, by prayers and alms, to recover the favour of

God. Heaven frowns on the unfeeling miser, but ever looks with kind regard on the bountiful and generous. Your land will again yield its increase; success will accompany your endeavours; and riches will yet flow in abundance.

And if a change of circumstances make some retrenchments necessary, why begin with that which you owe to the poor? Retrench your pleasures; retrench your amusements; retrench your attendants; retrench your vices, before you retrench your duties.

Lastly, if *your* situation be uneasy in times of general misfortune and distress, think seriously what must be the situation of those who can with difficulty subsist in the best of times. Then, more than ever, is your assistance required, when no works are carried on to employ the active and industrious; when the small pittance which they obtain from their own exertions and the charity of the humane, is so soon swallowed up by the high price of provisions; and when the season of the year forbids their being dispersed into asylums of distress.

3. Many men excuse themselves by saying, that the demands upon them are so fre-

quent that their charity is altogether exhausted, and that were they to give something to every one who asks relief, nothing would be left for the support of their own family. Strange it is that the very circumstance which should excite your liberality, makes you the more uncharitable. The great number of the unfortunate is the reason why your charity is so loudly called for. If few persons were to be relieved your bounty would be the less necessary, at least, necessary in a less degree. But in times of hardship and want, no man who is himself above the fear of want, ought to withhold his mite.

Your concern for the interests of your family is laudable. “ If you provide not for your own, especially for those of your own house, you have denied the faith and are worse than an infidel.” Perhaps too industry and economy are the best bestowed charity ; for they may prevent you and your descendants from becoming a future burden on the publick. But think how much a small matter saved from your daily expenses, and of no consequence to you, would add to the happiness of the poor, and you will not surely refuse to deny yourself a luxury, when, by

doing so, you can save a number of your hungry and naked and houseless brethren from misery and death.

The reason why we feel charity so great a burden is, that our charity is extended upon no settled plan, but is merely accidental. In general all our income is applied to the purposes of our own expenditure, and, of course, every farthing given to the poor is a diminution of our enjoyment. But would men allot yearly a certain portion of what they possess for the relief of the indigent and distressed, and reserve that as a sacred and inviolable deposit put into their hands by the common father of the rich and poor, intended for the benefit of the latter; then they would feel the exercise of charity no hardship, the number of miserable objects would speedily decrease, and plenty, cheerfulness and joy, would be widely diffused throughout society.

III. The third thing which I proposed, was, to suggest some directions for the exercise of this virtue. And, in my opinion, you will not err, if your charity extends to *proper objects*, proceeds from *proper motives*, and is performed in a *proper manner*.

1. In general the most destitute are the

most worthy objects of our charity. Misery, in whatever shape or in whatever character, whether in our friends or in our foes, in the good or in the bad, is the object of our compassion, and calls for our assistance. The generous and wounded soldier who gave the cup of water brought to quench his own thirst, to another whose necessities appeared greater, acted according to the true spirit of charity.

It is an opinion both erroneous and dangerous, that hatred of vice should render us uncompassionate to sinners, or that variance and animosity should make us deaf to the cries of our enemy in distress. There can be no greater act of charity than to reclaim the vicious; there is not a more express precept in the gospel than that we feed our enemy when he is hungry, and give him drink when he is thirsty. It is thus that we are treated by our heavenly father, whose fairest and best-loved attribute it is to pity and forgive, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. This is the example set us by our great Master who performed towards us, even when we were enemies and sinners,

the greatest act of charity and mercy which ever did or ever can happen in the universe.

It is impossible to particularize the different objects which are worthy of your charity. Look around you, and you will see a sufficient number of them. Among those who request your assistance you will distinguish the *industrious*, who, after all their efforts, are unable to supply their own and their children's wants; the *aged and infirm* whose arm is now unstrung, and who, declining into the winter of life, no longer display the blossoms of spring or the fruit of autumn; the *helpless orphan* on whose tender years no parent of their own ever smiled, whom no protector defends from the early and infectious blasts of vice, to whom no guardian and instructor points out the path of duty. But above all, you ought to distinguish those who, after being accustomed to affluence and plenty, are by some unforeseen accident, some sudden reverse of fortune, without any fault of their own, reduced to bear the galling yoke of poverty; who, after being the father of the fatherless, the stay of the orphan, and the shield of the stranger, now need that charity which they were wont so liberally to

dispense. To them poverty must be the more insupportable, because they are prevented by modesty from making known their wants and disclosing their misery. To their assistance, then, let the charitable and open hand be stretched out. In their case, too, let charity be performed with that secrecy and tenderness which their delicate and susceptible dispositions require.

2. While your charity is extended only to proper objects, it ought also to proceed from *proper motives*. On the principle from which any action arises, depends its merit or demerit. If we are charitable from motives of pride and ostentation, that we may be seen of men, and may gain the applause of the world, our charity is but as a sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. The observations of our Lord on this subject are highly pertinent and well deserve our attention. To prevent the mixture of improper motives in the exercise of charity, he requires that it be done in secret. “Take heed,” says he, “that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee,

“ as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and
“ in the streets, that they may have glory of
“ men. Verily, I say unto you, they have
“ their reward. But when thou doest alms, let
“ not thy right hand know what thy left hand
“ doth : that thine alms may be in secret, and
“ thy father which seeth in secret himself
“ shall reward thee openly.”

In like manner, think not by works of charity to compound for other sins with which you are unwilling to part. Some would be glad to give a little of their goods for the relief of the poor, provided it would screen them from the punishment due to fraud, injustice, and oppression, and were they allowed to spend the rest in extravagant and unlawful pleasures. In former times, indeed, religion was of a nature so accommodating as to admit pretensions of this kind. If any man, at the close of a wicked and abandoned life, expended the money he had acquired by violence and deceit, in building churches, in erecting monasteries, and in founding charitable institutions, all his former offences were blotted out, and his saintship infallibly secured. But we preach a very different religion. Not that we are less anxious than our predecessors that

you should practise works of charity ; but we wish you to be just as well as charitable ; we wish you to act from purer motives than hypocrisy and a love of praise. If your wealth has been acquired by extortion and rapine, by grinding the face of the poor and oppressing the stranger who is within thy gates, by overreaching the unwary, or withholding from your creditor his due ; and you think that by giving some little of it away in charity, you may safely continue in the same course of profitable iniquity, cast it not into the treasury of the Lord ; it is the price of blood and of sin, and cannot be received.

3. Let your charity be performed in a *proper manner*. This rule is of more consequence than may at first be imagined. An action, however good in itself, if performed in an improper manner, loses half its merit. Many a charitable deed is performed in so harsh and insulting a manner, or is accompanied with so liberal a proportion of reproach and invective, that a refusal of the gift desired would have been far less disagreeable. To grant a request with a willing heart, to confer a favour with delicacy and propriety, is one of the most difficult offices which occur in the intercourse

of society. Let your charity, then, be performed in a kind and compassionate manner; and shew that you feel and are interested for the person whom you relieve. Give your alms with gentleness and affability, avoiding all harshness of manner, and all unnecessary display of superiority. Be charitable with a glad spirit; give cheerfully and without reluctance; and let no appearance of force and restraint detract from the merit of your virtue, or cause your good to be evil spoken of.

IV. I shall now conclude with stating a few of the motives which should induce you to *follow after charity*.

And first, let me observe, that the intrinsic excellence and beauty of this virtue, are sufficient to recommend it to all the lovers of what is great and beautiful. How noble, how god-like an employment, to supply the wants of the necessitous, to raise up the bowed down, to heal the wounds of the afflicted, and to smooth the bed of sickness! Such conduct must be free from all selfish and interested motives; from the poor and wretched we can expect no return. By such conduct we shew ourselves to be the genuine children of our

father in heaven, who is the helper of the poor, the father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow, who giveth unto all liberally and upbraideth none, who is constantly conferring favours on those who profit him nothing. By such conduct we shew ourselves to be the true disciples of Jesus, whose life was one continued course of charity and goodness to mankind.

SERMON VIII.

*On Meekness : its nature and great excellence in
the sight of God,*

PSALM 25, VERSE 9.

“The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will
he teach his way.”

RELIGION, while it elevates the soul to God, and teaches us to set our affections on things above, neglects not the duties of civil life, or those laws which regulate our connections with one another. It not only prepares us for a future life, by prescribing doctrines and precepts for the cultivation of our moral and religious powers; but it also smooths our road through the present stage of existence, and sweetens the intercourse of society, by inculcating love, gentleness and meekness. The wisdom which cometh from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated: full of mercy and of good fruits.

Among the virtues of the Christian life, that of *meekness*, though accompanied with less show than many others, does not hold a less important place. It is a disposition of mind highly amiable in itself ; it is a distinguishing mark of the disciples of Jesus ; it is extremely favourable to the cultivation and improvement of every other virtue ; and it is of high price in the sight of God. “ The meek will he
“ guide in judgment ; and the meek will he
“ teach his way.” Let us attempt to describe it, and to point out the blessedness with which it is connected.

I. This virtue is not the effect of natural disposition, nor is it a habit to be acquired in the school of the world ; but it is a Christian grace, and a fruit of the Spirit. There are some who have in them much of the milk of human kindness, and who consequently possess a softness of disposition which is productive of an easy, gentle, and inoffensive behaviour. But such men are yielding and submissive more from want of spirit and firmness to withstand opposition, than from any fixed principle of conduct. There are others who have much complaisance in their behaviour, and much smoothness of phrase in their speech,

who yet have not “ the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” They have been much conversant in the ways of men ; they have acquired an artificial politeness which enables them to conceal every feeling of disgust and dislike ; and often, under the veil of gentle appearances and the most obliging manners, they conceal the bitterest malice and ill-will. But the meekness which is taught in the school of Jesus, is founded on a good temper, a steady principle of virtue, a modest opinion of ourselves, a sincere benevolence and good will to our neighbour, and above all, a love of peace and quietness. It is in no respect inconsistent with firmness and vigour of mind ; it is yielding and submissive in no one point of religious or moral importance ; it is more nearly connected with a natural politeness, which proceeds from the heart, than with an artificial complaisance of manners.

Meekness must also be distinguished from *gentleness*, a virtue to which it bears a very great resemblance, and with which it is often, perhaps, unavoidably, confounded. We have no way to judge of moral habits, but by the effect which they produce ; and both meekness and gentleness are productive of the same

calm, mild, and equable behaviour. But, properly speaking, gentleness is a qualification of those actions which we do to others; meekness, of those actions which regard the conduct of others towards us, or the events which happen to us from without. Thus we are said to give a reproof with gentleness or tenderness, and to receive it with meekness.

Who, then, is the meek man? What influence has this virtue on the character and conduct?

In one respect, meekness does not differ from humility. The meek man is modest and diffident in his opinion of himself. He is sensible of the weakness and corruption of his nature, and of the greatness and frequency of his own particular faults. In his composition there is no arrogance nor pride, no obstinacy nor self-conceit. He is not haughty, distant, or reserved; but is free of access, and easy to be entreated. In his manners he is unaffected; in his behaviour unassuming; in his dispositions complying and obliging. When he is blamed or spoken evil of, he is more ready to confess his faults, and to condemn himself, than to retaliate upon others. If any man differ in opinion from

him, he is disposed rather to distrust his own than to condemn the other's judgment. In every case where his own opinions and inclinations are concerned, he will rather yield, than, by disputation and opposition, produce animosity and discord. I do not, however, mean that he will yield in matters of duty and of essential importance. This would be a servile and sinful compliance, not the meek and humble submission to which I allude ; and it would indicate the greatest weakness and corruption of mind. On these points the meekest man will give place, no, not for a moment. But in matters of indifference, and in trifles, he is by no means anxious to impose his opinion upon others. And it must be remembered that the greatest part of human life is nothing but a series of little and unimportant events ; and that these are the chief cause of those jarrings and dissensions which disturb and embitter human society. For it is an observation founded on experience that men seldom quarrel about serious and important matters. Their evil passions and prejudices, their obstinacy and self-conceit, are most apparent in things of no moment. And unhappily this is the case particularly

in matters of religion. The less essential any doctrine is, the more eagerly is it contested ; the smaller the difference is between parties and sects, their virulence against each other becomes proportionably greater.

Farther, the meek man is actuated by good will to others, judges of their actions with charity, and views their characters in the most favourable light. With him there is no malice, nor envying, nor strife. This arises from the former part of his character, viz. the just opinion which he has of himself, for it is by viewing our own character and conduct in too favourable a point of view, that we are often led to think unfavourably of others. He who loveth himself more than he ought to do, will not love his brother also. But the meek man wishes well to all mankind ; rejoiceth in the success of others ; envyeth not their attainments ; is candid to their merits ; unwilling to think evil of any man ; always leans to the charitable side, where an action admits of two interpretations. In short, the calmness and serenity of his own mind is diffused over every thing around him. To the jaundiced eye, every thing is of an unnatural colour. All appears distorted and

deformed to a mind troubled with fierce and angry passions. But the mind of the meek man is like a clear and undisturbed lake, which reflects every object in its true colours and its just dimensions.

Again, the meek man bears with the faults and weaknesses of others ; is slow to wrath ; unwilling to take offence ; and ready to forgive the injuries which he receives. In these respects, he is directly opposite to several characters which are too common in the world. The first are the severe and unrelenting who make no allowance for the unavoidable imperfections incident to human nature ; to whom the follies of men are unpardonable crimes ; who yield not in one minute article even to preserve the peace and happiness of society. But the meek carefully observe those injunctions which abound in the New Testament, to bear one another's burdens, and to suffer with the infirmities of the weak. They copy the example of Jesus, who pleased not himself, but on whom fell the reproaches of those who reproached others. The God of patience and of consolation, who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust, commandeth them to be like-minded one towards another.

The next class of men from whom the meek essentially differ, are the passionate ; who are full of wrath and anger, whose passions are so furious that the smallest spark is sufficient to set them in a blaze, who take offence at every disrespectful word or gesture, who resent every real or imagined injury. But meekness suffereth long, beareth all things, is not easily provoked. The meek man is greater than the mighty, for he hath rule over his own spirit. No fierce or unruly passion is allowed to disturb his repose ; no darkness obscures the sunshine of his mind. He knoweth the real value of the honours and advantages of the world, and passes by those little neglects, affronts and injuries, which create so many heart-burnings and animosities among men. He is careful to observe the direction of the Apostle ; “let all
“bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, be put away from you. And be ye
“kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another.” The last thing opposed to meekness in the view in which we are considering it, is that peevishness and fretfulness of temper which begets ill-humours and discontent, and convert every event and

action into food for its own disorder. Such men continually wear a face of gloom and uneasiness; they are discontented and displeased with every thing around them. But the meek man is ever pleased, cheerful, and easy. He is at peace with himself, and consequently under no temptation not to be at peace with others. If, at any time, serious provocation has led him into anger, the sun goeth not down upon his wrath. It is a guest that tarrieth but a little. He never allows it to settle into resentment, malice or revenge. His behaviour is ever gentle, placid, and equal. He meets the calamities and disappointments of life with humble submission and pious resignation. In every situation he possesseth his soul in patience. Though the storm howls without, all is calm and serene within. His spirits are never ruffled by misfortune, his mind is never unhinged by disappointment, and good humour and contentment are the constant inhabitants of his dwelling.

Lastly, the great feature in the character of the meek man, is his love of peace and quietness. He is not fond of high and elevated stations, of the shew and bustle of life. His

delight is in ease and retirement. He knoweth that the thunder more often attacks the lofty building and the high tower than the lowly cottage. He sees the mountain assailed by the blast while not a breath is stirring in the vale, and the oak bending under the storm while nothing disturbs the ivy which creeps upon the wall. But if his situation lead him to mingle in the world, as far as in him lieth, he liveth peaceably with all men. He seeketh for peace as for hidden treasure, and often parts with his rights, and sacrifices his interest to maintain it. He provoketh not others to anger, nor administers fuel to their passions, but by a soft answer turneth away wrath. "Pleasant are his words," to use the language of Solomon, "they are as honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and marrow to the bones." Not only does he live peaceably with others himself, but he also endeavours to make all men live at peace with one another. He tries to allay the heats, animosities and discords, which must take place in the intercourse of mankind, where the passions and interests of men interfere so much, and so directly oppose one another. He pacifies the resentment of the angry, soothes the

irascible, brings the peevish into good humour, rejoices to make one blessed family of mankind, to behold all men uniting in love to God and love to man.

Upon the whole, the virtue which has been delineated, and which it was found impossible to keep entirely distinct from several other virtues, humility, patience, contentment, is that which is recommended by the Apostle Paul in these words, “ Put on (as the elect
“ of God, holy and beloved,) bowels of mer-
“ cies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meek-
“ ness, long-suffering, forbearing one another,
“ and forgiving one another.”

But the best description of meekness is to be met with in the history of the life and character of Jesus. There we find meekness to be not a virtue of which only an idea can be formed, without the possibility of its being practised ; but we see it actually embodied and in human form dwelling among men. Meek and lowly in heart was the son of God ; he was humble in his deportment ; every action of his life was full of condescension, gentleness and love. The Legislator of the Jews was called the meekest man on earth, but a meeker than Moses is here. Isaiah

saw him in prophetic vision, and thus described him: “ He shall not strive, nor cry, “ neither shall any man hear his voice in the “ streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, “ and smoking flax shall he not quench. “ When he was reviled, he reviled not again. “ When he suffered, he threatened not.” To the errors of his friends, he was mild and gentle; he was patient under, and ready to forgive the injuries, reproaches, and insults of his enemies. When the impetuous zeal of his disciples led them to beg that he would command fire to descend from heaven, and consume a people who believed not on his name, with what meekness did he reprove their fault, and correct their mistake? “ Ye “ know not what manner of spirit ye are of; “ the son of man came not to destroy men’s “ lives, but to save them.” Though he came to his own, and his own received him not, he was not angry and exasperated at their rejection of him, but when he drew near unto Jerusalem, he beheld the city and wept over it. When Jesus left the celestial mansions to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, meekness descended along with him from heaven, and accom-

panied him during the whole of his abode upon earth. Amidst the hardships of his humble station, and notwithstanding the obloquy, the neglect, and the ill usage which he met with, she was his constant attendant. She breathed in his words, she shone forth in his looks. When, towards the close of his life, his friends forsook him and fled, when malice was directing all her shafts against him, when cruelty assailed him in the most terrible forms, when justice refused to listen to his cry, when pity seemed to have almost entirely fled from the society of men, even then meekness did not desert him, but dictated his last words, which were a prayer for his enemies, “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Not only was meekness a distinguishing feature in the character of our Master; it is also the spirit which every part of his religion breathes. Before his appearance, the very reverse of this virtue was evident both in the general state of society and in the characters of individuals. It was the age of war and conquest. The arts of civil and domestick life were unknown and uncultivated, and rapine, bloodshed and cruelty, prevailed over

the face of the earth. In private life, too, however much they might cultivate patriotism, courage, and other shining qualifications, the peaceful virtue of meekness escaped their notice. Both Jews and Gentiles were remarkable for a pride and haughtiness of character very inconsistent with the weak and dependent state of human nature. They had some love for their friends, but it went no farther. They knew not what it was to forbear taking offence, or to forgive injuries. The dagger of assassination was daily drawn in revenge of wrongs. Man became the enemy of man, and those who should have lived together as brethren, took pleasure only in promoting discord and disorder, or, like savage beasts, in devouring one another. But this is not so much a matter of surprise, when they neglected the true foundation of peace and harmony ; when even their moralists and philosophers represented meekness, gentleness and humility, as nearly allied to weakness of mind, and meanness of spirit, and as inconsistent with a great and noble character. But what were the precepts of Jesus and his Apostles ? “ Blessed are the meek,” said he, “ *for they shall inherit the earth.*” When his

disciples were disputing about precedence and power, Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said unto them, “ except ye become as little children, ye shall “ not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” In truth, to love one another, to live at peace with all men, to bear the infirmities of the weak, to forgive the wrongs of the injurious, to be slow to wrath, to cultivate meekness, gentleness and kindness, are the constant precepts of that charitable religion, which was proclaimed by the Saviour of men, and which proceeded from the God of peace ; that religion whose benign influences have dispelled the ignorance and barbarity of the nations, enlightened and civilized the human mind, softened and refined the manners of society, restrained the ravages and the cruelty of war, mitigated the severity of punishments, and taught all men to consider themselves as the children of one universal parent, who is “ good unto all, and whose tender mercies “ are over all his works.”

Besides, how much reason have we to rejoice in the happiness of our lot, when we compare Christianity with another pretended revelation from God, which has gained over

to its side a great part of the human race ! What joy and exultation should fill our minds when we contemplate the character and life of Jesus, and then consider the character of the ferocious prophet of the east ; when we behold our Saviour meek and lowly in heart, condescending and inoffensive to all men, and after that, turn our eyes to Mahomet dyed in blood, riding in triumph over thousands of slain, and dragging the proselytes of his religion at the wheels of his chariot ; what delightful joy should we not feel when we compare the gospel which proclaims peace on earth, and good will towards men, with that religion which carries war and desolation in its train, and every step of which has been marked with cruelty and rapine.

This virtue, then, though confined chiefly to the calm sequestered vale of life, or to the scenes of private and domestick retirement, cannot be unimportant when it runs through every part of our holy religion, when it is so often, and so eagerly recommended by it, and when it has so great an influence on the happiness of mankind. It is not calculated to gain the applause of men, but it is of high price in the sight of God. To do acts of pub-

lick and extensive utility, to save a falling or raise a sinking state, to scatter plenty o'er a land, is the lot of only a few men in an age or nation. Years may pass over our heads, before we have an opportunity of practising any great and shining virtue, of visiting with comfort in our hands the widow and fatherless in their affliction, of smoothing the bed of death, or of pouring the oil and wine of consolation into the wounded spirit : but every man has it in his power to diffuse peace and joy around him by the meekness and gentleness of his behaviour. There is not a day nor hour of our life wherein we may not add to the happiness of the world, by cultivating a meek and quiet spirit. And how blessed would be the state of society, were this virtue universally practised ! “ How good and how pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity ! It is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion.” Indeed we can form no greater idea of the happiness of the higher mansions, where every thing, like the calm and untroubled ocean, reflects the serenity of God's countenance ; where the dissensions, and angers, and quarrels, and storms which render

the sea of life so tempestuous, are all blown over; and where the reign of universal peace and harmony is begun, and shall never be terminated.

II. But the mere description of this virtue will not be sufficient to induce you to practise it. Is the meek man without his reward? *Doth he serve God for nought?* No, my friends, he doth not serve God for nought. Great is the reward of meekness considered with respect to the possessor himself, with respect to the world around him, and with respect to God whose approbation he seeks.

1. Great is the blessedness of meekness considered with respect to the possessor of that virtue. Of every virtue it has been justly observed that it is its own reward: for each is accompanied with that self-approbation, that peace and satisfaction of mind which, next to the enjoyment of God, is the greatest felicity attainable by human beings. But meekness is calculated not only from the reward of self-approbation which accompanies it, but also from its very nature to produce this effect. For in what does that internal enjoyment which is so great an ingredient in human happiness consist, but in the proper regulation of

our passions, appetites, and affections ; in that calm, serene, and meek temper of mind which has been described in the former part of the discourse ? The conduct of others, however unjust or injurious, and the events of life, however calamitous and adverse, cannot affect the repose of him who possesses a meek and quiet spirit. He has a source of happiness and enjoyment in the temper and constitution of his own mind, of which he can no more be deprived than of his existence. The reproaches and censures of others cannot hurt the man who has a modest and humble opinion of his own character. Envy cannot torment the breast of him who views the success and happiness of others with complacency and delight. Injury and insult meet with no corresponding passions in a mind regulated by meekness, and taught to suffer with patience and composure the wrongs of the oppressor. Those evils which happen alike to all men, are soothed and mitigated by a soft and gentle and complying temper. To bear adversity with becoming dignity, a bold and courageous spirit are altogether insufficient : patience and submission are the only remedies. The blast shatters the tree which endeavours to resist its

power, but passes over without injuring the shrub which yields to its force. What then can disturb the meek man? No evil can reach him from without, and within all is peace and happiness.

If meekness have such an influence on our happiness in the day of adversity, how much more does it gild the sunshine of prosperity. He who has been depressed beyond measure in adversity, will be intemperate in the day of success. He only who has borne with patience and calmness, misfortune and disappointment, can display that moderation and temperance in prosperity which are necessary to the proper enjoyment of life. Tumultuous and excessive joys are unknown to the meek man; his mind moves in that calm and equal tenour which gives a true relish to life. The sunshine seems brighter when it follows or precedes a storm; but meekness resembles that clear and serene sky which is a stranger to storms and tempests.

To cultivate meekness, then, is to cultivate quietness, peace, and happiness. He who has attained this virtue, is in possession of a treasure superiour to the riches of the earth, which the world has not given, and which it cannot take away. It is our interest, therefore, to study

meekness for its own sake, and in consideration of that internal peace which it brings in its train. But the motives to the practice of this virtue, will be much stronger if we consider it with regard to others.

II. Great is the reward of meekness as regards the world. Nothing counteracts the malevolence and discordant principles of society more than the tender spirit which keeps aloof from dissension and contest. The passions of men are in the moral world what the raging tempest is in the natural—command the elements and you make peace—command the passions and discord ceases to rave. The angry, when they meet with gentle words and mild demeanour, are disarmed of their ferocity, the opposition that elicits their fiery particles is removed and they depart harmless and without riot.

The meek man, like the skilful artist, touches the rudest machinery with the finest instrument, and causes it to obey his wish. He combats not by strength but by gentleness; he opposes not with violence, but he conquers by moderation; he disarms the terrible of their weapons, as if by enchantment, and their instruments of death fall harmless at his feet.

“ Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” saith our Lord; and, my brethren, the meek do inherit all that is valuable upon earth—they inherit peace and unruffled happiness. They inherit moreover the friendship of all the good, which is more precious than the goods that perish. Nor is this all. The meek inherit the blessings of all men; for they are faithful and just friends, are enemies to none, encroach not upon the possessions of the rich, and are the constant friends and advisers of the poor. The just love them, the unjust respect them, and their greetings are universal, cordial and harmonious. Does a strife arise among their neighbours, their character of uprightness and holiness causes them to be appealed to as umpires in the dispute. With their judgment all are satisfied because all believe it to be founded upon justice and morality.

Free from the common enemies of man, the angry passions, revenge, envy, hatred, pride and ambition, the meek do also obtain and secure the goods of the world by seeking them in moderation, and by using them with prudence. How often does the passionate man mar his prospects by giving himself up to the

empire of his appetites ! How often does he lose his acquired riches and honours by grasping with an avaricious and arrogant hand at unlawful possessions. But the meek are governed by a more happy spirit. They seek the blessings of this life with a temperate zeal, and surrounded by friends and assistants their efforts are never unavailing ; not over-anxious to gather all into themselves, they interfere not with the concerns of others. They engage not in vain contention, nor do they raise up enemies to thwart them in their honest endeavours to obtain a competency for their families. Nor does any vanity, or pride, or ambition induce them to engage in schemes of aggrandizement so as to expose to peril the earnings of their earlier days. Humble and content in Jesus, full of gratitude to God, they use their gifts as not abusing them, and satisfied with their lot, they give praises to heaven for all they possess. Thus, my brethren, is it that the meek inherit the earth.

III. Finally, great is the reward of the meek man with respect to God ; meekness includes the very essence of humility, is the groundwork of charity, and is inseparable from holiness. How much then must this

virtue be estimated in the eyes of God ! The humble shall be exalted ; the charitable shall be paid many fold in heaven for what they dispense on earth ; and the holy are those who alone shall see God. It becomes us then to cultivate this character as we regard the salvation of our immortal spirits, and we shall not cultivate it in vain. By assimilating ourselves to Jesus, our perfect model, we shall approach the true perfection of the godhead, and shall advance the holy work of heaven here upon earth. Jesus was humble and meek ; God loveth the image of his son and will not destroy it. He delighteth in the lowly mind and regardeth it as his representative here on earth, for it advanceth his glory and the happiness of his creatures. What honour so great, my brethren, as to do God's will on earth ; to act the part of his faithful servant, and to feel that his spirit shed abroad in our souls assures us of his approbation ! All the pomp and glory of this world sink into nothing when contrasted with such transcendant honours. The approbation and countenance of God ! What a sublime and immortal feeling does the thought excite in the breast of the Christian ! He pants for it ; he reaches on to-

wards it; he glories in dying for it. Omnipotent and eternal in the heavens, the Father commands us to yield a ready obedience to his will. Shall we not obey him who made this vast universe, and called all creatures into existence out of nothing. The stubborn pride of sin, however, makes man forget his duty to his Maker. It is the Christian virtue of meekness which can truly estimate the weakness of man and the glory of the King of kings. Humble in the flesh, the spirit of the meek man raises itself with awful reverence to the heavenly throne, and says “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:” the radiance of the God-head illumines his soul, and full of holy aspirations he seeks not but to do the wish of him who ruleth all things.

The meek and humble spirit is cherished by God on earth, and it shall be advanced to great glory in the heavens. The proud, the disdainful, and the vindictive, God rejecteth, for they disturb the harmony of his creation: the contrite he delighteth to honour. When the hour of the world’s death shall come the glories of this life shall be wrapped in gloomy night, but the humblest Christian virtue shall be fixed in eternal happiness in the heavens. My

brethren, let us pray to God to give us meek and lowly spirits, the dispositions of humility, that we may render ourselves worthy to join in the praises of the Lamb.

SERMON IX.



On the character of the saints : the providence and favour of God peculiarly exercised towards them in the hour of death.



PSALM 116, VERSE 15.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

THERE is no truth in religion of more importance to the direction or consolation of man, than that of a divine and particular providence in human affairs. What influence ought it not to have on the actions of our lives to know that there is an invisible Spectator who is constantly about our path and about our bed, and who spieth out all our ways; that there is a supreme Governour and Judge who marks with the minutest exactness, and with approbation or abhorrence, every thought, word, and action of our life! How consoling to reflect, that weak, ignorant, and helpless as we are,

still we are not left in this world of vicissitude and trouble, to our own guidance, to the direction of a blind fate, or to the sport of accident, but are under the perpetual guardianship, protection, and direction of a wise and benevolent being who watches over us in the natal and in the mortal hour ; who takes an interest in all our concerns, who appoints to us our various fortunes and conditions, who rejoiceth in our happiness, who lends an ear to our complaints, and who, having the hearts of all men and the powers of universal nature subject to his control, causeth all things to work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let “ the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.”

But the doctrine of a superintending providence, though important and useful to all, is peculiarly interesting and comfortable to good men, whose persons are justified and accepted in the beloved, whose lives being in conformity to the law of God, are the object of his peculiar approbation, whom he guards as the apple of his eye, whom he guides with his counsel, and forsakes not even when the king of terrors approaches. For “ precious in the

“sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

I hope it will contribute to our edification and improvement if, at this time, I briefly consider the two points to which the text principally directs our attention. I mean,

1. The character of those whose death is precious in the sight of the Lord, and

2. In what respects the death of the saints is precious in God's sight.

I. The first thing proposed is to make some remarks on the character of those whose death is precious in the sight of the Lord—they are the *saints*, which literally signifies *holy persons*. This is a designation frequently given to the people of God, as expressive of their true character; for not only are they considered as righteous, in consequence of the interest which by faith they have in the righteousness of the Redeemer, but they have a principle of holiness inherent in them, by virtue of their regeneration, and they also abound in the outward fruits of holiness, to the praise and glory of God. This is a condition absolutely requisite to their enjoying the divine favour and regard, so that their life may be the object of God's care, or their death precious in his sight. The Lord, who is himself glorious in holiness and

the inexhaustible source of perfection, can have no delight in the ungodly and impure. Hence an irreversible decree hath passed in heaven, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” and as the flame consumeth the stubble, so will the fire of his holiness burn up the ungodly, who with fallen spirits shall have their portion in that lake of torments whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever. But the Lord saith of his own people, “Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth. And they shall call them the holy people, the re- deemed of the Lord.”

The holiness of the people of God is not original and natural, but derived. By nature they are like unto others, children of wrath and of disobedience; the thoughts of their hearts are only evil continually, and the actions of their lives are contaminated by imperfection and guilt. But infinite wisdom and goodness have devised means sufficiently efficacious to renew and sanctify the most impure. “Come now and let us reason together,” saith the Lord; “though your sins be as scarlet, they

“ shall be white as snow, though they be red
“ like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And
this change consists of two parts, a purification
from sin, and a communication of holiness ; a
removal of bad, and an acquisition of good
dispositions.

Sin is the great cause which excludes the
creatures of the Almighty from the favour of
their Creator, and draws upon them innumera-
ble evils. It renders the life of the sinner
miserable and his death awful. Before men
can either enjoy the favour of God on earth,
or be fitted for the immediate vision of his
glory hereafter, their souls must be purified by
the washing of regeneration, and renewing of
the Holy Ghost. They must be cleansed by
the blood and spirit of the Saviour. Hence
David was wont to pray, “ wash me thorough-
“ ly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from
“ my sin ; create in me a clean heart, O God,
“ and renew a right spirit within me.” When
John was favoured with a vision of the re-
deemed, who stood before the throne and be-
fore the Lamb, he beheld them arrayed in
white robes, with palms in their hands, and
was informed that they were washed and made
white in the blood of the Lamb. All, there-

fore, who sincerely hope for immortal life, will purify themselves, even as God is pure.

But not only are the saints purified from the defilement of sin and vice : in their souls are implanted holy principles, and that assemblage of Christian graces, which constitutes their likeness to their heavenly father. They are not only accounted of the family of God by adoption, but they are indeed his children, being formed after his image, rendered partakers of the divine nature, and dwelling in God and God in them.

A holy life, proceeding from a renewed and sanctified heart, completes the character of the saint. Like so many rays of light converging to one point, justice, mercy, truth, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, harmoniously unite in the saint, and emit their blended radiance in his life and conversation ; so that others, seeing his good works, glorify their father who is in heaven. The love of God, which glows in his heart, powerfully constrains him to a sincere, cheerful and uniform obedience. It was the Almighty command to Abraham “ walk before me, and be thou “ perfect,” and it is the fixed determination of

every true saint, to walk before the Lord unto all well pleasing : to walk as in his presence and under his omniscient eye ; and that not on a few particular occasions, and at stated times only, but regularly and uniformly through the whole course of his life. Thus the inward graces and virtues of the holy not only beautify and adorn the soul, but serve to produce obedience in those whom the Lord hath set apart for himself, and redeemed to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In this manner their saintship is visible to the world, and holiness to the Lord is established in their character. This holiness is not founded on constraint, nor does it depend on the feeble efforts of an apostate heart, but is produced and maintained by the influences of an Almighty Redeemer, in whose sight their death as well as their life is precious.

II. Let us with equal brevity and simplicity consider in what respects the death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord.

It was sin which brought death into the world ; and though, eventually, a blessing to the saints, it is a formidable foe, from which human nature shrinks back with aversion. The psalm, in which the text is found, cele-

brates the goodness of God in delivering from death, and contains a prayer that the life which he had so graciously preserved might for the future be spent in his service. This remarkable preservation of the psalmist's life, was the reason of the observation in the text, that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

Their death is precious in his sight, because he is pleased often to bless them with length of days, and to bring them to the grave in a good old age, as a shock of corn comes in his season. The sons of violence and strife frequently rise up against the saints of God. But their life and all that is dear to them are deposited in his hands as a sacred trust : he forsaketh them not in any case ; and in his sight their life as well as their death is precious. He redeems their souls from deceit and death, and brings them not to the grave till death becomes to them great gain.

Long life is in a peculiar manner promised to the saints. They shall inherit the earth, while the wicked who are in great power, and spread themselves like a green bay tree, shall be cut down like the grass, and pass away. " The Lord knoweth the days of the upright ;

“ they shall dwell in the land, and the perfect
“ shall remain in it : but the wicked shall be
“ cut off from the earth, and the transgressors
“ shall be rooted out of it.”

The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, because by it he oftentimes removes them from the evil to come. “ The
“ righteous perisheth,” saith the prophet,
“ and no man layeth it to heart ; and merciful
“ men are taken away, none considering that
“ the righteous are taken away from the evil
“ to come.” The saints are the pillars of the world, and their death portends evil to the place and nation in which they have lived. Ruin came upon Sodom, because there were not ten righteous men to be found in it. The earth itself is preserved for the sake of good men ; and when the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, the saints are removed by death to a place of security, that they may not be the sad spectators of such direful calamities.

Again, precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints, because he deprives death of its sting, and encourages them in the moment of their departure to commit their spirits to his care, and to rely with confidence

on his ability to save to the uttermost all those who sincerely believe in his mediation. The righteous are indeed at all times God's peculiar care; but on a bed of agony, and in the hour of death, his almighty arm is stretched out in a particular manner for their support. With that voice which called all nature into existence, he bids them not fear, for he is with them: even he who has the keys of death and of the unseen world in his hands, who himself encountered the king of terrors, and who knows what support his creatures need in their dying moments. It was on this account that David sung with triumphant joy, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

It is impossible that the idea of death in itself should not affect, more or less, even those who are best prepared for its approach. It cannot be dressed out in any form that will reconcile the reflecting mind to pass it by without sensations of solemnity and awe. The anxious care, the hopeless dejection, the bursting grief of near and dear connexions, from whom it is painful to part, and whose efforts

cannot prevent the approach of the inevitable hour, are circumstances of additional distress, sufficient to appal the stoutest heart.

In these gloomy and distressing moments, the saint reflects and experiences that his death is precious in the sight of the Lord. This gracious promise, replete with every comfort, fortifies him against desponding fears, and brightens his soul with the beaming rays of hope, when this world darkens on his view. Sympathizing angels hover round his departing spirit, ready to conduct it to the realms of glory. That benevolent Saviour, who himself trod the thorny paths of life, and who hath taken from death the dreaded sting, is at the hour of dissolution more particularly present, to strengthen every grace, to fortify the mind against the terrors of the powers of darkness, and to bring comfort to the bed of sickness when the body is fast wasting away. Believing and rejoicing in him who is their salvation and their glory, and blessed with a foretaste of the joys to come, the saints depart in peace; willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. To them the passage through the dark vale loses all its terrors; and the tremendous gates of death are the

portals which lead to those pleasures at God's right hand, where, according to the Apostle's emphatick expression, they shall be "filled with all the fulness of God."

The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, because by it he brings them to everlasting life. In all men there is a presage and earnest desire of immortality; and the belief of a future existence is inseparably connected with our idea of an all-powerful, wise, and just God. The darkness that rested on this prospect, notwithstanding the general prevalence of the doctrine, is now removed by the gospel of Christ. He hath brought life and immortality to light, dispelled those clouds that rested on the grave, and pointed out a state of endless existence beyond that dark region. This is one of the great advantages of the Christian institution, that, it gives the clear promise and sure hope of eternal life. It represents death as a departure hence, in order to bring us to our exalted Redeemer, who lives and reigns for ever, and by whom the saints shall be presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory with exceeding joy.

We are to consider the everlasting rest which

remaineth for the people of God, as the fruit of the Saviour's merits and sufferings, as one of the greatest and noblest effects of his ascension into heaven, and of his powerful mediation for us at the right hand of God. The felicity of heaven is indeed the gift of God ; but that gift is secured and acquired for us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. " I give " unto my sheep eternal life," saith he, " and " they shall never perish, neither shall any " one pluck them out of my hand."

This eternal life imports more than we can express or comprehend ; something more excellent than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or heart can conceive. Crowns, sceptres and triumphs, every kind of worldly success and prosperity, are but faint resemblances of this eternal, unspeakable, inconceivable happiness. No pain, nor sorrow, nor death are there. There is fulness of joy and happiness for evermore. Nor shall the souls only of the saints be thus blessed and happy : their bodies which now rest in hope, shall also be raised with immortal beauty and excellence. They are still under the guardianship of that blessed Saviour, to whom the very dust of the saints is precious, who will not suffer one atom of their bodies

to perish ; who was himself the first fruits of them who sleep, and who by the resurrection of his own body, has consecrated theirs to a glorious immortality. “ For, since by man
“ came death, by man came also the resur-
“ rection of the dead ; and, therefore, when
“ Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we
“ shall also appear with him in glory.” By that almighty power by which he made the worlds, and upholds them in being ; by which he nailed our sins to the cross, triumphed over the king of terrors, and conquered all the legions of the prince of darkness, he will also rescue the captive bodies of all the saints from the power of the grave, raise them up in his own most glorious likeness, and swallow up death in victory. He will command the four winds to restore those bodies which they have scattered over the face of the earth. The winds and storms shall obey his word ; the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them, and all the generations of men shall return to a life which endureth for ever.
“ I will ransom them from the power of the
“ grave : I will redeem them from death.
“ O death I will be thy plague : O grave I

“ will be thy destruction.” In the joyful prospect of this happy event, a dying saint can even now triumph over death, and say, “ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory.” Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON X.

The goodness and power of Christ, manifested by his works on earth, conclusive proofs of his divine nature.

JOHN, CHAP. 9, VERSE 32.

“ Since the world began was it not heard that any *man* opened the eyes of one that was born blind.”

MY présent object is, in the first place, to make a few remarks on the history recorded in this chapter, and then to state the force of the argument implied in the text; that since Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, and did many miracles, he must have been something more than *man*; must have been commissioned and countenanced by heaven: for since the world began it was never heard that any *man* altered the course of nature, or opened the eyes of one who had been born blind.

Who can sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of Jesus in choosing the person

spoken of in this chapter of the Evangelist as the subject of a miracle. He was a poor blind man who sat begging at the gate of the temple. The great and the mighty of this world would have passed by without noticing such a child of misery, or they would perhaps have made him an object of their scorn, and a subject for their diversion. But Jesus, though higher than the highest, always practised the most endearing condescension and humility, and preached good tidings unto the poor. He went about continually doing good ; seeking objects of distress whom he might relieve, constantly employed in that merciful errand on which he was sent. His miracles were all of the humane and benevolent kind. The infinite power with which he was armed, was never employed but for the benefit of mankind. In order to display it he did not command fire to descend from heaven and consume his enemies ; he did not let loose the tempest as a scourge to punish mankind ; he did not strike dumb the tongue which blasphemed him, or deprive of sight them who sought to apprehend him. On the contrary, he bound up the broken hearted, he proclaimed liberty to the captive, he fed the hungry,

he opened the eyes of the blind, he gave hearing to the deaf, and feet to the lame. How forcible a demonstration of his divine original. So gracious a messenger could proceed only from him who is love and goodness itself. How beautiful and striking a characteristic of that dispensation of grace which he came to reveal! How noble an example for our imitation!

This poor man was not only blind, but he had been so from his infancy. His blindness was not the effect of any accident or disease, which art or medicine might remove. It was a natural defect in the organ, to supply which the same infinite power and wisdom were requisite as to form the organ at first. This precluded the possibility of any kind of deception, and fully evinced the truth and certainty of the miracle.

It is, farther, worthy of remark that the person now cured was well known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His misfortune, his profession, his situation, must have attracted the attention of multitudes. As he daily sat at the gate of the temple asking alms from the passengers, he must have been known to all who went thither to pay their morning and

evening sacrifice. This circumstance was an undeniable proof of the certainty of the miracle ; it shewed that there was no collusion in the case ; that this man was not suborned to declare that he had been born blind while he really had not ; but, being known to the mall, it was evident that, if he was restored to sight, a miraculous work had actually been performed.

As Jesus, therefore, went out of the temple, he cast an eye on this hapless sufferer, whom he immediately discerned to be a proper object of compassion, and the fit subject of a miracle. His disciples also beheld the blind man, but with very different impressions. With a disposition, of which we have still too many examples, to consider the misfortunes of others as judgments from heaven, and with a very unseasonable spirit of curiosity, they ask, “ Master, who did sin, this man, or his “ parents, that he was born blind ? ” The answer is direct and positive ; there was an higher cause, the glory which would redound to God by this demonstration of his mercy and power. We are as clay in the hands of the potter, who maketh one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour. The divine vis-

itations are not all punishments : some are for our trial, our warning, our reformation : all shew forth the power, the justice, and the goodness of God.

He who at first said, let there be light, and there was light, could with one word have opened the eyes of the blind. Nay, without utterance his will was sufficient to have produced the effect. But he chose to employ the instrumentality of means. Nor did this detract in the least from the miraculous nature of the cure. For it surely required power equally infinite to communicate to clay and water, the ability of curing the blind, as it does to open their eyes instantaneously, and without the intervention of second causes. But Jesus would try the faith and obedience of his patient ; he would teach us that it is only by the use of those means which he has appointed that we can expect the cure of our spiritual diseases : he would shew that the most improbable means will produce the desired effect when he determines that it shall be so : that bread and wine can strengthen and refresh the soul when received by faith according to his appointment : that water can avail to the mystical washing away of sins, when accom-

panied with the blessing from on high : that Jordan can heal a leper and Siloam give light to the blind, when the Almighty gives the word, go, wash and be whole. In short, he would represent by expressive symbols the original depravity of our guilty and polluted nature, and the necessity of our being washed, cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of our God. Washing in the pool of Siloam was, therefore, merely a sacramental act, whereby the blessings to be communicated were typified and sealed, and the divine power more strikingly manifested in the sight of the people.

The feelings of the blind man, upon the communication of sight, are difficult to be expressed or even conceived by us who have always enjoyed the faculty of sight, and who, being never subjected to the want of it, do not sufficiently value this important blessing. From the general and obvious views of nature which present themselves to every man, let me direct your thoughts to this spiritual improvement.

Into what a world of wonders did the blind man find himself transported ! How did he gaze with admiration on the heavens and the

earth, on the faces and shapes of all creatures, on the varieties of colours around him, on the cheerfulness of the light, on the lively beams of the sun, on the vast expanse of the air, on the limpid transparency of the water, on the glorious ornaments of the temple, and on the stately places of Jerusalem ! Every thing was full of delight, and excited astonishment. With similar sensations will the servants of God enter into the joy of their Lord. Thus will they be affected when, the darkness of mortality being done away, they shall behold God's presence in righteousness, whence they shall be called to witness the felicity of the world above, the shining mansions of saints and angels, the majestick splendour of the divine throne, and the incomprehensible brightness of the Godhead.

So great was the change produced on the external appearance as well as the inward feelings of the man who had been restored to sight, that his neighbours and acquaintance did not at first recognise him to be the same person. This shewed the certainty and greatness of the miracle. They did not greedily swallow, like simple and ignorant people, the tale however improbable, but believed only

after a careful inquiry into the fact. The thing itself was in their opinion also so great and wonderful, that without the express testimony of their senses, they would have deemed it a mere trick and imposition. This may also be considered as a fit representation of the change produced in the habits of him whose spiritual blindness is removed by light from on high. His former companions in guilt and folly, unable to account for the change, are doubtful whether it be the same person. His heart and conduct are certainly not the same. Before, the mind was dark and gloomy—now, it is full of light and cheerfulness, through the knowledge of God, and the hope of heaven. Before, the heart was devoted to earthly things—now the convert uses this world as not abusing it. Before, his thoughts and anxieties had reference only to his body, his estate, or the opinion of mankind—now, they regard the displeasure of God and the peril of his soul. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away—behold, all things are become new !”

The poor man removes the doubts of his friends, by declaring *I am he*. He would not conceal from others the mercies he had ex-

perienced; he would not be so unjust or ungrateful as to suppress the loving kindness of his God. We are unworthy of that light and those blessings which we enjoy, unless we seek to diffuse them among mankind. “ Let
“ them give thanks whom the Lord hath re-
“ deemed and delivered from the hand of the
“ enemy; let them praise him with their
“ whole heart; let them shew forth all his
“ marvellous works; let them declare his
“ name among their brethren; let them exalt
“ him in the congregation of the people, and
“ praise him in the assembly of the elders.”

They who before doubted, now became inquisitive. They ask, how were thine eyes opened? The poor man, who had been so ready to declare himself the subject of the cure, is equally zealous to proclaim the authour of it. “ A man that is called *Jesus* made clay
“ and anointed mine eyes, and said to me,
“ go to the pool of Siloam and wash, and I
“ went and washed and I received sight.”

Had the people, who made inquiry into this astonishing fact, heard it with unprejudiced ears, they could not but have listened with pious admiration; they could not but have declared their belief in so omnipotent an

Agent. But, adverse to the blessed Jesus, and partial to the Pharisees, they summon him that was once blind before these implacable enemies of Christ, and this cure having been performed on the Sabbath, they fix upon this circumstance as the ground of their accusation.

But as the malice of Christ's enemies was, for the most part, frustrated and repelled upon their own heads, so their present scheme not only failed of success, but served to make the miracle wrought by him on the blind man more generally known—served to shew its force in proving his divine mission and to increase the number of his disciples. We now find the man who once sat and begged, witnessing a good confession before the assembled Pharisees. We find him defending the gracious authour of his cure against the cavils of malignity and injustice. We see him, a resolute confessor, suffering excommunication for the name of Christ, and maintaining the innocence, the honour, the divinity of his benefactor. We hear him teaching the doctrines of truth to them who sat in the chair of Moses, and convicting of blindness them who punished him for seeing.

The Pharisees strove to confute and disprove the testimony of the man that was blind by an appeal to his parents. They supposed that the fear of excommunication and of incurring the anger of the rulers, would induce them to deny the circumstance of their son's being born blind, and thus it would follow that no miracle had been performed. Being disappointed in this, and finding it impossible to deny the fact, they next try to suppress it; and, by reviling the man who had been cured, to make him ashamed of confessing Jesus. But neither did this succeed. The man, far from being ashamed to own himself a disciple of Jesus, endeavours to persuade them also to become such, and argues with them upon the subject of this miracle with a simplicity, but at the same time with an ingenuity and force of reasoning, which cannot be surpassed even by the most acute disputants.

Miracles have ever been esteemed an undeniable proof of a divine mission. Our Lord himself appeals to those works which he wrought as the best argument which he could employ in support of his pretensions as the son of God.

When John sent two of his disciples to in-

quire whether Jesus was the Messiah, our Lord gave no other answer than this, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see, inform him of my works, and let him judge if they can be performed by any other than the sent of God. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.

The argument derived from miracles being the main pillar of the Christian faith, much has been said and written concerning their nature, possibility, credibility, and tendency, to prove the truth of Christianity. But the argument was perhaps never more forcibly and concisely stated than in the simple and ingenious discourse of this poor man, who had himself been the subject of so striking a miracle: “Why, herein is a marvellous
“thing, that ye know not from whence he
“is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.
“Now we know that God heareth not sinners;
“but if any man be a worshipper of God,
“and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since
“the world began was it not heard that any
“*man* opened the eyes of one that was born
“blind. If this man was not of God, he
“could do nothing.”

To alter, suspend, or reverse the laws of nature, must require the same infinite power which first established them. In the words of the man who was once blind, “ Since the world began was it not heard that any *man* opened the eyes of one that was born blind.” Whoever alters, suspends, or reverses the laws of nature, must either be a divine person, or must be invested with divine power ; in the language of the person who had been blind, “ if this man was not of God he could do nothing.” From the nature of the Supreme Being we may with absolute certainty infer, that he will not countenance an impostor, that he will not alter or suspend the laws of nature but for wise and important purposes, that they who are endowed with the power of working miracles are approved and sent by him, and are worthy of credit in all they say, and of obedience in all they command ; in the words of scripture, “ We know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth.” The general inference from these points is evident, since Jesus Christ wrought miracles, he was sent by God, and since he was sent by God, his

religion is true and of divine authority. We are as much bound to believe and obey it, as to obey the voice of conscience, which is the natural vicegerent of God in the soul of man. But how are we certain that Jesus Christ did work miracles? Of this we are equally certain as of his existence. For both are declared by the same persons and rest upon the same authority. And of the existence of Jesus Christ we are as certain as that there was such a person as Julius Cæsar, who was dead more than 1800 years ago, or that there is such an island as Japan which none of us perhaps ever saw. Our knowledge in both cases rests on the testimony of credible witnesses; and, perhaps, the historians of our Saviour's life and miracles are more worthy of credit than any others, because by affirming what they did, they exposed themselves to loss and persecution; and some of them moreover sealed their testimony with their blood. They must have been well assured of the truth of facts which they would die rather than bear witness against.

The reasoning of the poor man, whose natural and spiritual eyes had both so lately been opened, was so convincing and powerful

that even the subtle and ingenious Pharisees could make no reply. But, instead of yielding to his arguments, such was their perverseness and pride, that they determined to get rid of him whose presence and discourse were equally galling to them ; and they cast him out of the Synagogue. As light is painful to a diseased eye, so truth is unpleasant to a mind entangled by prejudice and error. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. A scorner hateth rebuke and shutteth his ear to those friendly admonitions which open to him his faults. The wicked cannot bear the presence and example of wise and good men. Their own vices and defects appear then in a clearer light.

The poor man that was once blind, though cast out, was not forsaken. Though ejected from the Synagogue, he was admitted into the kingdom of Heaven : And wherever the gospel of Jesus is preached, he will be remembered and spoken of to the end of the world as the first confessor and martyr to the Christian cause. No sacrifice made for the sake of Christ shall be in vain. He is faithful who hath promised, and he is not unjust to forget our work of faith and labour of love.

Whosoever loveth father or mother, brother or sister, more than Christ, is not worthy of him. But whosoever shall leave father and mother, brother and sister, house and land, for the sake of the gospel, shall in no wise lose his reward. If any man deny Christ before men, him will he also deny before his father who is in heaven. But they who preserve themselves unspotted from the world, who steadfastly and faithfully bear testimony to the truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shall be openly acknowledged in the presence of his father and his holy angels, and graciously welcomed into the joy of their Lord.

SERMON XI.

On the duty of holding the righteous in remembrance, and the important advantages derived from the recollection of their virtues.

PSALM 112, VERSE 6.

“The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

RIGHTEOUSNESS, in the language of scripture, denotes general worth or excellence of character : To it is ascribed whatever belongs to religion or holiness. He that is righteous and shall be had in everlasting remembrance is described in this Psalm as fearing God, delighting greatly in his commandments, upright, gracious, full of compassion and charity. Sometimes, indeed, the sense of the expression is limited, and the righteous are compared and contrasted with those who are distinguished by goodness. Thus, in the well known illustration of the grace of God in the salvation

of men, the Apostle observes, “ scarcely for
“ a righteous man will one die, yet peradven-
“ ture for a good man some would even dare
“ to die.” But, in general, and excepting
comparisons and distinctions of this kind, by
righteousness is meant whatever belongs to a
perfect character.

Persons of this character shall be in ever-
lasting remembrance. This expression must
also be understood in a sense limited by the
temporary duration of all human affections
and pursuits. The time of our sojourning
here is but short, and the survivor, in whose
memory the good man lives, shall himself
soon pass away and be forgotten. A few illus-
trious characters, whose lot enabled them to
perform great exploits, and to act a distinguish-
ed part on the theatre of the world, may live
for ever in the page of history, and receive the
praises and the blessings of all future genera-
tions of men. But with regard to the great
bulk of mankind, even the pious, the upright,
and the good, their love and their hatred and
their envy soon perish, and, in a little time,
the place which once knew them shall know
them no more. The Psalmist, therefore,
means that the memory of the righteous shall

not speedily be effaced from the hearts of those who knew and valued their integrity and worth, but shall be often and long recalled with sentiments of honour, gratitude, and affection.

In illustration of this subject, I propose to inquire,

1. By whom the memory of the just is blessed, and held in respectful and grateful remembrance.

2. *Why* we ought to hold the righteous in everlasting remembrance, and

3. *How* we shall most properly and effectually perpetuate the remembrance of the righteous.

I. We are to inquire by whom the memory of the just is blessed, and long held in respectful and grateful remembrance—and

1. Good men are held in everlasting remembrance by their own family : for by them the benign influence of their good qualities was most sensibly felt. In them the memory of their virtues was mingled with the warm sentiments of natural affection. To them the loss of their love, their services, their example, is the severest deprivation. The affectionate partner of their lives, who, for a long course

of years has been in the habit of imparting mutual assistance and consolation, whose interests were necessarily interwoven with theirs, whose happiness was greatly, I had almost said wholly, in their power, who best knew their good qualities, who witnessed that piety and charity which modesty concealed from the publick eye ; on them doubtless is made the most lasting impression of the virtue and affection of the partner who is gone down to the dust ; to their memory the venerable image is often present ; in their ears the lisping accents of their common offspring are eloquent ; the features of the deceased perpetuated in the children who survive, recall and renew that respect and gratitude and affection which the living failed not to command, and suffer not the memorial to perish from their breast.

To the children also of worthy and affectionate parents, who are now no more, the remembrance of their character can never cease to be interesting. To them they impute with pleasure and gratitude the various virtues they may possess ; to them they refer the success in life which they may have enjoyed ; to their latest hour they reflect with melan-

choly satisfaction on the fond and affectionate solicitude and anxiety with which they watched over their infant years, and guarded their steps in the slippery paths of youth ; on the pains and expense which they bestowed on their instruction and education ; how they kindly relieved their wants, and attended them in sickness and pain ; how they solemnly warned them of the ways of the destroyer ; how they led them by their wise precepts and pious example into the paths of peace ; on the sanguine hopes which they delighted to indulge from the prospects of their opening talents, and on the fervent prayers which they addressed to heaven for their prosperity and success in life. The time is not distant when we ourselves shall live no more ; but if we are righteous, we shall be had in remembrance. If we are faithful to our God and to our children, they will bless and consecrate our memory when our heads are laid in the dust. Even their posterity may learn some good thing from them which we have imparted ; and that happy day may at last come, when we shall be able to say before the throne of God, “ Behold us and the children whom “ thou hast given us.”

May we not even descend lower, and say that the righteous man is held in remembrance by the domesticks also of his family. The servants of a just, humane and generous master, remember with gratitude the marks of kindness and confidence which he has bestowed on them; they regret his departure with unfeigned sorrow; they respect his memory; when they go abroad into the world they celebrate his praise; by them his character reaches far and near, and is handed down with honour to the children of many generations.

2. The righteous are held in remembrance by the more intimate associates of their youth or of their more mature age.

The pressure on the mind is severe indeed when by the will of God we have lost the most faithful, the most affectionate of our associates; those of whom we had conceived the most delightful expectations; or those by whose means we had attained the most solid advantages for this world or for eternity. But their memorial is not lost; not the remembrance of their virtues and of their intellectual endowments; not the remembrance of their kindness; not the remembrance of their

usefulness to us ; nor the remembrance of the satisfaction which we have enjoyed with them. And what is truly encouraging and truly worthy of attention is, that all that was precious and praiseworthy in a departed friend, remains in the memory, while all his imperfections are buried in the grave. It is their good and estimable qualities alone which consecrate their memorial within us, separated from all the infirmities which were once united to them. This, while it adds to the honour and respect manifested for the memory of the dead, is as useful as it is gratifying to the living. We remember that which was good : we forget every infirmity which was attached to it ; we dwell with affection on every advantage and on every satisfaction which it yielded to us, and its living impression is rivetted on our hearts. We feel as if the image of the departed virtues, pure as the spirits of just men made perfect, were before us, and we are still united to them as by the cords of love. These recollections equally solemn and impressive, have a direct tendency both to comfort us in our sorrow for those who are asleep, and to purify our affections during the rest of our pilgrimage. We think of those who walked with

God ; and their memorial kindles our abhorrence of the pollutions of the world, while it awakens our ardour to become followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. We think of the departed spirits who were once our companions below, as we contemplate the angels of God descending to bless our recollections and to watch our habitations.

This posthumous existence in the memory of those whom we once esteemed and loved is a powerful incitement to virtue and a strong consolation to the virtuous in the prospect of their departure hence. For to be remembered while he is no more ; to be sometimes recalled to the memory of the living when he is removed out of their sight ; to be wished alive again by some of his surviving friends when he is numbered with the dead, is among the fondest desires of man. On the other hand, the thought that as soon as our breath is flown our memory is obliterated ; that our remembrance shall perish from the earth and we shall have no name in the streets, is depressing beyond conception to the human mind, and sinks man even lower than the grave which his body is to occupy.

3. But while the memory of the wicked shall utterly perish, or be recalled by all good men with detestation and abhorrence, the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance; and that not only among their family and friends, but also by all whom their labours have profited, their instruction enlightened, their example improved, or their bounty relieved.

The dispositions which lead men to employ their talents for the advantage of their fellow-creatures, and to do them good offices freely without any hope of a requital, create one of the first distinctions by which one man can be raised above another. If they are animated by the pure and cheerful spirit of religion they form the most interesting of human characters. The love which directs us, by a sense of duty, where to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to assist the weak, to comfort the poor, or to revive the sorrowful; the love which makes usefulness our happiness, and the help of every kind which we can bring to others our habitual solicitude, is love out of a pure heart, such as Christ requires and acknowledges.

When this affection becomes the habit of

the mind, it always finds its object readily ; and without departing from its proper sphere, will always lead to the means of glorifying God. It extends to those who need advice or countenance, as well as to those who are destitute of food and raiment ; to those who require the aid of superiour influence or superiour talents, as well as to those who are pressed down with sorrow ; to the hidden retreats of ignorance and misery, as well as to the opportunities of known and publick utility. The usefulness of men who live under the influence of benevolent and generous affections, and who follow them steadily and earnestly through life, extends far beyond their natural or immediate sphere, by means of those whom they relieve or assist ; and even beyond the limits of their own lives. But every thing which depends on the breath of man has its destined period. The most useful life is spent, before we are aware of its progress ; and all the kindness which animated its spirit perishes in the dust.

The selfish man dies, and we lament not ; or we think of him with more compassion than regret, or we remember the artful guise which his selfishness could put on, and have

nothing better to remember ; or we think of those who fill his place, and who cannot be less useful in the world than he has been.

But the righteous do not perish as the fool dieth : they leave an impressive and a permanent memorial. When such men depart, we feel as if a dark cloud had risen around us, and we fear as we enter into the cloud. We think with emotion of the short-lived labours of the most faithful men, and of the pressure of calamities on the world when they are gathered to the dust of their fathers ; they who had so great a share in all that was worthy and respectable around them ; they whose hand was found in every thing useful or pleasing to their fellow creatures. When the righteous is taken away, the living will lay it to heart. The report of his disease excites universal sympathy and regret. The poor whom his bounty relieved, as they pass the mansion where he once resided, will strike their pensive bosoms and say, “ this was the abode of
“ him whose heart was ever anxious to devise
“ and whose hand was ever ready to execute
“ liberal things.” The religious society of which he was so worthy a member will often turn with tears in their eyes to the place which

he once occupied in their assembly, but which is now left vacant. The orphan will pay many a grateful visit to his grave, and water with his tears the spot where the ashes of his father repose.

II. As we cannot propose any thing but the most cursory view of the subject on which I have proposed to treat, I now hasten to inquire why we ought to cherish the remembrance of good men.

1. And we ought to honour the memory of the just from respect to their worth. Can we refuse to esteem the tender husband, the affectionate parent, the generous master, the faithful friend, the good member of society, the friend of religion? Who so odd as not to revere the man who considers the case of the poor, and promotes and diffuses happiness around him? He who has eminently and perseveringly sustained these characters cannot be forgotten by the wise and discerning.

It is our duty to venerate the image of God: we must therefore respect and honour those who are his workmanship, who are renewed after his likeness in righteousness and true holiness; who are his children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. The charms

and attractions of the most perfect form what are they compared to the beauties of holiness? Where are proportion, grace, and dignity equal to their's, who are the children of the most high? The righteous resemble God; they strive to be perfect as he is perfect; to be holy as he is holy; and to have the same mind in them which was also in Christ. And can we think of the perfections of deity; can we contemplate the amiable and perfect character of the son of man without sentiments of veneration, honour, and love? And in regarding the righteous as imitators of God, as resembling our blessed Redeemer, shall we not be filled with pleasure and admiration? Shall we not be constrained and determined to preserve their memory with honour?

2. We ought to remember the righteous with respect and honour out of gratitude for the advantages which we have received from them. When we shew kindness and confer favours we well know and naturally expect that they should make an impression on the minds of those who receive them. We feel their insensibility and ingratitude when no return is made. What we resent and condemn in others, shall we be capable of committing

towards our worthy benefactors? We must not forget what profit we have derived from them. We must affectionately remember what we owe to their cares, their counsels, their exertions, their assistance, their friendship and their example. By beholding their good works and worthy character, we have been imperceptibly and sweetly drawn to the approbation and imitation of real excellence. We are in the way of receiving much advantage also, after they are removed from us, by revolving the years that are past, by reviewing the worthy deeds and high attainments of the saints who have left us. Thus we learn what was avoided, what was resisted, and what was overcome: we learn how amiable, how comfortable, how respectable, is the life of the righteous. They shew us, and shall it be without effect, how to conduct ourselves with propriety, by what means to attain their distinction and enjoyments, how to secure the approbation of the wise and good, and especially of the Judge of all.

3. We ought to remember the righteous with honour, and, from a sense of justice, to vindicate their character and counteract the influence of misrepresentation and detraction.

We well know that good may be evil spoken of; we well know that some men are exceedingly eager to grasp at, and to circulate unfavourable reports of religious characters. They lessen the worth of the righteous, they impute improper motives to their best actions, and take delight in bringing them to their own level. Piety and punctuality in celebrating the institutions of religion have often been branded as hypocrisy; alms-giving, and attention to the necessities and comforts of the poor are called ostentation; liberality, in its most generous deeds and exertions, has been represented as the most interested selfishness; regular manners are styled want of spirit and penuriousness. If, my friends, the righteous are so misrepresented and traduced, if especially they have enabled us to be vouchers and witnesses for their worth by their friendship and good offices, are we not called upon to do them justice? Let us assert the purity of their principles, the genuineness, the regularity and fervour of their devotions, their pure and active charity, and that, in short, their behaviour was such as becomes the gospel of the grace of God which denies ungodliness

and worldly lusts, and teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this life.

4. We ought to cherish the remembrance of good men, from a regard to the honour and interest of religion. We ought to speak of their worth and exhibit their characters, that thereby men may be induced to admire and receive that blessed system, the excellence and power and truth of which were demonstrated in their attainments, worth and happiness. We are required to employ every method of affecting and impressing the minds of men, and of leading them to think seriously of their souls, of their duty and of eternity. Thus our Lord urges his followers to manifest superiour goodness, in order to promote the interest of religion, let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works may glorify your father in heaven. But it may be that we are afraid to propose ourselves as models of excellence for the imitation of others, and of those especially whose best interest we have most at heart. To them, too, our real character may not be sufficiently known; they may remain under the influence of misrepresentation, prejudice and suspicion respecting us.

If these things be so, or if we only think our example labours under such disadvantages, we are bound the more to avail ourselves of the known worth and reputation of the righteous for arresting the attention, exciting the esteem, and gaining the hearts of our friends. From time to time, and as occasion offers, let us thus address those who are dear to us. “ See what
 “ this righteous man was, what objects he pur-
 “ sued, what worth he manifested, he preferred
 “ the service of God, he sought the honour that
 “ cometh from the most high. He was respec-
 “ ted and honoured in life. His memory is
 “ dear to his surviving friends. He resisted
 “ the prevailing vices and temptations of the
 “ age, and of his condition of life. He wit-
 “ nessed for God, and adorned the doctrine of
 “ God his Saviour.” By representations of this kind, and the reflections and exhortations they naturally suggest, much good may be done; our object may be secured: our friends may be rendered attentive, they may even be affected and changed, they may arise and follow the righteous; they may walk as they also walked.

5. In a word, we ought to cherish the remembrance of good men, from a regard to

the glory of God. Honouring the righteous is to the glory of God and the promoting of the interest of the gospel, because in their character, their attainments, and their happiness, the glory of God is displayed, the image of God is exhibited, and the happiness of the saints is demonstrated. Piety delights in beholding the glory of the Lord in all his works and ways; in the heavens and in the earth, in the sea and in the dry land. There are manifestations of his glory, however, more especially attracting and affecting. What is seen of God in the history and character of the saints is of this nature. We see the divine wisdom, power, goodness, sovereignty and faithfulness, in raising them up; in the dispensations of his providence towards them; in the influence of his grace; in their being sanctified, established and settled; in their being kept through faith unto salvation, we find the saints ascribe their salvation in all its parts to the blessing of God. “In me, says the
“Apostle, Jesus Christ shewed all long-suffer-
“ing. By the grace of God I am what I am.”
Christians, in finding the persecutor and blasphemer preaching the faith which he once strove to destroy, glorified God in him. In

the progress and perfection of the Christian life, and in the history of the saints, the presence, power and faithfulness of God are manifested according to their varying conditions and exigencies. Is it not our duty to preserve such manifestations of God that the affections and graces of piety may be awakened and cherished? This we do by holding the righteous in honoured remembrance. Happy are they who by paying due honour to the righteous, and making their light to shine before men, induce them to glorify their heavenly father.

III. We are now, in the last place, to inquire *how* we shall most properly and effectually perpetuate the remembrance of the righteous who have no more share in any thing that is done under the sun. And,

1. The first and essential rule for holding the righteous in an endeared remembrance is carefully to review their character and worth from time to time. I can easily suppose occasions on which it is not at all necessary to desire men to dwell on the history and worth of their valuable deceased friends. Are they taken from them at a time when they did not look for so fatal an event, but on the contrary were reckoning on the continuance of their

protecting presence; when, too, men are placed in circumstances wherein they formerly experienced, and now much need the wise counsel and effectual help of their friends; on such occasions their thoughts are full of them, and their tongue is the pen of a ready writer in uttering lamentations, and in offering liberal tributes of praise. By and by, however, we find them greatly changed; business and pleasure occupy the mind and engross the heart. We then have as much reason to blame their forgetfulness as formerly we regretted the danger of their being overwhelmed by sorrow. That such charges may not be brought against us, that the endeared remembrance of the righteous with all its happy effects may be preserved, we ought to review their history and dwell on their worth on particular occasions. The following seasons are highly natural and proper for this purpose. We ought to remember the righteous with affection, and talk of them with honour, when similar characters claim our regard; when we know or hear of the same loss sustained by others as we experienced by the death of our dear friends; when circumstances similar to those which distinguished

their worth occur ; when the celebrating of their praise promises to have happy effects on those around us ; when by doing justice to their character, we silence aspersions and confound the malicious and the wicked. On such occasions as these it will be highly useful to meditate on the worth, and to publish the honours of the righteous.

2. We effectually cherish the memory of good men, by introducing them and their worth into our acts of devotion. The great advantages derived from the company and advice, the assistance and example of good men, are not the only blessings we are in danger of overlooking and not duly prizing because they are not connected with the thoughts of God and the exercises of piety. If we reflected more on our dependence on God, and his goodness in bestowing and preserving our enjoyments, we would value them more highly. By carrying them in our minds when we appear before God, and by blessing God for them, their worth is enhanced, our gratitude is heightened and perfected. And have we not to remark, in particular, that the devout sentiments we feel and express to the giver of every good and perfect gift, for blessing us

with the knowledge and the friendship of the righteous, will revive and heighten our value for them ; for those excellent persons whose highest and dearest object it was to bring us by good advice, good example, good education, and numberless endearing good offices, to the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, whom to know is life eternal.

3. We ought to preserve an honourable remembrance of the righteous by imitating that worth and excellence which we admire and commend. It is in this manner only that our praise is proved to be sincere. It is thus we profit most by their excellencies. It is thus we will most effectually preserve their endeared remembrance and perpetuate the power of their example. Let us then be imitators of them, as they were of Christ. Let us beware lest, in commending them, we be not found condemning ourselves.

There are marks of respect and of grateful remembrance, which in certain circumstances may be decent and proper, and useful, but which may be given and perhaps have often been given by custom, by ostentation, by selfishness and not by affection. Sincere regard cannot be expressed by every one in pompous

monuments and the parade of mourning. Imitation of worth is in the power of all, and close imitation is the highest testimony of the most unfeigned affection and respect. Be then, my brethren, what the righteous were. Have they fallen who stood in the first ranks, supporting manfully and successfully the cause of religion, fighting the battles of the Lord, of order, of truth, of worth, of happiness! Fill ye up the breach; repair ye the loss; complete ye the ranks; raise ye their weapons; shew their skill; maintain their advantages; quit ye like men, and be strong.

4. Last of all, it will have the happiest effect on your preserving the endeared memory of the righteous, to meditate on the honours conferred on them and awaiting them from heaven in this world, and in that which is to come.

Whoever is truly righteous is highly honoured of God, whether the world believe it and perceive it or not. They bear his image; they enjoy his favour; they belong to his family; they are united to all the great and the good, and the venerable in heaven and on earth. Has not the Lord, the Judge of all, often distinguished his righteous servants, and

caused men to take knowledge of the objects of his favour and approbation? He has raised them on high; he has enrolled their names in the lists of glory. See in what striking instances, on how many memorable occasions, providence has marked them for the care and charge of heaven. See his light shining on their tabernacle; see his interpositions in their behalf, in rescuing them from impending ruin, in bestowing unexpected blessings, in overruling and controlling what is formidable and hostile and from which no way of escape seemed possible, in bringing good out of evil, and causing the malice and machinations of enemies to produce more good than the wisdom and exertions of friends. In such dispensations we are made to say, verily, there is a God that rules the world, that loves and honours the righteous.

“Him that honoureth me, saith the Lord, “I will honour.” History, experience, and observation bear witness to the faithfulness of God in every age. Through life favour has distinguished the righteous, the light of God’s countenance has been lifted upon them. Sometimes also in a conspicuous manner the

Lord favours and distinguishes his servants at their departure out of this world. By length of days, by a sound constitution, by vigorous faculties, by increasing usefulness, by heightened enjoyment, by the fruit of their labours, by more abundant respect and honour, by serenity of mind, by confidence in God, by the unclouded prospect of glory, honour and immortality have the righteous, in the end of life, been honoured of the Lord. And ought not we to preserve their memory with honour?

It is always true that the death of the saint is dear to the Lord. On all the excellent of the earth, however, the same tokens of the favour of heaven are not conferred, in the evening or at the close of life. The sun sometimes leaves the horizon in an unclouded sky with all nature serene and beautiful; at other times he sets obscured in clouds. But it is the same glorious luminary, whose brightness no clouds can sully, and who disappears to rise again in renewed splendour.

If we believe and meditate on the glory that shall be revealed, if we place before our eyes the descending judge, the assembled world, the publick, unfading and eternal honours of the righteous, their depression and obscurity

will not only be as nothing, but will rather add to their celebrity and glory. If such be the heritage of them who seek God, can we but be constrained to honour them whom God delighteth to honour, and whom he will hold in everlasting remembrance?

SERMON XII.



*On the caution necessary to be observed in our
censure of others.*



MATTHEW, CHAP. 7, VERSE 1.

“ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

THOUGH the opinion of the world is by no means an infallible test of character, yet it is not without reason that we set a high value on reputation. Though the approbation of our own conscience is the surest reward of virtue, yet an indifference to reputation is not the attendant of a mind most desirous to be satisfied with itself. It is the attainment of those only who have completely thrown away a good opinion of themselves and have nothing to lose. To every person then, who has a just sensibility to reputation, it will appear a matter of the greatest importance, to establish a rule to regulate the judgments which men form

of one another, and to prevent those errors into which they are liable to fall. This rule our Saviour has laid down in the words of the text; which forbids us rashly to form an unfavourable judgment of others. For though the precept is expressed in general terms, and literally taken would prevent us forming any opinion of others, whether favourable or otherwise, yet so seldom do mankind err on the favourable side, and so little harm arises from so doing, that we can never interpret the precept as in any respect directed against it. Besides the intercourse and connections of society give us an unavoidable interest in the character of others. Were we to become indifferent spectators of their conduct human life would stand still. But this is impossible. We will love those only who are deserving—we will trust those only who are honest—we will believe those only who have never deceived us. Every action of a man is influenced by the opinion he entertains of his neighbours; and in this sense by abstaining from judging them we must cease to have any intercourse with the world. The spirit of our Saviour's exhortation, then, is not to abstain wholly from judging others, but that in forming our opinions we should be charitable and think no evil.

Neither does this precept require us, in forming our judgment, always to think well of our neighbours. Shall we overstep those limits which separate right and wrong? If a man appear in open day, clothed with his vices, shall we suppose that virtue may wear such a garb? If he takes the name of God in vain, shall we not call him profane? If he be intemperate, shall we shut our eyes until we find an interval of sobriety and call him sober? If he ruin the innocent, if he defraud those who trust in him, if he oppress those who depend on him, and repulse with harshness the petition of the poor, shall we not call him cruel, unjust, insolent and worthless?

There is room enough for charity, without extending it to vice; and our characters will have but a poor title to indulgence if we have no other than that we ourselves spare those who openly violate the laws of morality and good order. This precept was intended to promote peace among men, but not by reconciling right and wrong, by destroying the only foundation on which peace can be established. Wo unto them who call evil good, and good evil; wo unto them who would separate infamy from vice—who smile at crimes, and hold forth their right hand to wickedness.

The tendency of this precept then is to prevent us from judging others in circumstances where we are not competent to judge; and to prevent us from judging unfavourably, unless we have clear and decided reasons for so doing. And how many considerations occur to enforce this precept, “Judge not, lest ye be judged.”

1. Consider the influence of men’s own passions and feelings in preventing the judgments they form of others. Were we to turn our eyes to the darkest side of the picture which these present we should perceive envy, jealousy, resentment and party-spirit holding their nocturnal assemblies to sacrifice to malice and falsehood the devoted characters of whomsoever they meet. Who shall pass without danger from the venom which they scatter, and who knows the paths where invisible fiends haunt? What shield can defend from the secret attacks of an unseen foe? While you wish that you yourselves may escape them, beware lest you be accessory to the mischief which they work. They watch your steps; they place a dagger in your way, and filling you with false clamours they urge you to throw it at the innocent. Take not up the secret hints they drop;

listen not to their insinuations—shut your eyes to their signs and your ears to their whispers.

Next to these appear the ill-natured, the peevish and the illiberal. At their tribunal temper sits as judge, and a word, a look will condemn you. If a defect or an offence appear, to that their eyes are turned; or if your merits are regarded, it is with a frown that they should be found in such company. If you wish to escape their censure, you must think as they think, you must speak as they speak, you must look grave when they look grave. Their minds resemble those barren and inhospitable regions, overhung with a perpetual gloom where no beauty or verdure appears, where the sun never sheds his enlivening beams.

But passing from these more flagrant breaches of candour and Christian charity which thinketh no evil, we may sufficiently perceive the influence of passion over the opinions of mankind, in the common affairs of life, and in characters who cannot justly be accused of malice, falsehood and illiberality. How much are men disposed to represent the character of another in that light in which they wish to view it? On one occasion, they con-

jecture circumstances which they have not seen, and which change a good action into a bad one. On another, when an action appears at first sight improper, they catch at what they see, and save themselves the trouble of conjecture. When first appearances are unfavourable, from these they, hastily, draw their picture, giving it, from their own imagination, colours so strong that nothing else can be seen through them. When first appearances on the contrary are too favourable, they search around, and, by a perverse ingenuity, introduce into the back ground of their picture such unpleasing objects as spoil the beauty of what is better seen, and give to the whole that disagreeable aspect they desire it should wear. In this way there is no virtue, there is no grace nor accomplishments which a mind disordered by selfish feelings will not divest of its true form, and represent in a shape which may displease. If a man be open and liberal, to such a mind he seems ostentatious, and to court popularity. If he be sober, he appears unsocial; if he be wiser and more learned than they, he is assuming and vain. To such a mind, justice wears the form of harsh severity, and gentleness

seems to be a want of spirit ; prudence is transformed into cunning or timid caution ; liberality appears to be profusion, and the most necessary economy is represented as penury.

When, therefore, my brethren, you judge your neighbour, examine your own hearts. Even in the mind of those who wish not to be unjust, who are not without candour, injurious prejudices arise. When you find fault with another, beware that no interference of interest, or rivalry in your pursuits, no difference of opinion, and no feeling of resentment may have produced, without your perceiving it, a desire to find fault. Would you wish to entertain a better opinion of him whom you blame ? Is it with reluctance that you perceive his faults ? Put these questions to your own hearts, and answer them sincerely. If it give you a secret pleasure to censure, and if you would be disappointed in finding your censures groundless, distrust yourselves. Though these feelings were not improper in themselves, there is little doubt but they mislead you. Receive not then a sentiment you have so much reason to suspect, express it not to others, let it not influence your conduct. Banish the feelings from which it flowed. If

you regard what is fair and what is just, proceed not to pass sentence of condemnation, while you hold in your hand a bribe to condemn.

2. These sources of error in judging our neighbour, lie within our own breast. There are others which lie without us of no less influence ; without attention to which the most impartial and candid will become unjust.

The laws of morality are fixed and immutable ; but the situations, the constitutions, the temper, the education, and the pursuits of men are infinitely various. Hence arises a variety of character and a diversity of conduct among those who have the same rules to guide them. The same things become not the young and the old, the serious and the gay, the rich and the poor. The man who has had few opportunities of acquiring knowledge cannot act with the skill and success of experience. If we confound these characters, and judge them by a common law, how vague and unjust will be our judgment ? But in how few instances are we qualified to discern the true effect of circumstances like these, and the various complexions which their different combinations may give to the same con-

duct? Farther, on how many circumstances does the degree of merit or criminality of a single action depend? We are not merely to inquire what an action is, and then say it is right or wrong. We must likewise examine the principle and motives from which it flowed, the difficulties and dangers to be encountered, the temptations to be resisted, and the rewards to be gained. These are circumstances often concealed from every eye but the eye of God, and a man's own conscience. But when they are not known, is it a stretch of good nature and indulgence, is it a hard restraint on the freedom of opinion, to forbear to condemn? Or rather do not the soundest and plainest principles of justice require us to forbear? The history of the world presents many affecting instances of the reproach, sufferings and misfortunes which the most virtuous characters have endured from that propensity which the greatest part of mankind have to judge by appearances or events, while it has often remained for a future generation to discover and do justice to their integrity. To these, however, we need not recur. The recollection of every man will furnish him with a sufficient number of instances, in his own case

at least, in which his conduct was misunderstood, and in which he will not refuse to own that men were rash in blaming him. Be not guilty of an injustice towards others to which you are so much exposed, and of which you are so ready to complain. Even when the censures you pass on your neighbours happen to be just, yet when they are not warranted by your knowledge of his situation and conduct, your rashness is no less criminal. But if they are unjust, you are guilty of an injury which receives its greatest aggravation from that ignorance which in other cases may be an excuse for him who offends.

3. Hitherto I have chiefly considered the precept in the text as intended to prevent us from blaming those who may not be deserving of blame. But it goes farther than this, and even where the most charitable indulgence cannot make us blind to the faults of another, it bids us judge them as becomes those who are themselves conscious of errors and imperfections. Nor is it in this case founded on principles less just. Even when you are guilty of a folly which you are not disposed to excuse, would you bear to be upbraided and condemned by him who had an equal share in

your folly, while his censures fell on you alone? And does it alter the case that your faults are not the same with those you perceive in your neighbour? Heaven alone knows whose scale preponderates. You may treat with severity the faults of others, while you spare your own, but will this partiality extend beyond your own breasts? Will God or man judge you by other laws than those which bind all? Under the most proper sense of those errors into which a man falls from the imperfections of human nature, he feels himself entitled to indulgence from those who are subject to similar failings. He alone deprives himself of this title who allows it not to another. If you have any delight in exposing offences, it may not be difficult to discover and to drag forth an offender; but let him who is without sin among you throw the first stone.

After all, let us beware of applying this principle of charity to an improper use. While you expect the charity of your brethren with regard to those deviations from your duty which are past, into which you were led against your will, and which you are desirous for the future to avoid, you expect what

religion requires them to grant. But if you claim their indulgence to evil habits, which you wish not to forsake, promising in return a similar indulgence to them, you abuse our Saviour's precept, and convert it into a toleration for sin, placing charity, that virtue which most distinguishes our religion, on this foundation, that he who leaves the greatest number behind him in the commission of wickedness ought to possess it in the most extensive degree. A truly good man will not be partial to a bad action because he himself has committed it, nor will he by claiming such partiality from others lay himself under an obligation to approve what is wrong in them. The object of charity is to prevent us from making the imperfections of our brethren a reason for refusing to do them good; but it is not possible to do them a greater injury than to encourage them in sin.

4. Another consideration of great weight to enforce the precept in the text, is that stated by our Saviour: "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." And there cannot be a more just law either in the sight of God or man. With regard to man, the experience of

the world has established it as a maxim, that, when one is rash in finding fault and, without sufficient knowledge of the character and actions he pretends to judge, is prone to suppose evil where there is room for supposing good; when from doubtful appearances he always forms that opinion which is most unfavourable, whence are we to think that this propensity arises? The innocent, the sincere, and the upright are not apt to suspect. They often find their own conduct attended by imprudence or followed by ill consequences of which they were not aware; and neither from appearances nor consequences do they perceive just ground of thinking ill of those to whom the same thing may have happened. The secret of those who possess so much ingenuity in finding out the faults of others lies within their own breast. But experience has discovered it, and when we meet with such persons we transfer their suspicions and their ill-natured remarks on others to their own character. Who are most ready to take offence if it be not those who are most ready to give it? Who are they who prey on the reputation of their neighbour, but those who have lost their own? Who are the suspicious, but those who have secrets in their

own conduct? Who are the malicious and the envious, who detract from the merit of others, but those who have not merit enough to procure the success which excites their resentment? Such is the natural connection between a man's own character and the opinion he is disposed to form of others. The good alone; conscious of their own integrity, have the true principle of candour in their breast. Prudence therefore enjoins that we should not be rash in forming unfavourable opinions of others; for in so doing we condemn ourselves, or enable others to detect our wickedness.

With regard to God, the consideration which we are now illustrating is much more powerful. The person who judges, and he who is judged are both equally seen by him. He needs not to look for our character and our deeds in the opinions we form of others. He is our witness; and whatever we may do to our brethren, he will impute to us no crimes of which we have not been guilty. But for our want of charity, for our hard suspicions, and our severe censures, he will judge us on their own account. And with what peculiar aggravations will they appear in the sight of that being to whom the most secret faults of

our own hearts lie open? Ye who judge your neighbours, lift up your eyes to your common judge, beholding the secrets of your own soul. Turn them inwards on yourselves. With the impressions which you now feel, stand up, call your neighbour before your tribunal, put on your dignity, your penetration, and your severity, and say unto him, "Thou sinful man, " thou offender of God, I condemn thee;" heaven frowns at your presumption, and your own crimes assume a deeper dye.

When God shall judge us all, folly will weigh less against us in the scale than ill-will and resentment; imprudence will not prove so heavy as calumny; nor will the frailties of humanity appear so criminal as that evil imagination which delighted to magnify them. And what shall the uncharitable man answer if God should say to him in the final settlement of characters and rewards, "Thou didst look with a " severe eye on the faults of thy brother; shall " I pass over thine, or shall thy unkindness " lessen them? Thou didst impute to him of- " fences which he meant not and committed " not: shall I overlook those which I saw, and " of which thou thyself art conscious. Thy un- " just and harsh censures made the innocent

“ to suffer pain ; what shall be done to thee,
“ thou false tongue ? With what judgment
“ thou didst judge, shall I not judge thee ;
“ and with what measure thou didst mete,
“ shall it not be meted to thee again ? ”

5. I shall only add one other motive to deter us from judging our neighbour ; addressed not so much to the malicious and uncharitable, as to the generous and well-meaning who form unfavourable opinions of others chiefly from rashness and inattention. When you lift up your voice against another without sufficient knowledge of his conduct, even when appearances may give some countenance to your reprehensions, it is not improbable they may be groundless. Of what wrongs may you not thus become the authour ; against which the person you injure, will be less prepared to guard, the more innocent he is ? To him who wishes to deserve the good opinion of the world, you may thus occasion the most discouraging of all mortifications. Of every advantage which depends on a good name, you may deprive him. You may be thus led to treat with unkindness those who merit favour. You may throw obstacles in the way of the most deserving and hurt the most tender feelings of a good man’s heart.

To prevent you from following the practice of such evil, in addition to the other considerations already stated, we may observe, that, he alone is entitled to sport thus at random with the character of others, who would himself feel no pain from any injuries his own might receive; who could behold with indifference the suffering and distress which he occasioned; and whose condemnation could not be aggravated by being judged as he judged his neighbour. If this be a character which you justly abhor, and the imputation of which you would reject with indignation—*then judge not, that ye be not judged.*

SERMON XIII.

PART I.

On the divine origin of the Christian religion.

ACTS, CHAP. 5, VERSE 38, 39.

“Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this council, or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

THIS was the sage advice of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, and a man of great reputation, to the Jewish council, who were assembled to concert measures for suppressing the new religion then beginning to be preached by the Apostles. The object of this advice is to dissuade the Jews from doing any thing to injure the Apostles or to suppress the publication of their opinions. For if that system which they taught with so much boldness and diligence was merely an imposition, devi-

sed by themselves, and calculated to answer worldly purposes, it would, like some other pretended revelations which Gamaliel mentions, be discovered, and, without any effort on the part of the Jews, would sink and come to nought. On the other hand, if it really was, what its friends pretended, a scheme of religion derived from God, containing sufficient evidence of its divine origin, and supported by the power of the Almighty, it was vain for them to oppose it ; in spite of all their efforts it would prevail, and they would only add to their own guilt by plotting against the Lord and his anointed. The natural inference from which is, that, if it did succeed it was not of man but of God ; and thus the success of the gospel, and even its very existence in the world, is an irrefragable evidence of its truth.

It must be confessed, that, success, abstractly speaking, is no certain proof of the excellence of any opinion. Error and wickedness have been more prevalent, and have met with a more welcome reception, than even truth and virtue. Neither is the rapid and extensive propagation of a religion, in itself, a decisive proof of the divinity of its origin.

The Mahometan faith was as widely and instantaneously spread through the world as the Christian; and even to this day occupies a larger and more populous portion of the earth. But all we can infer from this is, that the means were adequate to the end; the cause sufficient to produce the effect. And in the instance mentioned this sufficiency is very apparent. While Mahomet displayed the Koran in one hand he held the sword in the other; and it is no wonder that a religion supported by such powerful arguments should meet with success. The vices which it allowed, and the sensual paradise which it promised to its votaries were well calculated to gain the approbation of an effeminate and luxurious people. The period of its introduction was distinguished by the immoral lives and internal divisions of the Christians. Its propagators were learned as well as brave, and recommended by their talents what they defended by their swords. In short the rejection of the Koran would have been more wonderful than its general reception.

But in the case of Christianity, success is a sufficient proof of its authenticity; for no external causes did exist adequate to the effect.

In the most enlightened and inquisitive age in which the human race had yet been found to exist, twelve poor, simple, and illiterate fishermen issue forth from the land of Judea, at that time an inconsiderable province of the Roman empire, to teach a new system of religion, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth ; a man of obscure rank and station in life, whom his own countrymen had taken as a criminal and hanged on a tree ; to teach a religion which had to combat the interest of priests and rulers, the science of the wise and learned the deep-rooted prejudices and immoral lives of the vulgar ; a religion whose rewards were confined to another state of being, and offered nothing at present to its disciples, but dangers and persecution. And yet so mightily did the word of God grow and prevail, that this religion, without friends, without force, without fraud, had in less than half a century ranked among its proselytes the greater part of the immense empire of Rome, and was moreover known where the name of Rome had been never heard, where the day of science and civilization had never dawned, among nations of discordant tongues, governments and religions. In all this there is evidently some-

thing more than human. The only inference we can draw is, either, that, the religion of Jesus is in itself so excellent and supported by such indisputable evidence as to conquer by the force of truth, or that it was protected and carried forward by the invisible aids of the Holy Spirit, and over-ruling providence of its great authour, whose character authorizes us to infer that he will not countenance and support an imposture.

All this appears to be naturally inferred from the words of the text, but to prove and illustrate this point more fully, the following observations will contribute; which though some may deem unnecessary, because most of you entertain no doubt of the truth of your religion, will at least have these good effects. By impressing the truth of your religion more deeply on your minds, they will lead you the more to reverence its doctrines and precepts. It will console every man to know that the religion whereon the foundation of all his hopes is built is not a cunningly devised fable which the prejudices of custom and education have taught him to receive and revere, but may be defended by reasoning and argument, and is indeed the wisdom and the

power of God. In short, it will prove an antidote to that poisonous system of infidelity and atheism, which some men in all ages have endeavoured to spread by argument and ridicule, but which in the present age is propagated by much more forcible weapons, those too of a carnal nature*.

First, then, when the gospel was proposed to mankind, they were not without religion, as was the case when the different forms of the heathen system were introduced. I mention this to shew that the ready reception which Christianity met with in all countries, did not proceed from its being the first religion offered to the world; so that the passion for religion natural to the human mind, having no other object, led men to adopt this form in place of a better, and almost without examination. In every country, there was already a religion established by law, patronised by the rulers, and practised by the people. And what was still more unfavourable to the progress of Christianity, the heathen religions were in most places excellently adapted to the taste of the vulgar, by the magnificence of their temples, and the splendour of their cere-

* Macknight's Harmony.

monies. The Jewish religion possessed the same advantages ; and, besides this, really enjoyed the honour which all the rest falsely claimed, of being a revelation from heaven. Moreover in heathenism there was nothing which could have the least influence to prepare the minds of its votaries for the reception of the gospel ; but rather every thing to alienate them from it. For it is well known that there was the most direct opposition between all the different forms of the heathen religion and the gospel. Judaism indeed ought to have paved the way for the introduction of Christianity, for which it was intended as a preparatory dispensation, but, through the wickedness of the Jews, it proved otherwise. For the decendants of Abraham, being prepossessed with the belief of the eternal obligation of the Mosaick institutions, were filled with violent enmity to the gospel, which taught the abrogation of the law. It is evident, therefore, from the nature of things that the introduction of the gospel upon the ruins of the established religion, must in all countries have been effected in opposition to the sword of the magistrate, the craft of priests, the pride of philosophers, the passions, humours and

prejudices of the people, as well as the interest of many of them whose trades and professions, like the goldsmiths at Ephesus, depended upon the continuance of the ancient superstition, all closely combined in support of the national worship, and in opposition to that new system which aimed at nothing less than the total subversion of the old.

It farther deserves attention, that, in the conversion of the world to Christianity, the methods whereby absurd systems have sometimes been successfully established, were not used. For the life and doctrines of Christ was not a story privately whispered among the Christians themselves, or communicated only to the few who were disposed to be of their party. It was not propagated in the dark, by people who stole about from house to house, with an intention to deceive the credulous. It was not delivered out by parcels, the first of which being tolerable palatable, paved the way for one more absurd and extravagant to follow. It did not insinuate itself into the belief of mankind by slow and insensible steps. These are the arts whereby the forgeries of impostors have crept into the world, and systems of error have at length become to be believed, which if of-

ferred openly and all at once would have been rejected with abhorrence as monstrous. But, instead of this, the history of Jesus and the most offensive doctrines of Christianity were preached publicly in Jerusalem, the scene of these wonderful transactions, in the synagogues, in the streets, in the temple itself, and even before the representatives of the Jewish nation in council assembled. It was soon afterwards preached in the same publick and open manner through all the regions of heathenism. At the discourses of the Apostles, and the meetings of the disciples, every one who chose might be present. The history and doctrines there advanced were proposed in their true, native colours, without any softening or disguise. They were proposed, also, all at once; at least all the essential articles of the gospel, which however disagreeable to the passions or prejudices of men, were delivered by the Apostles with the greatest openness in every sermon. As a proof of all this we may appeal to those candid and undaunted discourses of St. Peter and St. Paul, which are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: and with still greater evidence to the publication and dispersion of the books of the Evangelists, and the Epistles which

contain the whole of Christianity, and were offered entire in the first age of its progress to the world as we now have them. It is therefore indubitable that all who anciently embraced Christianity, had an opportunity of examining the whole scheme before they formed the resolution of becoming the disciples of Jesus. No one was cheated into this belief by any artful dealing of the first preachers of the gospel.

There is a third circumstance which with judicious persons will render the conversion of the world to Christianity a most striking proof that our religion is from God, namely, that the belief of the doctrine and miracles of Jesus, which in so short a time became general through the world, began in the country which had been the scene of his ministry, and particularly in the capital city, where he had been publicly tried, condemned, and put to death, by the senate of Israel, as a deceiver. For, on the fiftieth day after his crucifixion, there were no less than three thousand converted in Jerusalem by a single sermon of one of the Apostles, who insisted upon the miracles performed by Jesus as things well known to all present, a topick which the Apostles in

every sermon failed not to urge. A few weeks after this, five thousand who believed are said to have been present at another sermon preached by the same Apostle. In the second year after our Lord's ascension the number of the disciples multiplied greatly, and a great company of the priests, who had always been the most violent opposers of the new religion, became obedient to the faith. In the third year they multiplied so exceedingly that there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all except the Apostles scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria. In the third or fourth year, the spreading of the Christian faith was so remarkable, even in the remotest provinces of Palestine, that the high priest and council of Jerusalem, in order to put a stop to it, sent forth persecutors as far as Damascus. Of these the leader was a zealous young man named Saul, who in this very journey was converted by Jesus appearing to him at noon-day. About eight or ten years after our Saviour's death, the disciples were grown so numerous in Jerusalem and the country about, that they became the object of jealousy to Herod himself. For, at the instigation of the

priests, he carried on the persecution against them, by putting to death one Apostle, and imprisoning another, whom he intended also to slay.

This wonderful success of the gospel in its native country must tend greatly to convince us of its divinity. For if the things therein told had been false, would such numbers upon the spot where they were said to be done and at the very time at which they happened have given such credit to them, as on their account to have exposed themselves to the most grievous persecution.

But the success of the gospel was by no means confined to Judea. Being preached in all the different provinces of the Roman empire, numbers of heathens as well as Jews were converted to the faith. A clear proof that the Christian system was not a fabrication by the Jews, invented with a design to raise their nation to its pristine grandeur, but contained such evidence of its divine origin as failed not to make an impression on those to whom it was proposed, of whatever nation or tongue. The conversion of the gentiles is so much the more remarkable that almost the very first triumph of the Christian religion

were in Greece itself, the seat of learning and the polite arts. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul's Epistles, that churches were very early planted in most of its principal cities. Even all-conquering Rome, the seat of wealth and empire, was herself conquered by the force of truth. Many of her inhabitants embraced the Christian faith, as early as in the reigns of Claudius and Nero; and but a few years after the crucifixion of our Lord, when the matters told concerning him were recent, and it was easy to have disproved them, if they had been false, by many witnesses from Judea, both Jews and Gentiles, who continually resorted to Rome, either for business or pleasure, and by the constant communication which subsisted between the capital, and all the provinces of the empire.

This leads me to observe that the remarkable success of the gospel did not happen in a dark age or among a rude people, but in an age justly celebrated for the height to which learning and the polite arts were carried; and among the Greeks and Romans, the renowned masters of the sciences. In most countries, at this era, knowledge was more widely diffused

and society more civilized than they had been at any former period. Besides, the world under the protection of the Roman government enjoying at this time profound peace, men of a speculative turn were every where at leisure to examine the matter with care, and as the different nations of the world were now united under one head, they had easy communication with one another and with the city of Rome, the centre of intelligence and correspondence. It is therefore undeniable, that, when the gospel was first proposed, all ranks of men in all countries were as well secured as possible from being imposed upon by false pretences of any kind, and the gospel would not probably be adopted before it was duly considered.

It must indeed be confessed that the first proselytes to Christianity were not in general the most enlightened and inquisitive of their age, but, on the contrary, mean, simple men who had more veracity and integrity than understanding, who were more ingenuous than learned. This circumstance, though at first it may seem dishonourable to the Christian cause, will, upon mature reflection, add greatly to the evidence of its truth. Jesus himself rejoiced in it, and

more than once solemnly returned thanks for it. “ At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and
“ said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven
“ and earth, that thou hast hid these things
“ from the wise and prudent and revealed
“ them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it
“ seemed good in thy sight.” The Apostle
Paul gloried in the mean condition of the first
converts. “ You see your calling, brethren,
“ said he, how that not many wise men after
“ the flesh are called. But God has chosen
“ the foolish things of this world to confound
“ the wise, and God has chosen the weak
“ things of the world to confound the things
“ which are mighty; and base things of the
“ world and things which are despised hath
“ God chosen, yea and things which are not
“ to bring to nought things which are; that
“ no flesh should glory in his presence.”
Our Lord and his Apostles thus rejoice in the
conversion of the people, because they know
this circumstance above all others would prove
the truth of their doctrine. The prejudices
and attachment of mankind to old opinions
have always been found to bear a proportion
to their ignorance. The bulk of mankind are
every where incapable of comprehending a

train of reasoning, and cannot easily be persuaded to change the principles in which they have been educated even by the most conclusive arguments. Since, therefore, such numbers were converted to Christianity, it could not have been by artful reasoning, but by some striking miracles which made a deep impression on their senses; and by a power much more irresistible than that of cool argument, surmounted all the obstacles which superstition, custom and education had thrown in the way of their conversion. The same circumstance is a clear proof that men were not compelled to adopt the religion of Jesus, by the secular power; were not seduced by the influence and example of the great; were not encouraged by any prospect of profit or honour to enter into a society the greater part of whose members were poor ignorant men, less likely to be of advantage to those who might adhere to them than to bring them into trouble and disgrace. “Is not this the Carpenter’s son?” did they impiously say of the Saviour himself: “are not these of the sect of the Nazarenes?” did they contemptuously ask concerning his followers. And most certainly no man would expose himself to the reproach

brought by such association unless the evidence of the gospel itself, or the powerful operations of the Spirit of God, had produced in his mind the most undoubted conviction of its truth.

But though the generality of the first converts to Christianity in all countries were people in the middle and lower stations of life, it ought not to be forgotten that from the very beginning there were not wanting men of birth, education, talents, and fortune, whose conversion added both lustre and dignity to the gospel triumphs. Among the Jews, we may mention Nicodemus, one of the rulers; Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the senate of Israel; the great company of priests mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, whose office and literature rendered them conspicuous; and above all the celebrated Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, whose attachment to the worship of his father was originally so deep-rooted, and whose excellent education, extensive learning, and unrivalled eloquence appear in all his discourses, and are the admiration even of infidels themselves. The sacred and profane writers supply us with a numerous catalogue of princes, magistrates and philosophers, who became converts to the gospel long be-

fore it was the religion of the empire of Rome or was supported by the arm of power. For in process of time it became so that it was not a *single* person of figure in this city, or in that nation, who obeyed the gospel, but *multitudes* of the wise, the learned, the noble and the mighty in every country. These being all fully convinced of the truth of our Lord's pretensions, and deeply impressed with a sense of his dignity, gave the most solid proof of their conviction, and consequently of the truth of Christianity, by worshipping as a God one whom his countrymen had condemned as a malefactor; by forsaking the religion wherein they had been bred, a religion well suited to their inclinations and passions, and embracing one whereby they could gain neither honour nor profit, but on the contrary, much suffering and disgrace. In short, the religion was of God, and with his aid, it could not fail to make its way in the world.

SERMON XIV.

PART II.



On the divine origin of the Christian religion.



“Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this council, or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

I FORMERLY read these words with a design to impress on your minds a sense of the truth of your religion, and consequently a regard for the doctrines and precepts which it contains; and I proposed to show, as a natural inference from this advice, and I may also say prediction of Gamaliel, that the great success of the gospel in the first ages, and its existence at this very day, are undoubted proofs of its divine origin.

It is evident from the great multitude of converts to Christianity in the first ages, that it

must either contain irresistible evidence of its being from God, or the invisible and effectual power of the Almighty must have accompanied the preaching of the Apostles. No other causes, at least, can be discovered sufficient to produce the effect. On the contrary, every thing conspired to prevent the success of the gospel. The Christian religion was opposed by the sword of the magistrate, the craft of the priests, the pride of the philosophers, and the passions and prejudices of the Jew and Gentile.

This religion was not propagated in the dark, nor delivered out in parcels, according to the usual method in which impostures are made to succeed ; but was fully laid before men all at once, that they might judge of the whole under one view. Mankind, then, were not cheated into the belief of it, but received it upon due examination and conviction. The gospel was first preached and believed by multitudes in Judea, where Jesus exercised his ministry, and where every individual had full opportunity of knowing whether the thing told of him were true or not. In this country, surely, his history never would have been received, unless the facts alleged

in it could have stood the test of examination. Moreover, the religion of Jesus was preached and believed in the most renowned countries and cities of the world, and in an age when a spirit of inquiry universally prevailed, and the faculties of men were improved by the most perfect state of social life. In such an age as this, it would have been very impolitic for a deceiver and impostor to have made his appearance. The first converts, it is true, were, in general, men of middle and inferiour stations; but even these, in an age of such knowledge and intercourse, were sufficiently secured against false pretensions. Or if you suppose their minds not to have been sufficiently informed with knowledge, you should consider that in proportion to their ignorance, their attachment to their first religious principles would be strong; and that to bring men of such characters to change their principles nothing less than infinite power or evident miracles are adequate. These were the ideas which engaged our attention when I last discoursed to you.

I now proceed to observe, what seems highly worthy of attention, that the belief of Christianity was attended with no worldly ad-

vantage, which might induce men to renounce their native religions and embrace a form of worship so very different from every thing then practised. On the contrary, by becoming Christians they denied themselves many sensual gratifications which their own religions indulged them in ; they subjected themselves to a course of life rigid and severe, very different from that to which they had been accustomed, and which is so agreeable to the flesh. For at their baptism, or admission into the Christian society, they bound themselves to renounce the world with its pleasures, as a sacrifice necessary in such times of persecution, and to mortify the strongest inclinations of their nature. By renouncing the religion of their country, they lost the affections of their relatives, separated themselves from their acquaintance, forfeited the enjoyments of private and social life, estranged themselves from their friends, and banished themselves from their families. Nor was this all ; by embracing the gospel, they exposed themselves to still more terrible and positive evils. From the very beginning, the profession of Christianity was attended with the continual hazard of all manner of personal sufferings ; and in proportion as this religion spread itself, the

evils accompanying the profession thereof multiplied. Nor is this wonderful; if they did such things to the master of the household, what could the servants expect? The profane and ecclesiastical historians tell us of ten furious persecutions carried on against the Christians in the early ages of the gospel, to compel them to relinquish their faith, in which they endured every species of torture and suffering which rage, cruelty and superstition could invent. St. Paul has given us such a description of them as must shock the feelings of every man of feeling and humanity. The primitive Christians, instead of sitting under their own vine and their own fig tree, as we do, without any to make us afraid, “ had trial of cruel mock-
“ ings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds
“ and imprisonment. They were stoned, they
“ were sawn asunder, were tempted, were
“ slain with the sword: they wandered about
“ in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being desti-
“ tute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered
“ in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens
“ and caves of the earth.” Powerful induce-
ments these to embrace a system of which they
were the inevitable consequence! — Nothing
but over-bearing evidence, evidence such as

they could not by any means resist, was able to make men in those circumstances receive a religion which plunged them into such terrible misfortunes.

We may add, as connected with this part of the subject, that the constancy, firmness and patience displayed by the primitive martyrs, who submitted to such cruel sufferings rather than renounce their religion or blaspheme their Saviour, could not be the effect of human strength, but must have been produced by supernatural aid. Without such aid, the trials to which they were exposed were sufficient to overbear duty, reason, faith, conviction, nay and the most absolute certainty of a future state. It is natural to man to wish to be delivered from pain; and when they could have been so even by mental reservation, or any hypocrisy which was not without the possibility of being followed by repentance and forgiveness, we must conclude that those who preferred the reproach of Christ, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his namesake, must have been supported by some miraculous power. We know that St. Stephen, the first martyr for Christianity, was encouraged, in his last moments, by a vision of

that divine person for whom he suffered, and into whose presence he was then hastening. Let any man lay his hand calmly upon his heart, after reading those terrible conflicts in which the ancient martyrs and confessors were engaged, when they passed through such new inventions and varieties of pain as tired their tormentors; and let him ask himself, however zealous and sincere in his religion he may be, whether under such acute and lingering tortures, he could still have held fast his integrity and have professed his faith to the last, without supernatural assistance of some kind or other? When we consider that it was not an unaccountable obstinacy in a single man, or in any particular set of men, in an extraordinary juncture; but that there were multitudes of every age and sex, of different countries and conditions, who for near three hundred years together made this glorious profession of their faith in the midst of tortures and in the hour death, we must conclude, that, they were either of a different constitution from the present race of men, or that they had miraculous support peculiar to those times of Christianity, without which perhaps the very name of it might have been extinguished.

But farther, it is worthy of consideration that those who became converts to the gospel were not induced to do so by the force of arms, the influence of authority, the refinements of policy, or the power of great examples. They were prevailed upon to change their faith, merely by the preaching of a few illiterate mechanicks or fishermen, who were wholly destitute of the advantages of birth, education or fortune, and who, by condemning the established worship of all countries, were every where looked upon as the most flagitious of men. A particular stress has been laid upon this argument by our Lord and his Apostles. They direct us to consider the illiterate character and low station of the first preachers of the gospel, as a proof that, in the conversion of the world, they acted by the power of truth, and with the assistance of God. “*We have this treasure in earthen vessels*, says St. Paul, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.” But the force of this argument will best appear, if we consider the conversion of the work, first, simply as an event implying a change of men’s religious principles, and secondly, as attended with a thorough reformation of their manners.

First, the conversion of the world, considered as a change of men's religious principles, effected merely by the power of persuasion, supposes that every convert was convinced of the absurdity of his former faith, and brought to see that the religion now offered to him was rational and well founded. But this was a task too arduous for the weak instruments employed ; for unless they were assisted by God, they had the prodigious labour to undergo of learning the languages of all the nations, whether barbarous or civilized, to which they went, before they could discourse to them, either of the ancient belief, or of the new faith which they came to offer to them. This itself was an obstacle which must have absolutely marred their design ; and therefore this single consideration demonstrates, that, in prevailing with multitudes in all countries to change their religious belief, the Apostles were inspired by God with the gift of tongues, as the gospel records affirm. Allowing, however, that by any means you please to fancy these men attained the knowledge of all the languages in such perfection, that they could speak them fluently ; yet to instil knowledge effectually into the minds of the people

was a work of immense labour, requiring frequent and particular application to each individual. If so, how can we suppose twelve men sufficient for the conversion of nations! Were they capable of addressing all the individuals of those vast multitudes, who in the different countries of Europe, Asia and Africa were brought to serve the living God by their ministry? No, such particular addresses were impossible; and therefore the conversion of the Gentiles could not be produced by them. An event so stupendous must have been accomplished by means more effectual; means capable of swaying great numbers at once; namely undeniable miracles wrought openly in proof of the doctrines which the Apostles taught. Indeed the natural means of argument and persuasion must have been altogether inadequate to the effect. Mankind were too much attached to their religions to relinquish them upon the first offer of a new faith. This was the case not only with the Jews, but with all the idolatrous nations, to whom the Apostles offered the doctrines of the gospel. The religions in the belief of which they were educated, were considered by them as of divine authority. Besides, these religions

conspired with their passions, were connected with their interest, and they were confirmed in the belief of them by the influence of authority and example. The religions of the learned were nothing but the systems of philosophy which they adopted. The peculiar tenets of these systems, they adopted with the same strength of faith wherewith Christians now-a-days embrace their several creeds and confessions, and they defended them with the same intemperate warmth. Here then were obstacles which the Apostles were, of themselves, too weak to surmount. The ignorant would not attend to discourses which flatly contradicted their favourite notions, and robbed them of their pleasures: the philosophers would detest a religion which overturned their several systems at once, discovered their ignorance, mortified their pride, and ruined their credit. Certain, therefore, it is that the sermons of the Apostles, which made the heathens renounce their religion, must have been accompanied with a divine power before which all opposition vanished. Such is the declaration of St. Paul; “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal
“but mighty through God to the pulling down

“ of strongholds. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

Secondly, the conversion of the world being attended with a thorough reformation of manners in the heathens who obeyed the gospel, is likewise a demonstration that in spreading Christianity the Apostles were expressly assisted by God. To persuade the wicked to amend their lives, included many impossibilities. The manners of men in those days were beyond measure corrupt. The picture which the Apostle Paul has drawn of them in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, however shocking, is but too just. The vices to which they were addicted were the effects of lusts and passions rendered unconquerable by long habits of indulgence. In the commission of many acts of wickedness they were authorized by the laws and discipline of their country. Some of the most pernicious vices were permitted them by the opinion of their philosophers. To persuade great numbers of mankind in such circumstances, to forsake their vices, that is, to act contrary to nature, to

habit, to example, to interest, and to pleasure, what human eloquence was sufficient? Or if human eloquence were sufficient to persuade them, whence, I pray, were the converts to derive the power of thoroughly changing, or at least of subduing their passions, or of altering the whole bent and current of their nature? Whence the power of becoming pious, just, charitable, chaste, temperate, meek, humble, heavenly-minded, amid an infinity of powerful temptations; and after having been unjust, uncharitable, intemperate, proud and worldly-minded to a high degree? The heathen converts themselves looked upon the sudden and surprising change of manners, wrought on thousands of the most profligate, as something miraculous. By the consent; therefore, of all prudent men, it were ridiculous to the last degree, to suppose that the Apostles, by means merely human, produced this great change in the manners of multitudes, formerly enslaved to their lusts, and sold under sin.

There is another fact, which, were it not more immediately connected with a subject foreign in some degree from this, would deserve attention in the present question, namely, that the wonderful success of the gospel was an

event predicted long before it happened, and at a time when it was of all things the most improbable.

But the last observation I shall make on this subject, is that our religion has subsisted during the long period of almost eighteen centuries in full vigour, though its enemies have strenuously attacked it both by argument and arms. Many errors have been propagated in the world, some in one way and some in another: but after due inquiry and examination they have been detected, they have come to nought and their followers have disappeared. What a glorious triumph for the cause of Christianity which has stood the test of ages and been found sufficient. In its infancy, while it enjoyed no protection from the magistrate, all men were allowed and even encouraged to argue against it with boldness. In free countries, even where Christianity is the law of the state, the same liberty is allowed; and every advantage has been taken of this indulgence. For no method of overthrowing the gospel has been forgotten. Both argument and ridicule have been employed. Its nature and evidence have been sifted to the bottom. But, thanks to the goodness of the cause, it has still kept its ground, and has at all times displayed a peculiar and

divine strength derived from its being built on the rock of ages against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. In a word, it is of God and nothing can overthrow it.

The greatest difficulty on this subject arises from that wonderful defection from the gospel which happened after the publication of Mahomet's doctrine to the world. This is indeed one of the darkest secrets of divine providence. But the causes that contributed to produce this great revolution are manifest. They were plainly the vices and discords of the Christians of those times, who thereby gave the enemies of our faith courage to attack it, put weapons into their hands, and furnished them with every manner of advantage. Christ came into the world, with the design to subdue the power and destroy the kingdom of Satan. He displayed the banner of his cross, and summoned all nations to repair to it; who accordingly obeyed the signal. But while the extremest parts of the earth were meditating a submission, while his greatest enemies were hastening to put their necks under his feet, a stop was put to their intentions and his triumphs by the mutinies and desertions of his own soldiers. Who can suffi-

ciently deplore the guilt and detest the evil influence of those vices which wrested so many kingdoms at once from the empire of Christ? They not only arrested his doctrine in its full course, and said to it hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, but made the sun of righteousness go backward as it were many degrees, and leave countries under gross darkness which had once been enlightened by the saving truths of the gospel.

Many princes since this period, with more piety than discretion, have made attempts to regain, by force of arms, that ground which Christianity lost, and, by their sword to plant anew their faith in those places where it once had possession. Such misguided zealots seem always to have forgotten the advice of our Saviour to St. Peter upon a similar occasion, *put up thy sword into the sheath*. This great work is not to be accomplished by crusades and holy wars, but by conflicts of another kind, which we must maintain with our own corrupt habits and vicious inclinations; not by foreign acquisitions, but by domestick victories over those impieties of Christians, which give the enemies of the gospel such advantages over it. For though the kingdom

of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force, yet the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. When the conversations of those who bear the name of Christ, become agreeable to the purity of his doctrine; when the divisions of Christendom are healed, and the professors of our holy faith live together like men of one mind in one house, then and not till then shall the sceptre of Christ's kingdom extend itself to all the unconverted parts of the earth.

That God, ere the day of final retribution will bring this about, the scripture expressly assures us; but of the particular time, at which he will effect it, we know no more than when he will come to judgment. However, let us all, as far as lies in our power, contribute to this great event and prepare the way for it. Let us, in our several places and stations, do our utmost to promote the kingdom of Christ within us, by advancing the love and practice of evangelical purity, and let us also frequently put up our request for the arrival of that happy period when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain of the Lord.

SERMON XV.

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On duelling.
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“Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they who take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

THE first principle in our nature is self-preservation. To gratify this principle every exertion may and ought to be made, which does not infringe the rights of our neighbour. To repel the blow which aims at our destruction, even by the death of the offender, when that is necessary to our safety, is lawful and commendable; because we act in obedience to this first of all principles, a desire of existence, without infringing any right of our neighbour's, for surely he could never have any right to take away our life. This principle contemplates the preservation not merely of our existence, but also of our faculties, members and rights of every kind.

In aid of this principle, and subservient to it, nature has provided us with another which is innocent and useful when properly regulated. This is what we call anger or resentment. *When we are hurt nature disposes us to resist and retaliate. Besides the pain occasioned by the injury, the mind is ruffled, and a desire raised to retaliate upon its authour. This principle is both defensive and offensive. It prompts us not only to place ourselves in a posture of defence ; but, as offensive arms are often the surest means of defence, by deterring the enemy from the assault, so resentment leads us to go beyond ourselves and strike terrour into the assailant by threatening him with retaliation. Man, in his present stage, is surrounded with so many objects of a destructive nature, that he needs some armour which shall be always ready in the moment of danger. Reason would be of great use for this purpose where there is time to apply it. But in many cases the mischief would be done before reason could think of the means of prevention. To supply this defect the wisdom of nature has provided this principle of resentment, which prevents mis-

* Reid's Essays.

chief by the fear of punishment, which is a kind of penal statute, promulgated by nature, the execution of which is committed to the one who is threatened.

It is evident, however, that as it is unjust to do an injury, so it is no less unjust to punish it beyond measure; for there the parties change sides, and the injured become the injurious. To prevent excessive resentment nature has provided us with no means but the candour and reflection of the injured party, and the fear of a renewed resentment from the person who originally did the injury. These, however, are very imperfect remedies. Nothing can be more evident than that a man is a very unfit judge in his own cause, especially when inflamed by resentment and smarting under injury. However clear might be our right in a state of nature to redress our own wrongs, yet in a state of social union, this right with many others is surrendered into the hands of the magistrate who is charged with the execution of the laws. Nor could the rights of individuals be more secure than when placed under the protection of the united force of the society, nor more impartially adjusted than by indifferent and unprejudiced men. Hence

the law considers him as guilty of a crime who, of his own private act, injures another even in retaliation for wrongs received. For if we are assisted in the maintenance and recovery of our rights by the general strength of the community, it is but reasonable that we should wait for publick arbitration.

And this rule is not only founded in equity, but in absolute necessity. For if individuals were permitted to indulge their resentment, and to seek redress of injuries with their own arm, the safety, nay the very existence of society would be at an end. Resentment is a passion which indulgence has a peculiar tendency to increase. Give it the reins and it becomes ungovernable. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; as coals are to burning coals, or as wood to fire, so are contentious men to kindle strife. No one can say of resentment, hitherto shalt thou go and no farther. The impetuosity of passion hurries us inevitably beyond the limits we prescribed to ourselves, and the flames of dissension being kindled, the spirit of retaliation yearns for mutual destruction. In this progress of variance and strife, the original injury is altogether lost sight of, the passions of

others, who may be connections or friends of either party, draw them also into the vortex of contention. Families, cities and nations are placed against each other in hostile array, and society is converted into a scene of bloodshed and disorder.

It is therefore a first principle of the social compact, as well as a maxim of religion, that no individual should take it upon him to avenge himself. The law declares vengeance is mine, I will repay it. He therefore transgresses the first principle of equity, who when he receives an injury of whatever kind seeks redress in his own person. One man injures another in his property, by detaining from him a debt which is justly due. Does the injured party go and seize the goods or property of the party who commits the injury, and repay himself. Such a proceeding every man of common sense knows to be incompatible with the existence of law and of society. How comes it then that a similar method of proceeding in the case of an infringement of any other right does not appear equally unjustifiable and absurd. How comes it that when our honour or reputation is injured, we not only omit to seek redress from the fountain of justice, but even deem it pu-

sillanimous so to do, and, in violation of the first duty of a good member of society, take satisfaction ourselves by calling forth the person who did the wrong to single combat. Herein we act more unjustifiably than our barbarous ancestors, from whom the unhappy practice descends. The duel constituted a part of their publick administration of justice. It was solemnly and judicially appointed by the magistrate to assist him in deciding the merits of a case. We cannot sufficiently pity the ignorance and superstition which gave rise to such a practice. Unacquainted however with the rules of evidence, in deciding causes, and imagining that the deity would interpose for the safety of the innocent, their conduct may in this point of view admit of some excuse. But we, in cases where the evidence is clear, where the law is ready to pronounce its sentence, grossly insult the majesty of the state, usurp the power of the magistrate, and defeat one of the principle ends of the social union, which was instituted to restrain the excess of resentment, by demanding private satisfaction for injuries offered to our honour.

Here indeed it may be said that there certainly are cases where the law of nature permits a person to redress his own wrongs without

waiting for the decision of the judge. But what are those cases? Those in which no appeal to the law is possible, as in desert islands, where no society exists; those cases in which to wait for the protection of the law would be attended with infinite and irremediable ruin, as when our life is assaulted and endangered. Here as the law cannot furnish a man with a perpetual guard, nor the magistrate be present to protect the person of every individual in the community, the law allows him to redress his own wrong, and to defend himself even if it lead to the death of the assailant. But even in this case so strongly does it disapprove of the practice of seeking private redress, that every effort must have been previously made to escape, or to disarm the assailant, before we can lawfully have recourse to this expedient. In short, private redress of injuries is allowable in cases where from defect of evidence no redress could otherwise be obtained. Thus in the 22d chap. 2d verse of Exodus, we read this law, which agrees also with that of the English code. "If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, no blood shall be shed for him: if the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him." The reason of which appears to be,

that if discovered and recognised, as he might easily be in the day, the fact could be proved and the decision of the law obtained; but if he escaped, which he was likely to do in the dark, no restitution or redress could be obtained. But will it be said that injuries done to honour are in any respect in a similar predicament? What irretrievable mischief would ensue from waiting for the decision of justice? What more effectual vindication of our honour can be obtained than by the impartial and deliberate sentence of the law? What redress more satisfactory can we desire than to have our innocence declared by disinterested and enlightened men, and the brand of falsehood and of infamy impressed upon our adversary?

Besides, if even the case were such as to permit private retaliation, yet this ought to be proportioned to the measure of the offence: the same redress is not applicable in every case. The very principle of this law, is, as expressed in the scriptures, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." It may be just and equitable that, whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed, but surely it can never be just and equitable that a slight injury, whether real or imaginary, arising

from some unguarded expression, from some interference of interest, or from sentiments of pride mutually indulged, should be redressed in the blood of the rival or aggressor. Neither is it consistent with common sense, that, from the retort courteous to the lie direct, there should be only one method of redress, the death or maiming of either of the parties. Is it equally as criminal to question the integrity of our neighbour as to plunge a dagger into his bosom? Must an uncivil speech be accounted for as manslaughter; or a passionate blow be punished as premeditated murder?

2. He who challenges another to single combat, for injuries received, violates those precepts of our divine religion which enjoin a meek, patient, and forgiving conduct.

The law of nature permits a retaliation for wrongs, under this restriction, that, except in a few urgent and extraordinary cases, the redress and punishment of wrongs be referred to the magistrate. The law of Moses, which is chiefly a publication of the law of nature, expressly and formally enjoins under the same restriction the law of retaliation. Thus in Exodus, 21st chapter, and 23, 24, 25 verses, "Thou shalt give life for life, eye

“ for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot
“ for foot, burning for burning, wound for
“ wound, stripe for stripe.” But all this was
expressly directed to be as *the judges* should
determine. Besides, there are many clauses
additional to and explanatory of this general
maxim, to be found in the books of Moses,
which greatly soften the rigour of the law,
and lean powerfully to the side of justice and
mercy. To prevent the fatal effects of sud-
den resentment, cities of refuge were appoint-
ed where the criminal might be secure, till
the law had calmly and deliberately decided
upon his guilt or innocence. And though
we read in the gospel that it was said by them
of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour
and hate thine enemy, it must be confessed
that no such command as the latter of these is
to be found in the Mosaick law, but it must
have been the false comment of the Scribes
and Pharisees, as a mistaken inference from
some express commands of God to the Israel-
ites to destroy and root out the wicked and
idolatrous Canaanites. So much the reverse
was the true law, that Moses expressly says,
“ Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge
“ against the children of thy people, but thou

“ shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Lev. xix. 18 ; and again, “ If thou meet thine
 “ enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt
 “ surely bring it back to him again. If
 “ thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying
 “ under his burden, and wouldst forbear to
 “ help him, thou shalt surely help with
 “ him.” Exodus, 23d chap. 4th and 5th verses.
 In like manner in the book of Proverbs, 24th
 chapter, 29th verse, “ Say not I will do so to
 “ him as he hath done to me ; I will ren-
 “ der to the man according to his work.”
 And under the Old Testament dispensation,
 we have on record many illustrious examples
 of patience under ill treatment, and forgiv-
 ness of injuries. Nay even among the heath-
 en writers we meet with many excellent max-
 ims on this subject. Pythagoras is recorded to
 have said, that, we ought neither to begin re-
 proaches nor to avenge ourselves on those who
 reproach us. Menander says, he who can
 bear injuries patiently is the best of men.
 Plato, in his celebrated work entitled Crito,
 observes, that, even when provoked by an in-
 jury we ought not to retaliate whatever we
 may suffer from others.

It must be confessed, however, not only that

the Jewish writings spoke faintly on this subject, and that the heathen philosophers and sages were by no means consistent and uniform in their opinions about the forgiveness of injuries and the proper behaviour towards enemies, but, also, that the custom and maxims of the world were in the days of our Saviour, as in our own, altogether the reverse of meekness and forbearance. It was the era of war and of conquest, when rapine, bloodshed and cruelty prevailed over the face of the earth, when the fiery and turbulent soldier commanded more effectually the esteem and applause of the world than the peaceable and inoffensive citizen. The Jewish Rabbis had, from a mistaken interpretation of some of the precepts of their law, and from a spirit of national pride, inculcated an absolute hatred and contempt of all nations but their own, so that they would not point out the road or direct to the neighbouring fountain any who was not a descendant of Abraham.

It remained for the blessed Authour of our holy religion to enlighten the world on this important subject, to teach fallen and sinful men the duty of forgiving and forbearing with one another. It formed indeed a necessary and

essential article in the gospel, the great design of which was to promote peace on earth and good will among men—which was itself so striking a display of the divine forgiveness, and which was embellished by so amiable and perfect an example of patience and forbearance in him who was meek and lowly in heart. The general character of the wisdom which cometh from above is that it is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits. It is a system of humanity, kindness and love, utterly incompatible with variance, emulation, wrath, strife and malice. It commands us to put on, as we pretend to be the elect of God, bowels of mercies, meekness of disposition, humility of mind, forgiving and forbearing one another in love. It commands us to live peaceably with all men, not only with the good and gentle, but also with the froward. On the one hand it inculcates a gentle and inoffensive behaviour, so that all ground of variance on our part may be removed. It condemns not only actions hurtful to our neighbour, but also words which may wound his feelings and provoke him to wrath, and even injurious thoughts and unreasonable

anger though concealed in the breast. Thus says our Lord in the gospel of Matthew, 5th chapter, 21st and 22d verses, “Ye have heard
“ that 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, that whosoever is angry with his brother
“ without a cause, shall be in danger of the
“ judgment, and whosoever shall say to his
“ brother Raca, shall be in danger of the
“ council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool,
“ shall be in danger of hell fire.” Were these
and similar directions frequently occurring in
the New Testament to be sincerely and punctually
observed by those who profess to obey them,
the flame of resentment would, for want of fuel,
soon die of itself. But in a mixed and imperfect
state, offences must needs come. And the gospel
has not omitted to give us directions for regulat-
ing our conduct in such cases. But what are these
directions? Does the gospel represent it as cowardly
and mean-spirited to act with the calmness of a
reasonable being when we have been exposed to
injuries? When men revile us, and speak all
manner of evil against us falsely, are we com-
manded to return railing for railing? When even,
in a

fit of passion, he has smitten us on the cheek, are we directed to seize him and demand instant satisfaction to the utmost extent of retaliation? No, on the contrary, we are commanded to bear these things patiently, not to resist evil, not to recompense evil for evil, sincerely and unreservedly to forgive our brother the wrongs which he may have done us; nay even to love, to bless, and to do acts of kindness to those who are guilty of the greatest outrage and abuse, and all this it enjoins us to do as we hope to have our names enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. For hear the words of the Lawgiver himself, and also the commentary of one of his Apostles, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye
" for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say
" unto you, that ye resist not evil; but who-
" soever shall smite thee on thy right cheek
" turn to him the other also; and if any man
" sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat,
" let him have thy cloak also. And whoso-
" ever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with
" him twain. Ye have heard that it hath been
" said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate
" thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your
" enemies, bless them that curse you, do good
" to them that hate you, and pray for them

“ that despitefully use you and persecute
“ you. If ye forgive men their trespasses your
“ heavenly father will also forgive you, but
“ if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neith-
“ er will your heavenly father forgive your
“ trespasses.” To the same purpose St. Paul
says, “ Bless them which persecute you,
“ bless and curse not. Recompense to no
“ man evil for evil. Dearly beloved, avenge
“ not yourselves, but rather give place unto
“ wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine:
“ I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if
“ thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he
“ thirst, give him drink; for in so doing,
“ thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.
“ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil
“ with good.”

It is not necessary to my present purpose to enter into a defence of these precepts, to show their reasonableness, or to point out the many motives which should induce you to comply with them. This I have done on former occasions, with what success will appear at that day when I must account for what I have here spoken, and you for what you have here heard. Besides, as Christians, you profess to receive them and to be governed by

them. Neither is it necessary to enter into a critical examination of these passages, and to shew the exact measure of forbearance which they enjoin. Some of the early fathers of the church, while Christianity was yet new, and a zeal for the words of the Saviour was still warm and unabated, maintained that they required a non-resistance, absolutely unlimited, inconsistent with the exercise of war, of self-defence, and of redress of injuries of any kind or in any way. One of them (St. Ambrose) maintained that if a Christian was assaulted, even by an armed robber, he ought not to retaliate upon the assailant, lest while he defended his life he should pollute his piety. Another (St. Augustine) says "I cannot approve
" of this advice to slay another in self-defence,
" unless it be in the case of a soldier, or of a
" publick functionary who possesses a lawful
" authority, and is bound by his office, to do
" this not for himself, but for others."

Others, with much more justice, have maintained that an interpretation so rigorous would place the morality of Jesus in direct opposition to the natural sentiments of right and wrong, would be inconsistent with other passages of scripture, and contrary to the ex-

amples of Christ and his Apostles. However this may be, taking these precepts in the very lowest sense which they can possibly bear, they will not fail to stamp with guilt the practice which we are now considering. - It is certain that the gospel condemns all pride, violent and excessive anger, malice and revenge; that it enjoins humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness of injuries. But whence come wars and fightings among us? Come they not from those very passions which the gospel commands us to suppress? What is it but *pride* which fills a man with an overweening idea of himself, which magnifies every affront or injury offered to his dignity and his feelings, that seeks after occasions to distinguish itself, that causes a man to refuse to be entreated or to confess the faults which he may have in return committed? What is it but *anger* that pushes him on to resist and to retaliate. What but *revenge* that coolly and deliberately resolves on the destruction of his adversary, pursues him into his domestick retirement, tears him from his family and friends, drags him to the field of death, and points the instrument of murder where it should have placed the shield of defence. Humility,

mekness, patience and forgiveness are never found in such society. They are the steadfast friends of peace and concord. They were the constant companions of him whom we profess to imitate. They shone forth in his looks; they breathed in his words; they stood forth embodied in all his actions. When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but gave his back to the smiters, and his checks to them who plucked off the hair. When malice was directing all her shafts against him, when insolence loaded him with contumely, when justice refused to listen to his cry, when cruelty assailed him in the most terrible forms, meekness, patience, and forgiveness did not forsake him, but dictated his last words, which were a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies and persecutors. Let this illustrious example convince those violent spirits, who extinguish the flame of their resentment with the blood of their adversary, that by complying with the precepts of the gospel they are in no danger of degrading their nature or of extinguishing the sense of honour. Human nature was never so much exalted as by the character and life of our Saviour. The sense of honour

was never more delicate than in the breast of Jesus of Nazareth. Low as was his rank, the tempter shrank back from his rebuke. Though bound as a criminal, Pilate trembled in his awful presence. The lawless and enraged multitude, overawed by the dignity of his countenance, suffered him to pass unhurt through the midst of them. Such is the respect which the calm aspect of virtue can secure!

But let the men of the world think of these virtues as they please, the Christian cannot think lightly of them, who knows that upon the practice of them all his hopes of future happiness depend. Only reflect that ere long your will stand before the judgment seat of God, supplicants for mercy and forgiveness, and then say what ought to be your conduct under the most provoking injuries. Imagine your secret sins disclosed and brought to light; imagine yourselves thus humbled and exposed; trembling under the hand of God; casting yourselves on his mercy, crying out for forgiveness of your ten thousand aggravated offences; then imagine such a creature talking of satisfaction, refusing to be entreated, disdainingly to forgive, extreme to mark and to

resent what is done amiss—it is impossible to imagine an instance of more impious and unnatural arrogance.

Here perhaps it may be said that I have been hitherto only contending with a phantom; that I have altogether mistaken the point. The advocate for duelling is not an advocate for revenge. He who calls forth another that has injured and insulted him, rejects with abhorrence the imputation of so base a motive. He freely forgives the insult received: he has even an esteem for the offender. It is not hatred, or revenge, or a thirst for blood, that calls him to the field, but a direful necessity which none laments more than himself, either to forfeit what is dear to him above all things, his honour, or to demand satisfaction for an offence which he would otherwise have overlooked.

Allowing this to be the case, I shall by and by proceed to show the folly and wickedness of such a principle. But I cannot allow it to be the case. Will any one seriously say that he who assails his neighbour with a deadly weapon has no enmity nor ill-will against him? If he has not, his conduct is more absurd than the madman who casteth about firebrands, arrows and death, and saith am I not

in sport? The intoxication of passion, though it does not justify, may yet account for the commission of this crime. But, for the honour of human nature, we cannot suppose that any man would assault another's life out of mere wantonness and gaiety of heart. If it be pretended that it is in vindication of his honour which has been injured, were there not many other more effectual methods of doing this than by calling his adversary forth to single combat? Was his courage questioned? Was there no publick enemy, against whom his prowess might be displayed, that he must thus attack a fellow citizen, perhaps a friend? Was his veracity impeached? Was there no tribunal competent to decide so well as the point of the sword? Who does not perceive the prudence and propriety of the answer given by Augustus to Anthony, when the latter, tortured with shame at his own misconduct, galled with envy at his rival's success, despairing of his affairs, and disgusted with existence, challenged the former to single combat? "If Anthony is weary of his life, said Augustus, there are many thousand ways of ending it besides the point of my sword." The challenger, therefore, cannot evade the charge of

revenge ; he cannot pretend that from the heart he forgives the trespasses of him whose life he seeks.

3. But I now proceed to other instances of guilt attending the practice of duelling, which apply equally to him who gives and him who accepts a challenge. For both are in the eye of God guilty of *murder*. To take a way the life of another unjustly has in all ages and nations been deemed the greatest crime which can possibly be committed against God, against society, or against an individual. It is a direct insult to the majesty of heaven, whose image we bear ; it is a violent attack on the authority of the law, which promises protection to all its subjects ; it violates at once every temporal right of the individual, and may plunge him, with all his sins upon his head, uncanceled, unrepented of, into everlasting misery. Hence the wise Authour of, our frame hath not only impressed upon the mind a sense of the guilt of murder, but has moreover strengthened it by the most inexpressible horror, and the most awful anticipations of punishment, which no distance of time, no subsequent prosperity, can ever wholly obliterate from the thoughts of those who have been guilty of its

commission. “ My punishment,” said he who did the first murder, “ is greater than I “ can bear; every one that findeth me shall “ slay me.”

Revelation fences and guards human life in a manner still more strict and awful than even the sentiments of nature, aided by the desire of self-preservation. For thus spake God unto Noah, “ Surely your blood of your “ lives will I require ; at the hand of every “ beast will I require it : and at the hand of “ man, at the hand of every man’s brother will “ I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth “ man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed : “ for in the image of God made he man.” No one is ignorant of the sixth commandment of the law. “ Thou shalt not kill;” And lest any one should suppose that this heinous crime might, like some other instances of transgression of a very aggravating nature, have a method of expiation and atonement appointed for it, the performance of which would absolve the criminal from his guilt and punishment, the lawgiver adds, Deut. xix. 11, 13, “ If any man “ hate his neighbour, and smite him mortally “ that he die, thine eye shall not pity him.” Numb. xxxv. 31, “ Moreover ye shall take no

“satisfaction for the life of a murderer; but he shall surely be put to death.” Neither the cities of refuge, nor even the altar of God, could screen the murderer from punishment. Exod. xxi. 14, “If a man come presumptuously upon another to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.” Yea still to increase our reverence for human life, and our abhorrence of murder, it is added, that even the brute animal which might be the instrument of taking away a man’s life was accursed, and the place where the deed was committed was polluted. Exod. xxi. 28, “If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten.” Numbers xxxv. 33, “Ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” The gospel not only confirms and sanctions every tittle of the moral law, but, on this subject in particular, declares that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him, but that they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

' I have recalled to your recollection these prohibitions and aggravations of this horrid and unnatural crime, that you may see more clearly how valuable and sacred a thing the life of man is in the eye both of religion and of the law, and what dreadful guilt they incur who unjustly deprive another of that which is the foundation of every blessing. Now by what arguments or evasion shall the duellist evade the imputation of this crime? Does he not voluntarily and with premeditation attempt to take away the life of his adversary? The failure of the attempt does not diminish the guilt of the attempt; for, though the law would not account it murder unless followed by an actual killing, yet God, who searcheth the heart and with whom intentions are acts, considers the attempt as no less criminal than the act itself. Where the death of either or both the parties ensues, that this is murder is not the language of divines only, or of partial advocates, but of that law which has justly been esteemed the proudest monument of human wisdom. "This," says its ablest and clearest commentator, speaking of the case where one, with a sedate, deliberate mind, and formed design, doth kill another, "takes in the case of

“ deliberate duelling, where both parties meet
“ avowedly with an intent to murder; think-
“ ing it their duty as gentlemen, and claim-
“ ing it as their right, to wanton with their
“ own lives and those of their fellow creatures;
“ without any warrant or authority from any
“ power either divine or human, but in di-
“ rect contradiction to the laws both of God
“ and man; and therefore the law has justly
“ fixed the crime and punishment of mur-
“ der on them, and on their seconds also.”

It is the common language of the duellist to say that he allows his adversary a fair and equal chance in combat. But what a chance!! The chance of being slain, or, what is worse, of committing murder. Without, indeed, the exposure of the persons of the parties, duelling would be nothing else than assassination. And as it is, it makes no difference in the guilt, and but little in the consequence. The highwayman who, in the face of day, attacks and murders another who is also armed and prepared, may be admired perhaps for a certain kind of generosity and courage, but he is not the less a murderer on that account. The danger to which the duellist is equally exposed with his adversary may perhaps de-

ter a few from engaging in duels who would be glad to dispatch their enemy where it could be done without personal risk. But on the other hand, the excessive baseness and meanness of the crime of assassination will ever prevent its commission by men of the smallest pretensions to courage and magnanimity; whereas the fascinating glare which the supposed generosity and bravery of engaging in single combat throws over this crime will be apt to dazzle and allure many who otherwise might be inclined to forgive. And it is found in fact that there are very few indeed who have not sufficient bravery to run the hazard to which they are exposed in a duel, in obedience to the call of passion or of false honour.

4. Will the duellist plead, in extenuation of his offence the mutual consent and permission of the parties to attempt each other's life? But it is evident that no man can transfer to another a right which he does not possess himself, namely, to determine the duration of his own life. This evasion only leads us to consider another circumstance of guilt attending those who engage in duels. I mean, that, by wantonly exposing their own lives,

they incur the guilt of self-murder. That the Almighty, by the very constitution of our nature, has fixed his canon against self-murder. That we ought not to desert our post, abandon our trust, and rush uncalled into the presence of our Maker, are points requiring no proof to a Christian audience. But are not they guilty of this sin, who, rather than support the pain and torture of imaginary dishonour, seek to disburden themselves of existence? For where is the difference between voluntarily rushing upon another's sword and plunging it into our own bosom? Were the Romans who perished, at their own request, by the hands of their freed-men, less guilty of suicide, than they who fell upon their own swords? We came into being for important purposes. When these purposes are fully answered, and our continuance in the world altogether useless, we are evidently incompetent to determine. Our duty to society and to ourselves requires that we should strive to preserve our life and faculties for the discharge of that duty, until we receive a manifest and irresistible call to depart hence. Can our life ever be of so little consequence and value to ourselves or to others that we may wantonly put it in the

power of any violent spirit who may choose to ask it of us? When we are required to make our calling and election sure, when we have need constantly to improve ourselves in knowledge and virtue, when perhaps our fall will bring the gray hairs of aged parents with sorrow to the grave, or expose to want and misery the infants of whose existence we have been the instruments? Can any man in his sober senses deem it wise and prudent not rather to bear the proud man's wrong, the oppressor's contumely, than expose himself to the divine wrath, and plunge himself into utter destruction? What will the duellist be profited if he gains the applause of the whole world and lose his own life and his own soul? This leads me to observe,

5. That they who give and except challenges are guilty of the folly and wickedness of paying a greater deference to the opinion of the world than to the laws of God and to the dictates of their own mind. It has been already proved that the practice of duelling is inconsistent with reason and religion, that it implies a very high degree of guilt, and that no man who is actuated by a sense of duty can ever engage in a duel. There is reason also to

believe that few men who have seriously reflected on the subject, approve of the practice, they lament it as a great evil, which requires to be remedied. But still they practise it, and, what makes this sin differ from many others, and adds greatly to its guilt, they habitually practise it, by being resolved to do so, whenever occasion offers. And wherefore is this? They love the praise of men more than the praise of God. The world has said that he who tamely bears insults and injuries, that he who refuses to give another honourable satisfaction for them when required, is a coward—and this is an imputation which they must wipe away. So to prove themselves no coward, they commit a most flagrant act of cowardice; they fear where there is no cause for fear, they dread a phantom which has no power to hurt.

There is not in our language a word of more equivocal meaning, less clearly understood, and more egregiously misapplied than honour. Strictly speaking, it originally signified that sentiment of esteem and approbation which exists in the mind of others, for what is excellent and virtuous. But, by a natural transition, it is also applied to that merit which is the ground of this esteem. Hence

honour, as applied to a man himself, is nothing but virtue. Honour as applied to others is the reputation of virtue. Virtue, then, is the *substance*, honour is the *shadow*. He who acts uprightly and in conformity with the laws of reason and religion is the truly honourable man: for he is honourable whether man think so or not, he who deserts the path of duty, and, by servile compliance, seeks to be accounted honourable by the world, pursues the shadow and loses the substance. In the eyes of God and in the eyes of all wise men he is actually dishonoured, for he wants the only foundation on which honour can rest.

Beside, let those who are disposed to follow fashion and opinion, as the guides of conduct, consider seriously the consequences of such a principle. Our ideas of morality would not in that case be more stable than our taste in dress and equipage. There is not a duty which might not be got rid of, if the prevailing opinion were once admitted to be the standard of virtue; if vague and unauthorised maxims of honour were allowed to create exceptions to the divine law.

By steadily adhering to our duty, through good report and through bad report, we en-

joy the internal approbation of our own mind; and surely one self-approving hour far outweighs the loudest plaudits of the giddy multitude.

The man who follows *honour*, as a guide of conduct distinct from virtue, puts his neck under a yoke, he becomes the slave of publick opinion, he enlists himself in the service of one of the most capricious, inconsistent and tyrannical masters, whose laws are obscure, perplexed and entangled. The man of principle, who follows virtue as his sole guide and his only aim, proceeds in a safe and plain path, he has only to inquire whether God hath said, "this do," to awaken his exertions, and "this thou shalt not do," to induce him to abstain. He is not insensible to the voice of sincere and well-earned praise; but still it is a small matter with him to be judged of man's judgment. He looks up to a higher tribunal, where the judge is altogether competent to decide, and his decision will finally award the prize. A few misguided men may censure him who has courage to set at nought their opinions, to act according to his own principles, to reject a sinful compliance with the practice and maxims of the world. But

his record is on high, his witness is in heaven. He has confidence towards God; his own heart does not condemn him. Angels proclaim their approbation; all wise and good men join their amen. Even the censures and reproaches of the world, like clouds which seek to obscure the sun, will be gradually dispersed, and the man of principle, who feared God and had no other fear, will shine forth with greater splendour, approved of God and of man.

Thus dangerous and uncertain a guide is *human opinion*, even allowing it to be innocent and well founded. But if the opinion of the world be false and absurd; if it be at utter variance with our duty and interest, then, I should suppose, there can be no question whether we ought to obey God or man; that we must not follow the whole world to do evil. Now, in the case before us, what are the opinions of the world which are the foundation of this destructive practice? First, that it is cowardly to put up with an affront or any imputation on our honour. But as to this virtue of courage, deemed so honourable, and the reputation of which is so highly courted, abstractly considered, it is no virtue at all. It depends

entirely upon the purpose to which it is applied. When employed in the discharge of our duty, when guided by discretion, when tempered with humanity, it is justly ranked among the highest principles of our nature. But when exercised with passion, in the service of revenge, to destroy and not to protect, then it is brutal and ferocious, an object of detestation and abhorrence. In this species of courage, if it may be called so, the highwayman and the robber, are certainly entitled to the palm; the lion and the tyger leave all your men of honour at a hopeless distance.

But allowing that, independent of the merits of the question, some kind of courage is necessary to expose our person in the field, does it follow that he is destitute of courage who declines the call? There is a species of valour, different indeed in kind from the former, but of a much more exalted and honourable nature, which is displayed in resisting our own passions and in meeting undismayed the eye of a misjudging world. This passive valour requires a greater exertion of self-command, it manifests a greater superiority to popular prejudices; it shows fortitude in the discharge of duty which neither his own turbulent pas-

sions, nor the insolence of provocation, nor the sneers of folly can shake. He that is slow to wrath is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit greater than he that taketh a city. He who, from weakness of nerves or bodily imbecility, cannot meet his adversary in the field, is not intitled to this praise. But, on the other hand, he is not deserving of blame; for he might as well be condemned for wanting the strength of the elephant or the swiftness of the rein deer. But the man who, from principle and a just sentiment of honour, disregards the efforts of little angry souls to wound his feelings and to disturb his peace, who repays contumely and insults with courteous behaviour and kind offices, who marches on in the path of duty with a firm and undaunted step, rises above the ordinary rank of humanity, and imitates him whose fairest best loved attribute is to pity and forgive.

To meet another, in what is falsely called the field of honour, is an effort which many a coward has forced himself against his nature to make, but we cannot meet with a single instance where he could induce himself to forgive. This is a task left for men of great and generous dispositions, for men who are as

much above fearing as doing ill, for men who have a true sense of honour, and who, in consequence of this, continue doing every thing which they ought to do, fear nothing but what they ought to fear.

Nay, my brethren, may we not retort the charge of cowardice on those weak and timorous minds who tremble at undeserved reproach, who dread shame more than guilt, who fear him who can kill the body only more than him who can cast both soul and body into hell fire.

But how many noble instances are on record where persons have declined to give or to receive a challenge, without the smallest imputation on their courage or their honour! was Colonel Gardiner a coward who replied to one who challenged him, “ I am not afraid “ to fight but I am afraid to sin.” Was the the honour of Sir Walter Raleigh tarnished, when this great man, upon being very injuriously treated by a hot-headed, rash youth, that next proceeded to challenge him, and on his refusal to fight spit upon him, and that too in publick, took out his handkerchief, and with great calmness made only this reply, “ Young man, if I could as easily wipe your

“ blood from my conscience, as I can this in-
“ jury from my face, I would this moment take
“ away your life!” Who does not admire the
prudence, the magnanimity and the courage of
the Marshal Turenne who, when a young offi-
cer, at the siege of a fortified town, had no less
than twelve challenges sent him, all of which
he put in his pocket without farther notice ;
but being soon after commanded upon some
desperate attack on a part of the fortifications,
he sent a billet to each of the challengers, ac-
quainting them “ that he had received their
“ papers, which he deferred answering till a
“ proper occasion offered, both for them and
“ for himself, to exert their courage for the
“ publick service; that being ordered next
“ day to assault the enemies works he desired
“ their company, when they would have an
“ opportunity of signaling their own bravery
“ and of being witness of his!” In short, to
propose an example of the perfection and
propriety of which their can be no question,
was the sense of honour extinct in the breast
of Jesus of Nazareth, who, when one of the of-
ficers that stood by struck him with the palm
of his hand, calmly replied, “ if I have spo-
“ ken evil, bear witness of the evil; if well

“ why smitest thou me ?” All ye who would be sincere Christians, and men of true honour, go and do likewise.

Thus much for the sinfulness of duelling ; and as this is the point which I am more particularly called on to illustrate here, perhaps, the discourse might terminate. But, as I do not wish to leave any matter of this controversy wholly untouched, or to allow the duellist any advantage which he might claim from the expediency or usefulness of the practice, I beg your farther indulgence while I say a few words on its folly and mischievous tendency.

He, we are told, who wantonly and outrageously injures the honour and the feelings of his neighbour, ought to suffer for his misconduct. And so he ought. But how will duelling answer the end of *punishment*, when the injured person runs the same risk of suffering with the person who did the injury ? This is to confound innocence and guilt, reward and punishment.

He who has received any injury, we are farther told, has a right to satisfaction and compensation : his violated honour requires publick reparation. And let him have satis-

faction of the most substantial and genuine kind. But surely duelling furnishes no such satisfaction. The destruction of your neighbour is no recompense for the loss which you have sustained. You may take the life of him who gives you the lie, or charges you with a breach of trust; but hereby you will only load your conscience with the guilt of his blood, and your veracity and integrity will still be as much subject to question as before. If his charge be just, you were the person who impeached your honour, when you committed the crime. If unjust, your best vindication will lie in manifesting to the world the falsehood of his imputation, and the infamy will then redound with tenfold weight upon the head of the slanderer.

But tamely to submit to every insult without resistance or retaliation, would only be an invitation to farther acts of injustice and oppression. I have never said that redress of injuries is in no case to be sought for and obtained. I only say that the redress must be such as is consistent with reason and with Christianity. But would the evil dreaded actually ensue? He must be an ungenerous and dastardly coward who will continue to persecute one who

receives his ill-usage with coolness and disregard—who returns blessing for cursing, politeness for insult, love for hatred. If your adversary be worth the gaining, if he is such a character as even your man of honour would meet in the field, such behaviour will assuredly gain him. A soft answer turneth wrath; and the most effectual way to overcome evil is by good. If he is otherwise disposed, the wisest treatment is silence and contempt; for surely it cannot be incumbent on a man of worth and respectability to enter the list of contention with any worthless and abandoned character who chooses, by insolence and abuse, to provoke his resentment. A prudent and peaceable man has nothing to dread even from the insolent and overbearing. They will either be disarmed by forbearance, or they will reap the contempt and detestation of the world for their pains. It is by pride that contention cometh. If a man, indeed, be himself quarrelsome and contentious, if his own manners be rude, offensive and overbearing; if he tarry long at the wine, and then have wo, sorrow, contentions, babblings, and wounds without cause, he must extricate himself in the best way he can. For the evil consequences of such conduct.

religion prescribes no remedies because it utterly condemns the conduct from which they flow.

But who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good. When envy and strife and wars begin, possess ye your souls in patience. The storm will soon be over; and should the demon of revenge come forth in the tempest, think it not incumbent on you to encounter him. It is not honour which attends him, but some spirit of darkness which counterfeits her likeness. Walk on in the path of virtue, in the company of the wise and peaceful. In this way you will gain the favour of God and of man: and the phantom which you dread has not the smallest power to do you harm.

But the advocate for duelling farther says, that, if this fair and honourable method of redress be abolished, the consequence will be continual assaults and affrays; the strong triumphing over the weak, and the streets nightly moistened with the blood shed by the assassin's dagger. Here at last the truth has come out. It is a spirit of revenge, which prompts men to engage in duels, and if denied gratification in this way, it will vent itself in

another. Such are the inconsistencies to which the advocates of a bad cause are always reduced. Besides, shall we vindicate one crime by another still more unlawful. Because it is forbidden to murder, is it therefore lawful to steal?

But would the consequences predicted necessarily follow? One would suppose, from the language of the duellist, that, if this practice were abolished, all law, morality and decency would be abolished together with it. The strong might trample upon the weak, if there were no laws to protect the persons of every member of the society, and no fear of God nor sense of religion to check the violence of passion. And what other security have we that the strong shall not take away the property of the weak, that the rich shall not oppress the poor, and the cunning defraud the simple. Behind the shield of religion and law the weakest member of society may rest in peace and security. Would assassination be committed? But by whom? Not surely by the men of honour and others who follow reason and religion as their guides, and who know that such a crime is in direct opposition to their laws, and is more-

over followed by inevitable present misery, and, unless repented of, by everlasting destruction. Let us, at any rate, not do evil that good may come. Let us make an experiment which an appeal to fact will fully justify. For though the passions of men have led them to commit foul and deadly crimes, in all ages and countries, it does not appear that assassination has been more frequent in those ages and countries where the practice of duelling was utterly unknown, than in the present times of refinement and honour.

In short, the advocates for duelling maintain that the practice has at least produced in men a more delicate attention to the feelings of each other, a greater degree of courtesy and politeness of behaviour than were known in former times. And for this shall we sacrifice our principles, our religion and our hope of heaven? But how does duelling produce these effects, because the uncivil, the outrageous, the abusive, may be called to risk their lives in the field of honour. Fear, then, is the principle in our nature by which it operates. Without mentioning that this is the very principle, the imputation of which the duellist so much dreads,

I shall only observe, that that politeness which is the effect of fear and constraint, cannot sit easy on a man, or be of much value. The true source of politeness is a benevolent and kind disposition. Where all is goodness within, all will be gracious and obliging without. We, Christians, know that politeness is an essential branch of the love of our neighbour, and that we are expressly commanded in the gospel to be *gentle and courteous*. We perceive also, in the intercourse of society, that it is manifestly our interest to pursue that course of behaviour which has a tendency to procure us the good will and esteem of all around us. Nor will we so far disparage the blessed effects of our holy religion, or of the progress of light and knowledge, as to allow that a gothick, barbarous and inhuman practice is the sole or even the principle cause of that superiour refinement of manners which characterizes modern times.

Morning and Evening Prayers used at the Orphan-House, Charleston, S. C. composed by the Rev. Dr. Buist, for the use of the orphans in that institution.



MORNING PRAYER.

OUR Father who art in heaven, since thou hast ordained praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, we now approach thee with reverence and humility, to offer the homage of gratitude and praise for the many mercies we have received from thee, to confess our own unworthiness and numerous faults, to make known unto thee our various wants, and to pray for those good things which are useful both for the body and the soul. O thou who art the Father of the fatherless, and who feedest the young ravens, turn not away thine ear from the supplications of those unhappy orphans who have no father nor protector but thee. Good cause have we and all mankind to magnify and bless thy holy name; to reverence thy power; to admire thy wisdom; to fear thy justice; to love thy holiness, and

above all, to extol thy loving kindness and tender mercies. We praise thee, O God! for our being, for the noble faculties which thou hast bestowed on us, for the many things which thou hast given to make us happy, and for the tender care and affection which thou hast shown towards us ever since we came into being. Before our thoughts had learned to form themselves in prayer, thou didst mercifully lend an ear to our complaints and cries. Even at this present time, though our ignorance and inattention prevent us from perceiving thee, thou art our gracious guide and powerful protector. Thy hand, unseen, preserves us from a thousand dangers, calamities, and temptations which would otherwise prove fatal to our happiness and our virtue. We humbly thank thee, that when we were destitute and forsaken by our earthly parents and relations, thou didst kindly and bountifully open for us a place of refuge in this house. We are grateful for the food which we eat, for the raiment wherewith we are clothed, for the air which we breath, and for the health and happiness which we enjoy. We praise thee for the means of improvement which thou hast put in our power; for the

benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion which thou hast conferred on us. We do most affectionately, with all the powers of our body and soul, thank and praise thee for thy goodness to us and to all mankind, in sending thy son Jesus Christ, not only to deliver us from death and future punishment, but, by his holy life and meritorious death, to procure us a title to eternal happiness in heaven. We sincerely praise thee that thou hast instructed us in those things, and allowest us time and opportunity to profit by them, while many younger and more deserving than we, have been taken out of the land of the living, and deprived of all the means of grace and duty : For we confess, O God ! that we have behaved very ungratefully to thee in return for so much goodness, and that we are altogether unworthy of a continuance of thy favour. Conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, we are naturally prone to evil, and though now enlightened by reason and religion, we too often offend thee in thought, word and deed. Deaf to the instruction of our teachers and the voice of wisdom, we have heedlessly run on in the ways of folly, and proved disobedient children to thee. But we beseech thee, O merciful

God ! in the midst of wrath remember mercy. For the sake of thy beloved son Jesus Christ forgive all our past follies, and receive us into thy favour and friendship. We are sinful, do thou sanctify us. We are weak, do thou support us. We are ignorant, do thou instruct us. Defend us from evil of every kind. Preserve us now, and throughout life, in the paths of righteousness, innocence, and peace. Enable us by diligence and application to make due progress in the several branches of education allotted us. Teach us to behave with reverence and obedience to our guardians and teachers, and with humility and respect to all men. Enable us to live in peace and harmony with one another as brethren. Preserve us from pride and vain glory; from cursing and swearing; from cruelty, dishonesty, falsehood and covetousness. O! our Father, while not yet enslaved by vice beyond the hope of recovery, or burthened with the cares and evils of life, we would in the morning of our days present ourselves to thee and dedicate our lives to thy service. Accept the unworthy but sincere offering, and fulfil thy promise, that they who seek thee early shall find thee. We return thee sincere and hearty thanks for our preservation during the

last night, preserve us by thy watchful providence throughout the whole of this day of which we have now seen the light. Let no evil come near our dwelling. Let us be guilty of no thought, nor word, nor action which may give offence to thee, or prove injurious to our fellow creatures. May we live in thy fear all the day long, remembering that thy eye is ever upon us, and that, though we may conceal our faults from others, yet they are all well known to thee, our Maker and Judge. May these, our sincere praise and humble requests, find acceptance in thy sight for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Mediator, who has taught us thus to address thee: Our Father, &c.



EVENING PRAYER.

OUR Father, who art in heaven exalted far beyond our comprehension, but who condescends to dwell with those who are of an humble and contrite spirit; we now appear before thee to present our evening sacrifice of adoration and praise. Thou art worthy to receive all blessing and glory, and honour, and praise;

for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure and praise they were created. It is thou, O God! who causeth light, and again spreadest darkness over the face of nature. To thee we owe the constant return of day and night, and the grateful change of the seasons. On thy kind and protecting providence, we, and all thy creatures, depend for nourishment, preservation, and support. In thee we live, move, and have our being. In thy hand is our breath, and thine are all our ways. It is owing to thy goodness and forbearance, that we have not long before now been counted with the dead. Thy mercies are renewed every morning, and thy faithfulness is manifested every night. We praise thee, O God! who hast preserved us throughout this day safe from harm and danger. If we have been happy enough to make any improvement, to perform a good action, or to resist a temptation, not unto us but unto thy name be all the glory. But alas! we fear that our time has been wasted in idleness, or employd in sin and folly. We deeply lament that we have done so many things to offend thee, our Father, our preserver and friend; that we have lost so many means of improvement and opportunities of

doing good. May the merits of our blessed Saviour and Intercessour shield us from the punishment which we deserve. Let not the errors of our youth, or the sins of our infirmities, be remembered against us. Grant us thy divine grace to preserve us from the commission of sin in future, to instruct us in thy law, to strengthen our good resolutions, and to keep us in the way of righteousness, henceforth even for ever. In every case of difficulty and doubt, do thou guide our wandering steps. In every season of danger, be thou our guardian and defence. While we praise thee for all the acts of mercy and kindness shown to us during the day past, we earnestly beseech thee to grant us thy protection during the night which is to come. O Thou! whose eyes are ever awake to guard the just, watch over us during the silent hours of the night, and preserve us from every danger. Into thy hands do we commit ourselves, and, as the day is appointed for labour and the night for rest, grant us sweet and refreshing sleep, that we may awake in the morning with renewed vigour to run our Christian race. Teach us every night, when we lie down to sleep, to commune with thee and with our own hearts,

and to think of that period when we shall close our eyes for ever to the light, and lie down in the cold and silent grave. May such thoughts lead us to a constant preparation for our latter end, and enable us every morning, when we awake, to renew the dedication of ourselves unto thee, and to think of the morning of the resurrection, when we shall arise from the dead, either to happiness or misery, according as our actions have been good or evil. O Lord! we pray not only for ourselves, but for the whole race of mankind. May religion, virtue, knowledge and happiness, be spread throughout the whole earth. Bless the land wherein we live; guide with thy council and preserve by thy power, the rulers of the nation, and give them grace to execute justice and to maintain truth. Bless the ministers of religion, endow them with true wisdom and understanding of the truth, that they may be able to save their own souls and the souls of those who hear them. Bless all men of whatever rank, profession or condition, and make them useful to the advancement of thy glory and the public good. Pour down thy choicest blessings on our kind supporters and benefactors. Bless, in a particular manner,

our parents by adoption, the commissioners of this house. Bless our teachers and guardians, and grant, that all employed in this house may discharge their duty with diligence and fidelity. Bless and provide for fatherless children and widows, and for all that are desolate and oppressed. Send relief to the afflicted and distressed whether in mind, body or estate. “ Fulfil now these our petitions, as “ may be most expedient for us, granting us in “ this world a knowledge of thy truth, and in “ the world to come life everlasting,” for the sake of thy beloved son Jesus Christ, in whose words we close our address unto thee, and under whose care we would compose ourselves to rest : Our Father, &c.

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