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SERMONS

B. Y

The late Rev. Mr. STERNE.

V O L. VI.



L O N D O N :

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S E R M O N VII.

PSALM xxxvii. 3.

Put thou thy trust in the Lord.—

WHQEVER seriously reflects upon the state and condition of man, and looks upon that dark side of it, which represents his life as open to so many causes of trouble;—when he sees, how often he eats the bread of affliction, and that he is born to it as naturally as the sparks fly upwards;—that no rank or degrees of men are exempted from this law of our beings;—but that all, from the high cedar of Lib-

nus to the humble shrub upon the wall, are shook in their turns by numberless calamities and distresses :—when one sits down and looks upon this gloomy side of things, with all the sorrowful changes and chances which surround us,—at first sight,—would not one wonder,—how the spirit of a man could bear the infirmities of his nature, and what it is that supports him, as it does, under the many evil accidents which he meets with in his passage through the valley of tears?—Without some certain aid within us to bear us up,—so tender a frame as ours, would be but ill fitted to encounter what generally befalls it in this rugged journey :—and accordingly we find,—

that

that we are so curiously wrought by an all-wise hand, with a view to this,—that in the very composition and texture of our nature, there is a remedy and provision left against most of the evils we suffer;—we being so ordered,—that the principle of self-love given us for preservation, comes in here to our aid,—by opening a door of hope, and in the worst emergencies, flattering us with a belief that we shall extricate ourselves, and live to see better days.—

This expectation,—though in fact it no way alters the nature of the cross accidents to which we lay open, or does at all pervert the course of them,—yet imposes upon the sense

of them, and like a secret spring in a well-contrived machine, though it cannot prevent, at least it counterbalances the pressure,—and so bears up this tottering, tender frame under many a violent shock and hard jostling, which otherwise would unavoidably overwhelm it.—Without such an inward resource, from an inclination, which is natural to man, to trust and hope for redress in the most deplorable conditions,—his state in this life would be, of all creatures, the most miserable.—When his mind was either wrung with affliction,—or his body lay tortured with the gout or stone,—did he think that in this world there should be no respite to his sorrow;—could he believe the
pains

pains he endured would continue equally intense,—without remedy,—without intermission ;—with what deplorable lamentation would he languish out his day,—and how sweet, as Job says, would the *clods of the valley be to him*?—But so sad a persuasion, whatever grounds there may be sometimes for it, scarce ever gets full possession of the mind of man, which by nature struggles against despair : so that whatever part of us suffers,—the darkest mind instantly ushers in this relief to it,—points out to hope, encourages to build, though on a sandy foundation, and raises an expectation in us, that things will come to a fortunate issue.—And indeed it is something surprising to

consider the strange force of this passion;—what wonders it has wrought in supporting men's spirits in all ages, and under such inextricable difficulties, that they have sometimes hoped, as the apostle expresses it, even against hope,—against all likelihood;—and have looked forwards with comfort under misfortunes, when there has been little or nothing to favour such an expectation.

This flattering propensity in us, which I have here represented, as it is built upon one of the most deceitful of human passions,—(that is)—self-love, which at all times inclines us to think better of ourselves, and conditions, than there is ground
for;—

for;—how great soever the relief is, which a man draws from it at present, it too often disappoints in the end, leaving him to go on his way sorrowing,—mourning,—as the prophet says, that his hope is lost.—So that, after all, in our severer trials, we still find a necessity of calling in something to aid this principle, and direct it so, that it may not wander with this uncertain expectation of what may never be accomplished,—but fix itself upon a proper object of trust and reliance, that is able to fulfil our desires, to hear our cry, and to help us.—The passion of hope, without this, though in straits a man may support his spirits for a time with a general expectation of better

better fortune;—yet, like a ship tossed without a pilot upon a troublesome sea,—it may float upon the surface for a while, but is never,—never likely to be brought to the haven where it would be.—To accomplish this,—reason and religion are called in at length, and join with nature in exhorting us to hope;—but to hope in God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death,—and without whose knowledge and permission we know that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground.—Strengthened with this anchor of hope, which keeps us steadfast, when the rains descend, and the floods come upon us,—however the sorrows of a man are multiplied, he bears up his head, looks

looks towards heaven with confidence, waiting for the salvation of God:—he then builds upon a rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.—He may be troubled, it is true, on every side, but shall not be distressed,—perplexed, yet not in despair:—though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, even then he fears no evil; this rod and this staff comfort him.

The virtue of this had been sufficiently tried by David, and had, no doubt, been of use to him in the course of a life full of afflictions; many of which were so great, that he declares, that he should verily have fainted under the sense and apprehension

hension of them, but that he believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.—He believed!—how could he do otherwise? He had all the conviction that reason and inspiration could give him,—that there was a Being in whom every thing concurred which could be the proper object of trust and confidence;—power to help,—and goodness always to incline him to do it.—He knew this infinite Being, though his dwelling was so high—that his glory was above the heavens,—yet humbled himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth:—that he was not an idle and distant spectator of what passed there, but that he was a present help in time of trouble:—
that

that he bowed the heavens and came down to over-rule the course of things; delivering the poor, and him that was in misery, from him that was too strong for him; lifting the simple out of his distress, and guarding him by his providence, so that no man should do him wrong:—that neither the sun should smite him by day, neither the moon by night.—Of this the Psalmist had such evidence from his observation on the life of others, with the strongest conviction, at the same time, which a long life full of personal deliverances could give;—all which taught him the value of the lesson in the text, from which he had received so much encouragement himself,—that he transmits it for the benefit of
the

the whole race of mankind after him, to support them, as it had done him, under the afflictions which beset him.

Trust in God;—as if he had said, Whosoever thou art that shall hereafter fall into any such straits or troubles as I have experienced,—learn by my example where to seek for succour;—trust not in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them:—the sons of men, who are of low degree, are vanity, and are not able to help thee;—men of high degree are a lie,—too often deceive thy hopes, and will not help thee:—but thou, when thy soul is in heaviness,—turn thy eyes from the earth, and look up
towards

towards heaven, to that infinitely kind and powerful Being, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; who is a present help in time of trouble:—despond not, and say within thyself,—why his chariot wheels stay so long? and why he vouchsafeth thee not a speedy relief?—but arm thyself in thy misfortunes with patience and fortitude;—trust in God, who sees all those conflicts under which thou labourest,—who knows thy necessities afar off,—and puts all thy tears into his bottle;—who sees every careful thought and pensive look,—and hears every sigh and melancholy groan thou utterest.—

In all thy exigencies trust and depend on him;—nor ever doubt but he, who heareth the cry of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow, if it is just, will hear thine, and either lighten thy burden, and let thee go free;—or, which is the same, if that seems not meet, by adding strength to thy mind, to enable thee to sustain what he has suffered to be laid upon thee.

Whoever recollects the particular psalms said to be composed by this great man, under the several distresses and cross accidents of his life, will perceive the justice of this paraphrase, which is agreeable to the strain of reasoning,—which runs through,—
which.

which is little else than a recollection of his own words and thoughts upon those occasions, in all which he appears to have been no less signal in his afflictions, than in his piety, and in that goodness of soul which he discovers under them.—I said, the reflections upon his own life and providential escapes, which he had experienced, had had a share in forming these religious sentiments of trust in his mind, which had so early taken root, that when he was going to fight the Philistine,—when he was but a youth and stood before Saul,—he had already learned to argue in this manner:—Let no man's heart fail him;—thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion

and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him;—thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be as one of them;—for the Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear,—he will also deliver me out of his hand.—

The conclusion was natural, and the experience which every man has had of God's former loving kindness and protection to him, either in dangers or distress, does unavoidably engage.

engage him to think in the same train.—It is observable that the apostle St. Paul, encouraging the Corinthians to bear with patience the trials incident to human nature, reminds them of the deliverances that God did formerly vouchsafe to him, and his fellow labourers, Gaius and Aristarchus;—and on that ground builds a rock of encouragement, for future trust and dependance on him.—His life had been in very great jeopardy at Ephesus,—where he had like to have been brought out to the theatre, to be devoured by wild beasts, and indeed had no human means to avert,—and consequently to escape it;—and therefore, he tells them, that he had this ad-

vantage by it, that the more he believed he should be put to death, the more he was engaged by his deliverance, never to depend on any worldly trust, but only on God, who can rescue from the greatest extremity, even from the grave and death itself.—For we would not, brethren, says he, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above our strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life;—but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, and
in

in whom we trust that he will still deliver us.

And indeed a stronger argument cannot be brought for future trust, than the remembrance of past protection;—for what ground or reason can I have to distrust the kindness of that person, who has always been my friend and benefactor?

On whom can I better rely for assistance in the day of my distress, than on him who stood by me in all mine affliction?—and, when I was at the brink of destruction, delivered me out of all my troubles? Would it not be highly ungrateful, and reflect either upon his goodness or

his sufficiency, to distrust that providence which has always had a watchful eye over me?—and who, according to his gracious promises, will never leave me, nor forsake me; and who, in all my wants, in all my emergencies, has been abundantly more willing to give, than I to ask it.—If the former and the latter-rain have hitherto descended upon the earth in due season, and seed time and harvest have never yet failed;—why should I fear famine in the land, or doubt, but that he who feedeth the raven, and providently catereth for the sparrow, should likewise be my comfort?—How unlikely is it that ever he should suffer his truth to fail?—This train of reflection, from

the consideration of past mercies, is suitable and natural to all mankind;—there being no one, who by calling to mind God's kindneses, which have been ever of old, but will see cause to apply the argument to himself.—

And though, in looking back upon the events which have befallen us, we are apt to attribute too much to the arm of flesh, in recounting the more successful parts of them; saying,—My wisdom, my parts, and address, extricated me from this misfortune;—my foresight and penetration saved me from a second;—my courage, and the mightiness of my strength, carried me through a

C. 4. third:—

third:—However we are accustomed to talk in this manner,—yet whoever coolly sits down and reflects upon the many accidents (though very improperly called so) which have befallen him in the course of his life,—when he considers the many amazing turns in his favour,—sometimes in the most unpromising cases,—and often brought about by the most unlikely causes;—when he remembers the particular providences which have gone along with him, the many personal deliverances which have preserved him,—the unaccountable manner in which he has been enabled to get through difficulties, which on all sides beset him, on one time of his life, or the strength of
mind

mind he found himself endowed with, to encounter afflictions, which fell upon him at another period:— where is the man, I say, who looks back with the least religious sense, upon what has thus happened to him, who could not give you sufficient proofs of God's power, and his arm over him, and recount several cases, wherein the God of Jacob was his help, and the Holy One of Israel his redeemer?

Hast thou ever laid upon the bed of languishing, or laboured under a grievous distemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy sorrowful and pensive spirit at that time; and add to it, who it was that had mercy

on thee, that brought thee out of darknes and the shadow of death, and made all thy bed in thy sickness.—

Hath the scantinels of thy condition hurried thee into great straits and difficulties, and brought thee almost to distraction?—Consider who it was that spread thy table in that wilderness of thought,—who was it made thy cup to overflow,—who added a friend of consolation to thee, and thereby spake peace to thy troubled mind.—Hast thou ever sustained any considerable damage in thy stock or trade?—Bethink thyself who it was that gave thee a serene and contented mind under those losses.—

losses.—If thou hast recovered,—consider who it was that repaired those breaches,—when thy own skill and endeavours failed:—call to mind whose providence has blessed them since,—whose hand it was that has since set a hedge about thee, and made all that thou hast done to prosper.—Hast thou ever been wounded in thy more tender parts, through the loss of an obliging husband?—or hast thou been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child, by its unexpected death?—

O consider, whether the God of truth did not approve himself a father to thee, when fatherless,—or a husband

band to thee, when a widow,—and has either given thee a name better than of fons and daughters, or even beyond thy hope, made thy remaining tender branches to grow up tall and beautiful, like the cedars of Libanus.—

Strengthened by these considerations, suggesting the same or like past deliverances, either to thyself,—thy friends or acquaintance,—thou wilt learn this great lesson in the text, in all thy exigencies and distresses,—to trust God ; and whatever befalls thee, in the many changes and chances of this mortal life, to speak comfort to thy soul, and to say in
the

the words of Habakkuk the prophet, with which I conclude,—

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines;—although the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;—although the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet we will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation.—

To whom be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

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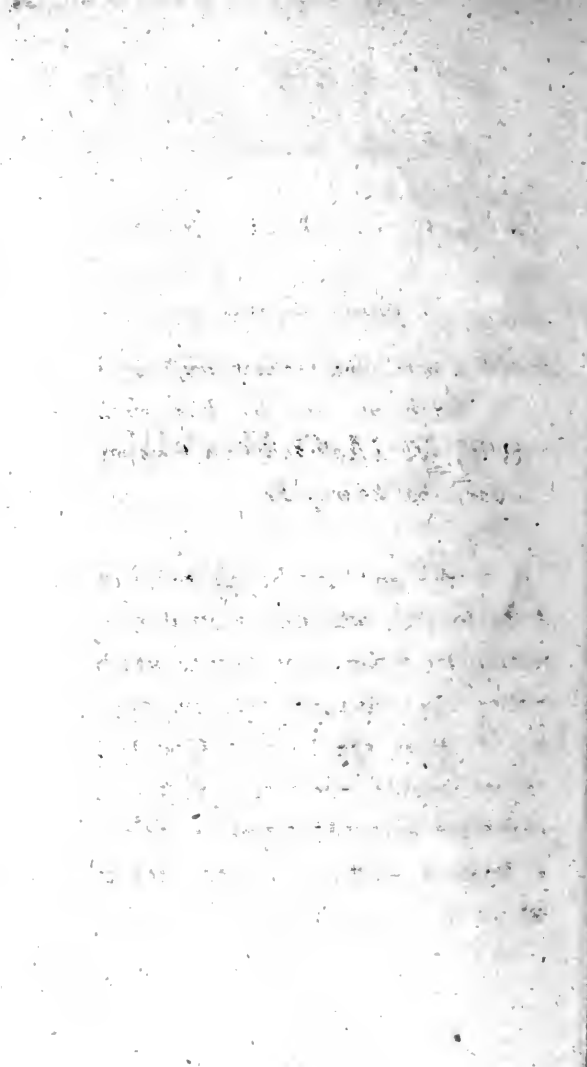
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CHAPTER

SECTION

S E R M O N V I I I .



S E R M O N VIII.

EXODUS xxi. 14.

But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile;—thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die.

AS the end and happy result of society, was our mutual protection from the depredations which malice and avarice lays us open to,—so have the laws of God laid proportionable restraints against such violations as would defeat us of such a security.—Of all other attacks which can be made against us,—that

of a man's life,—which is his all,—being the greatest,—the offence, in God's dispensation to the Jews, was denounced as the most heinous,—and represented as most unpardonable.—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.—Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer;—he shall surely be put to death.—So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are,—for blood defileth the land;—and the land cannot be cleansed of blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.—For this reason, by the laws of all civilized nations,

in

in all parts of the globe, it has been punished with death.—

Some civilized and wise communities have so far incorporated these severe dispensations into their municipal laws, as to allow of no distinction betwixt murder and homicide,—at least in the penalty;—leaving the intentions of the several parties concerned in it to that Being who knows the heart, and will adjust the differences of the case hereafter.—This falls, no doubt, heavy upon particulars,—but it is urged for the benefit of the whole.—It is not the business of a preacher to enter into an examination of the grounds and reasons for so seeming

a severity.—Where most severe,—they have proceeded, no doubt, from an excess of abhorrence of a crime,—which is, of all others, most terrible and shocking in its own nature,—and the most direct attack and stroke at society;—as the security of a man's life was the first protection of society,—the groundwork of all the other blessings to be desired from such a compact.—Thefts,—oppressions,—exactions, and violences of that kind, cut off the branches;—this smote the root:—all perished with it;—the injury irreparable.—No after-act could make amends for it.—What recompence can he give to a man in exchange for

for his life?—What satisfaction to the widow,—the fatherless,—to the family,—the friends,—the relations,—cut off from his protection,—and rendered perhaps destitute,—perhaps miserable for ever!—

No wonder, that, by the law of nature,—this crime was always pursued with the most extreme vengeance;—which made the barbarians to judge, when they saw St. Paul upon the point of dying a sudden and terrifying death,—No doubt this man is a murderer; who, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.—

The censure there was rash and uncharitable;—but the honest detes-

tation of the crime was uppermost.— They saw a dreadful punishment,— they thought;—and in seeing the one,—they suspected the other.—And the vengeance which had overtaken the holy man, was meant by them the vengeance and punishment of the almighty Being, whose providence and honour was concerned in pursuing him, from the place he had fled from, to that island.

The honour and authority of God is most evidently struck at, most certainly, in every such crime,—and therefore he would pursue it;—it being the reason, in the ninth of Genesis, upon which the prohibition of murder is grounded;—for
in

in the image of God. created he man;—as if to attempt the life of a man had something in it peculiarly daring and audacious; not only shocking as to its consequence above all other crimes,—but of personal violence and indignity against God, the author of our life and death.—That it is the highest act of injustice to man, and which will admit of no compensation,—I have said.—But the depriving a man of life, does not comprehend the whole of his suffering;—he may be cut off in an unprovided or disordered condition, with regard to the great account betwixt himself and his Maker.—He may be under the power of irregular passions and desires.—The best of

men are not always upon their guard.—And I am sure we have all reason to join in that affecting part of our Litany,—That amongst other evils,—God would deliver us from sudden death;—that we may have some fore-sight of that period to compose our spirits,—prepare our accounts,—and put ourselves in the best posture we can to meet it; for, after we are most prepared,—it is a terror to human nature!—

The people of some nations are said to have a peculiar art in poisoning by slow and gradual advances.—In this case,—however horrid;—it favours of mercy with regard to our spiritual state;—for the sensible de-
cays

cays of nature, which a sufferer must feel within him from the secret workings of the horrid drug,—give warning, and shew that mercy which the bloody hand that comes upon his neighbour suddenly, and slays him with guile,—has denied him.—It may serve to admonish him of the duty of repentance, and to make his peace with God, whilst he had time and opportunity.—The speedy execution of justice, which, as our laws now stand, and which were intended for that end,—must strike the greater terror upon that account.—Short as the interval between sentence and death is,—it is long, compared to the case of the murdered.—Thou allowedst the man no time,—said the
judge

judge to a late criminal, in a most affecting manner;—thou allowedst him not a moment to prepare for eternity;—and to one who thinks at all,—it is, of all reflections and self-accusation, the most heavy and unfurmoutable—That by the hand of violence, a man in a perfect state of health,—whilst he walks out in perfect security, as he thinks, with his friends;—perhaps whilst he is sleeping soundly,—to be hurried out of the world by the affassin,—by a sudden stroke,—to find himself at the bar of God's justice, without notice and preparation for his trial,—'tis most horrible!—

Though

Though he be really a good man, (and it is to be hoped God makes merciful allowances in such cases)—yet it is a terrifying consideration at the best;—and as the injury is greater,—there are also very aggravating circumstances relating to the person who commits this act.—As when it is the effect not of a rash and sudden passion, which sometimes disorders and confounds reason for a moment,—but of a deliberate and propense design or malice.—When the sun not only goes down, but rises upon his wrath;—when he sleeps not—till he has struck the stroke;—when, after he has had time and leisure to recollect himself,—and consider what he is going to do;—when,
after

after all the checks of conscience,—the struggles of humanity,—the recoilings of his own blood, at the thoughts of shedding another man's,—he shall persist still,—and resolve to do it.—Merciful God! protect us—from doing or suffering such evils.—Blessed be thy name and providence, which seldom or ever suffers it to escape with impunity.—In vain does the guilty flatter himself with hopes of secrecy or impunity:—the eye of God is always upon him.—Whither can he fly from his presence!—By the immensity of his nature, he is present in all places;—by the infinity of it, to all times;—by his omniscience, to all thoughts,
words.

words and actions of men.—By an emphatical phrase in Scripture, the blood of the innocent is said to cry to heaven from the ground for vengeance;—and it was for this reason, that he might be brought to justice,—that he was debarred the benefit of any asylum and the cities of refuge.—For the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood,—and that their eye should not pity him.

The text says,—Thou shalt take him from my altar that he may die.—It had been a very ancient imagination, that for men guilty of this
and

and other horrid crimes,—a place held sacred, as dedicated to God, was a refuge and protection to them from the hands of justice.—The law of God cuts the transgressor off from all delusive hopes of this kind;—and I think the Romish church has very little to boast of in the sanctuaries which she leaves open, for this and other crimes and irregularities.—Sanctuaries which are often the first temptations to wickedness, and therefore bring the greater scandal and dishonour to her that authorizes their pretensions.—

Every obstruction of the course of justice,—is a door opened to betray
society,

society, and bereave us of those blessings which it has in view.—To stand up for the privileges of such places, is to invite men to sin with a bribe of impunity.—It is a strange way of doing honour to God, to screen actions which are a disgrace to humanity.—

What Scripture and all civilized nations teach concerning the crime of taking away another man's life,—is applicable to the wickedness of a man's attempting to bereave himself of his own.—He has no more right over it,—than over that of others:—and whatever false glosses have been put upon it by men of bad heads or bad hearts,—it is at the bottom a

complication of cowardice, and wickedness, and weakness;—is one of the fataleſt mistakes, deſperation can hurry a man into;—inconſiſtent with all the reaſoning and religion of the world, and irreconcilable with that patience under afflictions,—that reſignation and ſubmiſſion to the will of God in all ſtraits, which is required of us.—But if our calamities are brought upon ourſelves by a man's own wickedneſs,—ſtill has he leſs to urge,—leaſt reaſon has he to re-nounce the protection of God—when he moſt ſtands in need of it, and of his mercy.—

But as I intend the ſubject of ſelf-murder for my diſcourſe next Sunday,—

day,—I shall not anticipate what I have to say,—but proceed to consider some other cases, in which the law relating to the life of our neighbour is transgressed in different degrees.—All which are generally spoken of under the subject of murder,—and considered by the best casuists as a species of the same,—and in justice to the subject cannot be passed here.—

St. John says, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;—it is the first step to this sin;—and our Saviour, in his sermon upon the mount, has explained in how many slighter and unsuspected ways and degrees,—the command in the law,—Thou shalt

do no murder, may be opposed, if not broken.—All real mischiefs and injuries maliciously brought upon a man, to the sorrow and disturbance of his mind;—eating out the comfort of his life, and shortening his days,—are this sin in disguise;—and the grounds of the Scripture expressing it with such severity, is,—that the beginnings of wrath and malice,—in event, often extend to such great and unforeseen effects, as, were we foretold them,—we should give so little credit to, as to say,—Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?—And though these beginnings do not necessarily produce the worst (God forbid they should), yet they cannot be committed without

these evil feeds are first sown:—As Cain's causeless anger (as Dr. Clark observes) against his brother,—to which the apostle alludes—ended in taking away his life;—and the best instructors teach us, that, to avoid a sin,—we must avoid the steps and temptations which lead to it.—

This should warn us to free our minds from all tincture of avarice, and desire after what is another man's.—It operates the same way,—and has terminated too oft in the same crime.—And it is the great excellency of the christian religion,—that it has an eye to this, in the stress laid upon the first springs of evils in the heart;—rendering us ac-

countable not only for our words,—but the thoughts themselves,—if not checked in time, but suffered to proceed further than the first motions of concupiscence.

Ye have heard, therefore, says our Saviour, that it was said by them of old time,—Thou shalt not kill ;—but I say unto you,—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.—The interpretation of which I shall give you in the words of a great scripturist, Dr. Clark,—and is as follows :—

lows :—That the three gradations of crimes are an allusion to the three different degrees of punishment, in the three courts of judicature amongst the Jews.—And our Saviour's meaning was,—That every degree of sin, from its first conception to its outrage,—every degree of malice and hatred, shall receive from God a punishment proportionable to the offence.—Whereas the old law, according to the jewish interpretation, extended not to these things at all,—forbade only murder and outward injuries.—Whosoever shall say, “ thou fool,” shall be in danger of hell-fire.—The sense of which is not that, in the strict and literal acceptance, every rash and passionate expression

shall be punished with eternal damnation;—(for who then would be saved?)—but that at the exact account in the judgment of the great day, every secret thought and intent of the heart shall have its just estimation and weight in the degrees of punishment, which shall be assigned to every one in his final state.

There is another species of this crime which is seldom taken notice of in discourses upon the subject,—and yet can be reduced to no other class:—And that is, where the life of our neighbour is shortened,—and often taken away as directly as by a weapon, by the empirical sale of nostrums and quack medicines,—which
ignorance

ignorance and avarice blend.—The loud tongue of ignorance impudently promises much,—and the ear of the sick is open.—And as many of these pretenders deal in edge tools, too many, I fear, perish with the misapplication of them.—

So great are the difficulties of tracing out the hidden causes of the evils to which this frame of ours is subject,—that the most candid of the profession have ever allowed and lamented how unavoidably they are in the dark.—So that the best medicines, administered with the wisest heads,—shall often do the mischief they were intended to prevent.—These are misfortunes to which we

are subject in this state of darkness ;
 —but when men without skill,—
 without education,—without know-
 ledge either of the distemper, or even
 of what they sell,—make merchandize
 of the miserable,—and from a dishonest
 principle—trifle with the
 pains of the unfortunate,—too often
 with their lives,—and from the mere
 motive of a dishonest gain,—every
 such instance of a person bereft of
 life by the hand of ignorance, can
 be considered in no other light than
 a branch of the same root.—It is
 murder in the true sense ;—which,
 though not cognizable by our laws,—
 by the laws of right, every man's own
 mind and conscience must appear
 equally black and detestable.—

In

In doing what is wrong,—we stand chargeable with all the bad consequences which arise from the action, whether foreseen or not.—And as the principle view of the empirick in those cases is not what he always pretends,—the good of the publick,—but the good of himself,—it makes the action what it is.—

Under this head it may not be improper to comprehend all adulterations of medicines, wilfully made worse through avarice.—If a life is lost by such wilful adulterations,—and it may be affirmed, that in many critical turns of an acute distemper, there is but a single cast left for the patient,—the trial and chance of a
single

single drug in his behalf;—and if that has wilfully been adulterated and wilfully despoiled of its best virtues, —what will the vender answer?—

May God grant we may all answer well for ourselves, that we may be finally happy. Amen.

S E R M O N . IX.

Sanctity of the Apostles.



S E R M O N IX.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

*Blessed is he, that shall not be offended
in me.*

THE general prejudices of the Jewish nation concerning the royal state and condition of the Saviour, who was to come into the world,—was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to the greatest part of that unhappy and prepossessed people, when the promise was actually fulfilled.—Whether it was altogether the traditions of their fathers,—or that the rapturous expressions

pressions of the prophets, which represented the Messiah's spiritual kingdom in such extent of power and dominion, misled them into it;—or that their own carnal expectations turned wilful interpreters upon them, inclining them to look for nothing but the wealth and worldly grandeur which were to be acquired under their deliverer;—whether these,—or that the system of temporal blessings helped to cherish them in this gross and covetous expectation,—it was one of the great causes for their rejecting him.—“This fellow, we know not whence he is,”—was the popular cry of one part;—and they who seemed to know whence he was, scornfully turned it against him, by
the

the repeated quere,—Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon?—and are not his sisters here with us?—And they were offended at him.—So that, though it was prepared by God to be the glory of his people Israel, yet the circumstances of humility, in which he was manifested, were thought a scandal to them.—Strange!—that he who was born their king,—should be born of no other virgin than Mary,—the meanest of their people; —(for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden)—and of one of the poorest too:—for she had not a lamb to offer,—but was purified, as Moses directed in such a case, by
the

the oblation of a turtle-dove ;—that the Saviour of their nation, whom they expected to be ushered amidst them with all the ensigns and apparatus of royalty, should be brought forth in a stable, and answerable to distress ;—subjected all his life to the lowest conditions of humanity :—that whilst he lived, he should not have a hole to put his head in, nor his corpse in, when he died ;—but his grave too, must be the gift of charity.—These were thwarting considerations to those who waited for the redemption of Israel, and looked for it in no other shape, than the accomplishment of those golden dreams of temporal power and sovereignty, which had filled their imaginations.—

The

The ideas were not to be reconciled;—and so insuperable an obstacle was the prejudice on one side, to their belief on the other,—that it literally fell out, as Simeon prophetically declared of the Messiah,—that he was set forth for the *fall*, as well as the rising again, of many in Israel.

This, though it was the cause of their infidelity,—was however no excuse for it.—For whatever their mistakes were, the miracles which were wrought in contradiction to them, brought conviction enough to leave them without excuse;—and besides, it was natural for them to have concluded, had their prepossessions given

them leave,—that he who fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, could not want power to be great;—and therefore needed not to appear in the condition of poverty and meanness, had it not, on other scores, been more needful to confront the pride and vanity of the world,—and to shew his followers what the temper of christianity was, by the temper of its first institutor;—who, though they were offered, and he could have commanded them,—despised the glories of the world;—took upon him the form of a servant;—and though equal with God,—yet made himself of no reputation,—that he might settle, and be the example of sō holy and humble a religion;

gion, and thereby convince his disciples for ever, that neither his kingdom nor their happiness were to be of this world.—Thus the Jews might have easily argued ;—but when there was nothing but reason to do it with on one side, and strong prejudices, backed with interest, to maintain the dispute, upon the other,—we do not find the point is always so easily determined.—Although the purity of our Saviour's doctrine, and the mighty works he wrought in its support, were demonstratively stronger arguments for his divinity, than the unrespected lowliness of his condition could be against it ;—yet the prejudice continued strong ;—they had been accustomed to temporal

promises;—so bribed to do their duty,—they could not endure to think of a religion that would not promise, as much as Moses did, to fill their basket, and set them high above all nations:—a religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,—but looked thin and meagre;—and whose principles and promises,—like the curses of their law,—called for sufferings, and promised persecutions.

If we take this key along with us through the New Testament, it will let us into the spirit and meaning of many of our Saviour's replies in his conferences with his disciples, and others of the Jews;—so particularly
in

in this place, Matthew vi. when John had sent two of his disciples to enquire, Whether it was he that should come, or that they were to look for another?—Our Saviour, with a particular eye to this prejudice, and the general scandal he knew had risen against his religion upon this worldly account,—after a recital to the messengers of the many miracles he had wrought; as that—the blind receiv'd their sight,—the lame walked,—the lepers were cleansed,—the dead raised;—all which characters, with their benevolent ends, fully demonstrated him to be the Messiah that was promised them;—he closes up his answer to them with the words of the text,—And blessed is

he that shall not be offended in me ;—
 blessed is the man whose upright
 and honest heart will not be blinded
 by worldly considerations, or hearken
 to his lusts and prepossessions in a
 truth of this moment.—The like
 benediction is recorded in the 7th
 chapter of St. Luke, and in the 6th of
 St. John ;—when Peter broke out in
 that warm confession of their belief—
 Lord, we believe,—we are sure that
 thou art Christ, the son of the living
 God.—The same benediction is utter-
 ed,—though couched in different
 words,—Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-
 jona ;—for flesh and blood has not
 revealed it, but my father which is
 in heaven.—Flesh and blood,—the
 natural workings of this carnal de-
 fire ;—

fire ;—the lust and love of the world have had no hand in this conviction of thine ; but my father, and the works which I have wrought in his name,—in vindication of this faith, —have established thee in it, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.—

This universal ruling principle, and almost invincible attachment, to the interests and glories of the world, which we see first made so powerful a stand against the belief of christianity,—has continued to have as ill an effect, at least, upon the practice of it ever since ;—and therefore, there is no one point of wisdom, that is of nearer importance to us,—than

to purify this gross appetite, and restrain it within bounds, by lowering our high conceit of the things of this life, and our concern for those advantages which misled the Jews.— To judge justly of the world,—we must stand at a due distance from it;—which will discover to us the vanity of its riches and honours, in such true dimensions, as will engage us to behave ourselves towards them with moderation.—This is all that is wanting to make us wise and good;—that we may be left to the full influence of religion;—to which christianity so far conduces, that it is the great blessing, the peculiar advantage we enjoy under its institution,—that it affords us not only the
most

most excellent precepts of this kind, but also it shews us those precepts confirmed by most excellent examples.—A heathen philosopher may talk very elegantly about despising the world, and, like Seneca, may prescribe very ingenious rules to teach us an art he never exercised himself:—for all the while he was writing in praise of poverty, he was enjoying a great estate, and endeavouring to make it greater.—But if ever we hope to reduce those rules to practice, it must be by the help of religion.—If we would find men who by their lives bore witness to their doctrines, we must look for them amongst the acts and monuments of our church,—amongst the first followers

lowers of their crucified Master; who spoke with authority, because they spoke experimentally, and took care to make their words good,—by despising the world, and voluntarily accounting all things in it loss, that they might win Christ.—O holy and blessed apostles!—blessed were ye indeed,—for ye conferred not with flesh and blood,—for ye were not offended in him through any considerations of this world;—ye conferred not with flesh and blood, neither with its snares and temptations.—Neither the pleasures of life, or the pains of death laid hold upon your faith, to make you fall from him.—Ye had your prejudices of worldly grandeur in common with
the

the rest of your nation;—saw, like them, your expectations blasted;—but ye gave them up, as men governed by reason and truth.—As ye surrendered all your hopes in this world to your faith, with fortitude,—so did ye meet the terrors of the world with the same temper.—Neither the frowns and discountenance of the civil powers,—neither tribulation or distress, or persecution,—or cold,—or nakedness,—or famine,—or the sword, could separate you from the love of Christ.—Ye took up your crosses cheerfully, and followed him;—followed the same rugged way—trod the wine-press after him;—voluntarily submitting yourselves to poverty,—to punishment,—to the
scorn

scorn and the reproaches of the world, which ye knew were to be the portion of all of you who engaged in preaching a mystery so spoken against by the world;—so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures,—and so irreconcilable to the pride of human reason.—So that ye were, as one of ye expressed, and all of ye experimentally found, though ye were made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, upon this account;—yet ye went on as zealously as ye set out.—Ye were not offended, nor ashamed of the gospel of Christ;—wherefore should ye?—The imposture and hypocrite might have been ashamed;—the guilty would have found cause
for

for it ;—ye had no cause,—though ye had temptation.—Ye preached *but what ye knew*, and your honest and upright hearts gave evidence,—the strongest,—to the truth of it ;—for ye left all,—ye suffered all,—ye gave all that your sincerity had left you to give.—Ye gave your lives at last as pledges and confirmations of your faith and warmest affection for your Lord.—Holy and blessed men ! —ye gave all,—when alas ! our cold and frozen affection will part with nothing for his sake, not even with our vices and follies, which are worse than nothing ;—for they are vanity, and misery, and death.—

The

The state of christianity calls not now for such evidences, as the apostles gave of their attachment to it.—We have, literally speaking, neither houses, nor lands, nor possessions to forsake;—we have neither wives or children, or brethren or sisters, to be torn from;—no rational pleasure—or natural endearments to give up.—We have nothing to part with,—but what is not our interest to keep,—our lusts and passions.—We have nothing to do for Christ's sake—but what is most for our own;—that is,—to be temperate, and chaste, and just,—and peaceable,—and charitable,—and kind to one another.—So that if man could suppose himself in a capacity

*

even

even of capitulating with God, concerning the terms upon which he would submit to his government;—and to chuse the laws he would be bound to observe in testimony of his faith;—it were impossible for him to make any proposals which, upon all accounts, should be more advantageous to his interests,—than those very conditions to which we are already obliged; that is, to deny ourselves ungodliness, to live soberly and righteously in this present life, and lay such restraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature,—the improvement of our happiness,—our health,—our peace,—our reputation and safety.—When one considers this representation

tation of the temporal inducements of christianity,—and compares it with the difficulties and discouragements which they encountered who first made profession of a persecuted and hated religion;—at the same time that it raises the idea of the fortitude and sanctity of these holy men, of whom the world is not worthy,—it sadly diminishes that of ourselves,—which, though it has all the blessings of this life apparently on its side to support it,—yet can scarce be kept alive;—and if we may form a judgment from the little stock of religion which is left,—should God ever exact the same trials,—unless we greatly alter for the better,—or there should prove some secret charm
in

in persecution, which we know not of.—It is much to be doubted, if the son of man should make this proof;—of this generation,—whether there would be found faith upon the earth.

As this argument may convince us,—so let it shame us into virtue,—that the admirable examples of those holy men may not be left us, or commemorated by us to no end;—but rather that they may answer the pious purpose of their institution,—to conform our lives to theirs,—that with them we may be partakers of a glorious inheritance, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT : [Illegible]

[Illegible text follows, consisting of several paragraphs of faint, mostly illegible text.]

S E R M O N X.

Penances.



S E R M O N X.

I JOHN V. 3.

*And his commandments are not
grievous.*

NO,—they are not grievous, my dear auditors.—Amongst the many prejudices which at one time or other have been conceived against our holy religion, there is scarce any one which has done more dishonour to christianity, or which has been more opposite to the spirit of the gospel, than this, in express contradiction to the words of the text, “That the commandments of God

are grievous.”—That the way which leads to life is not only strait, for that our Saviour tells us, and that with much tribulation we shall seek it;—but that christians are bound to make the worst of it, and tread it barefoot upon thorns and briers,—if ever they expect to arrive happily at their journey’s end.—And in course, —during this disastrous pilgrimage, it is our duty so to renounce the world, and abstract ourselves from it, as neither to interfere with its interests, or taste any of the pleasures, or any of the enjoyments of this life.—

Nor has this been confined merely to speculation, but has frequently

been extended to practice, as is plain, not only from the lives of many legendary saints and hermits, —whose chief commendation seems to have been, “That they fled unnaturally from all commerce with their fellow creatures, and then mortified, and piously—half starved themselves to death;”—but likewise from the many austere and fantastic orders which we see in the Romish church, which have all owed their origin and establishment to the same idle and extravagant opinion.

Nor is it to be doubted, but the affectation of something like it in our Methodists, when they discant upon the necessity of alienating them-

selves from the world, and selling
 all that they have,—is not to be
 ascribed to the same mistaken enthu-
 siastic principle, which would cast
 so black a shade upon religion, as
 if the kind Author of it had created
 us on purpose to go mourning, all
 our lives long, in sack-cloth and
 ashes,—and sent us into the world,
 as so many faint-errants, in quest of
 adventures full of sorrow and af-
 fliction.

Strange force of enthusiasm!—
 and yet not altogether unaccount-
 able.—For what opinion was there
 ever so odd, or action so extrava-
 gant, which has not, at one time or
 other, been produced by ignorance,
 —con-

—conceit, —melancholy ;—a mixture of devotion, with an ill concurrence of air and diet, operating together in the same person.—When the minds of men happen to be thus unfortunately prepared, whatever groundless doctrine rises up, and settles itself strongly upon their fancies, has generally the ill-luck to be interpreted as an illumination from the spirit of God ;—and whatever strange action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do,—that impulse is concluded to be a call from heaven ; and consequently,—that they cannot err in executing it.—

If this, or some such account, was not to be admitted, how is it possible

to be conceived that christianity, which breathed out nothing but peace and comfort to mankind, which professedly took off the severities of the Jewish law, and was given us in the spirit of meekness, to ease our shoulders of a burthen which was too heavy for us;—that this religion, so kindly calculated for the ease and tranquility of man, and enjoins nothing but what is suitable to his nature, should be so misunderstood;—or that it should ever be supposed,—that he who is infinitely happy, could envy us our enjoyments;—or that a Being infinitely kind, would grudge a mournful passenger a little rest and refreshment, to support his spirits through a weary
pilgri-

pilgrimage;—or that he should call him to an account hereafter, because, in his way, he had hastily snatched at some fugacious and innocent pleasures, till he was suffered to take up his final repose.—This is no improbable account, and the many invitations we find in Scripture to a grateful enjoyment of the blessings and advantages of life, make it evident.—The apostle tells us in the text,—That God's commandments are not grievous.—He has pleasure in the prosperity of his people, and wills not that they should turn tyrants and executioners upon their minds or bodies, and inflict pains and penalties on them to no end or purpose:—That he has proposed peace
and

and plenty, joy and victory, as the encouragement and portion of his servants; thereby instructing us,—that our virtue is not necessarily endangered by the fruition of outward things;—but that temporal blessings and advantages, instead of extinguishing, more naturally kindle our love and gratitude to God, before whom it is no way inconsistent both to worship and rejoice.

If this was not so, why, you'll say, does God seem to have made such provision for our happiness?—Why has he given us so many powers and faculties for enjoyment, and adapted so many objects to gratify and entertain them?—Some of which

he has created so fair,—with such wonderful beauty, and has formed them so exquisitely for this end,—that they have power, for a time, to charm away the sense of pain,—to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more.—Can all this, you'll say, be reconciled to God's wisdom, which does nothing in vain;—or can it be accounted for on any other supposition, but that the author of our Being, who has given us all things richly to enjoy, wills us a comfortable existence even *here*, and seems moreover so evidently to have ordered things with a view to this, that the ways which lead to our future happiness,

ness, when rightly understood, he has made to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.

From this representation of things we are led to this demonstrative truth, then, that God never intended to debar man of pleasure, under certain limitations.

Travellers on a business of the last and most important concern, may be allowed to please their eyes with the natural and artificial beauties of the country they are passing through; without reproach of forgetting the main errand they were sent upon; —and if they are not led out of their road by variety of prospects, edifices

edifices and ruins, would it not be a senseless piece of severity to shut their eyes against such gratifications?—*For who has required such service at their hands?*

The humouring of certain appetites, where morality is not concerned, seems to be the means by which the Author of nature intended to sweeten this journey of life,—and bear us up under the many shocks and hard jostlings, which we are sure to meet with in our way.—And a man might, with as much reason, muffle up himself against sun-shine and fair weather,—and at other times expose himself naked to the inclemencies of cold and rain, as debar
 himself

himself of the innocent delights of his nature, for affected reserve and melancholy.

It is true, on the other hand, our passions are apt to grow upon us by indulgence, and become exorbitant, if they are not kept under exact discipline, that by way of caution and prevention, 'twere better at certain times, to affect some degree of needless reserve, than hazard any ill consequences from the other extreme.

But when almost the whole of religion is made to consist in the pious fooleries of penances and sufferings, as is practised in the church of Rome (did no other evil attend it),
yet,

yet, since it is putting religion upon a wrong scent, placing it more in these than in inward purity and integrity of heart, one cannot guard too much against this, as well as all other such abuses of religion, as make it to consist in something which it ought not.—How such mockery became a part of religion at first, or upon what motives they were imagined to be services acceptable to God, is hard to give a better account of than what was hinted above;—namely,—that men of melancholy and morose tempers, conceiving the Deity to be like themselves, a gloomy, discontented and sorrowful being,—believed he delighted, as they did, in splenetic and mortifying actions,

and therefore made their religious worship to consist of chimeras as wild and barbarous, as their own dreams and vapours.

What ignorance and enthusiasm at first introduced,—now tyranny and imposture continue to support.—So that the political improvement of these delusions to the purposes of wealth and power, is made one of the strongest pillars which upholds the Romish religion;—which, with all its pretences to a more strict mortification and sanctity,—when you examine it minutely, is little else than a mere pecuniary contrivance.—And the truest definition you can give of popery—is,—that it is a
system

system put together and contrived to operate upon men's weakneses and passions,—and thereby to pick their pockets,—and leave them in a fit condition for its arbitrary designs.

And indeed that church has not been wanting in gratitude for the good offices of this kind, which the doctrine of penances has done them; for, in consideration of its services,—they have raised it above the level of moral duties,—and have at length complimented it into the number of their sacraments, and made it a necessary point to salvation.

By these, and other tenets, no less politic and inquisitional,—popery has

found out the art of making men miserable in spite of their senses, and the plenty with which God has blessed them.

So that in many countries where popery reigns,—but especially in that part of Italy where she has raised her throne,—though, by the happiness of its soil and climate, it is capable of producing as great variety and abundance as any country upon earth;—yet so successful have its spiritual directors been in the management and retail of these blessings, that they have found means to allay, if not entirely to defeat, them all, by one pretence or other.—Some bitterness is officiously squeezed into every
man's

man's cup for his soul's health, till, at length, the whole intention of nature and providence is destroyed. —It is not surprizing, that where such unnatural severities are practised and heightened by other hardships, —the most fruitful land should be barren, and wear a face of poverty and desolation;—or that many thousands, as have been observed, should fly from the rigours of such a government, and seek shelter rather amongst rocks and desarts, than lie at the mercy of so many unreasonable task-masters, under whom they can hope for no other reward of their industry,—but rigorous slavery, made still worse by the tortures of unnecessary mortifications.—*I say un-*

necessary,—because where there is a virtuous and good end proposed from any sober instances of self-denial and mortification,—God forbid we should call them unnecessary, or that we should dispute against a thing—from the abuse to which it has been put;—and, therefore, what is said in general upon this head, will be understood to reach no farther than where the practice is become a mixture of fraud and tyranny, but will no ways be interpreted to extend to those self-denials which the discipline of our holy church directs at this solemn season; which have been introduced by reason and good sense at first, and have since been applied to serve no purposes,—but those of religion:—
these,

these, by restraining our appetites for a while, and withdrawing our thoughts from grosser objects,—do, by a mechanical effect, dispose us for cool and sober reflections, incline us to turn our eyes inwards upon ourselves, and consider what we are,—and what we have been doing;—for what intent we were sent into the world, and what kind of characters we were designed to act in it.

It is necessary that the mind of man, at some certain periods, should be prepared to enter into this account; and without some such discipline, to check the insolence of unrestrained appetites, and call home the conscience,—the soul of man,

capable as it is of brightness and perfection, would sink down to the lowest depths of darkness and brutality.—However true this is,—there still appears no obligation to renounce the innocent delights of our beings, or to affect a sullen distaste against them.—Nor, in truth,—can even the supposition of it be well admitted:—for pleasures arising from the free and natural exercise of the faculties of the mind and body, to talk them down, is like talking against the frame and mechanism of human nature, and would be no less senseless than the disputing against the burning of fire, or falling downwards of a stone.—Besides this,—man is so contrived, that he stands in need of
frequent

frequent repairs ;—both mind and body are apt to sink and grow unactive under long and close attention ; and, therefore, must be restored by proper recruits.—Some part of our time may doubtless innocently and lawfully be employed in actions merely diverting ;—and whenever such indulgencies become criminal, it is seldom the nature of the actions themselves,—but the excess which makes them so.

But some one may here ask,—By what rule are we to judge of excess in these cases ?—If the enjoyment of the same sort of pleasures may be either innocent or guilty, according to the use or abuse of them,—how shall

shall we be certified where the boundaries lay?—or be speculative enough to know how far we may go with safety?—I answer, there are very few who are not casuists enough to make a right judgment in this point.—For since one principal reason, why God may be supposed to allow pleasure in this world, seems to be for the refreshment and recruit of our souls and bodies, which, like clocks, must be wound up at certain intervals,—every man understands so much of the frame and mechanism of himself, to know how and when to unbend himself with such relaxations as are necessary to regain his natural vigour and chearfulness, without which it is impossible he should either
be

be in a disposition or capacity to discharge the several duties of his life.—Here then the partition becomes visible.

Whenever we pay this tribute to our appetites, any further than is sufficient for the purposes for which it was first granted,—the action proportionably loses some share of its innocence.—The surplusage of what is unnecessarily spent on such occasions, is so much of the little portions of our time negligently squandered, which, in prudence, we should apply better; because it was allotted us for more important uses, and a different account will be required of it at our hands hereafter.

For

For this reason, does it not evidently follow,—that many actions and pursuits, which are irreproachable in their own natures, may be rendered blameable and vicious, from this single consideration, “That they have made us wasteful of the moments of this short and uncertain fragment of life, which should be almost one of our last prodigalities, since of them all, the least retrievable.”—Yet how often is diversion, instead of amusement and relaxation, made the art and business of life itself?—Look round,—what policy and contrivance is every day put in practice, for pre-engaging every day in the week, and parcelling out every hour of the day for one idleness or another,—

another,—for doing nothing,—or something worse than nothing ;—and that with so much ingenuity, as scarce to leave a minute upon their hands to reproach them.—Though we all complain of the shortness of life,—yet how many people seem quite overstocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the highways and streets of the city for guests to come and take it off their hands.—If some of the more distressful objects of this kind were to sit down, and write a bill of their time, though partial as that of the unjust steward,—when they found in reality that the whole sum of it, for many years, amounted to little
more

more than this,—that they had rose up to eat,—to drink,—to play,—and had laid down again, merely because they were fit for nothing else:—when they looked back and beheld this fair space, capable of such heavenly improvements,—all scrawled over and defaced with a succession of so many unmeaning ciphers,—good God!—how would they be ashamed and confounded at the account!

With what reflections will they be able to support themselves in the decline of a life so miserably cast away,—should it happen, as it sometimes does,—that they have stood idle
eyes

even unto the eleventh hour.—We have not always power, and are not always in a temper, to impose upon ourselves.—When the edge of appetite is worn down, and the spirits of youthful days are cooled, which hurried us on in a circle of pleasure and impertinence,—then reason and reflection will have the weight which they deserve;—afflictions, or the bed of sickness, will supply the place of conscience;—and if they should fail,—old age will overtake us at last,—and shew us the past pursuits of life,—and force us to look upon them in their true point of view.—If there is any thing more to cast a cloud upon so melancholy a prospect

pect as this shews us,—it is surely the difficulty and hazard of having all the work of the day to perform in the last hour;—of making an atonement to God, when we have no sacrifice to offer him, but the dregs and infirmities of those days, when we could have no pleasure in them.

How far God may be pleased to accept such late and imperfect services, are beyond the intention of this discourse.—Whatever strefs some may lay upon it,—a death-bed repentance is but a weak and slender plank to trust our all upon.—Such as it is;—to that, and God's infinite mercies, we commit them, who will
not

not employ that time and opportunity he has given to provide a better security.

That we may all make a right use of the time allotted us,—God grant through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

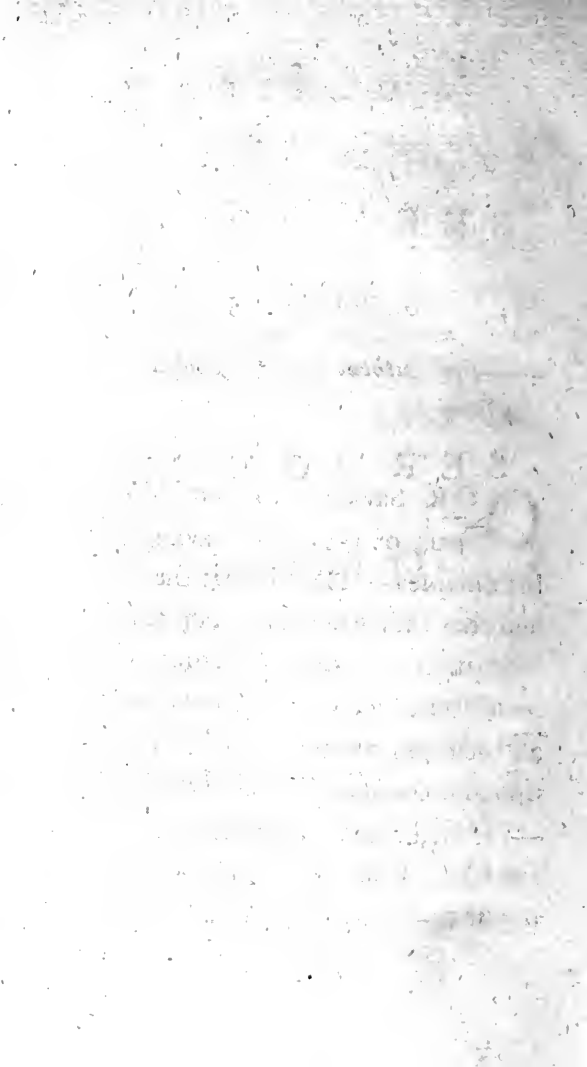
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
530 SOUTH EAST ASIAN AVENUE
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RECEIVED
MAY 15 1964

TO THE DIRECTOR
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
RE: [Illegible]

S E R M O N XI.

On Enthusiasm.



S E R M O N XI.

St. JOHN XV. 5.

—*For without me, ye can do nothing.*

OUR Saviour, in the former part of the verse, having told his disciples,—That he was the vine, and that they were only branches ;—intimating, in what a degree their good fruits, as well as the success of all their endeavours, were to depend upon his communications with them ;—he closes the illustration with the inference from it, in the words of the text,—For without me, ye can

do nothing.—In the 11th chapter to the Romans, where the manner is explained in which a christian stands by faith,—there is a like illustration made use of, and probably with an eye to this,—where St. Paul instructs us,—that a good man stands as the branch of a wild olive does, when it is grafted into a good olive tree ;—and that is,—it flourishes not through its own virtue, but in virtue of the root,—and such a root as is naturally not its own.

It is very remarkable in that passage,—that the apostle calls a bad man a wild olive *tree* ;—not barely a branch, (as in the other case) but a tree, which having a root of its
own,

own, supports itself, and stands in its own strength, and brings forth its own fruit.—And so does every bad man in respect of the wild and four fruit of a vicious and corrupt heart.—According to the resemblance,—if the apostle intended it,—he is a tree,—has a root of his own,—and fruitfulness, such as it is, with a power to bring it forth without help. But in respect of religion, and the moral improvements of virtue and goodness,—the apostle calls us, and reason tells us, we are no more than a branch; and all our fruitfulness, and all our support,—depend so much upon the influence and communications of God,—that without him we can do nothing,—as our

Saviour declares in the text.—There is scarce any point in our religion wherein men have run into such violent extremes as in the senses given to this, and such like declarations in Scripture,—of our sufficiency being of God ;—some understanding them so, as to leave no meaning at all in them ;—others,—too much :—the one interpreting the gifts and influences of the spirit, so as to destroy the truth of all such promises and declarations in the gospel ;—the other carrying their notions of them so high, as to destroy the reason of the gospel itself,—and render the christian religion, which consists of sober and consistent doctrines,—the most intoxicated,—the most wild
and

and unintelligible institution that ever was in the world.

This being premised, I know not how I can more seasonably engage your attention this day, than by a short examination of each of these errors;—in doing which, as I shall take some pains to reduce both the extremes of them to reason,—it will necessarily lead me, at the same time, to mark the safe and true doctrine of our church, concerning the promised influences and operations of the spirit of God upon our hearts;—which, however depreciated through the first mistake,—or boasted of beyond measure through the second,—must nevertheless be so limited and understood,

stood,—as, on one hand, to make the gospel of Christ consistent with itself,—and, on the other, to make it consistent with reason and common sense.

If we consider the many express declarations, wherein our Saviour tells his followers, before his crucifixion,—That God would send his spirit the comforter amongst them, to supply his place in their hearts;—and, as in the text,—that without him, they could do nothing:—if we conceive them as spoken to his disciples with an immediate view to the emergencies they were under, from their *natural* incapacities of finishing the great work he had left them, and
building

building upon that large foundation he had laid,—without some extraordinary help and guidance to carry them through,—no one can dispute that evidence and confirmation which was after given of its truth;—as our Lord's disciples were illiterate men, consequently unskilled in the arts and acquired ways of persuasion.—Unless this want had been supplied,—the first obstacle to their labours must have discouraged and put an end to them for ever.—As they had no language but their own, without the gift of tongues they could not have preached the gospel except in Judea;—and as they had no authority of their own,—without the supernatural one of signs and wonders,—they
could

could not vouch for the truth of it beyond the limits where it was first transacted.—In this work, doubtless, all their sufficiency and power of acting was immediately from God;—his holy spirit, as he had promised them, so it gave them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist.—So that without him,—without these extraordinary gifts, in the most literal sense of the words, they *could* do nothing.—But besides this plain application of the text to those particular persons and times, when God's spirit was poured down in that signal manner held sacred to this day,—there is something in them to be extended further, which christians of all ages,

ages,—and, I hope, of all denominations; have still a claim and trust in,—and that is, the ordinary assistance and influences of the spirit of God in our hearts, for moral and virtuous improvements;—these, both in their natures as well as intentions, being altogether different from the others above-mentioned conferred upon the disciples of our Lord.—The one were miraculous gifts,—in which the endowed person contributed nothing, which advanced human nature above itself, and raised all its projectile springs above their fountains; enabling them to speak and act such things, and in such manner, as was impossible for men not inspired and preternaturally upheld.—In the other
case,

case, the helps spoken of were the influences of God's spirit, which upheld us from falling below the dignity of our nature :—that divine assistance which graciously kept us from falling, and enabled us to perform the holy professions of our religion.— Though these are equally called spiritual gifts,—they are not, as in the first case, the entire works of the spirit,—but the calm co-operations of it with our own endeavours ; and are ordinarily what every sincere and well-disposed christian has reason to pray for, and expect from the same fountain of strength,—who has promised to give his holy spirit to them that ask it.

From

From this point, which is the true doctrine of our church, —the two parties begin to divide both from it and each other; —each of them equally misapplying these passages of Scripture, and wresting them to extremes equally pernicious.—

To begin with the first; of whom, should you enquire the explanation and meaning of this or of other texts, —wherein the assistance of God's grace and holy spirit is implied as necessary to sanctify our nature, and enable us to serve and please God? —They will answer, —That no doubt all our parts and abilities are the gifts of God, —who is the original author of our nature, —and, of consequence,

of

*

of all that belongs thereto.—*That as by him we live, and move, and have our being,*—we must in course depend upon him for all our actions whatsoever,—since we must depend upon him even for our life, and for every moment of its continuance.—That from this view of our state and natural dependence, it is certain they will say,—We can do nothing without his help.—But then they will add,—that it concerns us no farther as *christians*, than as we are *men*;—the sanctity of our lives, the religious habits and improvements of our hearts, in no other sense depending upon God, than the most indifferent of our actions, or the natural exercise of any of the other powers he has given us.

—Agree-

—Agreeably with this,—that the spiritual gifts spoken of in Scripture, are to be understood by way of accommodation, to signify the natural or acquired gifts of a man's mind; such as memory, fancy, wit and eloquence; which, in a strict and philosophical sense, may be called spiritual;—because they transcend the mechanical powers of matter,—and proceed more or less from the rational soul, which is a spiritual substance.

Whether these ought, in propriety, to be called spiritual gifts, I shall not contend, as it seems a mere dispute about words;—but it is enough that the interpretation cuts the knot, in-

stead of untying it; and, besides, explains away all kind of meaning in the above promises.—And the error of them seems to arise, in the first place, from not distinguishing that these spiritual gifts,—if they must be called so,—such as memory, fancy and wit, and other endowments of the mind, which are known by the name of natural parts, belong merely to us as men; and whether the different degrees, by which we excel each other in them, arise from a natural difference of our souls,—or a happier disposition of the organical parts of us.—They are such, however, as God originally bestows upon us, and with which, in a great measure, we are sent into the world.

But

But the moral gifts of the Holy Ghost, —which are more commonly called the fruits of the spirit,—cannot be confined within this description — We come not into the world equipt with virtues, as we do with talents; —if we did, we should come into the world with that which robb'd virtue of its best title both to present commendation and future reward.— The gift of continency depends not, as these affirm, upon a mere coldness of the constitution—or patience and humility from an insensibility of it; —but they are virtues insensibly wrought in us by the endeavours of our own wills and concurrent influences of a gracious agent;—and the religious improvements arising from

thence, are so far from being the effects of nature, and a fit disposition of the several parts and organical powers given us,—that the contrary is true;—namely,—that the stream of our affections and appetites but too naturally carry us the other way.—For this, let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and reflect what has past within him, in the several conflicts of meekness,—temperance,—chastity, and other self-denials,—and he will need no better argument for his conviction.—

This hint leads to the true answer to the above misinterpretation of the text,—That we depend upon God in no other sense for our virtues,—than

we

we necessarily do for every thing else; and that the fruits of the spirit are merely the determinations and efforts of our own reason,—and as much our own accomplishments, as any other improvements are the effect of our own diligence and industry.

This account, by the way, is opposite to the apostle's;—who tells us,—It is God that worketh in us both to do and will, of his good pleasure.—It is true,—though we are born ignorant,—we can make ourselves skillful;—we can acquire arts and sciences by our own application and study.—But the case is not the same in respect of goodness.—We can acquire arts and sciences, because we lay

under no natural indisposition or backwardness to that acquirement.—For nature, though it be corrupt, yet still it is curious and busy after knowledge.—But it does not appear, that to goodness and sanctity of manners we have the same natural propensity.—Lusts within, and temptations without, set up so strong a confederacy against it, as we are never able to surmount by our own strength.—However firmly we may think we stand,—the best of us are but upheld, and graciously kept upright; and whenever this divine assistance is withdrawn,—or suspended,—all history, especially the sacred, is full of melancholy instances of what man is, when God leaves

leaves him to himself,—that he is even a thing of nought.

Whether it was from a conscious experience of this truth in themselves,—or some traditions handed from the Scripture account of it;—or that it was, in some measure, deducible from the principles of reason,—in the writings of some of the wisest of the heathen philosophers, we find the strongest traces of the persuasion of God's assisting men to virtue and probity of manners.—One of the greatest masters of reasoning amongst the ancients acknowledges, that nothing great and exalted can be atchieved, sine divino afflatu;—and Seneca, to the same purpose,—

nulla mens bona sine deo ;—that no soul can be good without divine assistance.—Now whatever comments may be put upon such passages in their writings,—it is certain those in Scripture can receive no other, to be consistent with themselves, than what has been given.—And though, in vindication of human liberty, it is as certain on the other hand,—that education, precepts, examples, pious inclinations, and practical diligence, are great and meritorious advances towards a religious state ;—yet the state itself is got and finished by God's grace ; and the concurrence of his spirit upon tempers thus happily pre-disposed,—and honestly making use of such fit means :—and unless

unless thus much is understood from them,—the several expressions in Scripture, where the offices of the Holy Ghost conducive to this end, are enumerated;—such as cleansing, guiding, renewing, comforting, strengthening and establishing us,—are a set of unintelligible words, which may amuse, but can convey little light to the understanding.

This is all I have time left to say at present upon the first error of those, who, by too loose an interpretation of the gifts and fruits of the spirit, explain away the whole sense and meaning of them, and thereby render not only the promises, but the comforts of them too, of none effect.—

effect.—Concerning which error, I have only to add this by way of extenuation of it,—that I believe the great and unedifying rout made about sanctification and regeneration in the middle of the last century,—and the enthusiastic extravagancies into which the communications of the spirit have been carried by so many deluded or deluding people in this, are two of the great causes which have driven many a sober man into the opposite extreme, against which I have argued.—Now if the dread of favouring too much of religion in their interpretations has done this ill service,—let us enquire, on the other hand, whether the affectation of too *much* religion in the other extreme,

treme,

reme, has not missed others full as far from truth, and further from the reason and sobriety of the gospel, than the first.

I have already proved by Scripture arguments, that the influence of the holy spirit of God is necessary to render the imperfect sacrifice of our obedience pleasing to our Maker.—He hath promised to *perfect his strength in our weakness*.—With this assurance we ought to be satisfied;—especially since our Saviour hath thought proper to mortify all scrupulous enquiries into operations of this kind, by comparing them to the wind, *which bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst*

canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth:—so is every one that is born of the spirit.—Let humble gratitude acknowledge the effect, unprompted by an idle curiosity to explain the cause.

We are told, without this assistance, we can do nothing;—we are told, from the same authority, we can do all through Christ that strengthens us.—We are commanded to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.* The reason immediately follows; *for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.*—From these, and many other repeated passages, it is evident, that the assistances of grace were not intended

intended to destroy, but to co-operate with the endeavours of man,—and are derived from God in the same manner as all natural powers.—Indeed, without this interpretation, how could the Almighty address himself to man as a rational being?—how could his actions be his own?—how could he be considered as a blameable or rewardable creature?

From this account of the consistent opinions of a sober-minded christian, let us take a view of the mistaken enthusiast.—See him ostentatiously cloathed with the outward garb of sanctity, to attract the eyes of the vulgar.—See a chearful demeanour, the natural result of an

easy and self-applauding heart, studiously avoided as criminal.—See his countenance overspread with a melancholy gloom and despondence;—as if religion, which is evidently calculated to make us happy in this life as well as the next, was the parent of fullness and discontent.—Hear him pouring forth his pharisaical ejaculations on his journey, or in the streets.—Hear him boasting of extraordinary communications with the God of all knowledge, and at the same time offending against the common rules of his own native language, and the plainer dictates of common sense.—Hear him arrogantly thanking his God, that he is not as other men are; and, with
more

more than papal uncharitableness, very liberally allotting the portion of the damned, to every christian whom he, partial judge, deems less perfect than himself—to every christian who is walking on in the paths of duty with sober vigilance, aspiring to perfection by progressive attainments, and seriously endeavouring, through a rational faith in his Redeemer, to make his calling and election sure.

There have been no sects in the christian world, however absurd, which have not endeavoured to support their opinions by arguments drawn from Scripture, misinterpreted or misapplied.

We

We had a melancholy instance of this in our own country, in the last century, — when the church of Christ, as well as the government, during that period of national confusion, was torn asunder into various sects and factions; — when some men pretended to have Scripture precepts, parables, or prophecies to plead, in favour of the most impious absurdities that falsehood could advance. The same spirit which prevailed amongst the fanaticks, seems to have gone forth among these modern enthusiasts. — Faith, the distinguishing characteristick of a christian, is defined by them not as a rational assent of the understanding, to truths which are established by
indif-

indisputable authority, but as a violent persuasion of mind, that they are instantaneously become the children of God—that the whole score of their sins is for ever blotted out, without the payment of one tear of repentance.—Pleasing doctrine this to the fears and passions of mankind!—promising fair to gain profelytes of the vicious and impenitent.

Pardons and indulgences are the great support of papal power;—but these modern empiricks in religion have improved upon the scheme, pretending to have discovered an infallible nostrum for all incurables; such as will preserve them for ever.—And notwithstanding we have

instances of notorious offenders among the warmest advocates for sinless perfection,—the charm continues powerful.—Did these visionary notions of an heated imagination tend only to amuse the fancy, they might be treated with contempt;—but when they depreciate all moral attainments;—when the suggestions of a frantic brain are blasphemously ascribed to the holy spirit of God;—when faith and divine love are placed in opposition to practical virtues, they then become the objects of aversion. In one sense, indeed, many of these deluded people demand our tenderest compassion,—whose disorder is in the head rather than the heart: and who call for the aid of a phy-

fician who can cure the distempered state of the body, rather than one who may sooth the anxieties of the mind.

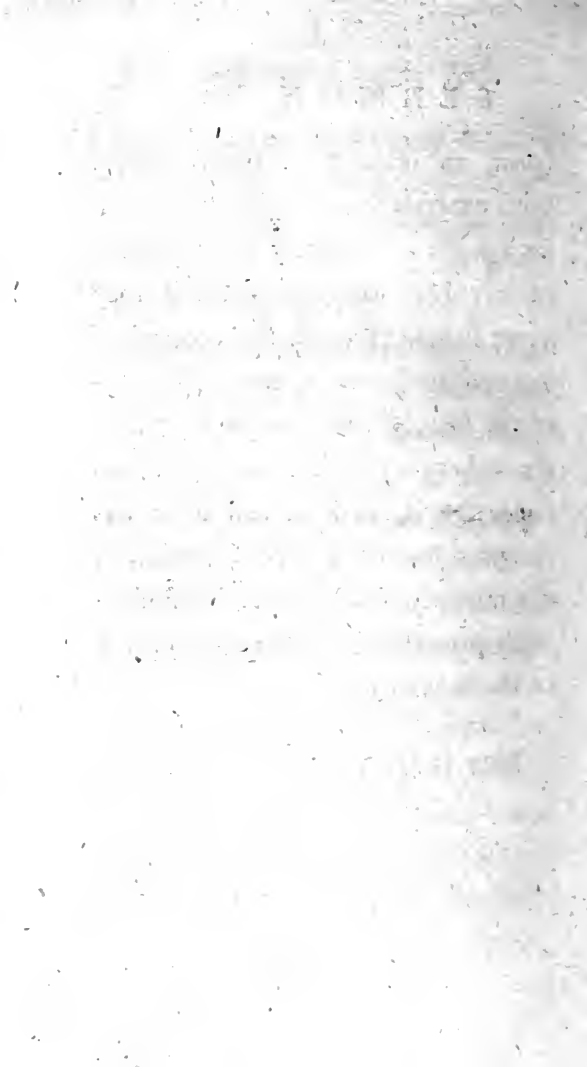
Indeed, in many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either,—that unless God in his mercy rebuke this spirit of enthusiasm, which is gone out amongst us, no one can pretend to say how far it may go, or what mischiefs it may do in these kingdoms.—Already it has taught us as much blasphemous language;—and, if it goes on, by the samples given us in their journals, will fill us with as many legendary accounts of visions and revelations, as we have formerly had from the church of

Rome. And for any security we have against it,—when time shall serve, it may as effectually convert the professors of it, even into popery itself,—consistent with their own principles;—for they have nothing more to do than to say, that the spirit which inspired them, has signified, that the pope is inspired as well as they,—and consequently is infallible.—After which I cannot see how they can possibly refrain going to mass, consistent with their own principles.—

Thus much for these two opposite errors;—the examination of which has taken up so much time,—that I have little left to add, but to beg of God, by the assistance of his holy

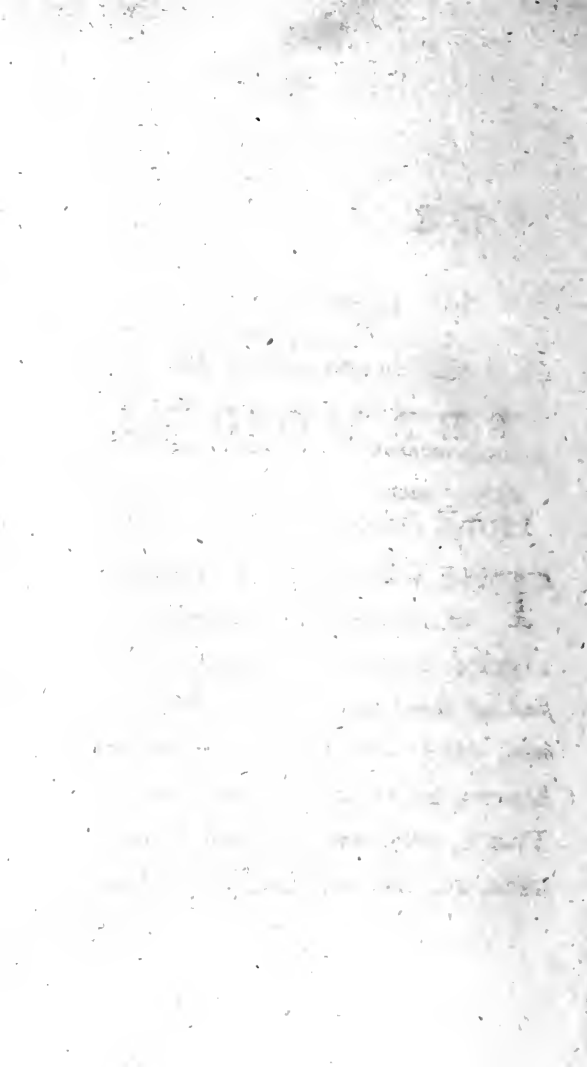
spirit, to preserve us equally from both extremes, and enable us to form such right and worthy apprehensions of our holy religion,—that it may never suffer, through the coolness of our conceptions of it, on one hand,—or the immoderate heat of them, on the other;—but that we may at all times see it, as it is, and as it was designed by its blessed Founder, as the most rational, sober and consistent institution that could have been given to the sons of men.

Now to God, &c.



S E R M O N XII.

Eternal Advantages of Religion.



S E R M O N X I I .

ECCLESIASTES xii. 13.

Let us bear the conclusion of the whole matter,—Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man.

THE wise man, in the beginning of this book, had proposed it as a grand query to be discussed,—*To find out what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heavens, all the days of their lives?—*That is, what was the fittest employment, and the chief and proper business,

ness, which they should apply themselves to in this world.—And here, in the text, after a fair discussion of the question, he asserts it to be the business of religion,—the fearing God, and keeping his commandments.—This was the conclusion of the whole matter,—and the natural result of all his debates and enquiries.—And I am persuaded, the more observations we make upon the short life of man,—the more we experience,—and the longer trials we have of the world,—and the several pretensions it offers to our happiness,—the more we shall be engaged to think, like him,—that we can never find what we look for in any other thing which we do under
the

the heavens, except in that of duty and obedience to God.—In the course of the wise man's examination of this point,—we find a great many beautiful reflections upon human affairs, all tending to illustrate the conclusion he draws; and as they are such as are apt to offer themselves to the thoughts of every serious and considerate man,—I cannot do better than renew the impressions,—by retouching the principal arguments of his discourse,—before I proceed to the general use and application of the whole.

In the former part of his book he had taken into his consideration those several states of life to which men usually apply themselves for happiness;
—first,

—first, learning,—wisdom;—next,—mirth, jollity and pleasure;—then power and greatness,—riches and possessions.—All of which are so far from answering the end for which they were at first pursued,—that, by a great variety of arguments,—he proves them severally to be so many *scarcely travels* which God had given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith;—and instead of being any, or all of them, our proper end and employment, or sufficient to our happiness,—he makes it plain, by a series of observations upon the life of man,—that they are ever likely to end with others where they had done with him;—that is, in vanity and vexation of spirit.

Then

Then he takes notice of the several accidents of life, which perpetually rob us of what little sweets the fruition of these objects might seem to promise us,—both with regard to our endeavours and our persons in this world.

1st, With regard to our endeavours,—he shews that the most likely ways and means are not always effectual for the attaining of their end :—that, in general,—the utmost that human councils and prudence can provide for, is to take care, when they contend in a race, that they be swifter than those who run against them;—or when they are to fight a battle, that they be stronger than those

those whom they are to encounter.—
 And yet afterwards, in the ninth
 chapter, he observes, that the race is
 not to the swift, nor the battle to the
 strong;—neither yet bread to the
 wise,—nor yet riches to men of un-
 derstanding,—nor favour to men of
 skill;—but time and chance happens
 to them all.—That there are secret
 workings in human affairs, which
 over-rule all human contrivance, and
 counterplot the wisest of our coun-
 cils, in so strange and unexpected a
 manner, as to cast a damp upon our
 best schemes and warmest endea-
 vours.

And then, for those accidents to
 which our persons are as liable as our
 labours,

labours,—he observes these three things;—first, the natural infirmities of our bodies,—which alternately lay us open to the sad changes of pain and sickness; which, in the fifth chapter, he styles wrath and sorrow; under which, when a man lies languishing, none of his worldly enjoyments will signify much.—Like one that singeth songs with a heavy heart, neither mirth,—nor power,—nor riches, shall afford him ease,—nor will all their force be able so to stay the stroke of nature,—*but that he shall be cut off in the midst of his days, and then all his thoughts perish.*—Or else,—what is no uncommon spectacle,—in the midst of all his luxury, he may waste away the greatest part
of

of his life with much weariness and anguish; and with the long torture of an unrelenting disease, he may wish himself to go down into the grave, and to be set at liberty from all his possessions, and all his misery, at the same time.

2dly, If it be supposed,—that by the strength of spirits, and the natural chearfulness of a man's temper, he should escape these, *and live many years, and rejoice in them all*,—which is not the lot of many;—yet, *he must remember the days of darkness*;—that is,—they who devote themselves to a perpetual round of mirth and pleasure,—cannot so manage matters as to avoid the thoughts of their *future states*,

states, and the anxiety about what shall become of them hereafter, when they are to depart out of this world;—that they cannot so crowd their heads, and fill up their time with other matters,—but that the remembrance of this will sometimes be uppermost,—and thrust itself upon their minds whenever they are retired and serious.—And as this will naturally present to them a dark prospect of their future happiness,—it must, at the same time, prove no small damp and allay to what they would enjoy at present.

But, in the third place,—suppose a man should be able to avoid sickness,—and to put the trouble of *these thoughts* likewise far from him,—yet

there is something else which he cannot possibly decline ;—old age will unavoidably steal upon him, with all the infirmities of it,—when (as he expresses it) *the grinders shall be few, and appetite ceases ; when those who look out of the windows shall be darkned, and the keepers of the house shall tremble.*—When a man shall become a burden to himself, and to his friends ;—when, perhaps, those of his nearest relations, whom he hath most obliged by kindness, shall think it time for him to depart, to creep off the stage, and make room for succeeding generations.

And then, after a little funeral pomp of *mourners going about the streets,*—
a man

a man shall be buried out of the way, and in a year or two be as much forgotten, as if he had never existed.—For there is no remembrance (says he) of the wise more than the fool;—seeing that which now is, in the days to come, shall be forgotten; every day producing something which seems new and strange, to take up men's talk and wonder, and to drown the memory of former persons and actions.—

And I appeal to any rational man, whether these are not some of the most material reflections about human affairs,—which occur to every one who gives himself the least leisure to think about

them?—Now, from all these premises put together, Solomon infers this short conclusion in the text,—That to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man;—that, to be serious in the matter of religion, and careful about our future states, is that which, after all our other experiments, will be found to be our chief happiness,—our greatest interest,—our greatest wisdom,—and that which most of all deserves our care and application.—This must ever be the last result, and the upshot of every wise man's observations upon all these transitory things, and upon the vanity of their several pretences to our well-being;—and we may depend upon it, as

an everlasting truth,—that we can never find what we seek for in any other course, or any other object,—but this one;—and the more we know and think, and the more experience we have of the world, and of ourselves, the more we are convinced of this truth, and led back by it to rest our souls upon that God from whence we came.—Every consideration upon the life of man tends to engage us to this point,—to be in earnest in the concernment of religion;—to love and fear God;—to provide for our true interest,—and do ourselves the most effectual service,—by devoting ourselves to him,—and always thinking of him,—as

he is the true and final happiness of a reasonable and an immortal spirit.

And indeed one would think it next to impossible,—did not the commonness of the thing take off from the wonder,—that a man who thinks at all,—should let his whole life be a contradiction to such obvious reflections.

The vanity and emptiness of worldly goods and enjoyments,—the shortness and uncertainty of life,—the unalterable event hanging over our heads,—*that, in a few days, we must all of us go to that place from whence we shall not return*;—the certainty of this,—the uncertainty of the

the

the time when,—the immortality of the soul,—the doubtful and momentous issues of eternity,—the terrors of damnation, and the glorious things which are spoken of the city of God, are meditations so obvious, and so naturally check and block up a man's way,—are so very interesting, and, above all, so unavoidable,—that it is astonishing how it was possible, at any time, for mortal man to have his head full of any thing else?—And yet, was the same person to take a view of the state of the world,—how slight an observation would convince him, that the wonder lay, in fact, on the other side;—and that, as wisely as we all discourse, and philosophize *de contemptu*

mundi & fugâ sæculi;—yet, for one who really acts in the world—consistent with his own reflections upon it,—that there are multitudes who seem to take aim at nothing higher;—and, as empty a thing as it is,—are so dazzled with, as to think it meet to build tabernacles of rest upon it,—and say, *It is good to be here.*—Whether, as an able enquirer into this paradox guesses,—whether it is, that men do not heartily believe such a thing as a future state of happiness and misery,—or if they do,—that they do not actually and seriously consider it,—but suffer it to lay dormant and unactive within them,—and so are as little affected with it, as if, in truth, they believed

it

it not;—or whether they look upon it through that end of the perspective which represents as afar off,—and so are more forcibly drawn by the nearer, though the lesser, loadstone;—whether these, or whatever other cause may be assigned for it,—the observation is incontestible, that the bulk of mankind, in passing through this vale of misery,—use it *not as a well* to refresh and allay,—but fully to quench and satisfy their thirst;—minding (or as the Apostle says), relishing earthly things,—making them the end and sum-total of their desires and wishes,—and, in one word,—loving this world—just as they are commanded to love God;—
that

that is,—*with all their heart, with all their soul,*—with all their mind and strength.—But this is not the strangest part of this paradox.—A man shall not only lean and rest upon the world with his whole strefs,—but, in many instances, shall live notoriously bad and vicious ;—when he is reproved, he shall seem convinced ;—when he is observed,—he shall be ashamed ;—when he pursues his sin,—he will do it in the dark ;—and when he has done it, shall even be dissatisfied with himself :—yet still, this shall produce no alteration in his conduct.—Tell him he shall one day die ;—or bring the event still nearer,—and shew, that, according to
the

the course of nature, he cannot possibly live many years,—he will sigh, perhaps,—and tell you, he is convinced of that, as much as reason and experience can make him:—proceed and urge to him,—that after death comes judgment, and that he will certainly there be dealt with by a just God according to his actions;—he will thank God he is no deist, —and tell you, with the same grave face,—he is thoroughly convinced of that too;—and as he believes,—no doubt, he trembles too:—and yet after all, with all this conviction upon his mind, you will see him still persevere in the same course,—and commit his sin with as certain an event

event and resolution, as if he knew no argument against it.—These notices of things, however terrible and true, pass through his understanding as an eagle through the air, that leaves no path behind.

So that, upon the whole, instead of abounding with occasions to set us seriously on thinking,—the world might dispense with many more calls of this kind;—and were they seven times as many as they are,—considering what insufficient use we make of those we have, all, I fear, would be little enough to bring these things to our remembrance as often, and engage us to lay them to our hearts
with

with that affectionate concern, which the weight and interest of them requires at our hands.—Sooner or later, the most inconsiderate of us all shall find, with Solomon,—that to do this effectually, is the whole of man.

And I cannot conclude this discourse upon his words better than with a short and earnest exhortation, that the solemnity of this season,—and the meditations to which it is devoted, may lead you up to the true knowledge and practice of the same point, of fearing God and keeping his commandments,—and convince you, as it did him, of the indispensable necessity of making that the
business

business of a man's life, which is the chief end of his being,—the eternal happiness and salvation of his soul.

Which may God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

END OF VOL. VI.







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