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SERMONS

ON THE

DIGNITY OF MAN,

AND

THE VALUE OF THE OBJECTS PRINCIPALLY RELATING TO

HUMAN HAPPINESS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE LATE

REV. GEORGE JOACHIM ZOLLIKOFER,

MINISTER OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION AT LEIPSICK.

BY THE REVEREND

WILLIAM TOOKE, F. R. S.



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SECOND VOLUME.



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SERMON XXVI.

The Value of Social and Public Worship.



O GOD, to meditate on thee, to worship thee, to have communion with thee, how honorable, how blessed an employment ! How far it exalts us above the other inhabitants of the dust ! How near it brings us to thy worshippers in heaven, and to thee thyself, who art all in all, both to them and to us ! Yes, in meditating on thee, we meditate on all that is good, that is great, that is exalted, that is venerable and amiable ! In praying to thee, we pray to the creator and sovereign of the universe, the wise and benign ruler, the gracious father, the great benefactor of us and of all mankind ! In having communion with thee, we have communion with the eternal, inexhaustible source of all light, of all life, of all happiness ! In employing ourselves in thy service, we feel the whole dignity of the man and of the christian ; feel that we are thy offspring, thy children, that we are capable of high employments, and are ordained by thee for such ! O might then the sentiment of thee and of communion with thee, ever be, and procure to us what it may and should be and procure to mankind and to christians ! Oh might we never enter the place which is consecrated to this divine employment without reverence, and never leave it without a blessing ! Let us, then, O Omnipresent, let us here ever intimately feel thy presence, and ever powerfully experience the influences of thy holy spirit ! Let light and life, and energy and comfort flow down upon us from thy throne, when in the sentiment of our manifold and urgent necessities, we here invoke thee for supplies of thy bounty. Let it be our constant aim in assembling here in thy presence, ever more

plainly and convincingly to discern the truth, to confirm ourselves in the belief in thee and in thy son Jesus, ever to advance in piety and goodness, in content and satisfaction, to consolidate our hopes, to bring us nearer to our vocation, and to become constantly more capable of the superior life; and let this be the fruit we shall reap from our attendance in this place! Teach us, to that end, ever to gain juster conceptions of the value of social and public worship, ever higher to prize it; and ever to make a more faithful application of it. Bless even now our reflections on these important objects, and hearken to our prayer, through Jesus Christ, in whose name we farther address thee, saying: Our father, &c.

PSALM xxvii. 4.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: Even that I may dwell in the house of the the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple.

SOCIAL and public worship, as employing both the mind and the heart of man, and that with the important doctrines of religion, is a matter entirely peculiar to christianity. Every religion had its rites, its solemnities; its festivals; all of them assembled their confessors at stated times, and on certain occasions, in their temples and at the altars of their gods; all of them spread fear and terror, more or less, about them; all of them employed and dazzled the senses of their worshippers with more or less pomp and magnificence. But in none of them was sound and wholesome nourishment administered to the mind and heart of thinking and sentimental persons; none provided for their information and instruction, for their moral improvement, for their comfort and repose. No where was man made acquainted with his end and origin, informed of his duties, and guided in his conduct; no where taught the rational

worship and adoration of God ; no where incited to virtue and directed to happiness. All this is the peculiar boast of the religion of Jesus. And how great are not these advantages ! Who can estimate all the good that has accrued from them, and still accrues ?—I am sensible that public and congregational worship, even where it is the least perverted from its proper object, is not always productive of what it might effect. It is administered by men ; and who knows not how frequently the best and most excellent institutions of creatures, so liable to fall into error, may be misapplied ? And as it is dispensed by men, so it is likewise attended and used by men ; and how easily do we not lose sight of the true end of things, and make them administer to our indolence or our passions ! But is it reasonable to deny any thing its value, because of eventual abuse ? No ; public and social worship is undoubtedly of very great value, be it as frequently and as shamefully abused as it may. It is, and will ever remain an excellent means of instruction, of improvement, of comfort, of awakening and exercising devotion and piety, of serving the cause of humanity, and of promoting universal and brotherly love. And, if the psalmist in our text could justly say, “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require : Even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple,” we, Christians, have greater, far greater reason to prize our national, established, social worship, and to frequent it with inward satisfaction and delight ! Of this I heartily hope to convince you in my present discourse. To this end, let me examine with you, the value of social and public worship. But let us, in the research, proceed with the greater caution and impartiality, as we are very liable to be

misled in it by superstition and prejudice. Let us, therefore, at the same time see, as well, wherein the value of worship cannot consist, as likewise wherein it actually does consist; or, as well what it cannot be and cannot perform, as what it really is and does afford.

Social and public worship, as well as all worship in general, has no value whatever as an ultimate end, but only as a means to some higher purpose. As eating and drinking, bodily motion and exercise, are not ends, but means of preserving our terrestrial life, of establishing our health, and of improving our faculties; so likewise instruction and reflection, all worship and exercises of piety, are no more than means of nourishing our spirit, of inspiring us with desire and ability to goodness, and thereby of promoting our perfection and happiness. The same holds good of private worship, and of all that we observe and practise in divine service. We there worship God, not for the sake of worshipping him; for he wants not our homage and our service; but we worship him, from the deep and lively sense we have of his greatness and perfection, and our dependance upon him, to invigorate every pious sentiment, to vanquish every turbulent passion, to dismiss every corroding care, and to increase our readiness and aptitude to do what is just and good, what is generous and great. We there pray, not for the sake of praying; for God knows what we want, and does continually what is best: But we pray, for the sake of elevating our mind, of purifying and composing our heart, and of rendering ourselves fitter for the mercy of God, and more susceptible of the influence of his spirit. We allow ourselves to be instructed there in our duties, in the design of our existence, and in the will of the Most High, not for the sake of being instructed in these matters: But that we may the better fulfil our duties, more certainly answer the end of our being, and more faith-

fully comply with the will of our Lord. We there reflect upon the doctrines of religion and christianity, not for the sake of reflecting on them, but to experience their force to our tranquillity and amendment by these reflections. We there renew our most sacred resolves, our most solemn vows, not so much for the sake of renewing them, as to imprint them the deeper in our hearts, and to reduce them to practice with more fervor and zeal. We there make a public profession of our belief and our hope, not for the sake of making this profession, but thereby to confirm ourselves in that faith, to strengthen our confidence in those promises, and to live more conformably to them both. And thus are the several acts of worship not ends but means. We use them, not on their own account, but for the good effects and consequences they may and ought to have. In these, and not in those, consists all the value of worship.

It possesses this value, secondly, only in so far as it is rational, so far as it is founded on truth, on just conceptions of God and his will and our relations towards him, and on such dispositions as are consonant to these conceptions; only in so far as it employs the understanding and the heart of the worshipper in a manner worthy of his nature, and the ends of his creation. The worship of the christian must be rational, his adoration of God must be in spirit and in truth. A worship which only occupies and amuses the senses, which dazzles or beguiles by art and ornament, by pomp and sound, which consists in empty ceremonies and rites, affords nothing for the mind to think on, and communicates no true, no generous, no noble feelings to the heart; such a worship can possess no higher value than other theatrical exhibitions, which attract the eyes of the multitude, and furnish them with entertainment or distraction. Still less real value does a superstitious

worship possess, which gives us low and false conceptions of the deity ; which spreads servile fears and slavish terror among its followers ; conceals the Father of mankind from their sight, and substitutes in his place an austere and implacable despot, an inexorable judge ; at the same time flattering their passions, emancipating them from indispensable duties, presenting them with the palliatives of false repose, and attributing a force and efficacy to mere outward actions and bodily exercises, which they have not and cannot have. It is written, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

As little advantage, thirdly, can we derive from our worship, if we have not regard to the disposition of mind in which we frequent it, the views we have therein, and the use to which we apply it. It is not our attendance on its offices, but the solid purport of this attendance, that renders it agreeable to God, and a source of blessings to ourselves. Acts of devotion do not operate upon us like the incantations of magic, without our participation or concurrence ; they improve us neither against our will, nor without our cooperation ; they are performed in the presence of God, the searcher of hearts ; and he is not to be imposed on by outward appearance, like men. No, only the consciousness and the consideration, the earnestness and the reflection, with which we perform our devotions ; only reverence for God, love towards him, delight and confidence in him ; the desire to please and to resemble him ; only positive purposes of becoming wiser and better ; only these can confer any real value on our acts of devotion.

Hence, therefore, it follows, that our worship can neither repair our former transgressions, nor supply the place of a virtuous and pious life, nor procure us particular blessings and testimonies of favor from God, without regard to its consequences and

effects. He that expects these from divine worship, ascribes to it a power which it does not possess; he therefore forms superstitious notions both of its destination and its value. To such an one is applicable the address of God by the prophet. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" To what purpose is the hypocritical reverence you shew me? Your worship is disagreeable to me, I am weary to bear it. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood;" your hearts and your lives are contaminated with vice. No, neither praying, nor singing, nor communicating, nor keeping festivals; only actual amendment, only restitution of property unjustly obtained, only earnest endeavors to counteract every kind of depravity, and to correct it as much as possibly, only this can efface our sins, and remove their pernicious effects from ourselves and from others. Only redoubled industry in virtue and piety can in some degree compensate for the negligence we have hitherto shewn. Only innocence of heart and probity of life, only uprightness and integrity, can render us capable of the favor of God, and partakers of his distinguished blessings.

Take heed then, my pious hearers, of expecting from worship in general, and from public and social worship in particular, more than it is able to perform, and of thus ascribing to it a value which it does not possess. Learn rather its true, its peculiar worth, and strive ever more fully to enjoy the benefits it is able effectually to procure you. Wherein then consists this worth? What are the benefits it procures us? Instruction, amendment, serenity and comfort, the incitement and the exercise of devotion, the promotion of humanity, and universal brotherly love: This is what we may rea-

sonably expect from public and social worship. And what a great and inestimable value must not this confer upon it!

First then instruction, and that on the most important matters, matters of the highest concern to all mankind; instruction concerning God, his will, our own destination, our duties, and the way to happiness; instruction on what God is in regard to us, and what we are in respect to him, on what we at present are, and what we shall hereafter be; instruction in all that can captivate the curiosity of man and most agreeably employ both his understanding and his heart. Let these instructions be as defective as they may; let them be never so much mingled with error; yet how much is not the knowledge of truth and the conviction of truth, considered at large, promoted thereby! How much light is thus diffused amongst all classes and conditions of men! What incitement to reflection, what diversified exercise does it not occasion to the mental powers! One person is reminded of what he already knew and believed, and will thus be confirmed in his knowledge and faith; another will clearly perceive what was totally concealed from him before, or only floated about in the obscurer recesses of his mind; a third will be rendered attentive to some doctrine of importance, feel the full weight of its truth, and be led to think it over again; a fourth views some truth he had already discovered in a clearer light, on a different side, in other and more various connexions, and thus acquires a plainer and completer knowledge of it; another combines it with his habitual way of thinking, learns to apply it more pointedly to himself, and thus to turn it to the best account. One is freed from a doubt, and another from an error. A careless and inattentive person is brought to reflect, and indifference is quickened into concern. At least some sort of impression

must be made of God, of religion, of duty and virtue, of our future expectations, and the ultimate end of man. And how is it possible for impressions so frequently retouched and repaired to be totally obliterated and effaced? Certainly no truth, no sound and wholesome doctrine delivered with energy can be delivered absolutely in vain. They are grains of wheat strewn by the servants of the Lord of the church under his own inspection, which will spring up, some sooner, and others later, and produce fruit, more or less, according to the richness of the soil into which they are cast; and at the day of the harvest it will be seen how well founded were the hopes of the sower, and how prolific the seed he sowed.

Encouragement and incitement to duty and virtue is another advantage we may expect from our attendance on divine worship, and which undoubtedly gives it a great value. And in how many various ways are we not there incited and encouraged to duty and to virtue! The commands, the promises, the denunciations of God; the benefits and example of Jesus; the fitness and reasonableness of duty; the beauty, the amiableness, the necessity of virtue; the infamy and pernicious effects of vice; the dignity of man, and the dignity of the christian; joyful and terrifying views of the present and the future life; the inward sentiment of what is right and good; our own experiences and those of others; self love; desire of applause; philanthropy; hope and fear; life and death; misery and happiness; what motives to duty and virtue are not here displayed and enforced! What motives of the human mind not set in motion! What emotions of the human heart not excited! What passions are not in unison with virtue and truth! And what prejudices against practical christianity are here left unconquered, what pretences of sloth not refuted, what cavils, and evasions

unanswered? And if, in addition to this, the possibility and easiness of the matter is shewn, the way and manner in which it is to be performed pointed out, and the best means provided to that end: Must not all this be productive of good, of much good; must it not be highly advantageous to the performance of duty, and to the practice of virtue? Must it not occasion thousands and thousands of good sentiments and actions amongst mankind?

Indeed experience allows us as little to doubt of it as the nature of the case itself. No, all do not depart unimproved from these schools of christian wisdom and virtue. Many have to thank them for inducement and excitation to amendment, many for their return to the way to duty, many for precautions against sin, for taste and inclination to goodness. How often does some truth, important to the religion or the morals of a man, dart like a pure ray of light into his benighted soul, touch him to the quick, thoroughly affect him with hope or fear, with trouble or with joy; discover to him the true state of his heart, the real frame of his life; beget in him the noblest wishes, the best resolutions; accompany him home, attend him in all his affairs, pursue him in all the companies he frequents, and let him have no rest till he surrender himself to its influence, and fully experience its improving and blessing energy! —How many a wicked purpose is rendered abortive, because he who conceived and cherished it in his breast, led by the kindness of providence exactly to hear some certain doctrine or precept of religion, particularly suited to him, delivered with sentiment and force, is struck and alarmed by it, brought to reflection, and moved to an alteration of mind! How many a good and christian deed, how many a reconciliation with adversaries and foes, how many a resolution to lead a new life, how many a step towards virtue, how many acts of liberality have been

occasioned by such discourses and acts of worship ! How many sallies of violent, brutal passions been thus prevented ! — — And even if these effects fall out but rarely, if it be only now and then that a wicked person is induced to forsake the error of his ways ; yet who can deny his having been strengthened by these means in good purposes, that he has been roused to zeal and perseverance in goodness, that he has been made happy in the more lively sentiment of his truly christian dispositions, the comfort of an approving conscience, the assurance of divine approbation and favor, has a foretaste of the blessed reward of his fidelity, and thence feels the acquisition of fresh courage and resolution to complete the work he has begun, to pursue his course with confidence, and to allow nothing to deprive him of the prize appointed for him that overcomes ? Yes, it is indisputable, that public and social worship throws the most salutary impediments in the way of wickedness and vice, and prevents numberless disorders and crimes in human society ; it is not to be denied, that it animates the true christian to more strenuous efforts in goodness and virtue, and keeps him from becoming weary and disheartened in integrity and beneficence. And what great advantages are not these !

How much tranquillity and comfort does not, thirdly, this worship diffuse over the hearts of men ! How many anxious cares, how many consuming vexations, does it not moderate or remove ! How differently do they not there often learn to judge of the world and their own condition ! How totally different to think of what are usually termed success and misfortune ! How much more calmly and resignedly to bear their troubles, how much more confidently and cheerfully to hope in God in the midst of want and misery, how much more undismayed to encounter every danger and even death, when all

these things appear to them in the light of religion and christianity, when they have learnt to consider them in their dependency on the will of the all wise and all gracious ruler of the world, and in their connexion with human perfection and happiness! And when forgiveness of sins is there announced to the contrite and returning sinner, the promises of assistance and support held out to the feeble, a better and an eternal life displayed before the wretched, a compensation and reward beyond the grave assured to the oppressed and innocent sufferer, what a healing balm, what refreshment and restoration, must not this shed into the soul that is thirsting and panting after comfort!

I here address myself to your own experience, ye who in sincerity of heart and design frequent the public worship. Say, my christian brothers and sisters, have ye not often come into the assembly of the worshippers of God, with heavy hearts and troubled minds? Has not often a secret pain, a sorrow of soul, attended you thither? Were ye not often languishing in search of comfort and repose? And have ye not there often found this comfort, this repose? Has not the burden that oppressed you, there fallen off from your heart? Has not a cheerful beam proceeded thence, that has enlightened your gloomy path, and shewn you an issue from the labyrinth in which you were involved? Have ye not often returned home, comforted, strengthened, and revived? —And what well disposed christian has not there rejoiced in the paternal love of God, in the fraternal affection of Jesus, in his relation towards God and Jesus, in his destination to a blessed immortality, in his approximation to the mark of his high calling; and, in the enjoyment of these delights, has he not learnt to endure, to despise, to forget all the troubles, all the sufferings, all the evils of the present life? Oh, who can recount all the comfort and serenity of

mind that mankind have derived from christian worship, all the tears of sorrow and pain which there have ceased to flow, all the cheerful and blessed sensations which have there been taught to rise : What a diminution of human misery, what an augmentation of human happiness has not arisen on all hands, in cottages and in palaces, among all classes and conditions of men ; and what an inestimable value must not this confer on public worship in our sight !

Public and social worship acquires, fourthly, a new value, as it kindles and inflames our devotion, and gives more life and dignity to our personal worship. What is not the solemn and public worship capable of producing, and how much does it often actually produce ! How often does it inspire even the volatile and giddy with seriousness, the scoffer with reverence, and the insensible and careless with sentiment and reflection ! How readily does it impart sentiments ; how principally the sentiments of piety and devotion ! Like an electrical fire they frequently seize on men of the most different tempers and opinions, infusing into their hearts a spiritual life. And, if I attend a worship where prayer, psalmody, the discourse of the minister, all combine to impress me with pious sentiments and reflections ; where a profound silence, a general and continued attention prevails around me, drawing off my mind by degrees from all outward things, and fixing it entirely on itself and on God ; when I there perceive my friends and acquaintance, or even unknown persons, of every age, either sex, and each condition of life, absorbed in serious meditation, and impressed with pious emotions ; when I join there a great assembly, a whole congregation, humbly prostrate before the being who dwells in heaven, and who fills with his majesty both heaven and earth, imploring grace and mercy and help of him from one mouth ; when I see them under a lively sense of their weakness and

their manifold spiritual wants, open their hearts and minds to the influence of christianity and religion; and with eagerness of soul imbibe light and consolation and repose and power to goodness; when I hear them celebrate the praises of the All bountiful and All wise for their existence and his bounties, rejoice in their connexion with him, and renew their vows of fidelity and obedience: What an impression must it not make upon me! How forcibly must I not then feel my own imbecility, my entire dependance on that sovereign spirit, how intimately feel his presence! How strongly feel myself penetrated with reverence, with love towards him, with submission to his will, with confidence in him, with joy at all the instances of his mercy! How important must not religion then appear to me! How light and cheerful must not I there find myself, humbling myself in the dust, with all my brethren and sisters, high and low, rich and poor, in the presence of our common creator and father, adoring his infinite greatness, and drawing life and happiness from his sufficiency! And must not this incitement, this ardency of devotion, though it should not always have place in an equal, and still less always in a superior degree, must it not give a great value to public and social worship?

What a value, in short, must it not receive from hence: That by it the sentiment of the natural equality of mankind and their mutual affinity, is maintained and invigorated, and that they are brought into so close a connexion and so intimate a union together by its means! Every thing that is here transacted and taught reminds us of our common origin, of our common wants and infirmities, of our common destination. Every thing that passes here must humble the pride of the great, and inspire courage and confidence into them of low degree; every thing must promote the interests of humanity and

love. And what binds men more together than the community of faith, of hope, of religious worship? Here we all present ourselves as feeble, dependent creatures; as creatures that are in want of instruction, of ability, of support and assistance, who cannot subsist of themselves; all as frail, sinful beings, who are asking for grace and pity. Here we all humble ourselves before him who only is wise, only mighty, only great, and to whom all men, all nations, all worlds, are as nothing. Here we all eat of the same bread, drink of the same cup, and, as the children of one father, all enjoy at one table the repast of christian love. Here the distinction of rank and dignity falls totally away, or meets with no peculiar regard. We are here, and feel ourselves, not as powerful or weak, not as superior or inferior, but as men, as christians; are all subjects, all children of God, all the redeemed of Jesus, the prince as the vassal, the rich as the poor, the learned as the ignorant. The prince now hears himself thus addressed:—Thou art a god upon the earth, but thou wilt die like any child of man. Abuse not thy power, for thou hast a master, a judge, in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons. And the poorest, the lowest of the people, is thus at the same time admonished:—Even thou art formed after the image of thy God, thee too hath Jesus redeemed, and thou art immortal; thee likewise an eternal life awaits; forget not thy dignity, and by a generous and independent conduct shew thyself worthy of thy origin and thy destination. And a divine service, which may contribute, and actually does contribute so much to our instruction, to our improvement, to our repose, to the exciting and inflaming of our devotion, to the advancement of humanity and brotherly love, must surely possess a great, an inestimable value.

Yes, ever shall ye be hailed, ever blessed shall ye be of me, ye places consecrated to the adoration of

God, ye solemn assemblies of his worshippers on earth! With the profoundest reverence, with a thankful and cheerful heart will I enter your gates, and celebrate with my brethren the worthiest, the noblest solemnities that mankind can perform on earth. Here will I wholly surrender myself to the sentiment of what God is and of what he is to me; and while I fulfil the duties of a worshipper and a child of God, will at the same time enjoy the blessedness of being so. Here will I enter into the closest bands of affection with all who know and love God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and enjoy my own felicity and theirs. Here will I seek nourishment for my mind and my heart, deeply imprint every lesson of truth, every word of exhortation, of comfort and peace, that shall be delivered to me, and thence return to my business in the world with invigorated powers, more joyfully discharge every duty of life, and bear every burthen of it with more submissive resignation. Here will I take on my pilgrimage, the comforts that refresh and restore my soul; I will consider my way, represent to myself the prize for which I am striving, and then with new courage pursue my course. Here will I enjoy in foretaste the blessedness of that better world, where I shall be surrounded by a purer emanation of day, where my faith shall be changed into sight, where, with the just made perfect, with spirits of a superior order, I shall adore him, and celebrate his praises who lives for ever and ever!

These, my dear brethren, must be the sentiments with which you are impressed by the consideration of the great importance of social and public worship; these the dispositions and views in which you must frequent it; this the generous fruit you will gather from it. So will it constantly become more estimable, more venerable, more delightful to you, never be irksome or unpleasant, and will procure you never ending felicity and bliss.

SERMON XXVII.

The Value of Solitude.



O GOD, thou hast elevated us to the rank of intelligent beings, made us creatures who have a clear inward consciousness of themselves and their condition, who can act with consideration and from perspicuously known principles, who can make ever farther progress in wisdom and virtue, who can feel thy being and thy presence, and have communion with thee the father of spirits. Oh that we might never mistake these our priviledges, never leave them unemployed, and constantly make the best use of them! We are still, alas, oppressed by the yoke of sensuality, we still too often and too easily are induced to withdraw from ourselves and from thee our creator and father, and wander about, unconscious of ourselves, beguiled by sensual lusts among things that have more semblance than reality! Alas, but too seldom is it so bright in our mind, so silent in our heart, so quiet around us, that we can thoroughly rejoice in thy existence and our own, thoroughly feel our superior destination, and think and act in complete consistence with it! O God, the father of our spirits, grant us then more to feel, more highly to prize our connexion with thee, and render us more susceptible of thy influence upon us, more frequently to collect our scattered thoughts, to seek retirement, to exercise ourselves more in reflection and thus come nearer to thee and to our superior appointment. Teach us to be jealous of the prerogative we possess as intelligent creatures. and let us find so much pleasure and happiness in the proper application of it, that we may nev-

er be wanting in incitement and inclination to it. Strengthen also now our mind that it may perceive the truth intended to inform and to improve it, in a perspicuous light; let it dissipate our prejudices and errors, and enable us by its lustre, more securely and happily to continue and to complete our journey of life. We ask it of thee in the name of Jesus, saying: Our father, &c.



MARK i. 12.

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

CONVERSE with mankind, and converse with oneself; the gaieties of social, and the seriousness of solitary life; diffusive, beneficent activity among many, and the application of the entire attention on oneself; vivacity in business and vivacity in reflection; noise and silence; dissipation and recollection, are always to be interchangeably followed, if we would attain the true end of our being, fulfil our several duties, and arrive at a certain degree of wisdom and virtue. If we confine our existence to either sort exclusively of the other, we shall neglect either our own most important concerns, or the concerns of our brethren. In the uninterrupted bustle of business and dissipation, we may easily forget ourselves; and by too severe a pursuit of solitary silence, we may as easily become indifferent and insensible to others. But, if we combine them both together, we shall live as much for others as for ourselves, promote as far as we are able our own felicity no less than that of other men, and shall neither be seduced to folly by levity and habitual distraction, nor to misanthropy by the gloomy and querulous austerity of the recluse. Two side ways, by which

too many have missed of the proper end of their being, and still mistake it, with only this difference, that now the one and then the other has been more thronged and frequented. At present, at least in our regions of the world, those times are past, when the solitary life, devoted to meditation, was so highly esteemed, and a total seclusion from the world was thought the sole means of access to heaven. Now the opposite path is more universally trodden: Company is every thing; and silence and retirement are fallen, with the majority, into evil report. But whether they merit this report? Whether, under proper limitations, they still are not worthy of the use and esteem of the sage and the christian? Whether we have not cause, in this particular likewise, to imitate our Savior Jesus, and like him to be led of the spirit, to be led by the sentiment of our spiritual wants, into the wilderness, or into retirement? This, my pious hearers, is what we shall now endeavor to discuss. I mean to discourse to you on the value and the discreet use of solitude; first stating the subject, then shewing its utility, and lastly adding a few rules for the prudent employment of it.

By the solitude I recommend, I mean not a life passed in absolute seclusion from all commerce with the world and all intercourse with mankind, not the life of the cœnobite, nor that of the hermit. Such a life is plainly in opposition to the destination and felicity of man, and at most is adapted only to the feeble, such as the weight of misfortunes has entirely borne down and rendered unfit for the business and joys of social life. And he who thinks by such a life to serve God, or to promote the salvation of his soul, neither knows God, nor understands what the term of saving his soul implies, and cannot be acquitted of the charge of superstition. No, to serve God means, from love and obedience to him, to serve his

creatures of the human race, and to fulfil all the duties of life ; and the saving of the soul consists in the application of all our faculties and powers to do the will of our creator ; and by the best and most useful means to effect as much good with them as we always are able.

No, the solitude I mean is every place, every retreat, where a man, for a longer or a shorter time, is alone and apart from the company of other persons, that he may be at liberty to make reflections on himself and his more important concerns, whether it be in a small room of his house, or in the spacious and open plain ; in the blaze of the meridian sun, or by the milder light of the nocturnal moon. Neither darkness nor confinement, but silence and freedom from such matters and absence of such persons, as might interrupt or disturb our thoughts, is the essence of solitude. The more extensive however the sphere of our sight and sentiment ; the farther our eyes can reach ; the freer our breast can respire ; the more our heart can comprehend ; and the more unimpeded it may expand ; so much the more productive to us is solitude in great, in generous, in pious thoughts and sentiments ; so much the more likely is it to be and to procure us what it ought to be and to procure. Even the presence of a mind in harmony with ours, of a heart pursuing and loving such objects as our own, is frequently, not only no hindrance, but rather an advantage to it. To such a solitude we ascribe great worth and manifold utility. And this for various reasons.

In solitude we think more sedately, more undisturbed and free ; and thinking, my pious hearers, is the grand prerogative of man, the foundation of his utmost perfection and happiness. In society, and in the midst of our affairs, it frequently happens, that, in this respect, we are more passive than active. We

must take the impressions of outward things as they fall upon us ; our mental representations will be exactly modelled on what surrounds us, on whatever we see and hear, on what we have to do. They commonly glide away from before us as quickly as they arise ; one presses upon the other ; their impetuous torrent carries us away with it. But seldom can we choose from among them ; but seldom can we detain such as are most agreeable and important to us ; seldom can we dismiss such as promise us neither profit nor pleasure ; but seldom can we distinguish between truth and falsehood, between reality and appearance. We there collect more materials for thought, than we are able to give our mental application to in all its force.

When we enter into retirement ; when we pass into solitude, we are then, in regard of thought, more active than passive. We act more from ourselves, and by our proper energy, than allow other things to act upon us. Our attention is less interrupted, is more continued and strong. We may select from among the objects of our reflection ; tarry as long as we will with those that, in present circumstances, are most profitable and pleasant ; consider them on more sides than one, in more than one combination ; compare them with our farther perceptions, with our other thoughts ; apply them more calmly to ourselves ; imprint them deeper into our memory and our heart ; and revolve them so long and in such various ways, till they diffuse a pure light upon our minds, and shed a genial warmth into our hearts, and thus become so fixed that they cannot be forgotten. Thus may we, by silent, solitary reflection, one while extend and rectify certain notions in religion, at another unravel some difficulties which perplexed our mind on the theatre of the world, now quiet our troubles and cares by a clearer conception of their

causes, and the best grounds of comfort, then collect new forces for the performance of our duty, and for making progress on the way of perfection, then again, by more attentively considering our wordly affairs and concerns, learn more wisdom and prudence for carrying them on. At all events, we exercise and strengthen our mental powers; many obscurities that render our path hard to pursue, disperse and retire; and we return, with more cheerfulness and content, to active and social life. The sphere of our sight becomes enlarged by reflection; we have learnt to survey more objects, and to connect them together; we carry with us a clearer sight, a juster judgment, and firmer principles, into the world wherein we live and act; and are then able, even amidst various distractions, so much the longer to arrest our attention, and to think and determine more rightly, in proportion as we have accustomed ourselves to this exercise in retirement.

In the silence of solitude, we have, secondly, a more intimate consciousness of ourselves, of our existence, of our faculties, of our dignity. How often and how easily do we forget ourselves in the hurry of business, in the distractions of company, in the eddy of a bustling life! How apt are we there to exist far more in others than in ourselves, to esteem far more the judgment and approbation of others, than the judgments and approbation of our hearts, take far more pains to give satisfaction to others than to satisfy ourselves, rejoice much more in being thought wise and good, rich and great, by others, than in the intimate conviction that we intrinsically are so! But, the more a man exists and lives in public and the less to himself; so much the less frequently and less perfectly does he enjoy his life; so much the more does it resemble a dream, and

so much the more easily will he be deceived by every error and appearance that offers.

Whereas in solitude, my dear brethren, our mind, as it were, returns home; there she collects her scattered forces, and concentrates them within herself. There we wake, as it were, from a dream; there we separate ourselves from all that is without us and is not properly our own; there we separate our very thoughts from that which thinks within us. There we intimately feel, that we are, that we live, that we think, that we are intelligent, free, spontaneously acting creatures, capable of great things, immortal. And what a blessed sentiment is not this! It is the joyful sentiment of one awakening from a trance, whose senses had been fast locked up, who had lost all arbitrary movement, all consciousness, and now opens his eyes to the clear light of day, is sensible to his internal faculties, exerts them freely and with perspicuous consciousness, and, impressed with these delicious sensations, praises his great preserver, that he still exists and lives, and can in spirit raise himself to him!

How much nobler, how much more blessed is this sentiment of ourselves and our ability, than the deceitful view of our figure, our apparel, our outward circumstances, our riches, our borrowed beauties and prerogatives, which so frequently transports us from ourselves, without allowing us to discern what actually belongs to our proper being, what gives us our true worth and dignity, from among the multitude of things to which we falsely attribute them! And when thus, in the solemn hour of solitude, the sentiment of self is quick within us; when thus the dazzling glare of what is foreign to us, what is only for a short period connected with us, vanishes from before our eyes; when thus our mind, as it were, looks into the depths of its nature: What capacities, what

powers, what dispositions for higher perfection and happiness, does it not discover in itself! With what a lively sentiment is it not then convinced, that its present state is not the completest mode of its existence, not the ultimate end of its being; that it is not and becomes not here, what it may be and become; that an ever active faculty dwells within it, constantly embracing more, and constantly aiming at remoter things, which is ever struggling to burst its narrow bounds, and to produce, in other circumstances, in other connexions with the visible and with the spiritual world, totally different effects, and to procure for itself the enjoyment of quite other satisfactions and fruitions! And what a glorious presentiment is this! What views it opens of everlasting being, and of everlasting progress! Yes, then does a man truly rejoice in his existence and his life; rejoice in them far more than in all the externals that belong to him; feels his entire worth, his inherent dignity, feels what he is capable of doing and performing; and feels himself sufficiently strong to accomplish every duty of life, to sustain its afflictions and troubles, to bear every privation of outward things, and to quit this life itself, the first step of his existence, without reluctance, and press forward, with resolution and ardor, into the superior life.

In the silence of solitude, we not only acquire and keep up a more intimate consciousness of ourselves in general, but we learn likewise, thirdly, to know ourselves, and particularly our failings and infirmities, far better than in the tumult of society. What a number of checks and hindrances does not this salutary knowledge of ourselves meet with in social life! Here are multifarious and intricate affairs; there alluring diversions and fascinating pleasures, which entirely draw off our attention from ourselves,

and fix it altogether on externals. Here we meet with flatterers, who, from interested views or from weakness and exuberant complaisance, pronounce us to be better than we are; there partial judges, who think to excuse their own faults and extravagancies by justifying ours. Here are testimonies of politeness, and others of friendship which bias our judgment of ourselves and our actions. Here are prevailing maxims and customs; there fascinating examples, which prevent us from inspecting our failings and feeling our defects.

On coming into silence, on entering into solitude, the illusions of self love disperse. The attention is fixed on ourselves; the flatterer holds his peace; no partial or corrupted judge, no civil friend takes our judgment by surprize; the force of example is weakened or evaded; the common excuses lose all their validity. A man is more familiar with himself, investigates closer, scrutinizes deeper, tries himself upon sounder principles, and pronounces more impartially on the value of himself and his actions. There he will neither be led into error by the dread of betraying himself before others, nor by the hope of obtaining from them a more advantageous opinion of him. There self conceit gives way to rational self love. There nothing is more natural than for a man to ask his own heart, Am I really that for which I am taken? The wise, the virtuous, the sincere, the upright, the beneficent, the well disposed, the useful man, which I am reputed to be by my friends? Have I done so much good, have I performed so much service to society as they ascribe to me? Am I actually exempt from those failings, which I know how to conceal in company, and from which I am thought to be exempt? Are these failings so insignificant, are they so unavoidable, so inseparable from human infirmity, as they are said

to be? Can I reflect on myself and on my moral condition with as much complacency, and be as satisfied with myself and my conduct, when I am not disturbed in reflecting on them, when nothing beguiles me, nobody flatters me, when I consider what I am and what I do, in the clear light of truth, in the presence of him who sees in secret? Oh how totally different, my dear brethren, do we not appear to our ourselves, how many weak places in our heart, how many infractions in our virtue, how many defects in our best dispositions and actions, do we not then perceive, which we almost always overlook in the ordinary dissipations of our lives, or only discern them, as it were, in the shade! And must not such discoveries as these be of inestimable moment to us, must they not render solitude, which enable us to make them, delightful to us!

But solitude must become still dearer to us, if we consider, in the fourth place, that we there feel the being of God, and his nearness, far more intimately and acutely than it is possible for us in other circumstances to do. Indeed he is every where present, every where near, near to every one of us, he pervades and animates all, he works in all and by all; and the sentiment of him never absolutely forsakes the wise man and the christian, even in the noise and hurry of an active and social life. He has the Lord always before him and walks continually in his presence. But how frequently will this greatest, this most blessed of all sentiments be obscured by the unavoidable distractions and businesses which engross our whole attention! How seldom can we entertain it properly, or dwell long enough upon it! How much oftener is it then only like a feeble, transient gleam, or the cold, unfruitful light of the moon, than the strong beams of the sun, warming, invigorating, illuminating, and enlivening nature!

No, only in the silence of solitude, only in those solemn hours and moments, when all around us is still, when we hear nothing in nature but the voice of God, the voice of God in our hearts, the voice of God in his word, only there do we learn to observe the revelations of the Deity within us and without us, see ourselves surrounded with the effects of his power and goodness, and cordially feel that he is not far from every one of us, that he is all in all. There our reflections are perspicuous and certain: If I be, then God is; if I be and operate here, then God is and operates here, by whom I subsist and live. Am I encompassed by creatures all around me, by beauties, by blessings, and powers? Then am I encompassed all around by God, the father of these creatures, the source of these beauties and powers, the giver and preserver of these bounties. Where force, where motion, where life, where intelligence, where freedom and activity is, there is God, there he reveals himself, there he acts! How nigh, how inexpressibly nigh then must he not be to me, and to every thing that is and lives and thinks and moves! What can I be and think and will and do and enjoy, that does not afford me a demonstration of the existence and the presence of God, without whom nothing is and nothing will be, nothing can be, and nothing happen? No, I have no need to soar into the heights of heaven, to search for him, the Omnipresent, nor to dive into the abysses of the deep, neither to look for him in the splendor of the sun nor in the darkness of the night, neither through the boundless regions of the sky nor in the temples of his votaries, neither in this nor in that peculiar spot of his immeasurable domain; he is in the height and in the depth, in the splendor of the sun and in the obscurity of night, among the hymning choirs of superior spirits, and in the midst of his worshippers.

on earth; he is here and at the same time there, in me and in each of his creatures, is every where, and every where equally great, equally powerful, equally good, every where perfection and love itself! Nothing can conceal me from his inspection, nothing deprive me of his vivifying and blessing influence, nothing of his paternal tenderness; nothing remove and part me from him, without whom I should not be, and without whose power and will I could not continue for a moment!—And now when these thoughts are strong and vigorous in me; when I thus feel the nearness of my God, my creator and father; feel that I live and move and am in him; what a light must not then diffuse itself upon all things round me, what brightness in my mind! What are the cares and what the troubles that will not then vanish away! What strife of the passions will not then subside! What tumult not sink into peace! What hopes, what assurance, what joy will not animate and pervade my frame! What a foretaste not bless me of purer and everlasting pleasure! And shall not the solitude that promises and procures me such advantages be dear to me?

O solemn silence, be thou hailed of me! Hail, sacred solitude! Sacred to wisdom, to self possession, to supernal joys, sacred to the complacency of God; ever be thou blessed of me, ever let me find thee the restorative, the comfort, the solace of my soul! Take me into thy bosom, when stunned with the noise of the world and weary of its pleasures, I am only alive to my intellectual wants! Oh shed thy mild reviving influence on me, when I feel the weariness of the traveller, overtaken by night, while yet a great way from the place he endeavored to reach, or has had the misfortune to stray from his path! Shield me from the derision of the vain, from the unmerited scorn and the uncharitable judgment of the envious,

from the melancholy view of the follies, the crimes, and the miseries, which so often disfigure the scene of busy and social life! Be thou my sanctuary and resting place against the hostile attacks of infidelity and doubt; dart light around me when my path is obscure; appease my swelling heart, abate the rage of every wild and furious passion, establish serenity in my breast; give me to feel the intimate presence of my creator and father, to taste the ravishing joys of exalted devotion, and be to me the gate of heaven!

But, wouldst thou, my christian friend and brother, wouldst thou that solitude should be and procure to thee what it is and procures to the wise man and the christian; then let the following maxims of prudence be recommended to thee in the use of it.

Seek not solitude from disgust or misanthropy; not that thou mayest give freer scope to thy sullen and gloomy reflections, or the furious sallies of thy wounded pride, thy affronted vanity; not for breaking forth in sad complaints, or for indulging some secret sorrow or some unruly passion; not for withdrawing thyself from thy brethren, for dissolving thy intercourse with them, and depriving them, as unworthy, of thy services and converse. No, this were to profane the solemn silence that surrounds thee, a criminal abuse of so excellent a means of improving and calming thy heart: And every folly thou committest there; every depraved sentiment or sensation thou indulgest there, will so much the more degrade thee, as it was more easy for thee to avoid or to suppress it.

Seek not solitude, when thy duty, the duty of thy station and calling summons thee to active life, when thy friend, thy brother, is in need of thy succor, when thou canst perform something useful to society. To do good is always better than to think well: Useful employment preferable to the loftiest repose;

a magnanimous sacrifice for the benefit of others more meritorious than the noblest sentiments. Beware then of preferring the pleasures of solitude, innocent and respectable as they are, to the pleasures of beneficence, and, under the pretence of promoting thy own internal perfection, to neglect the advancement of the general welfare.

Seek not solitude, thirdly, as a punishment on thyself, as a penance for thy numberless dissipations and amusements. Thus it would soon become burdensome to thee. Thus it could neither be useful nor agreeable to thee, and the oppressive languor that would haunt thee there would soon deliver thee a prey to every foolish and dangerous dissipation and pleasure, that bids fair to free thee from this hateful incumbrance. No, the sentiment of thy spiritual wants, the sentiment of thy superior vocation, the desire of becoming wiser and better, and of having more communion with God, should drive thee into retirement, and should direct thy thoughts and thy employment there. It should be the nourishment and recreation of thy mind and heart, the soother of thy cares, the reward of thy industry and fidelity in business, thy refreshment after wearisome assiduity, and thy preparative and strengthener to every fresh exertion requisite to thy station in life.

If in these views thou enter into solitude, then let thy thoughts and sentiments flow unrepressed, so long as they are innocent and good, suitable to thy present temper of mind and thy immediate necessities. Lay no restraint upon thyself, unless particular purposes require it. Let the sentiment of thyself, the clear internal consciousness of what thou art and dost, be active in thee; hide thee not from thyself; repel no sentiment or thought merely because it is strange or unusual to thee; let thy mind exert its vigor without restraint. The more freely, naturally

and calmly thou thinkest and feelest, the more will the recesses of thy heart disclose themselves to thee; truth will shine upon thee with a brighter beam; and the farther advances wilt thou make in self-knowledge, in wisdom and virtue.

Lastly, never depart out of solitude without taking with thee into social and active life some good and lucid notion, some noble and pious sentiment, some virtuous resolution, or some ground of comfort. Retirement should not be so much an ultimate end as a means to higher aims. Let not thy attachment to solitude render thee morose and querulous, dispirited in goodness, sullen, or unsocial, shy and unfriendly to mankind. Return to thy brethren with an open countenance, a cheerful heart, and with firmer affection; and then apply the force thou hast collected, the perceptions thou hast acquired, the serenity thou hast restored within thee, the satisfaction and hopes thou hast confirmed, the sentiment of the divine presence and nearness wherewith thou hast impressed thy heart; apply all these to the more ready and cheerful prosecution of thy business, to greater circumspection in thy conduct, to a happier enjoyment of the bounties of thy God, apply it to the purposes of beneficence and the advancement of human happiness. Proceed on thy way towards the mark of the prize of thy high calling, which now shines brighter before thee; proceed undismayed and firm, and practise, as thou goest, what thou hast learnt in this school of wisdom and virtue. So wilt thou completely fulfil thy vocation, and neither be slothful and idle in solitude, nor trifling and negligent in the hurry of the world.

SERMON XXVIII.

The Value of Social Life.



O GOD, who art the father of us all, how closely hast thou not connected us with each other! How intimately, how indissolubly interwoven our concerns, our wants, our sorrows and joys together! No one can dispense with others; no one can be accomplished and happy for himself alone; every one may be useful to others in numerous ways. How were it possible for us here, most merciful father, to mistake thy call to be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, and our destination to social life? No, it is thy appointment that we should consort together along the path of life, mutually bear each others burdens and facilitate the way to each other, that we should commute thy various gifts and blessings with one another, impart to others of our substance, and mutually rejoice in the interchange of benefits. By planting strong social dispositions in our hearts, what sources of generally useful activity and of generous pleasure hast thou not made them! Oh that no sordid selfishness, no misanthropic passion might weaken or disturb these sources of satisfaction and delight! Might they ever flow more clear and pure, ever issue more copiously, and diffuse around abundance of true happiness and joy! Do thou then grant us the understanding, the wisdom, the integrity and virtue which in this respect we want. Do thou penetrate and replenish our hearts with the gentle, generous, affectionate emotions and dispositions, with the zeal to serve and benefit others, with that warm participation in the prosperity and adversity of all, which alone can confer a real value on social life. Let us

more and more plainly perceive and prize this value, and behave in regard to it as is agreeable to thy will and to our vocation. Bless to that end the reflections we are now about to begin on that subject. Let us thoroughly comprehend the lessons of wisdom that are to be delivered to us, impartially apply them to ourselves, and make a faithful use of them in our future conduct. For these blessings we implore thee, fully trusting in the promises given us by Jesus, and, as his followers, farther address thee, in filial confidence, as, Our Father, &c.



EPHESIANS v. 15, 16.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

THERE are blessings known, esteemed, admired, and used by all, and in the use of which every person finds pleasure and profit, to the use of which therefore none need excitation or encouragement, and yet which require a certain recommendation if we would perceive their entire value, use them in the best manner, and obtain as much pleasure and profit from them as they are calculated to afford. Of this kind, undoubtedly, is social life. Who does not know and feel that man is formed for intercourse with his brethren, for communicating to them of what he is and has, for the exchange of his thoughts and sentiments with theirs? Who has not tasted the pleasures and joys of social life, and been charmed with the sweets of them? Who does not prefer it to absolute and constant solitude? Who then does not find in himself sufficient impulse to the use and enjoyment of it? How seldom is it necessary, comparatively speaking, to caution our acquaintance against

too strong a propensity to retirement, or to exhort them to go into company, in the ordinary sense of the word! How much more easily, and how much more frequently, upon the whole, do we not run into the extreme on this side than on the other!

But whether this sociability is and procures us all that it might be and procure? Whether we prize and affect it, not merely from blind impulse, not merely to fly from ourselves, not merely for following the prevailing fashion, but on plain and acknowledged principles? Whether we understand and feel what it is that gives it its really great value? And whether it is of that value to us, or affords us all those satisfactions and advantages, which we may seek in it, and expect from it? These are matters whereon, notwithstanding the universally strong propensity to social life, perhaps but few people ever reflect, and in regard to which probably but few are able to give themselves a satisfactory account. Man is a social being, since he naturally possesses dispositions and capacities for society, and finds pleasure in it; since he hears sociability praised, and readily complies with the fashion that is most prevalent at certain times and among particular people. But, whether he be social in the best and most honorable manner to the wise and virtuous man, to the christian, and reap from his sociable turn the greatest utility possible, the most harmless and most noble pleasures, about this he too seldom concerns himself; and hence it is that this very instinct is so often a burthen, even to its admirers and encomiasts, and so seldom comes up to their expectations. My design at present is to give you a few directions in reflecting on sociableness, towards a sounder judgment and a better use of it. Accordingly, we will investigate together the value of social life.

For more accurately ascertaining it, we shall have two questions to answer. The first is, How must social life be managed in order to render it of a certain value? The other, What gives it this value, or wherein consists the value of it?

These investigations will teach us how we are to walk circumspectly, according to the apostolical exhortation in our text, and not to behave as fools in regard of social life, but as wise, adapting ourselves to times or circumstances, and making the best use of both.

Sociableness, my pious hearers, is always better than unsociableness; a defective use of this natural impulse, or this propensity founded in education and improved by intercourse, is better than the total disuse of it. But all sociableness is not rational and christian, every kind of social life is not of great value. Neither all sociableness nor every kind of social life is able to procure us lasting advantage and real pleasure. Principally, by the absence and avoidance of several defects and imperfections; principally by the presence and the united activity of several good properties and virtues, does social life become and afford what it may and ought; by this means does it principally acquire that value which renders it worthy of our high esteem and participation. And what are then the good properties, the virtues, we are to bring with us into social life, and exert therein; what the faults we have to avoid, if we would have it of great value to us?

Honesty and openness of heart is the first good property, the first virtue we must introduce with us and exercise in social life; to be destitute of all restraint and all circumspection, is, on the other hand, the first fault we must avoid, and therewith the grossness which is its inseparable attendant. To be sociable implies to communicate to one an-

other our thoughts, our sentiments, to compare together our opinions and views, to barter them against each other, and to rectify and improve them by each other. Would you reap this benefit from it, my pious hearers? Then must truth be in your discourses, in your gestures, in your looks, in the tone of your voice, and in your whole attitude and behavior; then must you actually think and feel what you pretend to think and to feel, be that in reality for which you are desirous to be taken. Then must you therefore not lock up your thoughts within your own breasts, and not reject every reflection and sentiment, every opinion which is not yet marked with the stamp of the mode, or the prevailing fashion of the day, and is not thoroughly and universally current; then must you not sedulously strive to conceal yourself from others; not torment yourself with a scrupulosity that kills all the vivacity and sprightliness of conversation, at every word you utter, every sentiment that arises in your bosom, every feature of your face, every gesture of your body, as if you were afraid of betraying the true state of your mind; then must you neither regard social life as an intercourse of impostures, nor use it as a school of dissimulation. This would not be a fair, honorable, and obliging commutation of what we are and have, but an artful and fraudulent intercourse, imposing upon others what we are not and do not possess, and yet would appear to be and to have. By this means social life would be turned into a low farce; and what value could it then be of to thinking and sensible men?

Beware, however, of imagining that honesty and openness of heart is incompatible with circumspection and prudence. Though you communicate freely and honestly with others, you have no need on that account to repose a blind confidence in all you meet;

to disclose to every one the inmost thoughts and sentiments of your heart. Though you do not dissemble, do not give yourself out for better than you are, you are not therefore unnecessarily to reveal all your infirmities and failings. Though you say to others nothing but what you think and feel, you need not therefore directly tell every one whatever you think and whatever you feel. Though you shun the anxiety of excessive scrupulosity about whatever you speak and do, you need not therefore speak and act without prudence and circumspection. Otherwise you will injure many, give offence to many, keep numbers of weak but well intentioned persons aloof from you, prevent many good designs, but not yet ripe for execution, from coming to effect, cause the truth to be suspected which is not comprehensible to every one, and bring contempt on your ill timed expressions of sentiment. Your frankness will become folly, and your sincerity degenerate into rudeness.

The use of a generous freedom is another good property, another virtue, which we must take with us and display in social life; absolute licentiousness and effrontery, on the other hand, is another fault we must avoid. Would you run no risk of finding social life burdensome to you; would you have it to be not so much labor and toil as refreshment and recreation; then, by all means, you should breathe freely, think freely, judge freely, act freely; you should venture, in most cases, to follow your own innocent humor and your irreproachable inclinations; you should not decline to appear what you are, and to do what you find agreeable; you should not think yourself bound to comply with the self conceit and the humor of others, to model yourself by other persons in all things, and absolutely to say and to do nothing but what has been heretofore received and

is handed down, or what every one says and does. This would be introducing an insipid uniformity and an oppressive languor into social life.

But, on the other side, if you would have it as little burdensome and disagreeable to your company as to yourself; then you must not pretend to preside alone, not constantly lay down the law, not always endeavor to arrange and control the pleasures, the affairs, and the connexions of others; you must allow others the same liberty you use yourself, and they allow, make them the same little sacrifices of complaisance and indulgence which they at other times make you; and therefore interchangeably direct and obey, now follow others, and then be followed. In short, you must set bounds to the use of your freedom, whenever it would be injurious to others, or they might reasonably take offence at it; particularly whenever it might have a tendency to lead the younger members of society into error or sin. The unlimited use of one's liberty in social intercourse is criminal licentiousness, is actual tyranny and disgusting arrogance.

Graceful, polite, and agreeable manners are a third requisite which we should carry into social life, and attend to the observance of; artificial constraint, on the contrary, and a stiff and formal carriage, is a third fault we are to avoid; and even the christian, who in every respect ought to be the most accomplished as well as the best of men, should not imagine that matters of this kind are indifferent to him, or unworthy of his attention. To be agreeable to others, and even to please by the exterior, is a purpose of social life, and one of the principal sources of the pleasures it procures us. The eye must not there be hurt by any thing repugnant and shocking in mien, gestures, or in apparel; no harsh, discordant, shrieking tones must grate upon the ear; the taste for the

beautiful must be satisfied and entertained, by the natural, the becoming, the proper, the captivating, in the figure, the posture, the voice, the garments, and the whole demeanor. Would you, my pious hearers, attain and promote these views; then adorn your persons, but overload them not with borrowed ornaments; follow the fashion so far as is consistent with propriety and a cultivated taste; but run not into the extravagant or ridiculous; let a graceful ease and a noble freedom, not an artificial formality, a childish levity, or an offensive ferocity, be the rule of your movements and outward appearance. Let the tone of your voice be natural and firm, and soft, and suitably modulated to the subject of your discourse, but never so as to become inaudible by an excessive modesty, or disgusting by an affected suavity; study to acquire elegant and complacent manners, but let them be *your own*, and not a close, servile, and thereby a ridiculous imitation of extraneous behavior. Whatever relates to decorum and outward address must not be the effect of affectation and artifice, but the genuine result of an inward sense of the beautiful and becoming, and receive animation from that sentiment alone; and even the outward deportment, the very garb of wisdom and virtue, must give a lustre to intrinsic worth, and thus render it more amiable.

Benevolence and philanthropy is a fourth good property, a fourth virtue, which we must carry with us and practise in social life; envy, coldness, indifference, and jealousy, on the contrary, or flattery and affected sensibility, compose a fourth class of the faults we should there avoid. And, indeed, would you receive pleasure from the countenance of your brethren, and from your conversation with them; then must you enjoy their welfare, and be delighted with their good fortune. Otherwise every better

quality you perceive in them, every mark of approbation conferred on them by others, every praise they obtain, must give you uneasiness. Would you have your intercourse with them not irksome or painful, would you support it with pleasure; then must you take part in all that relates to them; you should not be indifferent to whatever befalls them, whether good or bad; then must you rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Would you procure sustenance and employment for your heart by your converse with others; then must you expand it to the feelings of humanity and friendship; then must you let it be animated by correspondent estimation and love; then must self interest, self love, and misanthropy be eradicated from it. Coldness, indifferency, insensibility, envy, hatred, are the death of all social pleasures; are what constantly, more or less, impair and weaken these satisfactions, and are the causes that disgust, displeasure and languor so often prevail in company.

But in avoiding these mistakes, take care not to boast of dispositions which are foreign to you, or to testify a sensibility which you do not possess. Seek not to compensate the defects of your benevolence and affection by the base arts of flattery. Put not on the semblances of gladness, or sorrow, while your heart neither feels the one nor the other. Accost not with pretended friendship those from whom your heart is averse. Feign not to shed tears of compassion, of sympathy, of joy, or of tenderness. Be not lavish in particular protestations of friendship to any man that is not the friend of your soul, the confident of your heart. Rarely can artifice conceal the defects of nature, and the want of veracity; and people in general would rather you let your coldness appear, than be duped by the semblance of a cordial concern. Would you avoid these errors; then be christians,

for the christian is animated by unfeigned love ; that is the prime motive of all he thinks and speaks and does.

Affability is a fifth good quality, which we should bring and employ in social life ; loquacity, on the contrary, is a fifth failing which we should avoid. The affable man entertains, but the loquacious confounds. The former speaks with reflection, and selects the most profitable and agreeable from what he has to say ; the latter delivers every thing that comes into his mind without consideration or choice, and shakes out his wallet of good things and bad, proper and improper, windy conceits and stupid dreams, in every man's face he meets. The former actually converses with others, and hearkens when they speak with the same attention he, in his turn, requires from them ; the latter is constantly speaking, never has time to hear, and his perpetual torrent of words rushes over all, like a deluge, deprives the intelligent of the desire and the opportunity to speak, and both the wise and the unwise of all power to hear. The former, in short, knows the fit time for holding his tongue, and is not ashamed of his silence ; the other had rather have recourse to idle reports, or slander, or lies, than allow himself to be robbed of the imaginary honor of possessing an inexhaustible fund of entertainment.

Strive therefore to maintain and heighten the pleasures of society by a rational and discreet affability ; but do not heedlessly spoil them by loquacity. Learn to hear as well as to speak. Distinguish yourself more by the truth, the justness, the moral goodness of what you say, by the delicacy of your remarks, and the fit manner in which you produce them, than by the redundant verbosity, and stupefying vehemence of your speech. Let your discourses be seasoned with salt, according to the pre-

cept of the apostle ! Let them be ever inoffensive, conducive to edification, and constantly so ordered, that the claims of truth, of virtue, of religion, of christianity, be never infringed. Be not distressed in those moments when the vivacity of conversation gives place to profound silence, frequently unavoidable, and often so salutary to the support and improvement of reflection. Rather submit to the reproach of unsociableness, or of poverty in materials of entertainment, than escape this reproach at the expense of truth or philanthropy, virtue or decorum.

Mirth, harmless, temperate mirth, is a sixth good quality which we should carry with us into social life, and put in practice there ; dissolute mirth, on the other hand, and extravagant jollity, is a sixth fault we have to avoid. The former, decent mirth, recreates and strengthens both the health of the mind and that of the body ; it is really recreation ; is even worthy of the wise man and the christian ; and gives to every thing that is spoken or transacted an agreeable aspect, a heightened value ; the other, dissolute mirth, enervates and perplexes the mind, frequently distorts the body, commonly debases the character, excludes every finer and more generous satisfaction, corrupts the taste, and leaves nothing behind but confusion and wild uproar.

Avoid these faults, and acquire these good qualities, if you would give and receive much real pleasure in social life. Let serenity accompany you in the society of your brethren ; let gaiety and cheerfulness animate you there ; let inoffensive wit and harmless raillery season your conversation ; enjoy allowable and innoxious mirth. But enjoy them with prudent moderation. Beware of every thing that benumbs your reason, that deprives you of the consciousness of yourself and the respect that is due to others, of every thing that distresses others or de-

grades them in their own eyes, of every thing that is in opposition to the dignity of the man and the christian. Rejoice in the Lord alway; that is, constantly so as becomes a christian. Only that cheerfulness which is consistent with the thoughts of God and your duty, and which you will reflect upon with pleasure in the silence of retirement, or at least in your hours of solitary meditation will not be a cause of regret; only this cheerfulness should be approved, sought after, enjoyed, and encouraged by you.

If we take with us these good qualities, these virtues, into social life, and exercise them there, at the same time avoiding their opposite defects; if therefore sincerity and frankness, but not indiscretion and rudeness; generous freedom, but not licentiousness and arrogance; graceful, refined, and agreeable manners, but not foppery, affectation and incivility; benevolence and philanthropy, but not coldness and jealousy, or flattery and artificial sensibility; affability, but not garrulity; mirth, but not licentiousness; prevail in social life; then certainly it has a great value, it then procures us complete and diversified pleasures, solid and lasting utility. However, the more particular statement of the pleasures and benefits arising from sociability, and the arrangement of them in their proper light, as the matter is so copious, we must defer to another opportunity. In the meantime, we will just draw a few inferences from what has been already remarked.

Collect from the foregoing causes, how it happens that society is so often irksome to you; that it so seldom answers your expectations; that you so frequently go into company, as it were against your inclination; and much oftener leave it, with a heart dissatisfied or totally empty. Either you yourself are deficient in those good qualities and virtues, to which social life is indebted for all its value, or you

miss them in others. Either you suffer yourself to be overtaken and beguiled by those failings, which diminish or destroy the pleasures of society, or you are obliged to experience the disagreeable effects of them in others. More carefully combat or avoid these failings, more strenuously strive to acquire those good qualities and virtues, and exercise yourself in the practice of them; so will the principal causes of languor and disgust be certainly banished from your converse with others, and that source of satisfaction and pleasure will be open to you.

Learn farther from what has been observed, that, although, to the best use and most solid enjoyment of social life, outward appearance, genteel and agreeable manners, and what is only to be acquired by frequenting polite circles, are very requisite; yet that likewise these things do not constitute the sole, nor even the principal requisites; but that depends on good moral qualities, on real virtues, on christian dispositions, on actual and distinguished merit both of mind and heart. Thence conclude, that he who comes to his brethren with an empty head and a cold heart, has no reason to expect either pleasure or profit from his intercourse with them, and that he who brings with him no disposition for harmless, elegant gaiety, can likewise have no pretensions to the enjoyment of such satisfactions, and has no right to complain at the want of them. Forget not, that the satisfactions and pleasures of social life consist in the mutual interchange and communication of what each person possesses and knows that is eminently beautiful, good, and agreeable; that they depend on a reciprocal giving and receiving; and that he who has nothing, or but little, to give, is only capable of receiving as little, and has no right to require any more. The greater stock, therefore, the more wealth in good thoughts, sentiments, opin-

ions, perceptions, various kinds of knowledge, views and accomplishments, you take with you, so much the more opportunity and means will you meet with for exchanging your riches against the commodities that others possess, and at the same time improve and augment your stock.

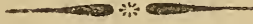
Learn, thirdly, from what has been said, that the wise, the virtuous man, the real christian, whether in society or solitude, is in his proper place; that he constantly carries about him the most copious sources of pleasure, which he imparts to others and enjoys himself; that he every where runs the least hazard of either doing or suffering wrong, of affronting others or of being affronted by them; that he is every where eminently good and eminently happy; and that he has always the means at hand, in his reflecting mind, his honest heart, and his contented disposition, of rendering very indifferent, and in many respects, disagreeable company, pretty tolerable. His trained understanding finds even there more materials for thought, his benevolent and philanthropic heart discovers there more of the beautiful and the good, overlooks and excuses more failings and follies, enjoys every pleasure and satisfaction in greater purity and perfection; and his temperate desires, his modest pretensions, are far more easily satisfied, than if he brought with him into company an empty head, a drowsy mind, an austere or envious eye, a misanthropical, discontented heart, or ungoverned desires and proud pretensions.

Learn, lastly, that solitary and social life must be mutually interchanged for each other, if we would receive the greatest possible advantage from both, and that the social alone, without the solitary life, can have no great value. In the silence of solitude we should qualify ourselves for the satisfactions and

pleasures of society. There we should learn to think judiciously in the christian sense of the term; if we would here speak rationally and agreeably. We should there collect and adjust the knowledge, acquire the virtues and the good qualities we are here to use, and by which we are to merit esteem and approbation and love. There we should form our taste to the beautiful and good, which we are here to cherish and apply. We must there procure our heart that peace, and fill it with those benevolent, generous sentiments and dispositions, which we find so necessary here, and afford so much satisfaction and delight both to ourselves and to others. We should there fight against the obstacles and temptations which may here lead us into error or plunge us into guilt. Combine them therefore together, and labor in solitude at the cultivation of your understanding and the improvement of your moral condition, with so much the more zeal, as it is so necessary to you in social life, that you may be so much the more useful and agreeable to others; and that you may reap again in return more profit and satisfaction from your intercourse with them. Yes, believe me, my dear friends, wisdom and virtue and piety, are and continue in all places, at all times, in all circumstances; in domestic and in social, as well as in solitary life, the best, the surest guides of man, the most solid basis of his satisfaction, the richest, the only inexhaustible sources of his pleasure and his happiness.

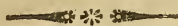
SERMON XXIX.

The Value of Social Life, continued.



O GOD, how much more might we not be and afford to others than we actually are and do ! How much more contented and cheerful and happy might we live together than it commonly happens ! How much farther proceed in virtue and perfection ! What incitement, what means and opportunities to that end hast thou not granted to us in social life ! Every reciprocal office we perform, every business that we pursue in common, and every pleasure that we commonly enjoy, might and should at the same time be an exercise in virtue and an approximation to perfection ; every assistance we afford our brethren, every satisfaction we procure them, at the same time be a benefit and a blessing to ourselves ! Yes, if we so much more esteemed each other as we might and should, so much more loved each other, so much more readily served each other, so much more closely connected our wants and businesses and pleasures together ; if sincerity and affection accompanied us in every society, there animated all our discourses and actions ; if we there looked not merely at our own things, but also and still more on the things of others, and our thoughts and sentiments were constantly in unison with our words and deeds : What a source of virtue and happiness would not social life be to us ! What a preparation to that better superior life, that will unite all wise and good persons together, that kingdom of reason and virtue to come ! O God, teach us them properly to understand and to use our advantages. Grant us ever more and more to be kindly affectioned one to another. Inspire into

us all a constantly greater avidity and zeal to serve and to assist each other, and to promote our reciprocal happiness to the utmost of our power. Grant that we may ever take a greater interest in the concerns and fortunes of our brethren; and so cordially rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Let our intercourse with each other be constantly more edifying, more useful, and the satisfactions we mutually enjoy, be constantly more innocent, more generous and fruitful in good works. Oh that in this respect the spirit of christianity might animate and guide us, and dignify all that we think and do! Bless to this end the considerations in which we are now to be employed, and hear our prayer through Jesus Christ, our lord, in whose name we farther implore thee, saying, Our father, &c.



EPHESIANS v. 15, 16.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

THAT social life has a particular value, that it is good and desirable, is a matter whereof no one doubts; of this, my pious hearers, our own experience assures us. But how is it to be ordered, what we are to observe, and what avoid in it, if we desire it to be of great value; and what peculiarly gives it this value, are questions we do not often enough consider, though the solution of them is of the utmost importance in the use and enjoyment of it. The first of these questions I have answered in my preceding discourse. We thence saw what good qualities, what virtues, we are to bring with us into social life, and there employ, and at the same time what faults we should avoid, if we desire it to afford us real pleasure and solid advantage. It must be, namely, hon-

esty and openness of heart, but not rudeness ; generous freedom, but not licentiousness and arrogance ; polite, elegant, engaging manners, but not foppishness, or formal and constrained behavior ; it must be benevolence and philanthropy, but not coldness and jealousy, not flattery, not artificial sensibility ; it must be rational and discreet affability, but not babbling and loquacity ; innocent mirth, but not petulance and dissolute merriment ; that must prevail in social life, if it be to procure us pleasures no less diversified than pure, advantages no less durable than solid.

The questions that still remain to be answered are, What confers this value on social life ? Wherein does it consist ? What is the utility, what are the pleasures it procures us ? To reply expressly to these questions is the object of my present discourse. Happy he who shall learn from it more justly to prize, and more circumspectly to use, the value of the riches it possesses, the means of improvement and happiness it offers !

Social life is, first, the most natural and the most abundant source of the knowledge of mankind. And, without the knowledge of characters, we can neither be so useful to our brethren nor they to us, as our duty and our common interest require. The sage, who in the silence of retirement reflects upon mankind, and at the same time narrowly observes himself, may certainly make great progress in the knowledge of human nature : He may make acute and just remarks on the capacities and powers of the human mind, on the process and connexion of its ideas, on its present and future destination, on human passions, prejudices, virtues and vices ; he may investigate the motives of human actions, and weigh the intrinsic value of their sentiments and actions. But it is only in intercourse with them, it is only in social life, that he will learn to apply the principles and rules by

which he judges of mankind, to a thousand particular persons and occurrences, and put their precision to the proof. There will he first learn to judge of the infinite variety of human minds, the difference of manners, of human dispositions and tempers. There he perceives every feature of human nature multiplied and diversified a thousand ways, sees every faculty of the human mind as differently exerted; every human propensity and passion shew itself under the most variegated and dissimilar aspects, and produce as manifold and different effects. There will he find combinations and mixtures of strength and weakness, of wisdom and folly, of good and bad qualities, of virtues and failings, which, remote from the actual world, he would scarcely have thought possible. And how much must not this extend and rectify his knowledge of mankind! How many phænomena in the moral world will it not elucidate, how many mysteries unravel, which were inexplicable to him, and which by mere meditation he could never have solved!

In society we learn, not only to know mankind in general, but in particular those persons among whom we live, and with whom we are obliged to associate, our acquaintance, our fellow citizens, our friends, every person with whom we are connected by business, by office and employment, and by ordinary affairs. There, on numberless occasions, their principles, their prejudices, their errors, their propensities, their passions, their sound and their weak side, discover themselves to us by degrees. There we learn to know the measure of their mental faculties, the sphere of their comprehension, their way of acting, the proportions of their strength or their weakness, the avenues to their heart, and the influence which certain persons or things have on them. There we may consequently learn, how far we may reckon up-

on them, or whether reckon upon them at all, trust ourselves to them or not, what we have and what we have not to expect from them.

And how useful, how necessary to us is this knowledge, if we would neither deal unjustly by ourselves or others, require neither too much nor too little of any, injure none by ungrounded distrust, nor by too much confidence tempt or perplex them, if we would prosecute our affairs with prudence and success, discharge our duty towards every man by the fittest means, make use of others to promote our designs, and in return contribute our means to the advancement of theirs, afford others the most useful services, and obtain similar services from them! From how many mistakes and errors should we not be saved by such a knowledge of mankind! How much more speedily and securely, in numberless cases, should we not gain our ends! How much more certainly know where to be firm, and where to yield; when we should go strait forward, and where reach our aim by a circuitous way; what maxims we should here use, and what there, for producing the best effects; how take in hand such a case, how manage such a business, how deal with such a person, how behave in such an occurrence! With how much greater ease and safety discharge our duty on one hand, and on the other promote our own lawful and honest designs! How much more good be able to perform, and how much more to enjoy! And must not then the social life that enables us to acquire this knowledge of mankind be of great value to us?

Yes, certainly great is its value! For, at the same time that it improves us in the knowledge of mankind, it in the second place supplies us with the most excellent means of exercising our mental faculties, of enlarging the sphere of our views, of rectifying and bringing into action the knowledge we have already

acquired, and of increasing it with new discoveries. If we wish to impart our sentiments on any subject to others, in a manner satisfactory to them; then we must represent the case at the same time in a more perspicuous method to ourselves, and more precisely discriminate our conceptions of it, and weigh them apart, than we commonly do when we reflect upon them only for ourselves. If we would hearken to others with intelligence, perfectly understand them, and apprehend their opinion or their judgment on any subject with full conviction, or oppose them with solid arguments; then must we more strenuously exert our attention, and more strictly investigate the matter, than if we were to determine upon it merely for ourselves by the suggestions of sensations that are at once imperfect and obscure. If we would accompany others in their train of reflections, or follow them in their arguments; then we must place ourselves, as it were, in the orbit of their view, and thus alter or enlarge our own. If we be desirous that others should readily communicate their reflections to us; then must we let them see that we perceive the truth and justness of them, and must repay them by some equivalent thoughts of our own. Generally speaking, in social-life we barter our experiences, our perceptions, our knowledge, against those of others, while all are gainers by this species of traffic, not excepting even him who gives far more than he receives; because we can never teach others without learning ourselves, and because every person in his line and circumstances, has seen much, heard much, experienced much, considered much, that another, in a quite different line, and quite other circumstances, could not have seen, not have heard, not have experienced, and not have thought on. We there learn to see things on new sides, unobserved by us before, in new connexions

and different relations; learn to judge of them more liberally, and therefore with less partiality and injustice. We there meet with opportunities of freeing ourselves from numberless prejudices against certain stations, or businesses, or pleasures, or modes of life, or other objects, by which such as live at too great a distance from the world are shackled and led into mistake; we learn to compare more things together, to comprehend more and to survey more objects at once, and thus likewise to judge more justly of the whole.

And how frequently, in social life, does not one intellect rouse and excite another! How often one light kindle another, one brilliant thought elicit another! How oft does a splendid ray of light, a vivid particle of celestial fire, dart into a mind where darkness and cold had fixed their reign, and awaken all its torpid powers to motion and activity! How often does even a pensive and enlightened head there find the solution of some difficulty, or the clue to some labyrinth of human thought, which it had long been seeking for in vain!—And at what point does the series of reflection stop, that a happy moment, an animated conversation with some friend to truth, has once given rise to? What sentiment is there that does not beget a thousand others; which does not multiply itself a thousand fold in every head that admits and comprehends it; which does not return upon the mind ten thousand times, as occasion offers, influencing its ideas and judgments! How frequently does it not happen, that some just and good sentiment, some right and proper judgment, some generous principle, some important rule of prudence, some pious sentiment or emotion, uttered by the wise man, the christian, in conversation with his brethren, how oft does it not sink, imperceptibly even to ourselves, into our hearts, and there germi-

nate in concealment, like a rich grain of wheat, and sooner or later bear fruits of wisdom, of virtue, of happiness, in an increase of an hundred fold! How oft does not some good word of this kind enlighten, direct, animate, determine us, long after it was mentioned in familiar conversation, and to which we afterwards paid no farther regard, and now presents itself to us in all its energy and truth, as a friend, as a counsellor, as a guide! How manifold, in short, how copious are not the materials we there collect for our own reflections, which we may work up afterwards in retirement as our views and wants require! Certainly, if solitude be indispensable for giving justness and solidity, firmness and consistency, to our reflections; social life is no less so for adding to the number of their objects, for giving perspicuity to them, and for rendering them serviceable by their proper application.

A third circumstance which confers a great value on social life is this; by it we are brought nearer together, gain the affection, and learn how to obtain more reciprocal satisfaction from each other. When a man lives remote from his fellow creatures, he is apt to judge too harshly of them; seldom takes much interest in what concerns them, and his heart very often retires from them in proportion as he withdraws himself from their society and converse. Humanity, human affairs, human misery, human happiness, in general and in the aggregate are nothing more than barren ideas, frequently mere words, which leave the heart unmoved and cold, unless at the same time they present us with lively images of several particular persons who share in this humanity, to whom these concerns are of consequence, who groan under this misery, or rejoice in this happiness. These ideas only then become living motives to generous sentiments and actions. But this vivacity and this energy they

can scarcely otherwise acquire than by means of social life, and the closer connexion we thereby contract with our fellow creatures. There alone we feel how much we all possess in common; how little one man can dispense with the help of another; of how much value one is to the other; how important this link is of the great chain which embraces and holds them all together. There we mutually discover many good qualities, many happy dispositions, many capacities and abilities, much acuteness and aptitude, which we did not suspect in each other; and how much must not this contribute to increase our reciprocal esteem and affection! How much generous satisfaction procure us! There we frequently hear individuals of each condition, each age, each sex, each way of life, deliver such just opinions, express such truly christian sentiments, and see them conduct themselves so prudently, that our mind energetically feels its affinity, and our heart entirely sympathizes with them; and how closely, how intimately must not this connect us together! How extensively promote the cause of humanity and brotherly love!

In social life we likewise learn to think more reasonably of the weaknesses, the failings, and the aberrations of our fellow mortals; we learn to consider them not only in and of themselves but in relation to the particular individual, to the situation and circumstances of that individual; we learn to judge of them by their grounds and occasions; we learn to compare them with the good that so often counterbalances, nay, which so often outweighs them; and how much more disposed must not this render us to each other, to bear and to pardon one another in christian love, and to admonish one another in meekness of spirit!

By social life we acquire more sociable dispositions, transact more social affairs, enjoy more social pleas-

ures and satisfactions, encourage ourselves more by common prospects and expectations; and by all this we are undoubtedly brought much closer together, into stricter and more intimate connexions, and are therefore, if we be well disposed and inclined, far more ready to serve and assist one another, and to promote our mutual happiness. To the calls of humanity, to the arguments of religion and christianity, are there superadded the particular impulses of acquaintance and frequent intercourse, the sacred impulse of friendship, the impulse of social pleasures, and the common honor of society; and how much more must not the united force of all these arguments and incentives effect in the man who does not harden his heart against them, than if he were reduced barely to follow the general and cold precepts of reason!

In social life we have, fourthly, the most diversified opportunities for exercising ourselves in many good dispositions and virtues; and every thing that confirms us in good dispositions and induces us to practise the virtues, is indisputably of very great value. In the stillness of retirement I certainly may and should reduce the propensities of my heart to order, give them all their proper direction, kindle and inflame my love for whatever is true and beautiful and good; that is, to virtue. But only in social life, in converse with my brethren, can I confirm my propensities in this good direction, and settle my love of truth, of moral beauty, of virtue, by a ready and faithful obedience to its precepts. Good sentiments that remain locked up in the heart, virtues that never exhibit themselves in action, can possess no signal value, but may easily appear better and greater than they really are. In social life they are put to the test; there we are summoned to bring them forth; there, in the practice of them, we meet with obstacles to vanquish, difficulties to surmount, and oppositions to

encounter; and the oftener we stand out these trials, obey these summons, and come off victorious, or at least maintain our ground, so much the better and more virtuous shall we be, and so much the more safely may we rely on our virtue.

And how various are the opportunities thus afforded us in social life! Here are weak brethren, whom I may easily offend, and who therefore exercise me in circumspection in my discourses and judgments: There are numberless defects and failings, which call for my little forgivenesses, my patience and indulgence. Here I perceive eminent qualities of mind and heart, the advantages of person, of station, of fortune, which raise others above me, which I should respect and admire without jealousy or envy, but with inward satisfaction, with hearty delight; there I distinguish myself from others by similar advantages, receive approbation from others, conciliate their affection; and this esteem and affection should neither subject me to a false humility, nor lead me into foolish pride. Here I may be surprised into displeasure, betrayed into anger, into violence, or ill humor, and should learn from thence to govern myself; there irregular desires and concupisence may be excited in me, which I should encounter and subdue. Here I may be called upon to speak with undaunted resolution in some good cause, to be ashamed of the truth before no man, to plead the cause of the person unjustly accused or calumniated, without respect of persons; there will prudence and humanity impose an uninterrupted silence on me, bidding me repress any sally of wit, though never so happy, any jest, though never so pleasant, which may vex or injure another. Here I meet with a perverse being, to whom I must yield for the sake of peace; there a quarrelsome person, whose passion I must restrain. Here some great or proud man, before whom I shall

not cringe; and there an humble, timid creature, whom I must not despise or confound. Here a man of high desert, whom I shall respect, though destitute of rank or station; there an injurious, a contemptible person, whom I shall not flatter, though surrounded by glittering pomp. Here I have an opportunity to let another shine when I might shine myself; there an opportunity to sacrifice my own pleasure and conveniency to the pleasure and conveniency of another, and thus to exercise myself in self denial and magnanimity. And who can reckon up all the opportunities and occasions that present themselves in social life for confirming us in some good sentiment, for exercising ourselves in some virtue, for resisting and weakening some bad propensity, and thereby for promoting our intrinsic, our spiritual perfection? Certainly he who makes his own amendment his main concern, will find opportunities and incentives to it in every company, in his intercourse with every person.

No less numerous are, fifthly, my pious hearers, the opportunities afforded us by social life for being useful to others in various ways; and this also must give it a great value in the eyes of the benevolent and affectionate man. And, in reality, how vast a multiplicity of services may we not there render to each other, and thus advance our mutual welfare! And how important are they not frequently in their consequences! We are there enabled, by instructive, entertaining, and familiar discourse, to free one person from an error, to clear up some doubt to another, and to remove from a third some scruple that gave him pain, conduct a fourth into the track of truth, and furnish him with an elucidation of matters it highly concerned him to know. There may we often raise the dejected, encourage the timorous, cheer the desponding, advise the wanderer, give reso-

lution to the irresolute, information to the ignorant, warmth to the cold, and fresh vigor to the almost expiring. There may we often bring the giddy to reflection, the slothful to activity, the frail to the sentiment and abhorrence of their failings, comfort the fallen, and animate those that are humbled by their fall to a cheerful prosecution of their course. There one while, a prudent and timely admonition, at another an affectionate suggestion, at another a friendly intreaty, at another a discreet remonstrance, at another deserved praise, at another a powerful word of comfort, at another an encouraging and animated address, at another a hearty concurrence in the designs, an interest in the concerns and actions of others, may obviate many faults and transgressions, may ward off many a misfortune, prevent many an uneasiness, restrain and abate many a hurtful passion, or occasion and reward many a good deed, unite many hearts together, and open to them various sources of happiness and joy. There often, by the presence and operation of eminently intelligent and virtuous men, the noblest qualities of the human heart are displayed, and purposes brought to maturity in actual effects, which otherwise would have remained in the intention alone. And how much may we not there effectuate by our example! What influence may we not obtain on others! When they see and observe the beauty, the complaisance, the generosity, the gentleness of virtue in the lineaments of our face, in our judgments, in our whole deportment; when they perceive the harmony subsisting in all the parts of our conduct, how tranquil, how satisfied, how cheerful the enjoyment of a good conscience and the assurance of the divine approbation render us; how cheerful our hopes, and rational our devotion; how respectable, how amiable, must not virtue and piety appear to them! What an impression

must not these observations, this sight, make on the good and the bad, on the strong and the weak, on the wavering and the resolute? What a salutary compunction must it not excite in one, what a generous emulation in another, what firmness and perseverance in a third!

Social life, in short, when properly used, is productive of very many innocent and real pleasures to us. The various advantages it procures us, is already the richest and the purest source of them. This greater knowledge of mankind, this extension of our perceptions and sphere of observation, this approximation of our hearts and minds to each other, this inward sentiment of our mutual relationship, this discipline in the noblest sentiments and virtues, this opportunity to do good and to promote felicity; what pleasure must it not procure to the friend of truth, the friend of virtue, the friend of mankind! And how many other sources of pleasure are not opened to us by the reciprocal confidence, the greater freedom, the natural endeavor to please, and to present ourselves on the most advantageous side, the various exertions and proofs of the benevolence of our brethren, the gaiety of conversation, the charms of mirth, the many agreeable occupations and amusements of our senses and minds, which are the property of social life and give it all its worth! And how the prudent, conscious, and sentimental enjoyment of these pleasures refreshes and revives our hearts! It recruits our spirits after finishing some laborious work; it rewards us for our industry and fidelity in the prosecution of an arduous calling and the duties of life; it furnishes relaxation to our assiduous intellect, by giving a freer and easier scope to its activity. It is repose, and yet not an inactive, not an irksome

rest; it is employment, and yet not violent, not toilsome business. We there enjoy our existence in common, our distinctions, our goods, our prospects and connexions; we there enjoy in common and with gladness of heart, the various gifts and recreations which providence has granted us to enjoy; we there feel the value of the mutual esteem and affection and friendship, that connects us together; we there find ourselves encouraged and recompensed by the applause that is given to our projects, our sentiments and our actions; we there calm and delight ourselves in the idea of the manifold assistances and services we may expect from each other, and the number of things we may accomplish by united efforts; we there find a variety of food for our taste, for our mind; we there walk a smooth and pleasant path, bestrewed with flowers, and thus acquire fresh cheerfulness and vigor for pursuing the rougher and thorny parts of our progress. And must not this be an agreeable mode of existence, a desirable enjoyment of a diversified and substantial pleasure? Must not the social life be of great value which procures all these advantages?

Judge then for yourselves, my dear brethren, what social life might be and procure to us, what a school of wisdom and virtue, what a source of happiness it is capable of being rendered, if we constantly turned it to the best account; and thence you will conclude, that it is commonly our own fault, when it is comparatively of small advantage to us. In the mean time, you are not to require of it all these benefits, all these pleasures, in an uninterrupted succession, and always in an equally high degree. In that case your expectations would seldom be fully satisfied, and social life would become ungrateful to you. It is sufficient, that it is adapt-

ed to procure us these advantages and pleasures, and actually does; in a greater or less proportion. Nothing more is requisite for demonstrating its excellent worth.

Feel and confess then this value of social life. Rejoice in the natural faculties and dispositions the Creator has granted you for it. Beware of slighting or rejecting what is so deeply implanted in the nature of man, and is so well calculated to promote his perfection and happiness. Much rather follow this impulse of your nature. Give into the enjoyment of social life; but use and enjoy it so as becomes the wise man, the christian. Never let either the affairs of your vocation, or your domestic duties, or your christian profession, or the prudent practice of silent contemplation and rational devotion be injured by it. Call yourself frequently to account concerning the temper of mind you carry with you into social life and in which you partake of it, upon the advantages and pleasures you procure from it. Be not negligently and coldly contented with every little advantage, with every trifling pleasure you may there obtain by chance. Endeavor to extract from it all the benefit, all the pleasures it is able to yield. Provide therein not only for your senses, but likewise for your heart, for your understanding, for your reflections and feelings; and reap from social life such fruits as may be serviceable to you in your business, and solace you in retirement.

Beware of considering social life as a matter to the use and enjoyment whereof neither attention nor consideration, neither wisdom nor virtue are required, to which every one is equally adapted and prepared, and from which every one may promise himself a like advantage. No, only the attentive

and thoughtful, only the good, the sensible, the virtuous man, can enjoy all the benefits and pleasures of social life which we have been considering, or even in a superior degree. The benefits and pleasures which the thoughtless, the giddy, the wicked man enjoys therein, are commonly very deceitful, or are of no great value. Connexions that are founded on self interest, on humor, or dishonest projects, are of no long duration; they are as suddenly impaired or dissolved as they arose. Pleasures that proceed not from a good, humane and tender heart, which depend merely on chance, tend solely to pastime, and to soothing the senses; pleasures wherein virtue and friendship are unconcerned, may possibly be innocent, but can never be desirable in any important degree, never wholly employ the soul in any worthy and honorable manner.

No, use social life to the end to which it is adapted and ordained. Strive by it to increase and to rectify your knowledge of mankind, to enlarge the circle of your observation, to enrich your stock of useful notions, and to confirm you in every worthy sentiment, to discipline yourself in every virtue. There learn to enjoy the intercourse with your fellow creatures; learn to love them, shew them your affection by numberless services and various gratifications; communicate freely and abundantly and generously to others of what you possess, if you would partake in what they have to bestow. There enjoy the pleasure of instructive, entertaining discourse, the pleasure of friendship and confidence, the pleasure of social gladness in the bounties of God; exalt and sanctify these pleasures, by the cheerful recollection of God, the donor of them; and then let the benefits and pleasures you obtain from mutual converse with your brethren, give you

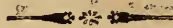
fresh incitement and vigor to the discharge of every duty of busy, of domestic, of solitary life. So will your turn for society be not only harmless, but every way profitable to you. So will it fit you for entering hereafter, in a higher state, into a closer and more blissful connexion with the wisest and best of men, and from your intercourse with them draw still more copious portions of perfection and happiness.

SERMON XXX.

The Value of a Busy Life.

O GOD, thou hast ordained us all to an active, busy life. To this end thou hast granted us all the necessary capacities and powers, and the strongest incentives. To this end hast thou subjected us to so many wants, and rendered their demands so urgent in us; To this end hast thou connected us all so closely together, and placed us in such a state of dependence on each other. It is thy gracious appointment that we, as rational and free agents, should enjoy the honor and the pleasure, of being, under thy inspection and by thy assistance, the stay and benefactors of our brethren, and that by doing good we should resemble thee, who from eternity to eternity art always doing good and constantly the best. Far be it then from us to misemploy these advantages or to leave them unemployed! Far be it from us to addict ourselves to a slothful, inactive, idle life! Far be it from us to be ever weary in well doing! No, to use the capacities and energies which thou hast imparted to us, and ever to use them in the best and worthiest manner, to perform the business thou hast given us to do, and to perform it with diligence and fidelity; ever to effect and to promote more good among mankind; that should be our pleasure and our boast, as the way on which we should strive after perfection and happiness! Strengthen us thyself, O merciful God, in these good dispositions, and grant that they may be brought into action in deed and in truth. Let us even now be convinced of the advantage of a conduct so consistent with such dispositions, that we may be awakened and powerfully excited to it, or confirmed in it. Bless

in this view our reflections on the doctrines that are now to be delivered to us, and hearken to our supplications, through Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord, in whose name we farther address thee, saying; as he taught us : Our Father, &c.



ROMANS xii. 11.

Not Slothful in Business.

BUT too many people sigh after rest as their supreme felicity, complain of the multiplicity of affairs and concerns that press upon them; wish they were discharged from them; long to be freed from all necessity of employment in any stated way; that they might apply their time and their faculties to some agreeable pursuit, and make such a use of them as might be most conformable to their taste and disposition. Such men seldom know rightly what it is they would have; they commonly wish to exchange a few light and very tolerable incumbrances and evils for a far greater burden. Rest is indeed a very desirable object; but it consists not in indolence, in slothful inaction. It is founded on moderation, on regularity, on inward contentment. It is consistent with the busiest life; and no man understands and enjoys it less than the idle and unemployed. No, to a man that is in possession of his health and faculties, a life of business is far preferable to one spent without occupation. It pro-

cures him infinitely more satisfactions and pleasures, and tends more to his perfection and happiness. The sacred writings therefore, which know our real wants, and best understand what can make us good and happy, every where incite us to industry, to diligence, to the exertion of our abilities: "Be not slothful in business," says the apostle Paul in our text. Perform the business of your office, of your calling, not from compulsion, not with reluctance, not in an indolent, negligent way; but execute it with care and zeal. Let us, my pious hearers, in order to awaken in us a more ready obedience to this apostolical precept, consider the great value of a busy life; and to that end, first, inquire how such a life should be conducted for having a great value; and then, what confers this value on it, or wherein it consists.

By a busy life we are to understand a life, wherein, by our station, our office, our calling, and our connexion with other persons, we have to manage and execute such works and businesses, mostly stated, as our time and abilities will allow us to manage and execute.

In order that such a life may be really and highly valuable to us, in the first place, these works and businesses must be proportionate to our powers of mind and body. We should know and understand what we have to do and to manage; we should possess the capacities, the abilities and the skill, that are requisite; we should, at least generally speaking, be able to proceed with facility and a certain confidence in ourselves; we should therefore have been long and early exercised in them; so as to have acquired a certain dexterity in them. If we are plagued and perplexed, and obliged to stop every moment, as it were, in our work and affairs, either through ignorance of what they demand of us, or from hesi-

tations and doubt concerning the best method of beginning or of prosecuting a matter, or from the sentiment of our inability to complete it; such a life can indeed be of no great value to us; it is a burden, an oppressive burden, under which we may easily sink.

In order, farther, that a life of business should be highly valuable to us; the business we carry on must be lawful, and we must be fully convinced of the lawfulness of it. We must be able to transact it without inward uneasiness, without any reproaches of conscience, without any servile apprehension of God. Neither must it give us cause to be ashamed before men; and we have no occasion to be so, whenever our work or employment is neither at variance with integrity nor with the love of our neighbor, neither in opposition to divine or human laws, let it be in all other respects as mean and insignificant as it may. On the contrary, if we are entangled in affairs which our own conscience disapproves, or which we cannot in direct terms pronounce to be right; in affairs on which we dare not bespeak the approbation and blessing of the supreme being, and while employed in them must drive off all thoughts of him, and his presence; in affairs which are held to be degrading and dishonorable by all intelligent and honest men, or are reckoned unworthy of the pains and the time we bestow upon them; then, indeed, such a life has so much the less value for being so busy. Affairs which a man is forced to conceal from the face of God, from the world, from himself, the scope and design whereof he must cover with the veil of secrecy, of artifice, of misrepresentation; of which a man dare not give account to others and scarcely to himself; and from which he has reason to fear, sooner or later, disgrace or punishment; such affairs must necessarily embitter the

whole life of the wretch that is engaged in them, and can produce nothing but trouble and remorse.

For rendering a busy life highly valuable, thirdly, regularity should preside in our affairs. We should know how one business follows on another, how they are conjoined together, how one is complicated in the other, how one conduces to the alleviation, the dispatch, and the execution of another. We should be able to take a just, and as far as possible, a complete survey of the whole, and know determinately what we have to do and to provide for in every portion of time, in every place, in every department, in every respect. Regularity lightens even the most complicated and the most troublesome affairs. With that they seldom come upon us unawares, seldom find us unprepared; and even the accidental and unexpected always find leisure and room where regularity prevails. Regularity enables us to do all things with ease, composure, and calmness; and no labor exhausts us less, none better succeeds, than what we perform in this temper of mind. On the other hand, where all is in disorder, there perplexity, contradiction, vexation, and discord, establish their sway; there a man knows not where to begin, how to proceed, or when to leave off; there one business crowds upon another; there one is forgotten, and another neglected; there a man will be one while over hurried, and at another over loaded with business; there a man has so many forgotten or neglected affairs to recollect, that he can scarcely attend to the present; there a man must at one time exert himself till he is fatigued and exhausted, and knows not at another what he shall first undertake; there a man has no fixed point to which he tends, and knows not how near he is to the end of his labors; and all this must necessarily render his business disagreeable and difficult to him.

Would we, lastly, have a life of business to be of great value to us, then must we pursue such affairs as we may probably expect will be productive of utility to ourselves or to others; though it is by no means necessary that we should foresee and previously ascertain this utility, or always immediately or visibly reap from it proportionably to our desires and endeavors. Constantly to be running on the course at random, and without hopes of reaching the goal, at length must weary the most indefatigable racer. To be always working and never to see the fruit of our labor advancing to maturity, never to be able to gather it, must at length render the most industrious, the most persevering workman dull and dispirited. It seldom however happens, and seldom without our fault, that lawful business, conducted with prudence, with application and regularity, can fail of being useful to ourselves and to others. Only we must be neither selfish nor covetous; nor look solely to our own advantage, but also to the general good; not only to outward, visible, present advantage, but also take into the account the remoter good consequences of our affairs, and their influence on our spiritual perfection; and then, with a very moderate share of success, we can neither fail of an incitement to business, nor of the rewards attending it.

If then a life of business be so framed, if the affairs incumbent on us be proportionate to our faculties and powers; if they be innocent and lawful; if we carry them on with order and regularity; if we may promise ourselves advantage from them; then we must ascribe real and great value to such a life; we must prefer it infinitely to a life of indolence.

And now what gives it this value? Wherein does it consist? That we may be able to answer these questions, we have only to weigh the consequences and effects of a life thus employed.

A busy life is, in the first place, the best, the only sure preservative from that languor of mind we feel whenever time hangs heavy on our hands; and that languor is incontestably a grievous burden. Never is the busy man at a loss to know how he shall employ the present day, the present hour, with what he shall employ or amuse himself. No sooner does he awake from sleep but he goes to his daily labor, sees it already before him, and disposes and connects the several parts of it together. Every period of the day has its particular allotment; one business succeeds another, one is constantly replaced by the next in order; every hour brings with it, as it were, its particular contribution; and the leisure his affairs allow him, is usually too short to let him fail in the opportunities and means of passing it both pleasantly and profitably. And thus the hours, the days, the weeks, the years elapse, without ever being tedious, ever being burdensome to him; and yet they are by no means vanished away; he knows he has used them, that he has employed them in a lawful and beneficial way, that he has turned them to an honest and just account, and that, in regard to their consequences, they are not lost.—On the other hand, how unhappy is the indolent man and the loiterer! How often is he utterly at a loss to know with what he shall begin the day, how he shall pass the first, the best, the most of its hours! How anxiously does he strive to divert himself! How restless, how dispirited does he run from one object to another, from one place to another, from one business to another, now beginning this, then that, finds nothing to his taste, and is satisfied with none! How much do his gratifications and pleasures depend on the most trifling accidents, and how easily does the privation of any of his customary dissipations and diversions render him wretched! How hard is he often put to it,

to what dreadful labor is he often reduced, for driving on, or, as he calls it himself, for killing his time! How impatiently does he long for the hour when he may lay down the load of dulness he has endured all day, and sink into the arms of sleep, if haply he may even there enjoy repose!

A busy life is, farther, a sure preservative from a thousand follies and sinful excesses, which the man who leads an indolent and lazy life can seldom avoid. He that has no settled business, who is consequently oppressed and persecuted by languor of mind, who feels himself unhappy, readily falls into every thing that promises him distraction, entertainment, or pleasure, into any thing from which he may hope for an alleviation of his condition. And, since he has so many hours, whole days and weeks, and years to occupy, he need not be nice in choosing the means and the persons that may assist him in this design; must often while away his time with the lowest and most insipid amusements, and seek a kind of satisfaction from the grossest pleasures; and, since the better, the busy class of mankind, neither wish nor venture to associate with him, he is generally confined to the company and conversation of such as, like him, are a burden to themselves and to others, who are as ignorant as himself how to make a good and worthy use of their faculties and their time. And from what follies and extravagances can such an one be safe? Into what folly, into what vice will he not readily plunge, whenever they promise him pastime or sport? Far different is the case with the busy man, as above described. His business allows him too little leisure, and gives his mind too manly, too serious a turn, to let him fall into the temptation of misapplying the few minutes he has to spare. The love of order that accompanies him in his affairs, forsakes him not in his periods of recreation. And

these, from his good character and conduct, he may pass in the company of the best and most deserving persons, which he necessarily prefers to the conversation of the foolish and the frivolous, with men who must appear to him contemptible and noxious.

A busy life is, thirdly, the most powerful incentive, and the best means of unfolding our abilities, of displaying, of exercising, and of invigorating our faculties, and accordingly of promoting our real perfection. Without attention, without consideration, without reflection, without comparing and connecting several things together, without a constant reference to the past and the future, no business that is not merely mechanical can be effectually carried on; and the more complicated, the more multifarious, the more important it is, the more unremittedly must we confine our attention and reflections to it, and keep all our mental powers in action. Neither are the obstacles and difficulties that accompany, more or less, every species of affairs, ever to be conquered, without industry, without regularity, without persevering patience, without firmness, without foresight and prudence. How powerful then must not the motives of duty, necessity, profit and honor, be to the application, and not unfrequently to the exertion of our abilities! And how much farther must we not proceed in the good, in the best application of them; how much more justly shall we learn to think; how much more intelligent, circumspect, prudent, discreet, wary, dextrous and virtuous, shall we not become; how much more useful to others than we could possibly be by a lazy and inactive life! How much does the man of business learn to comprehend with his understanding, to retain in his memory, and to execute with his powers! How rapidly and how easily does he survey, as it were at one glance, a long train of events, a whole

series of things! How justly does he not hit the point in which they all unite! How perspicuously does he unravel the most intricate matters! How many events and revolutions of things does he not foresee; and how much does he adopt in his plans and projects, which would frighten the ignorant or inexperienced, and throw them into pale astonishment! And what obstacles will he not at length overcome, what difficulties will he not vanquish, by courage and confidence! And must not these advantages be held for desirable by all men? Will they be too dearly purchased by a busy, a laborious life? Can we exercise our powers without the exertions to which they are adapted, and can we strengthen and improve them without exercise? Are capacities and powers, which we possess indeed, but do not manifest, do not apply, do not know how properly to use, of any great value? Does not our inward spiritual perfection consist in the fittest, easiest, best, and happiest use, in the greatest possible improvement of them? Is it not the only species of perfection that remains with us for ever? And shall we rather let these noble powers, powers by which we are able to effect so much, shall we rather let them sleep and stagnate, than awaken and invigorate them by activity and industry?

A life of business is, fourthly, the best means of being useful to others in numberless ways, and of having a great and manifold influence on the general welfare. For the subsistence and advantage of society it is necessary that various businesses and works be executed by its members, and that they be executed with assiduity and faithfulness. The one must in this manner, and the other in that, provide for the wants, the conveniences, the elegances, and the pleasures of his brethren. The more works and businesses of these kinds, therefore, we undertake and

complete, so much the more useful are we to society; so much the more serviceable do we render ourselves to it; so much the more ample is the contribution we bring to the common welfare. The busy man alone is grateful to the community which supports and protects him, and procures him a thousand advantages; he repays, and often repays with interest, the services it does him. Whereas the unemployed, the idler, is a mean spirited creature, who is always receiving, and never gives, who is profitable to none, and yet requires service from all men; an abject debtor, daily increasing his debt, and never intending to pay it.—And how extensively does the busy man operate around him! For what numbers of his brethren, near him and afar off, known to him and unknown, of all classes and conditions, mediately or immediately, does he not think and provide and labor! What services does he not render them, by his counsel, by his assistance, by his perceptions, by his dexterity, by his industry, by his integrity! How many others does he not set on to the most useful activity by means of his own business! How much evil does he not thus prevent, how much good not promote! How often is he by this means the benefactor, not only of the present race of men, but also of future generations! And must not such a life be of great value, must it not be far preferable to a life of inaction and idleness?

But, if a life of business be highly useful, so must it also, fifthly, on that very account, be an abundant spring of pleasure and happiness to ourselves. And in fact, my pious hearers, how great the pleasure to exert our talents, to display our abilities with skill, and in the most generally useful way! What a pleasure to vanquish impediments, to conquer difficulties, to plan extensive projects, to finish useful works, to bring good designs to perfection! What a pleasure,

when a man makes out his reckoning to himself at the end of the day, or the week, or the year, of the application of his faculties and his time, and can console himself in the reflection that he has not suffered them to lie idle, that he has not squandered them away, that he has not misemployed them, but has made them answer to the will of God, and has accomplished many good and useful matters with them! What a pleasure, when a man can say to himself, that he has discharged his duty, worthily filled his post, that he has served and assisted many of his fellow creatures, that he has been the benefactor of his brethren! What a pleasure, when a man may promise himself the respect, the affection, the gratitude of the whole society, and can accept and employ their reciprocal services, their testimonies of esteem, and the reward of his merits, with a good conscience, and with the grateful sentiment that he is not unworthy of them! And how greatly must not all these pleasures contribute to the felicity of the man! How pleasant to him must be the retrospect on his past, the enjoyment of his present, and the prospect of his future life! With what confidence may he not think on God, and how freely and openly converse with men! How contented, how satisfied must he not be in the consciousness of his growth in inward perfection, and the survey of the good he has effected about him! How sweet must not each longer or shorter recreation be to him, the enjoyment of each innocent pleasure, either sensual or intellectual, to which he has obtained a right by useful employment, and to which his appetite is not blunted by too copious an indulgence in this seasoning of life! Pure advantages, pure pleasures and joys, unknown to the unemployed and the idle. To them their faculties and powers are often a downright burden. To them every day, every week, every year of their lives,

is alike empty of actions and events that might gladden and refresh their minds. Them the past afflicts, the present perplexes, and the future confounds. And as often as they are forced to reflect upon themselves, they must stand ashamed before God and man. Their very pleasures are uniform and tasteless. And how often must they be an incumbrance, how often disgustful to them ! How great then must be the advantage in this respect of the industrious over the idle !

To conclude, a busy life, conducted with intelligence, with regularity, conscientiousness, and directed to the common welfare, is the best preparation for a superior, a more perfect, and a more blissful state in the future world. The more we here unfold our faculties, and elevate and improve our talents by practice, in so much greater and more important matters shall we there employ them ; so much the more shall we there be able to do with them ; so much the more quickly and easily shall we there proceed towards the mark of supreme perfection. The more carefully and earnestly we do in this province of the kingdom of God, what he has delivered us to perform ; so much the more will he confide to us to transact and to use in other provinces of his kingdom. The more extensively we here operate about us in views of general utility, so much the larger is the sphere of operation he there will assign us. The better we here allow ourselves to be educated and formed by our heavenly father, the better will he be able to employ us there when we shall have exchanged this state of childhood for the manly age. Rest and refreshment without previous toil, payment without service, perfection without the best and faithfullest use of our powers, bliss without an active, busy life, can no more be thought of in heaven than it can upon earth, can there no more exist than here.

What an encouraging prospect for the man that leads a life of business! And what a comfortless, melancholy idea for the slothful, who passes his days in loitering and idleness.

And now take all this into your minds at one view. Reflect that a busy life exempts a man from the oppressive load of languor of spirits; that it secures him from a thousand follies and sinful excesses; that it most cogently incites him to unfold his capacities, to exert and exercise his faculties, and thereby to advance his perfection; that it furnishes him with means and opportunities of being useful to mankind in the greatest variety of ways, and of acquiring a vast influence on the general welfare; that it is a rich source of pleasure and happiness to himself; that, in short, it prepares and fits him for a higher and better state; and say, after all, whether a life of business is not of real and of great value; whether it is not far preferable to an inactive, unemployed, and lazy life.

Certainly, my dear brethren, this is the best and noblest use of life. Hereto are we ordained and called; hereto has God entrusted to us capacities and powers, and given us so many urgent wants. By this alone can we become as perfect, as happy as man can be in the present state of things, and extract from this, usually so short and uncertain a life, as much advantage as it is able to afford. Thus no moment of it passes empty and unenjoyed away. Thus a man, as it were, multiplies his existence, and lengthens his life. Thus a man lives and operates by others as well as himself, and frequently even to the latest posterity. Render therefore thanks to God if he has placed you by his providence in a busy station, proportionate to your powers, and adequate to your time. Complain not of the quantity and trouble of it. Be not sluggish and slothful in the perform-

ance of it. It is proper for the state of exercise and education wherein we live at present; and if you carry it on with understanding, with regularity and conscientiousness, if you treat and manage it as work committed to you by God, you will pursue it with comfort and pleasure, and not without advantage. Therefore, long not after the imaginary happiness of an inactive repose, or you will soon severely pay for the foolish wish. Let it rather be to you, as it was to our Saviour, your meat and your pleasure, to perform what God has given you to do, to work indefatigably while yet it is day, lest the gloomy night of affliction and sorrow, or the impenetrable shades of death, come on before you have finished your task. Be like the faithful servants, whom their lord at his coming, be it late or early, finds employed in his service.

SERMON XXXI.

The Value of Commerce.



O God, who art the governor and ruler of all, the parts as well as the whole, the small as well as the great, what connexion, what order and harmony prevail not throughout the whole of thy immense domain; and how much more should we not be lost in profound astonishment and joyful transport, could we survey and comprehend in our minds a larger portion of it! But even on our terrestrial globe, even in the government which thou exercisest over us men, what traces of the wisest, benignest inspection and providence are not discoverable! How exactly adapted is every thing to the greatest possible welfare of all living creatures! How intimately all is connected and interwoven together! What an all embracing, indissoluble chain of causes and effects, the ultimate aim and consequence whereof is life and happiness! To every one of us hast thou allotted his place, to every one given his appointed measure of capacities and powers, to every one assigned his sphere of operation, to every one committed his particular affairs; and if every one of us do that which thou callest him to do, then every one provides and works for all, and all provide and work for every one, and thus the whole innumerable family of thy children on earth, are brought constantly nearer to their perfection. How worthy likewise in this respect is the vocation to which thou hast called us! How worthy that we should fulfil the several duties of it with cheerful minds, with unabated zeal, with inviolable fidelity! O teach us then likewise herein to acknowledge and revere thy purposes as those of the wisest and kindest parent; let us by constantly esteeming the business of our station and

calling on earth as highly important, be strongly incited to prosecute them with ever increasing care and dignity. Bless to this end our meditations on the lessons of truth that are now to be delivered to us. Let our perceptions be increased and our sentiments elevated and ennobled by them. In this behalf we offer up unto thee our supplications in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and address thee farther, trusting in his promises, as—Our Father, &c.



ISAIAH xxiii. 8.

Whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth.

IT is of great importance for a man to know how to dignify his vocation, the profession he is engaged in, or the business he carries on. This lightens to him all the troubles and disagreeableness attending it; this repays him for the painful industry and the unremitted cares he bestows upon it; this stimulates him to do all that relates to it with alacrity and exactitude, and to neglect no part of it as unworthy of his attention; though never so insignificant or trifling in itself. And how is this to be done? How does a man dignify his calling? How does he make it of greater value to him? On one hand, by considering it as an effect of the order and arrangement established in the world by God; saying to himself:—It is the will of God that mankind should be so connected together, so labor for each other, and thus mutually contribute to the public benefit; and that I in particular should act in the sta-

tion, the department I fill, in such a manner as my vocation demands. But also on the other hand by discerning the value of his calling, or discovering what it is that renders it really important and estimable, by representing to himself its connexion with the welfare of society at large, and its beneficial influence upon it. By this means every man may confer a dignity on the calling he pursues, so that it be but lawful. And this is indisputably the best means and the strongest inducement to walk, as the apostle exhorts us, worthy of our vocation. What may be advanced of every profession holds good in a particular manner when applied to commerce. And, as the generality of you are one way or other concerned in this vocation, it will not be thought unsuitable if I deliver a few considerations which will enable you to think adequately of it. Having then, in the foregoing discourse, investigated the value of a busy life in general, I shall now proceed particularly to examine into the value of commerce, as a particular species of it. In this design we must first shew, what gives to commerce, in and of itself, a considerably great value; and then, how and by what means this its value is enhanced in regard to those by whom commerce is carried on.

When we ascribe a distinguished value to commerce, we consider it not barely as a means of providing for our own support. This property it has in common with every profession, even the meanest calling of life, that it procures us food and raiment, and supplies the wants of nature. Neither do we consider it basely as the means of acquiring wealth, and of living more conveniently and elegantly than others, or of playing a more distinguished part in society. For these likewise are advantages that belong not exclusively to this state of life. They may fall to the lot of the artist, the mechanic, the husband-

man, the man in public trust, and even to persons of the learned professions. No, if we would rightly consider and appreciate the eminent value of commerce, and thence acquire for it the respect it deserves, we must take into the account its beneficial influence on the general prosperity, what it contributes towards the stock of human perfection and happiness? And now, what are its pretensions in this respect?

First, it sets mankind upon a far greater, a far more diversified, and thereby a more useful activity; and every thing that promotes useful activity among mankind, promotes their benefit. For only thus are our torpid capacities and powers, as it were, roused, developed, exercised, and by degrees brought to that point of strength and perfection which they are designed to attain. And how greatly does not commerce contribute to this effect! What numbers of hands, what numbers of heads it employs! To how many kinds of trades and manufactures does it not give life! To how many others does it not communicate a weight and value, which but for it they could never acquire, and which without it would be carried on in a more careless and superficial manner! How many sorts of industry, of dexterity, of art, does it not quicken and support, encourage and reward! How alert and busy does it not render, in numberless respects, the inventive faculties of man! What a powerful and far operating spring in the whole of social and busy life! How many wheels of this grand machine, large and small, does it not set in motion! And what fatal stoppages and obstructions arise where its impulse is checked or impeded! How many people it requires, how many people must strenuously exert their abilities in various ways, in rearing and obtaining the products of nature, in working them up, in improving them, in stowing

them, in transporting them from one place to another, and often to the remotest regions of the habitable earth! How much less diligently and industriously would not all this be done, how much fewer people be employed in it, if all these products received not additional value from every man's hand through which they pass, if by means of commerce they were not exchanged for other products of nature, or disposed of to profit! How much less life, agility, industry, diligence and address, is perceptible, where little or no commerce exists, than where it flourishes! How many hands and heads are there almost inactive, which here would be employed in various useful ways! Would you convince yourselves of the life and activity which commerce excites among mankind, transport yourselves in imagination into the midst of a famous mercantile city, visit its exchange and its harbor; or only represent to yourselves a populous and much frequented market place; what a multitude and diversity of busy persons of all ranks and conditions will you not there perceive! And yet this is extraordinary activity limited to a short portion of time, and confined to a narrow space; activity very inconsiderable, compared to that which is an endless, uninterrupted consequence of commerce in the generality of countries on the habitable globe. And must not this give it a real and a great value?

Commerce, farther, connects men more together, brings them nearer to each other, and lets their mutual dependence on each other be more sensibly felt; and every thing that brings and unites mankind more closely together is a source of pleasure and happiness to them, and may be likewise an incitement to virtue. Mutual wants, social businesses, social views and advantages; what strong ties of connexion! If the merchant be in want of the industry,

the labor, the mechanical and mental powers, the service and assistance of a thousand men; these in return stand in need of his protection, his support, his encouragement, his pay. If the former would execute his designs and attain his purposes, a thousand others must cooperate with him to that end. If he would reap the profit he expects from his business, he must let a thousand others obtain a proportionate advantage. That trade may be carried on with success, handicrafts, arts and agriculture, must flourish also; all ranks and conditions of men must then have more concerns together, work more for each other, and enter into closer connexions. And how far do not these connexions extend! How many classes and descriptions do they not embrace! What nation is so remote that is not brought nearer to the rest by commerce? Along what pathless wilderness, over what steep and craggy mountains, across what untried stormy seas and oceans, does not the merchant find his way to his remotest brethren! Allow it to be self interest and the love of gain that teaches him to despise these dangers and to conquer these difficulties; yet the effect is always that man is thereby more connected with man, that social dispositions are awakened and supported in them, that an interest in their reciprocal prosperity and misfortunes is strengthened and increased; and must not all these considerations taken together redound to the advantage of mankind, and tend insensibly to their improvement and perfection?

By the same means, my pious hearers, commerce facilitates to mankind the communication of their perceptions, their inventions and discoveries, their goods and advantages, to each other. It occasions a constant and universal circulation and exchange of all these things among them. It indeed likewise disseminates many faults and vices, and opens many

sources of calamity where they would else have been unknown. But do not those manifold and great benefits far exceed these accidental disadvantages? How far behind would the human race have been in every particular; how little would they have advanced above the condition of infancy; with how much labor and toil must they have supplied the prime wants of nature; how slowly would they have proceeded in civilization; if every nation, every province, had been confined to its own experiences, observations, discoveries and inventions! How much is learnt by one people of another, in necessary and useful as well as in agreeable and entertaining matters, in mechanics and the fine arts, in agriculture and husbandry, as well as in the sublimer sciences! How many steps farther are not all these advanced at various times by the communication of some single idea, some curious instrument, or some new device! What important revolutions may not some fresh branch of commerce, a new kind of manufacture, an introduction of new articles of trade, a new scope to the genius, occasion by promoting arts and sciences among a whole people! And how quickly is useful knowledge now conveyed from one extremity of the inhabited and cultivated earth to the other! How soon may the luminous thoughts, which now occupy the soul of one of my brethren in the most distant regions of the northern or southern hemisphere, become likewise mine, and diffuse light into my mind and satisfaction into my heart, or introduce more order into my conduct and my affairs! How much more easily and rapidly, by means of this great connexion and extensive communication, may not even the weightiest matters of religion be disseminated, and the most salutary, the most comfortable truths be transplanted thither where ignorance, error, and baleful superstition, have hitherto prevailed! And is

it not commerce that promotes and facilitates this connexion and communication of mankind with each other?

Besides, commerce procures mankind numberless conveniences, numberless kinds of pleasure and delight, which else they must be without, or must obtain with far greater difficulty, less frequently, and with much more labor and expense. Scarcely any sort of natural productions and fruits of the earth, of the works of art and industry, are at present the exclusive property of any one country. Now whatever either of them has that is eminently good and beautiful is reciprocally an article of exchange. We may now see the wonders of nature, in their most diversified and delightful forms; may enjoy the products of every region; make use of the intelligence, the abilities, the work of every nation; and may accumulate and employ as our own whatever can flatter the taste and charm the sight, whatever can add ornament to our dwellings, beautify our gardens, give neatness and warmth to our raiment, or embellish our condition; whatever can employ our mind or gratify our curiosity, from the remotest and most dissevered districts of the globe; and this, in a hundred respects, is within the reach of the poor as well as the rich. And who can be so insensible to all these advantages, as to ascribe no value to commerce by which he procures them? Or who will allow himself to be deterred from pronouncing it estimable and desirable, because these conveniences and elegances of life may be abused, as indeed they but too often are?

Lastly, by all these means, commerce contributes in no small degree to soften and polish the manners of mankind, to form their taste, and to promote mutual toleration and forbearance among them. The more mankind converse together, and the more

closely they are connected among themselves; so much the more attention will they shew to what may displease or please another; so much the more assiduously will they remove every difficulty in the way of their intercourse with each other, avoid every thing that may disturb their connexion, and sedulously avoid whatever may give umbrage or offence to one another. The more good and beautiful articles they compare with others and offer for them, and the oftener they are necessitated to choose between them; so much the more will their taste be rectified and refined; so much more impartial is their judgment of what is beautiful and good. In short, the more diversity they perceive in the sentiments and usages of mankind, and the more they observe how little influence they have on their general and most important judgments and actions, so much the more justly will they learn to judge of these things; so much more will the distance and dislike which these causes might have occasioned be weakened; so much the more will they be accustomed to look upon a man as a man, and to affectionate every good man, to esteem every intelligent and honest man, to whatsoever nation he may belong, whatsoever language he may speak, whatsoever religious opinions he may hold, whatsoever customs he may choose to observe. Accordingly this mutual toleration and esteem is always far greater and more universal among mercantile nations, than among such as are more confined to their own territories, and have less intercourse with others.

And this, my dear brethren, this it is, that gives commerce in general and on its own account a great and intrinsic value, what renders it important and honorable in the eyes of the thinking man. It even possesses this value, in a greater or less degree, when the man that carries it on thinks narrowly and acts selfishly, when he regards it merely as relative to his

own personal profit, and cares not how little advantageous it may be to others. But in that case, and in regard to him, it is of extremely little, or indeed of no value, as he degrades and debases it, by his sentiments and conduct, to a low and despicable means of gaining a livelihood. A great distinction therefore is to be made between the value of commerce, taken intrinsically and at large, and the worthiness it confers on such as carry it on. The former is and ever remains very great; the latter but too frequently is extremely small. Would you therefore, who exercise this calling, dignify it likewise in regard to yourselves, and render it a means to you of greater perfection and more durable happiness; then allow yourselves to be guided by the following admonitions and precepts.

Exercise your understanding in habits of reflection, and strive to enrich it by augmenting your stock of useful knowledge, particularly such as relates to your affairs and undertakings. Study the matters in which you are daily concerned, their nature and quality, their utility, the purposes to which they may be applied, their modifications and transmutations, their influence on the general weal of the community; study the ways and methods in which they are produced, obtained, wrought up, improved, and applied; study the state of the countries and nations with which, by means of your occupation, you are mediately or immediately connected; study the persons with whom you are concerned in business, or whom you employ, and on the character of whom so much depends in the prosecution of it; so will you constantly find in all you do more employment and food for your mind; always more clearly understand what and wherefore and to what end you do it; and thereby a thousand objects, which in themselves may be very insignificant, will acquire a greater worth

and importance in your sight. You will execute as thinking, as enlightened men, with complacency and pleasure, what otherwise you would only perform as day laborers, from necessity, and probably with dislike.

Enlarge therefore the orbits of your views, the circuit of your knowledge and perceptions, in proportion as you enlarge your sphere of action. Pursue the affairs that offer themselves to you, not in a mere mechanical manner; work and operate, not as it were blindfolded, or merely by old maxims and customs handed down from father to son, but upon well digested principles and generous plans. Strive more and more to comprehend the whole of the concern wherein you are engaged, and to comprehend it with more participation and interest. Revolve frequently in your mind the nearer and more remote, the present and future consequences of your transactions and dealings, the influence they may and will have, in a thousand ways and manners, on the conduct, the fortunes, the happiness of vast numbers of mankind of all classes and conditions. This also will confer great weight and dignity on all you undertake and execute.

Expand your heart too in this respect by benevolent, philanthropical sentiments and feelings. Let not covetousness, nor mean self interest, nor vanity, but genuine, universal philanthropy and brotherly love, be the chief instigators of your diligence and industry. Think it your duty and your glory, not barely to labor for your own, but likewise for the general profit; and do this not solely according to the natural combination of things, and without peculiarly thinking on it, but do it with consciousness and consideration, and so as that this view may be always present to your mind. Hesitate not therefore to encounter difficulties, to take trouble, to perform busi-

nesses from which you have little particular advantage to expect, but which you know will bring profit to others, to tend to the support and the good of the whole; and reckon not as labor in vain, as pure loss, whatever is attended by such consequences and effects. The idea that all you do in your lawful vocation, and by lawful means, is a part of the chain of businesses whereby the general welfare is upheld and advanced, whereby the sum total of life, of activity, of pleasure, of happiness, which is or may be among mankind, is augmented and put in circulation; this idea will give you satisfaction and courage in all your affairs, and fill you with an honest complacency at the sight of every consequence of your good endeavors. By such a way of thinking, every business you transact, petty and troublesome as it may be, will become an honorable employment, a labor of love. And thus will you degrade yourselves by nothing, think nothing a loss of time, or a dissipation of your powers, which in any way may be of advantage to society.

In fine, add a dignity to your calling, you who pursue commerce as rational, intelligent and well intentioned men, by considering yourselves as instruments in the hand of providence, whereby the cultivation of the earth and the civilization of its inhabitants are carried on and advanced; as instruments whereby God diffuses and multiplies his manifold gifts and blessings, more intimately connects the whole of his family, so widely extended, together, brings them closer to each other, and in such various methods animates, sustains, benefits and cheers them all. Do therefore whatever you are called to do by your profession in reference to this honorable appointment; do it from obedience and love to God, our universal Father in heaven; do it as by commission from him, and in the manner most conformable

to the wise and benign purposes of his government. By this means you will confer the greatest dignity on all your employments and labors, and exalt the faithful discharge of your calling into actual piety. You will serve God by serving your brethren; accomplish his will by fulfilling the duties of your vocation; carry on his work by prosecuting your own; and so may you also, as men worthily filling a station assigned them by God, promise yourselves a cheerful exit from this scene of things, and the enjoyment of a happy, a blessed futurity.

S E R M O N XXXII.

*The Value of a Country Life; or, the Edifying
Sojourn in the Country.*



O GOD, thou art not far from every one of us. Wherever we perceive the work of thy hands, there art thou, there actest thou; there revealest thou thyself to us the prime source of all that is and lives, as sovereign wisdom and goodness. And wherever thou art and actest, there speakest thou to us by thy works, there thou informest us of thy will; there warnest thou us of misery, and shewest us the means and way to be happy. O then that we sought and found thee, the Omnipresent, every where, that we saw, and worshipped thee in all thy works, and never lost the sentiment of thy presence! O that we every where and at all times attended to thy voice, readily submitted to be taught of thee, and willingly followed thy call to happiness! How totally otherwise, how much wiser and better should we then not think and judge and act! What light would then not be diffused over all our ways! How safely, how confidently, how cheerfully should we not then pursue our course! How calm should we not be under thy fatherly inspection, how cheerful and happy in the sentiment of communion with thee! Teach us to know this, to know it with intimate conviction, O gracious Father, and let it be promoted by the considerations in which we are now about to be employed. We invoke thee for it in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus, concluding our petitions in his comprehensive words: Our Father, &c.

MATTHEW xiv. 13.

And Jesus departed thence into a Desert Place, apart.

CITIES, large and populous cities, have incontestably their benefits as well as their disadvantages. The foundation of them, and the concourse of their inhabitants, are means in the hand of Providence for attaining its views with regard to mankind. And to this they greatly conduce in various ways. The closer aggregation, the more intimate connexion of so many individuals together, strengthens their powers, and renders them capable of many enterprises and businesses, for which a greater dispersion or separation would absolutely incapacitate them. Trade and commerce, arts and sciences, are brought by such closer connexions, by such a union and reciprocal communication of designs, abilities, talents, and aptitudes, to a higher degree of perfection than they could otherwise reach. By the daily intercourse of such numbers of men, of such various tempers and dispositions, the natural genius and faculties are more quickly, more easily, more considerably unfolded, set in motion, and applied. Emulation and ambition are more excited and employed, and produce more diversified and vigorous effects than in solitude, or in the narrow circle of a few acquaintances and neighbors. The manners will be refined; the conveniences and elegances of life improved; the means and opportunities of social pleasure will be multiplied; and the sallies of inordinate and violent passions will less and seldomer offend. Striking advantages, for which, in conjunction with many

others, we stand indebted to civil life, and which certainly are of no small value.

On the other side, in great and populous cities, bad example is more contagious; the temptations to folly and vice are far greater, and harder to avoid; the prevalence of fashion is universal and tyrannical; the implicit imitation of the noble, the great, and the rich is servile; the sway of received manners and customs, severe and oppressive. Innocence, truth, and sincerity, there more quickly disappear; the simplicity of nature is stifled by art; integrity is there obliged to yield to artifice; simplicity is ridiculed as puerile inexperience; the passions are concealed, but act with greater impetuosity and danger in their concealment. The taste will be refined, but at the same time be enervated and fastidious; pleasures will be multiplied, but the faculties for enjoying them obtused. Besides all this, the multiplicity of affairs, the noisy bustle, the numerous dissipations which prevail in populous cities, are powerful obstacles to collectedness of mind, to consideration, to vigilance over oneself, to frequent and animated aspirations towards heaven, and consequently are powerful obstacles to wisdom, to virtue, and to devotion.

The more therefore a man is smitten with the love of nature, and his Creator and Father; the more charms he sees in innocence, truth, integrity, and simple manners; the more taste he has for silent reflection; the more he is able to entertain himself; the dearer to him wisdom and virtue and cordial devotion are; the more agreeable will it be to him at times to exchange the tumult of the town for the quiet of the country; as he there can breathe and think and live more freely; as he there can completely retire within himself and converse with his own heart, can hearken to the voice of God in na-

ture, and in less artificial, less corrupted men, and indulge himself in the most natural and unadulterated meditations and feelings without reluctance or restraint. This, my pious hearers, has been, in all ages of the world, the nutriment of the mind and the wages of industry to the wisest and best among the sons of men.

Our Savior likewise, that sublime exemplar to all the wise and good, seems thus to have thought and judged on this material point. He withdrew not indeed from the company of his brethren, nor from populous towns and cities, not even from the capital itself; as he could there best prosecute the work his father had commissioned him to carry on, the work of enlightening and improving his contemporaries and mankind in general. Yet these populous cities and towns were not his constant residence. At times he forsook them, and retired, as it is said in our text, to the desert, that is, to some unfrequented or less frequented place. At times, as we are likewise told in the chapter whence our text is taken, he ascended the mountain, and there past the evening alone. There he recruited his spirits after the wearisome labors of the day; thought upon his grand concern; collected, by contemplation and prayer, by familiar intercourse with his heavenly Father, fresh energies for accomplishing his work on earth; recreated himself in thinking on what he had already done, and what remained for him still to do; and was happy in the sentiment of his dignity and his proximity to him that sent him.

Few of us, my dear brethren, are deficient in opportunities for making similar experiences, and enjoying similar satisfactions. Many are so circumstanced as to be able to pass a longer or a shorter period of the summer in the enjoyment of their gardens or the pleasures of the country. But whether

we turn these excursions to such account as becomes rational and wise persons; whether we extract as much utility and instruction from them as they are capable of yielding; is what I shall now strive to render easy for you to answer. To that end, I shall point out to you in a few short observations, how instructive a stay in the country is and may be to the man of reflection, the christian.

The time we spend in the country is, in the first place, instructive in regard to God and our behavior towards him; instructive in regard to the dignity and destination of man; and instructive in regard to our notions of happiness.

It is instructive, I say, first, in regard to God and our behavior towards him. In the tumult of towns, in the hurry of a busy life, in the giddy circles of amusement, meditations on God and the sentiment of his presence are but too easily prevented or effaced; there the knowledge we have of him is too frequently but a dead letter, and the use we make of it only a mechanical operation of the mind. But in the midst of the great theatre of his works, surrounded by the striking effects of his wisdom and bounty, in the enjoyment of rural tranquillity; in the open and free view of his heaven and his earth, there a man's feelings are quite altered, there he intimately feels that in him he lives and moves and has his being; that he inhales his air, is enlightened and warmed and cheered by his sun, that he is invigorated by his power, and elevated to him, and is encompassed on all sides with the bounties and blessings he has prepared for us. There the deity is in a manner close to us, though he be no where far from any one of us. His existence is there more certain to us; it is demonstratively apparent; and all doubts that may possibly arise in us at other times, here lose their force. God is, and he is the

Creator and Father of thee, and of all beings; this every thing around us declares in a language that cannot be mistaken. We there see him, in a manner, acting, working, imparting of himself, and diffusing benefits about him with a liberal hand, and employed in the preservation and welfare of every thing that exists and lives. The less we behold of human art, the more we see of nature, and the more beautiful she presents herself to us, the more does she lead us up to God; the more do all objects animate and exalt our ideas and sentiments of him. Every blade of grass, every flower of the field, every plant, every tree, every insect, every beast, the rising and the setting sun, the mild refreshing breath of evening gales, and the majestic violence of the storm, the serenely smiling sky, and the dark tempestuous night—all, all announce to us the presence of the Almighty, the supremely wise, the supremely good; all render him, as it were, sensible and apparent; all call us to bow down before him to adore his sovereignty, and to rejoice in his existence. There every thought on God will, with the good and sensible man, be accompanied by correspondent feelings; and every sentiment on supreme wisdom and goodness must be attended by reverence, by love, by gratitude, by joy, by hope and confidence.

And here interrogate thyself, O man, O christian, how near, or how remote, how natural, or how foreign to thee is the sentiment of God, what impression it makes upon thee, what other reflections and sentiments it excites within thee. Ask thyself; how wert thou disposed, what didst thou think, how didst thou feel, as thou walkedst alone across the smiling fields, or through the flowery mead, or down the verdant lawn, or along the shady grove, or by the serene and placid lustre of the moon. Did not a gentle reverential tremor, did not the sacred sentiment of

the proximity of thy God, affect thee? Did it never happen to thee as if thou sawest the Lord, as formerly he was seen in paradise, walking amongst his creatures, as if thou heardest him talking to thee, and explaining to thee his will and his designs? And if this holy sentiment have fallen to thy share, if it have ever penetrated thy heart; what love to thy Creator and Father, what trust in his benignity and providence, what zeal to do his will and to promote his views, what benevolent dispositions towards all thy fellow creatures, what aspirations after superior perfection and bliss, must it not have excited in thee! Happy they, who are able to recollect many such blessed moments! To them the thought of God is not a foreign thought. It lives and governs in their soul, and secures them a succession of complete satisfactions and of unsullied pleasures.

Rural life is, secondly, very instructive in regard to the real worth and destination of man. Here, my christian brother, here man appears to thee more in the character of man, stripped of all outward and dazzling distinctions; here mayest thou better learn to esteem him for what he is; learn what is properly his own as a human creature, what gives him real worth. A robust and healthy body; a sound and vigorous mind; a cheerful temper; an honest heart, glowing with love towards God and man; a prudent and active industry in his profession; wisdom, founded on years and experience; virtue, that consists more in actions than in words; piety, not indeed making us more learned, but better and more tranquil; these are of greater account than birth and rank and station, superior to all the borrowed splendor, with which the rich and great make such parade; and these alone, both here and every where, compose the true worth of man. Learn then to estimate thyself and the inhabitants of towns by this

standard; so wilt thou judge differently and far more justly both of thyself and others. No empty pride in things that are not of thyself will inflate thy mind; no excessive admiration of merely outward distinctions will degrade thee into a flatterer and a slave. Thou wilt esteem and love every one as thy brother who acts and thinks like a man, and acknowledge only intrinsic and substantial excellence as honorable in thyself and others.

But there mayest thou likewise learn more justly to judge of the destination of man. When thou there considerest how many and how various the toilsome and continued labors, how many the hands and faculties that are requisite for fertilizing the earth, for procuring food and clothing for its inhabitants, and for supplying their primary most pressing wants; canst thou then possibly doubt that man was designed for an active and busy life, for a just and due application and exertion of his powers? Canst thou then possibly think, that he sufficiently fulfils the intention of his being, when he sedulously shuns whatever bears the name of labor; accounts all stated and renewed work for violence and trouble; passes his days in slothful ease, in a delicate reservation of his faculties; or employs himself barely in fruitless speculations or idle researches, which have no influence on the welfare of human society? Canst thou possibly imagine that men who thus think and act, can claim any just precedence above the husbandman? Or canst thou then doubt of the great importance both of him and his vocation? Canst thou refuse him the esteem and the gratitude he deserves? No, the cultivation of the earth is the first, the most natural, the most necessary, the noblest and most honorable condition and calling of man; and he that despises this station of life, despises the ordinance of God, and forgets to what purposes man was designed by his Creator.

O thou, who consumest in town the products of the country, forget not from whence the food thou enjoyest, the beverage that refreshes thee, the clothing thou wearest, proceed, whence and by whom they are prepared and adapted to thy use; and despise them not who render thee this essential, this indispensable service! Honor the husbandman as thy steward and provider; oppress him not with hard services, with severe exactions, and still less with the burden of contempt, so hard to be borne; for he too has the manly, the moral sentiment, and that very frequently less impaired or vitiated than the generality of the inhabitants of populous towns. Honor him as thy elder brother, who provides for the whole family, prosecutes their most laborious affairs, and thereby leaves his younger brethren time and leisure and ability, to provide for the conveniences rather than the necessaries of life, and to invent and to enjoy a variety of more refined pleasures. Yes, honor agriculture as the prime, the peculiar source of wealth, as the firmest support of the commonweal, without which neither arts, nor sciences, nor trade, without which even thy city luxury and splendor could not subsist; and, if thou hast no means, no calling, no occasion, to pursue arts and sciences, trade and commerce, or to serve in what are termed the higher circles of the world; then haste thee back to thy primitive vocation, to the culture of the ground; and believe that thou art more agreeable in the sight of God, thy Lord, and far more honorable in the eyes of thy intelligent brethren, than if, replete with vanity and pride, thou squander away thy time and thy faculties, and require to reap where thou hast not sown!

This is not all, my christian brother! Even in respect to the superior destination of man when we

have done with this terrestrial life, our sojourn in the country, and our converse with its inhabitants, may be very instructive. How many mental powers, how many great and happy dispositions, how many generous sentiments, wilt thou not there discover, of which, in their confined and narrow sphere, in their simple and uniform train of affairs, but few can be exerted, applied employed, or used in the degree and extent to which they are adapted! How many heads, which for sagacity, for ingenuity, for docility, for extending or improving some of the sciences, or by state policy, would have rendered themselves conspicuous, had they been produced in different circumstances, and in other connexions! How many hearts, susceptible of the noblest and most effective benevolence, which might have felt and provided for the happiness of many thousands, if they were not thus totally destitute of the proper means and opportunities! How many persons, who live and die in the deepest obscurity, that would have attracted the attention or admiration of all beholders, had they been placed on a more spacious stage! And shall not these powers, these dispositions, be unfolded in another life? Shall these generous sentiments never be able to exert themselves in action? Shall all these active and improveable minds, all these sensible hearts, all these eminently good and useful human creatures, shall they never be what, from the ground plot of them, they might be and become? Has their Creator made such great preparatives for so poor a purpose; can he have lavished away so much power of production for such trifling effects? Couldst thou expect this of him whom all nature proclaims to be supremely wise? No, the more undeveloped capacities, the more restricted faculties, the more unfinished human intellects, thou meetest among thy brethren, so much the more certain mayest thou be

of their immortality and of thine own, of their and thine everlasting progress towards higher perfection.

Very instructive to the reflecting man, is, thirdly, his abode in the country, in regard to what is termed happiness. Here seest thou, O man, thousands of of thy brethren and sisters, dwelling not in palaces, not in houses adorned with the beauties of art; who partake of no costly dishes artificially prepared; who wear no sumptuous and splendid apparel; who loll on no luxurious couches; who yet in their humble cottages, with their ordinary food, in their simple attire, on their hard beds, find much comfort and joy, and nourishment and recreation; who probably find in all these, a greater relish, than thou in the enjoyment of affluence and superfluity. Here seest thou thousands of thy brothers and sisters, who are daily employed in the most laborious, toilsome, and which appear to thee the most disagreeable and painful occupations; and who yet are cheerful at their work, and contented with their condition; persons who are totally unacquainted with all thy exquisite delicacies, and with the generality of thy refined pleasures, and yet complain neither of languor, nor of the want of pleasures and pastimes; men whom the glad sentiment of their health and powers, the view of beautiful nature, the prospect of a plentiful harvest, an abundant production of the fruits of the orchard, the peaceful enjoyment of the refreshing evening breeze, the familiar table talk, and the animated rejoicings on festivals and Sundays, more than compensate for the want of thy splendid distinctions; men, in short, who may be very confined even in their religious notions, and probably are erroneous in many respects; but adhere to what they know and believe, and console and refresh themselves by meditations on God and the world to come, on numberless occasions, wherein thou who knowest, or pretendest to know

more, art driven and tossed from doubt to doubt, and know where findest peace.

Here, O learn what real happiness is, by what means and in what path thou mayest seek and find it. Here learn that happiness is not confined to affluence; does not consist in outward glare; not in rank and titles; not in a soft, luxurious, idle, and inactive life; not in an eternal round of diversions; not in the unhappy means of hearkening to every childish foolish fancy, and in exploring the methods of its gratification. No, learn to find it in the cheerful sentiment, and the alert application of our powers, in an active and busy life, in the due discharge of the duties of our calling, in setting bounds to our desires, and in the diminution of our artificial wants; to know that it consists in contentedness of heart, and in comfortable reflections on God, and on the better world of futurity; that it therefore is far more dependent on ourselves and our manner of seeing and judging of things, than on our outward circumstances and the regard we draw; and that no man is utterly secluded from the possession and enjoyment of it, be his station in life what it may.

Learn therefore to dismiss thy complaints, and no longer accuse the Creator and Father of the world; accuse thyself and thy froward taste, and thy irregular desires, and thy servile propensity to imitation, and thy false, perverted judgment on the worth of things, and the weakness by which thou sufferest thyself to be deceived by appearance and show, or swayed by the senseless fashion of the times, and the waste or abuse of thy more extensive knowledge—of these things thou mayest complain; but, from complaints proceed to alteration and amendment, if thou art not happy, or only happy in a slight degree; since thou mayest drink at every source of happiness which nature, art, society, and religion, open to thee.

And when thou hast learned this, thou hast learned the science which is the most important of all, the science of being cheerful, pleased, and happy, and of ever becoming more so.

So instructive, my pious hearers, may the time we pass in the country be to us, and so instructive it actually is to reflecting persons. To such an one what appears to be no more than recreation and pleasure, will prove a copious spring of wisdom. Thus will he at once invigorate both his mind and his body, the health of the one, and at the same time the health of the other. Thus does he draw nigh unto his Creator, his Father, his God; learns to behold and feel him in all his works; and rectifies his judgment on the worth and destination of man, and on his real felicity. May we all reap these experiences from our excursions into the country; and on every fresh occasion in more abundant measure!

SERMON XXXIII.

The Value of Domestic Happiness.



O God, the eternal, inexhaustible fountain of all comfort and happiness, how various, how abundant are the sources of satisfaction and pleasure which thou hast opened to us thy children, and to the enjoyment whereof thou invitest us by thy good providence ! If thou have beset our path of life with numerous impediments and difficulties for our discipline and correction, yet hast thou embellished it with numberless beauties and satisfactions which impart to us courage and energy to overcome those difficulties. If thou lay upon us sometimes heavy duties, toilsome businesses, severe afflictions ; thou softenest and alleviatest them to us by still more various and greater recreations and comforts. Yes, we may, we should be even here on earth contented and happy ; and if we are not so, it is by our own fault. In capacities, in means, in opportunities, in encouragements to it, thou lettest none of us be wanting. But too frequently we let ourselves be wanting in the wise and faithful use of that which can and should make us happy according to thy will ! But too often we allow ourselves to be cheated by the semblance of things ; slight truth and wisdom and virtue, the only sure guides to happiness ; and let ourselves be misled by error, by folly and vice on the road of trouble and misery. And then we doubt of thy goodness, murmur at thy decrees and dispensations, and complain of the lamentable lot of humanity ! O God, how unjust are we frequently against thee, and how inimical to ourselves ! Ah, forgive us our transgressions, most merciful father, and lead us back from our deviations. Let the light of truth dissipate the errors and prejudices that so

often misguide us. Teach us ever better to know and more worthily to use the wise and kind dispositions thou hast made for our happiness. Grant that we may all seek and find it there where thou wilt that we should seek and find it, and let us all become constantly more intelligent and good, and thereby more capable of its enjoyment. Bless to this purpose the meditations that are now to employ our thoughts. Let us perceive the happiness of domestic life, to which we are called by thee, in its real form, and derive from it all the blessedness that it is capable of procuring us. Grant our requests thou father of mercies, which we implore of thee in the name of our Savior Jesus, and, entirely relying on his promises, and resigned to thy will, we farther address thee as—Our Father, &c.

MATTHEW xxi. 17.

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany, and he lodged there.

IT not unfrequently happens, that a man is looking at a distance for what lies by him, for what is inviting him at home to immediate enjoyment; and this is commonly the cause that he either does not find what he seeks for at all, or not so complete as he could wish. Thus all mankind are in quest of satisfaction and happiness. But probably they least search for it where it would be the most easily, the most certainly, and the most completely found. They overlook or despise the sources of it which lie nearest to them, and are already in their possession; which no man can shut up from them, no man can render tasteless or contestable; which flow

indeed without noise, but in a copious and uninterrupted stream; and rove about in anxious perplexity after others, which can only be discovered with great labor, only sparingly enjoyed, from which they cannot always, from which they can but seldom draw undisturbed; can never entirely slake their thirst, and often run the hazard of taking in bitterness and death with the waters of them. I will speak without a metaphor. Mankind too often seek their principal pleasure, their whole felicity, in what is called the great world, in numerous and brilliant companies, in distracting and fascinating diversions, in extensive connexions with such persons as are distinguished by their rank, their train, their opulence, their luxuries, and their magnificence, and live sumptuously every day, or rather seem as if they lived. Too often do they run from one such glittering circle to another, from one such company of counterfeit freedom and joy to another, in hopes of assuaging their thirst after pleasure and happiness. But how seldom do they find what they seek! How much seldomer do they find it so pure, so complete, as they expected! How often do they there mistake the shadow for the substance, appearance for reality, and find themselves lamentably and shamefully deceived in their most flattering hopes! And how much more easily and satisfactorily, how much more sincerely and completely might they have found and enjoyed this pleasure and happiness, if they had been contented to look for it, not so far off, but nearer at hand; not in noise, but in quiet; not in what depends on mere accidents, but is in their own power; in short, if they had sought for it in domestic life?

Yes, in this little unrenowned circle, there is far more real solid joy, than in grand and brilliant companies; more happiness and greater variety of it is to be found in this small round of employments and

pleasures than on the vast theatre of glaring shows and tumultuous diversions. Here, in the enjoyment of domestic happiness, it is that the wise man, the christian, principally seeks and finds refreshment, recreation, and pleasure. Here even, our Lord, whose taste and sentiments were in all respects so humane and generous, sought and found them. Wearied by the labors of the day, and the contradictions of his enemies, he left them, as our text informs us, and went out of the city into Bethany, there to participate in the peace and comfort of a family united together by the tenderest affection, the family of Lazarus and his sisters; and to increase their satisfactions by his presence and converse. This humble abode of domestic happiness he preferred to the lofty palaces of the great, to the festivities of the rich, and the riotous mirth of the voluptuous. Happy they, who in this respect likewise are so minded as Jesus was! They can never be deficient in real felicity.

Yes, my dear brethren, great, uncommonly great, is the value of domestic happiness! But infinitely greater to them who know it by experience, than to such as are only acquainted with it from description. May I be enabled to do justice to it at least in my representation! In order to this, let us enter upon two inquiries. The first, how should domestic life be constituted, that it may have a great value? The other, what gives it this value; or, wherein does it consist?

Domestic life, like all other external goods, is not necessarily and of itself, but only under certain conditions, in particular circumstances, a real advantage and a source of actual felicity. Home is but too frequently rendered the seat of tiresomeness and disgust; the scene of low and ungoverned passions; the abode of vexation, of ill humor, of various dis-

sensions, of petulance and malice; not seldom an actual place of torment. This is always more or less the case, where wisdom and virtue are not of the party, and do not animate the businessess and pleasures of domestic life. Only there where wisdom and virtue dwell, where intelligent and good persons live together, only there dwell peace, satisfaction, and joy; it is they alone that render either a cottage or a palace the receptacle of pleasure; only by their means is any family, whether great or small, rendered capable of happiness. For only the intelligent and good can tell what solid happiness implies; none but they have either the taste or sentiment proper for it; it is they alone that estimate things by their real value, and know how to enjoy above all things what is true and beautiful and good, unesteemed and unknown as it may be in the great world; and among such as are not susceptible of the more delicate sensations. To them a word that overflows from the fulness of the heart, a look that indicates the soul, an inconsiderable but guileless action, an unimportant kindness but performed from real affection, a calm and silent sentiment of friendship, a free effusion of one's thoughts and sentiments into the bosom of one's family, is of more worth than the reiterated protestations of civility and regard, than all the flattering encomiums and blandishments, than all the friendly meins and gestures, than all the splendid entertainments in which the glory and happiness of the generality of large companies consist.

Wherever domestic happiness is found, it shews us persons who are connected together by real, intrinsic love and friendship, who live entirely by each other, and who seek their happiness, their honor, and their force, in the mutual union of their hearts. Only to persons of this description can and must every thing be of importance which each has and

says, and does and enjoys, how he is inclined, and whatever befalls him. They alone know how to consider the advantages of one with undeviating complacency; to observe the infirmities and failings of another without dislike; to reprove the indiscretions of a third with inoffensive gentleness; to understand the looks of each; to prevent the wants and wishes of all; mutually to comply with the designs of each other; to harmonize with the feelings of the rest; and to rejoice heartily in all the successes, even the most inconsiderable, that happen to each other. Wherever frigidity of temper and untractableness, where jealousy and envy prevail, there no real happiness is possible, in the narrow circle of daily intercourse.

Lastly, domestic happiness supposes a taste for truth, for nature, for a noble simplicity, for serene repose; as they are in contrast with error and art, studied and forced pleasures, and the more ostentatious and poignant diversions. That pure and generous taste alone can give any value to the comforts of domestic life, and, to such as understand and enjoy it, render all its concerns important and delightful, as the sources of satisfaction and pleasure. For, in this case, they arise, not so much from the object, as from the eye that beholds them, and the heart that feels them; not so much from the importance of the transactions and incidents themselves, as from the natural and spontaneous manner in which they arise, and the pleasing interest taken in them. To persons of a sound judgment and an uncorrupted heart, the cheerful countenance of the spouse; the lisping of the infants, the mirthful sports of the children, the sight of reason in its bud and in its blossom; to them the earnest curiosity of one, the innocent vivacity of another, the growth and improvement of a third, the contentedness of all, is a

scene far preferable, with all its privacy and simplicity, to any other, however intricately conducted, or splendidly performed; to them the silent and placid existence in a society of open affection, of unrestrained and unobtrusive benevolence and love, to hearts that are able to melt, is a kind of being which they would not exchange for any of those that are so much prized and envied by the multitude.

This once premised, the happiness of domestic life has doubtless a great, a conspicuously great value. Let us now see what gives it this value, or wherein it consists.

The comfort of domestic life is, in the first place, the most agreeable relief from the burden and heat of the day and its frequently tiresome business; the sweetest recompense for the work we have finished, probably after much toil, great exertions, much opposition, and at last finished without success. Here peace, recreation and repose, await the father, the mother, the individuals of the family, after they have finished, perhaps in the sweat of their brow, the labors of the day. And the cool dusk of the evening cannot be more welcome to the weary traveller than the relaxation they enjoy in the bosom of their family. Here the man of profound science unbends his mind, amuses himself with the agreeable images he receives from without; lowers himself to the comprehension of the chattering infant, to the understanding of each of his children; watches and cherishes every indication of a sound mind and a good heart as it springs forth, and accommodates himself to every thought and sentiment that unexpectedly presents itself to him. Here the man of business forgets his intricate concerns; dismisses his troubles for a time; if he cannot entirely banish them, receives comfort and encouragement from the partner of his soul; and his heart expands, his countenance

brightens, and troubles and cares flee away, till he has collected fresh vigor to resume his burdens, or rid himself of them. Here the scholar breaks off the thread of his investigations; steps out of the labyrinth in which he had probably entangled himself; and often finds, in the enjoyment of the innocence and noble simplicity of his offspring; more truth and more tranquillity, more aliment for his mind and heart, than all the learning and all the arts in the world could give him. Here every man sees and is sensible for whom he has been at work, for whom he has been exerting his faculties; and rejoices the more over what he has done, as those who are to reap the fruits of it are the dearer to his soul. Here every man receives the praise and applause he deserves, and receives it from the persons whose approbation and praise are every thing to him. Here the drooping are raised, the faulty corrected, the slothful excited, the afflicted consoled, and satisfaction, by degrees, is diffused over all. And where, then, my friend and my brother, where wilt thou, where canst thou seek and find this happiness, this recreation, this reward, if thou find it not in domestic life?

The happiness of domestic life is, farther, quiet, peaceful self enjoyment; a self enjoyment that is multiplied and ennobled by the intimate participation of all the concerns of this trusty society. Here a man returns from distraction and dissipation to himself; feels his existence; has a clear, distinct, internal consciousness of what he is and possesses, and lives more in himself and for himself, and in them and for them who are nearest to his personal being, than in outward things. Here what we are with regard to the society at large, and for which we must so often forget what we are in and of ourselves, comes into no consideration; we put off our titles and posts and dignities and borrowed distinctions, as

robes of ceremony, which are as often an incumbrance as an ornament to us; we return to our natural state of liberty, play no artificial character, represent no strange personage; think, speak, act entirely according to our own peculiar turn, as our sensations arise, and appear what we actually are, and nothing else. Here a man feels and presents himself as a man, the spouse as the spouse, the parent as the parent, the child as the child, the friend as the friend; but no one as sovereign or as subject, no one as the statesman, or as the prelate, or as the public teacher, or as the merchant, or in any other reference to station and calling. And how blessed is not this inward unadulterated sentiment of humanity, this serene enjoyment of real intrinsic perfection and dignity, independent on outward things! How much more blessed than any participation in the fallacious turbulence and dazzling splendor of the great world! How many innocent, humane, and generous emotions here arise and are displayed, which, in the ordinary hurry of business and dissipation, slumber in the recesses of the soul, as if in covert from the scorn and derision of the vain or the wicked! And is not this to be properly called, living, fully to enjoy one's life, and to be glad and rejoice in it, like a rational being, with consciousness and consideration?

The happiness of domestic life is, thirdly, the delightful, free, and intimate association between harmonious and mutually loving souls. Hence vanish all the constraints of art, of fashion, of received usages and ceremonies; all fear of cruel censure, of galling reproof, or biting jeers; all uneasy constraint; all wearisome attention to a thousand indifferent, insignificant things. Here every one shews himself in his own native colors, without needing to conceal even his harmless weaknesses, his actual imperfections and failings. Here one heart unfolds itself to an-

other ; and every reflection, every sentiment, is transferred, undisguised, unaltered in its full truth and force, from one to the other. Here no sorrow, no care, no wish, no joy, no hope, remains shut up in the recesses of the heart ; but, by free and reciprocal communication, every sorrow is mitigated, every care diminished, every worthy desire encouraged, every joy redoubled and heightened, every hope becomes actual enjoyment. Here each exchanges what he has, for what another possesses, alternately bestowing and receiving information and comfort, and force and satisfaction, and serenity ; while all feel themselves richer and greater, and stronger and happier, for what they are and possess in common. And where, I beseech you, where can these effusions, these communications of the heart have place, with so much careless freedom, and to so wide an extent, as in domestic life ? What a value then must not the happiness of it thus acquire in the eyes of every man who loves nature and truth, who has a humane, a tender, a communicative heart, and yet finds so little matter for its nourishment beyond the circle of his familiar friends !

And still how many more agreeable circumstances and advantages are not connected with this happiness, which greatly enhance the value of it.

The happiness of domestic life is, fourthly, inexhaustible. It renews itself daily, it multiplies itself without end. As much as nature is more diversified and richer than art, so much more various and abundant in pleasures and joys is this happiness than any other. Here are no settled boundaries, no determinate way and manner, how and to what extent a man shall please and delight himself. As various as are the employments, the transactions and the events of human life, and as various as the revolutions that daily obtain in regard of all these things ;

just so various also are the objects of friendly intercourse, and the familiar converse of domestic life. As inexhaustible as the thinking principle of the human mind, and the sensitive faculty of the human heart, so inexhaustible are the sources of delight that here stand open. Here no good word that is uttered falls to the ground; here no effect is without its reciprocal consequence; no sentiment that is not conceived, no testimony of affection that is not returned, no civility that is not repaid, no satisfaction that is not enjoyed by all, no emotion that is not transfused into every heart. Here the recollection of the past, and the prospect of the future, are intimately combined in the enjoyment of the present; all together form but one highly interesting whole; all take a lively part in all; and how much must not the agreeable employment and the pleasures of each by this means be multiplied! How much more than there, where only certain kinds of pleasures or amusements are to be found, which always wear the same aspect, and always return with the same restrictions; where a man is so seldom thoroughly understood; must so often give his words to the wind; so often exhibits thoughts and feelings, wherein none coincide either in sentiment or sensation; so often excites envy by his contentedness, and dark looks by his cheerful mien; and where commonly the most separate, and not unfrequently the most opposite interests actuate all the individuals of the society! No wonder then, if pleasure often fails, and its dull monotony renders it still oftener insipid.

The happiness of domestic life compensates the want of any other; but no other can compensate the want of that. Let the world, let thy countrymen withhold from thee the justice, the respect, and esteem that are due to thy merits; repay thy services with indifference and ingratitude; how speedily wilt

thou forget these slights, or these injuries, on returning to the bosom of thy family, on being received by them with open arms and open hearts, and in passing among them for what thou really art, obtaining the approbation which is truly thy desert, and in feeling the whole worth of their attachment and love! Has all the glittering tinsel of the great world, all the magnificence of the court, all the triumph of eminence and power, left thy heart empty and cold; has the farce of dissimulation, of artifice, of falsehood, of childish vanity that was there performed, wearied and disgusted thee; how soon does thy deadened heart expand itself as thou enterest the doors of thy house; how soon does it feel a mild and genial warmth in the circle of thy wife and thy children and friends; how soon do the sincerity, the frankness, the affability, the innocence which there prevail, restore thy soul, and reconcile thee to the human race! On the other hand, be as full as thou wilt of the bounties of fortune; be the darling of the great; be the idol of the people; be the oracle of the politest companies; be even great and rich thyself; preside over as many others as thou canst; but if thy habitation be the seat of discord and jealousy, and thy domestic life deny thee the peace, the satisfaction, the pleasure it yields to the wise and good; how little will every outward and dazzling circumstance of fortune make thee amends for this essential inward defect! How much will this one defect embitter the enjoyment of every species of success! How hard and intolerable will the burden of it be.

Hence it is, that the enjoyment of domestic happiness is always not less edifying and useful than pleasant. It is here a man learns the true ends of his being; here he is taught rightly to appreciate the value of all the goods of life; here he is convinced

of the emptiness of grandeur, of pomp, of rank and station. Here he is taught to think, and feel, and act like a reasonable creature; learns to forget his outward distinctions, and to see them in their proper light, more as toys and baubles, or even incumbrances, than as things in themselves covetable. Here all hearts are united, and ever uniting closer; the one becomes still dearer to the other, each is ever more ready and willing to assist and serve the rest; all collect new avidity, and new powers to fulfil the duties of their calling, more and more to deserve the esteem and applause of the others, and thereby to promote the welfare of the whole community, which is but one heart and one soul. With what zeal must not the father and the mother of the family be animated in their affairs, of what perseverance will they not be capable, while they taste the fruit of their industry in the enjoyment of domestic happiness, in jocund converse with their children, and provide themselves daily, by continued industry, with successive pleasures and renewed delights! What an incitement must not this be to the faithful discharge of their duties. And must not those pleasures be of extraordinary value, which instruct and improve whosoever enjoys them?

Still more. To the enjoyment of domestic happiness, no troublesome, no expensive preparations and arrangements are needful. It may be enjoyed at all seasons, in every moment of life. No sooner does the hour of social recreation, the hour of meeting again, the moment of finished labor arrive, but with them enter cheerfulness and mirth into this happy circle. No sooner does the want of this pleasure make itself felt, but the means of satisfying it are ready at hand. Selfishness and ill humor, and a thousand pretended or real obstructions and restraints, which defeat the schemes of pleasure among

people of fashion have little influence here. The inclination of one is the inclination of the other. This cheerfully bestows what he has, and as cheerfully and gratefully accepts what another gives him. When one is glad, gladness inspires them all; when one of them enters to the rest with a brightened aspect, joy beams from the faces of all. When one has done some good or obtained some success, and imparts it to the objects of his affection, it is as if all as well as he had done or enjoyed it. What advantages have not such pleasures and joys above those that often require whole weeks to be spent in planning, arranging, and expecting them; then by caprice or accident are still longer postponed; and at last, in a few hours, are over and gone, and very seldom produce what they promised.

To the enjoyment of domestic happiness as little of art and dexterity is requisite as of preparation and arrangement. It is entirely the work of nature and sincerity; not the effect of preconcerted devices, of studied parts, of a troublesome observance of the rules of behavior, and the modes that prevail for the day. A sound mind, and a good affectionate heart, is all, my dear brother, that is required to the enjoyment of this felicity. The less constraint thou here puttest on thy mind and thy heart, the more freely thou allowest them both to act; so much the more purely and perfectly wilt thou enjoy this happiness. Though, in the great world, both of them must crouch under the yoke of fashion, and the mind can seldom venture to think aloud, and the heart seldom dares resign itself to its feelings; yet here they may both follow their bent unimpeded and free, and exert their powers and qualities, in such manner and degree as is suitable to the inward impulse and the present occasion.

This also, my pious hearers, gives the happiness of domestic life a great advantage, that the enjoyment of it is never attended by surfeit or disgust, by sorrow or remorse. It is real enjoyment; and the sincerity of it constantly maintains its worth. It is innocent enjoyment; and innocence fears no reproach. It is social, affectionate enjoyment, which excites no jealousy, and attracts no envy; by which no one is injured, with which none are unsatisfied, from which none are sent empty away, and all are contented with each other. It is an enjoyment that is grateful to our Father in heaven, which is not disturbed, but exalted by reflecting on his presence, and which often consists in pious joyfulness for his bounty, in the heartfelt worship and praise of the Supreme eternal source of being. After this pure enjoyment, these lofty pleasures, you have nothing to fear in calling yourself to account; you need not be ashamed of what you have spoken or done; you will have no cause to think of appeasing those you have affronted, or of repairing the injury you have done to your brother; will cheerfully think on God, on your immortality, and on the world to come. Rest and sleep will not shun your embraces; but you will the more completely relish the comforts of them both, and delightful visions of the innocent pleasures you have enjoyed, will frequently, even there, be floating in your mind. And can you boast of this, you that seek your solace and happiness principally in great and shining companies, in loud tumultuous pleasures, in places of thronged resort? Have ye never lamented the preparatives, the expense, the time, the pains you have bestowed upon them? Are ye not frequently far more languid and heavy on returning from them than when you went to them? Have not often perturbation and concern about the consequences of what has passed, or reproaches for

your indiscretions, accompanied you to your dwelling? Have they not often, for a longer or a shorter time, destroyed your peace? Have they not often incapacitated you for prayer, or rendered it irksome to you? And if you have experienced this, and do so still, then confess the advantages which the quiet, innocent joys of domestic life possess over yours.

Lastly, the happiness of domestic life is restricted to no class of men. It is attached neither to station, nor to opulence, nor to elevation and power? Confined neither to the palace nor to the cottage. It may be enjoyed by all mankind, by persons of very rank, of every age, in every place. The sources of it stand open to all; to the poor no less than to the rich, to the low as well as to the high; to youth and age alike; every one may draw from these wells, and every one draw pleasure to his heart's desire. And which is that external boon that in this respect may be compared to the happiness of domestic life? How few persons are able to acquire an ascendancy over others! How few to shine in the splendors of exalted station! How few to obtain wealth and opulence! How few to raise themselves above others by personal distinctions, or by arts and erudition, or by great and heroic exploits, and solace themselves with the applause and admiration of their contemporaries! But all intelligent and good persons, the servant as well as his lord, the countryman as well as the citizen, the unlearned as well as the scholar, all may enjoy the happiness of domestic life, and may enjoy it in its full perfection. It is human sentiment, it is human happiness, which every creature that is human has an equal right to enjoy, and the same means to obtain. And what a great, what an eminently great value must not this confer upon it.

Now lay all this together. Consider what an agreeable relaxation from labor, and requital for it, what a silent and serene self enjoyment, what a free, delightful communication of our inmost thoughts and feelings, the enjoyment of domestic happiness is; consider that it is as diversified as inexhaustible; that it makes up for the want of every other happiness, but can never be itself supplied by any; that while it is so pleasant, it is also instructive and useful; that to the enjoyment of it neither great preparations nor peculiar dexterity and address are required; that it draws after it neither disgust nor remorse; and that, in fine, it is peculiar to no condition of men, but is capable of being enjoyed by all; and say, after all this, whether you know of any other external that has a greater worth than this, or even a worth so great?

No, my dear brethren, if you would enjoy pleasure, innocent, pure, daily renewing, never disgracing, never cloying; delights worthy of the man and the christian; then seek them not at a distance from you, since they lie at home; seek them not in things which are not in your power, but in what is more your own; seek them in the happiness of domestic life. If you may venture to expect them any where, it is certainly there they must be found.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Value of Friendship.



O GOD, the eternal, inexhaustible source of all affection and happiness, what joys, what felicities hast thou not prepared for us, by making us capable of affection towards each other, and of elevating that affection to pure and generous friendship! What a counterbalance to all the troubles and burdens of life hast thou not given us therein! Affording us a genial light through the roughest and gloomiest paths of it! Yes, all the dispositions, all the energies, all the propensities and instincts which thou hast planted in our nature, are good; they all testify that thou lovest us with parental tenderness, that thou hast not ordained us to grief, but to joy; not to misery, but to happiness! Might only all these dispositions be unfolded, these energies be so exerted, these propensities acquire such a direction, and these instincts be so enobled as is conformable to thy gracious and paternal intentions towards us! Might wisdom and virtue, might the light of religion direct and guide us all in this, and lead us all to the perfection and happiness whereof we are capable! How many unjust and criminal complaints of human misery would not then be done away! How satisfied, how blessed should we not then be in the social and cheerful enjoyment of thy bounties! How greatly facilitate to ourselves by mutual affection and friendship our progress on the way of duty and virtue, and how much more certainly and completely reach the end of our being! O God, do thou send the spirit of love, of pure and generous love, into our hearts! Open them to the charms of virtuous friendship. Enable us clearly to perceive, and intimately to feel its great value, and purify us from all low,

selfish inclinations and passions that are in opposition to it. O God, to approach nearer to thee, the father of spirits, and to unite ever closer the one to the other, is what all intelligent, sensible beings are perpetually striving after, is also longed for by human spirits! May we ever be becoming more susceptible of this happiness in both respects, and be ever drawing more felicity from this source of life. Bless to that end the contemplations we now propose to begin upon it. Strengthen our reflections, and enable them to penetrate us with virtuous, generous sentiments and feelings. For this we present our supplications to thee, as the votaries of thy son Jesus, our ever blessed Deliverer and Lord; and, firmly relying on his promises, address thee farther as he prescribed—Our Father, &c.

PROVERBS xviii. 24.

There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a Brother.

CHRISTIANITY has frequently been reproached as unfavorable to friendship, since it does not expressly inculcate it; prescribing indeed to its followers benevolence towards all, universal kindness and brotherly love, but not discriminate friendship. Friendship, however, is not properly a duty, not an indispensable obligation for all; it is not to be commanded, like justice and general kindness; its rise, its direction, very frequently depends on circumstances and incidents that are not in our own power; and even very intelligent and worthy persons, of a sensible and friendly heart, may and often must, without any fault of theirs, forego the happi-

ness of friendship, I mean strict and cordial friendship. At the same time it must be confessed, that the more a man opens his heart to universal benevolence, to philanthropy and brotherly love, those great commandments of the christian law; the more he allows himself to be governed by the spirit of them; so much the more adapted and disposed will he be to even the most noble and most exalted friendship. Nay, friendship would be a very general virtue, and the whole society of christians a band of friends intimately united together, if they all inviolably conformed to the precepts of that doctrine which they confess, and suffered themselves to be animated by its spirit.

Of this, what we know of the founder of christianity and of its primitive confessors, will not allow us to doubt. When we see Jesus repay the gentle, tender, affectionate disposition of his disciple John with distinguished affection and confidence, when we see this disciple so often leaning on his breast, and hear him continually called the disciple whom he loved, when we see our Lord selecting the house of his friend Lazarus as his place of refuge and recreation; when we hear him say to his attendants, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go to awake him;" when he afterwards hastens to his grave, weeps at the sight of his body, and the beholders exclaim, "See how he loved him!" how can we entertain the least doubt of the friendly disposition of Jesus, or think that such a disposition is at variance with his spirit and his doctrine? And the connexion that subsisted between Jesus and his disciples and followers in general, certainly presents us with an example of the most generous friendship. How indulgent, how affectionate, how familiar, was his converse with them! How great his concern for them! "If ye seek me," said he to the guards who came to seize

him, "then let these go their way." It is recorded of him, that, "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." And when he was shortly to be separated from them, how he soothed, comforted, encouraged them! How he seemed entirely to forget himself and his most important concerns, in his attention to them! How tenderly he takes leave of them at the last supper, and enjoins them the commemoration of him! How he bears them in mind even during the whole course of his sufferings, and in the last sad scene of them interests himself in their welfare! And how he hastened, as it were, on his resurrection from the dead to shew himself to them, and to dry up their tears! Was not this friendship, was it not the most exalted friendship? And the first christians, who animated and inspired by the spirit of christianity, were but one heart and one soul, who had all things as it were, in common, who were daily of one accord together; did they not compose a band of the most intimately connected friends, cemented together by the love of God and the love of Jesus, and the love of each other?

No, christianity is by no means unfavorable to real, virtuous friendship. It, on the contrary, inspires us with all the dispositions, incites us to all the actions, and makes us ready for all the sacrifices wherein the characteristics and the glory of friendship consist. Only we must learn how properly to understand and appreciate it. And this is the purport of my present discourse. In it I will inquire with you into the value of friendship, one of the greatest blessings of life. To that end I will first shew you how friendship should be constituted in order to have a great value; then, wherein the value of it consists; and lastly, how we should behave in regard to it, in order that it may be and procure to us what it is capable of being and procuring to us.

This will enable us to feel the truth of Solomon's sentence which we have taken for our text ; " There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Friendship, what a sacred, what a venerable name—and how abused and profaned ! Now the most captivating garb of virtue ; now the mask of vice. Now the indissoluble band of generous and noble souls ; and now the most dangerous snare of the betrayer of innocence. Here the parent of truth, of frankness, of sincerity ; there the disguise of the most artful treachery, and the deepest cunning. One while a powerful incentive to the fairest and most magnanimous achievements ; at another, the sordid means of prosecuting and attaining the most selfish designs. And all this while real friendship still maintains her station, and supports her dignity. She preserves the exalted place she has obtained among the virtues and prerogatives of human nature, among the sources of our felicity. But not every thing which bears her name, not every thing that borrows her garb, is she herself. Let us therefore, for her vindication, rightly discriminate between appearance and reality.

When I speak of the value of friendship, I mean not to comprehend under that term what the general abuse of it implies ; not every extensive or more limited connexion that may be founded on relationship, or on business, or on conviviality, or on social resort to pleasures and diversions, wherein neither intrinsic affection, 'nor tenderness, nor confidence, has part. This is generally nothing more than a selfish intercourse of trifling civilities and services, in which the heart has little or no concern ; and often a low traffic of mutual profit, which subsists for so long a time as each can find his account in it. No, real friendship is pure and generous affection, is the close and complete union of hearts, which is testified by an actual participation in all the joys and sorrows

of the other, a mutual and unreserved confidence, and the most disinterested officiousness, and so connects a man with his friend in regard to sentiments and sensations, that they both of them make but one self.

Neither is similarity or conformity of disposition, of taste, of propensities and pursuits, nor the strong attachment thence arising, the only, nor even the principal material for raising the structure of that friendship which truly deserves the name. This similarity, this conformity, this mutual propensity, may likewise subsist among fools and rogues, and do connect them together for a longer or a shorter time. But who will decorate such combinations and connexions as these with the sacred name of friendship! They are not unfrequently conspiracies against the general welfare, confederacies for social depredation or debauchery. No, it is only the similarity of disposition and sentiment, grounded on mutually good inclinations and propensities, on generous and beneficial designs and pursuits, that can so draw men together, and unite them so intimately to each other, that they shall become in a manner one heart and one soul; and only in this union can real and exalted friendship consist.

In order then, that friendship should have a great and solid worth, it must be built on real excellencies of mind and heart; on intelligence and virtue, and on reciprocal esteem. Both heart and mind are alike necessary to it. The good heart alone is not sufficient to the happiness of friendship. It must be guided by a sound, well regulated mind, if we would not frequently occasion our friend, against our will, more dissatisfaction than comfort, more harm than profit. The light that should enlighten us, and the warmth that should animate us, as friends, must not be like the dazzling flash of the lightning, and the scorching

heat of the summer's sun, but like the light of the day, and the mild and cheering breath of the spring. But even the best regulated understanding and the most soft and tender heart are but weak and frail supports of friendship without the aid of virtue. The friendship which is not founded on virtue, on reciprocal love to all that is beautiful and true, and right and good, cannot be of long stability. It is incapable of any generous and magnanimous sacrifice. The unprincipled man is always at certain periods interested and selfish. His views, his preferences, change with his inclinations, and take the color of his passions; and as often as these press into action, the voice of friendship is heard no more, and its most sacred rights are trampled under foot. Friendship between the bad only lasts till one has had his ends of the other in the prosecution of his plan, in the gratification of his sensual desires, or in the oppression and the ruin of a third. Only the virtuous man remains true to his friend even when he can procure him no more profit, and afford him no more assistance; when he has nothing left to return him for all his civilities and services, but a heart that confesses and feels their value. It is virtue alone, in fine, that can beget in me a solid and lasting esteem towards my friend. And what is friendship without esteem? The creature of self interest, of humor, of sensuality, or of a blind mechanical impulse, that is liable to as many alterations and accidents as the foundation whereon it rests.

Farther; if we would render friendship of actual and great value, it must be disinterested, generous, and at the same time impartial. He that courts my friendship, only that he may promote and effect, through my means, certain purposes advantageous to him, or hopes to execute some plan of ambition with greater facility; who is only so far and so long

my friend as he finds his account or his pleasure in it; he profanes the venerable name under which he conceals his base and selfish schemes. The true friend looks more to the welfare of his friend than to his own, and feels himself much happier when he can give him any thing, can help him, can work for him, or suffer for him, than when he receives assistance or benefits from him. He honors and reveres the mind, the heart of his friend, that which makes him a respectable and amiable man, and not his station, his wealth, his figure, his influence over others, or any outward advantages. But with all this, he is impartial. He overlooks not the greater accomplishments and merits of others, with whom he is less closely connected; does them ample justice; shews them, if they deserve and want it, still more respect, still more reverence, still more assistance, than to the friend of his heart; places them, not only in thought but in deed, above him; and furthers their views and their prosperity, even to the apparent detriment of his friend, whenever truth and justice, and the common interest require it of him.

Yes, in order that friendship should be truly and highly valuable, should be morally good, then, thirdly, it need not be at variance either with general humanity, or with the benefit of the whole society of which I am a member, or with the particular relations wherein I stand towards my parents and family, and my fellow citizens. Friendly affection, any more than patriotism, need not degenerate into misanthropy. I am neither to sacrifice to my friend my duty, nor the claims of the innocent, nor those of the public welfare; not so exclusively to attach myself to him, and to live for him alone, as to deprive of my esteem and affection, my benevolence, or my converse and services, others who have equal demands upon them. This neither will nor can be required

by the Friendship that is founded on wisdom and virtue; nay, it would be injured, dishonored, disgraced, by so doing. On the contrary, the more pleasure generous friends shall sacrifice to their duty, the more worthily each maintains his post in human and in civil society, so much will the tie of friendship, that holds them together, be more closely drawn.

Lastly, friendship receives its greatest value from real heart felt piety. This binds a man to his friend by all that is venerable, holy, and comfortable in religion. This renders every thing that is of most consequence to mankind, their common concern. This cleanses their hearts from all sordid motives and low propensities. This binds them together as fellow worshippers of God, as fellow disciples of Jesus, as coheirs of the future felicity, by the strong cement of faith and hope. This opens to them a prospect into a superior state, where affection will be everlasting, and where they will incessantly be striving after perfection with united powers. And of what fidelity, of what sacrifices must this not make them capable! What grand exalted sentiments interchangeably impart to them! What a value must it communicate to their friendship!

Friendship thus framed, and resting on such a bottom, has a great, an inestimable value: Let us see what gives it this value, or wherein it consists.

In the first place, friendship is the most intimate and happy conjunction of two souls of the same generous temper in heart and mind. All things in nature, my pious hearers, as well in the spiritual as in the material world, are continually striving to unite, to obtain a closer and completer union. As all the particles of matter reciprocally follow the law of attraction, so do spirits likewise, so do human souls, so all things tend and endeavor to assimilate with

whatever is or appears to be homogenous to them. This is the foundation of love; this the ground of friendship. Some have sensual and gross, others spiritual and noble conjunctions in view. The wiser, better, and more perfect two friends may be, so much the more perfect is their union also. When both of them are of a sound and vigorously reflecting mind, have a capacious and sentimental heart; when both have a widely extended knowledge, great and elevated notions, pure and generous feelings; both great activity in goodness; they then possess, as it were, more points of contact, so much the greater similarity or homogeneity, incessantly drawing them closer, and binding them more indissolubly together. They see so many objects on the same side, from the same point of view, in the same combinations; they think and judge of so many important matters in the same way; they are on such a number of occasions penetrated by the very same sentiments; employ themselves so frequently and so earnestly about the very same things, that each sees the other in himself; is sensible to himself in the other, and both so think, and will, and feel, and act, as though they were but one. Friendship is, in fact, a reduplicated or multiplied mode of existence, and of effecting and enjoying good. Each exists at the same time in the other, is operative and effective by him. The good which one does, is done by both; the satisfaction that one enjoys, is enjoyed by the other likewise; the merit of one is also set down to the account of the other. Both are animated by the same common interest, and are set upon the most diversified activity. And how much must not all this concur to unite like constituted souls; and how happy must not the sentiment, the enjoyment of this union be!

True friendship is, farther, the most intimate community of all the joys and sorrows of life; a community, which as much improves and heightens the one, as it diminishes and alleviates the other. No joy is of any great value which remains entirely locked up within my heart, which I cannot impart to a being of my kind, which I cannot enjoy with him; even the most exalted, the divinest of all joys, even the joys of piety, would cease to be what they are, if I could not enjoy them in the sentiment of the presence of God, and of my connexion with him; and every, even the slightest sorrows may become oppressive, may be intolerable, if I be forced to bear them alone, if none of all that surround me, will suffer with me, or if I am not supported under them by the sentiment of the presence of the Almighty. But what joy will not be improved and multiplied, what joy will not frequently be augmented into transport, by communicating it to the friend of my heart, when I know that he feels it as much as I do myself, that he will call my attention to every circumstance, every consequence, every effect of it that can increase its value, and that he will, for me, and with me, give praise for it, from the fullness of my heart, to God, the giver of joy! And what solid and good reflections, what humane and generous sentiments, what honorable purposes, what useful employments, what circumspect prosecution of them, what innocent enjoyment of nature, what improvements in knowledge or in virtue, what progress towards our common aim, must not this produce in friends thus connected together, and augment their satisfactions in it! How must not all be enobled in their eyes by the pleasure they mutually take in it, by the heart of sentiment and affection wherewith they enjoy it! And their sorrows, how much more tolerable, how much lighter must they not be to them, by not being abandoned

to their own violence and fury, by their not remaining locked up in the recesses of the heart, where they would rankle, and the more deeply inflict their stings, but are shaken forth from the bosom of the one into that of the other; all that tormented and pained him is entrusted to the other without reserve, not even concealing that which probably no danger, no torture, would have extorted from him! No, neither suffers for himself alone; neither bears alone the burden that oppresses him; each obtains from the other all the comfort, all the counsel, every assistance he ever has it in his power to give him. And what a sweet is friendship able to infuse even into the bitterest sorrows of human life! What a light it diffuses over the darknesses that surround it! What vigor and courage it inspires into the weary and heavy laden heart! What little circumstances does it not apply to cheer and revive it! With what a lenient hand it binds up its wounds! What attention, what officiousness, what complacency, what indulgence, what sacrifice, is too troublesome or too dear to this end! And what repays and rejoices them more than when they see the suffering friend suffer less, suffer more composedly, or suffer no more; when they can see him restored, strengthened, cheered, and satisfied, again in possession of the comforts of life.

Real, virtuous friendship is, thirdly, an united pursuit of one and the same end, an animated endeavor after ever increasing perfection. And how much must not their united endeavors be thus facilitated in the glorious attempt! Hand in hand they walk the path of wisdom and virtue; with united hearts, with combined forces, they labor at their improvement and happiness. One quickens and encourages the other to proceed; one incites the other to industry and perseverance, one kindles the other to generous and noble deeds. Each watches

over the other, as much as over himself; warns him of this danger, reminds him of that duty, supports him in each toilsome, each painful enterprise, and affectionately recalls him from every indirect and devious way. If one stumble or fall, the other raises him again; if one grow slack and weary on his course, he is inspired with new firmness and courage by the voice and the example of the other. Each finds in the other the skill, the ability, the dexterity on an hundred occasions, which he would never have found in himself. They never are weakened or retarded by low self interest; but a generous emulation animates them both, and allows neither one or the other to be left behind. They fight in conjunction against every disorderly passion that stirs within, against every attack of envy and derision, against the baleful influence of prevailing principles and practices, against every carking care and every mining sorrow. And how much must not this facilitate the conquest over all their foes! The more impediments and perils they meet with on the way, the more difficulties they have to encounter: So much the faster will the knot that connects them be drawn; so much the more will their fidelity be exercised and secured; so much the more poignant will the mutual sentiment of friendship be; and so much the more effectual their united efforts to vanquish every obstacle, to surmount every difficulty, and to force their way through dangers and calamities to the prize of their high calling, and to seize it with concurrent ardor. The severest penury, the most manifest danger, the hardest and most costly sacrifices, are at once the sustenance and the test of their generous friendship; and the more a friend can do and risk and sacrifice and suffer and laboriously acquire for his friend, so much the happier is he in the sentiment of his friendship. And

of what actions and what enterprises are not such friends capable ! What degree of virtue, what perfection is unattainable to them !

And what a value, what an inestimable value must not all this confer on friendship ! What terrestrial happiness, what outward distinction, can be compared to it ! None ; it is of far greater value than wealth and honor and elevation and power and all the splendor of earthly thrones. With it, a man may be deprived of them all, and yet be happy ; without it, though he had them all, his heart would never be satisfied, nor his thirst after happiness be assuaged.—Even love must yield the palm to friendship. Sensual love is consumed and destroyed by enjoyment ; and when it is not raised upon friendship, or does not change into it, it inevitably draws after it satiety, disgust and aversion. The joys of friendship alone neither droop nor decay, and the fruition of them never deadens desire. If friendship be less lively and vehement than love, It is therefore the more lasting and pure. Its objects are capable of continued advancement, of incessant perfection ; on which new beauties, new charms, new blossoms and flowers, for ever appear. It combines not flowers which bloom today and are withered tomorrow ; it incorporates not frail materials of dust and corruption ; but its connexions are of souls, of spirits, of immortal beings ; beings for ever raising themselves higher above the dust, for ever approaching nearer to the Father of spirits, the original source from whence they sprung. Love generally dies on this side the grave ; but friendship extends to the regions beyond it, into the better world to come ; death only transplants it into a new scene, where its satisfactions will be purer and more perfect, and it will display itself in still nobler efforts and more glorious actions.

Great as the value of friendship is, however enviable the person that enjoys it, yet is it by no means the prerogative of the darling of fortune, a benefit to which only persons of superior stations can make pretension. No, friendship seldom takes up her abode with the rich, still seldomer with the high and mighty. She prefers the cottage to the palace, the simple manners of the private person contented with his moderate circumstances, to the pomp and luxuries of the great; often does she rather choose the house of sorrow than the seat of festivity. Men of the inferior classes keep more together, are more sensible to their natural equality, cross and circumvent each other less in their views and enterprises, are less frequently competitors for the same pre-eminence, are not so dissipated and relaxed, nor so often forget themselves amidst a multitude of extraneous objects; and the sufferer is in want of a sympathising being, one into whose breast he may pour out his sorrows, whose presence and participation will comfort and cheer him, and in whose conversation he may forget his distresses and his pains. Thus friendship very frequently is a counterpoise to misery, while the want of it deprives the most shining circumstances of the greatest part of their worth.

Plain considerations; which will not allow us to doubt that friendship is a highly covetable blessing, that it is the choicest and best privilege of life. Happy he who possesses this rare advantage, who has learnt to prize it as it deserves, and is sensible to the felicity it confers. To him it is a never failing spring of tranquillity and comfort, of satisfaction and joy. To him must the path of life be far smoother, more luminous and pleasant, than to the wretch who is obliged to wander through his course, without a companion, without a friend to observe

his ways and partake of his pleasures, who must bear its troubles without assistance, and may often fall for want of a support.

Wouldst thou, my christian brother, know the happiness of friendship from experience; then be cautious in choosing thy friend. Herein let wisdom and virtue conduct thee. Let not the outward graces, nor friendly looks, nor a smiling countenance, nor flattering speeches, nor studied civilities, nor the first impression of complacency, nor every similarity in sentiment or taste beguile thee. Give not carelessly thy heart to any one that applies for it, or who procures thee present pleasure. Place not thy confidence in any thoughtless, inconsiderate person, any convivial jester, any witling, any scorner of religion and severe morality. Connect not thyself with any to whom the band of wedlock, the ties of domestic and of social life, and the still more awful relation that unites the creature with the Creator, are not sacred. In thy choice, prefer understanding and probity to all the glare of riches and the pomp of station, candor and openness of heart to the most polished sentiments and the most amusing wit; prefer even the severest reprovcr to the most agreeable flatterer. Choose for thy friend, the friend of truth, the friend of virtue, the friend of humanity, the friend of God. Rather forego a while longer the happiness of friendship, than run the least risk of finding wretchedness and misery where thou soughtest for the purest of human delights.

Wouldst thou, farther, enjoy the happiness of friendship, and that in a rational and lasting manner? Then form no extravagant, no romantic conceptions of it. Amuse not thyself with the notion of a friend that no where existed, or who must have been a useless or a worthless member of society if he did so exist. Be reasonable in thy demands on

thy friend. Require no perfection more than human, no infallibility, of him. Forget not that he is a man, a frail, circumscribed creature, liable like thee to err and to mistake, and must and will be so while he is a man. Forget not that he is a father, a husband, a brother, a citizen, head or member of some larger or less society, and stands in various connexions with a thousand others. Require not therefore, that he should always judge exactly right, give thee constantly the best advice, have his countenance always equally bright, his behavior always alike agreeable and pleasing, his heart ever equally open and sensible, or his interest in whatever concerns thee, equally active and warm. Demand not of him that he should live only for thee, converse with thee alone; still less, that he should wound his conscience for thy service, or sacrifice to thee the welfare of those who look up to him for protection and support. No the firmest tie of friendship is mutual exactitude and integrity in the discharge of our duties, as well as mutual indulgence and patience.

Wouldst thou, thirdly, render the enjoyment of this happiness lasting as well as complete? Then deal circumspectly with thy friend. The flower of friendship must be reared and tended with a gentle hand; it has need of nurture and refreshment, to preserve it from fading and withering away. Bear then with the harmless weaknesses of thy friend, though probably distasteful to thee. Impose on him no burden that he may find difficult to bear. Give him as freely, at least, as thou receivest of him. Put him not to trials which may imply distrust or awake suspicion. Extort no services or attentions; and force not from him the secret with which he is not willing to entrust thee. Beware of imputing to him each look, each word, each trifling action, which might not, probably, have been accompanied with a

sufficient degree of energy, as a breach of friendship, when thou art once become sure of his heart. Let not the power thou hast over him degenerate into authority and rigor; or the freedom and familiarity that subsists between you, into a total neglect of the rules of good breeding and propriety.

Wouldst thou lastly, enjoy the happiness of friendship, and learn its full value from experience; then be punctual and exact in the discharge of all the duties thou owest to thy friend. Pay a sedulous attention to his wants, his views, and his connexions; think nothing that concerns him to be indifferent to thee, but consider his interests as inseparable from thy own. Be before hand with him, as often as thou canst, in what he may expect or require from thy friendship; and let cheerfulness and pleasure accompany and animate whatever thou dost in his behalf. Thank him for the civilities and services he accepts from thee, as much as for those thou receivest from him. Above all things be scrupulously exact and faithful in the most important and generous demonstrations of virtuous friendship. Exhort, incite, encourage, and stimulate him to every thing that is laudable and good; and be not deterred from it by the fear of forfeiting his esteem and affection. The friendship that will not stand this trial, that will not be the firmer for it, is not deserving of that honorable name, deserves not to be cherished with all possible care, as the chiefest felicity of life. Indeed, thou must not be discouraged by the first unsuccessful attempt. Thou must even endeavor to procure admission and audience to thy admonitions, thy warnings and thy reprehensions, by every thing that is persuasive and prevailing in friendship. Thou must even repeatedly bear with the displeasure of thy once more equitable friend, and bear it with undiminished affection. But, when he will by no means

allow himself to be admonished, to be cautioned, to be reprehended by thee, if he will only endure to be flattered; then, let the bond of attachment between you be cancelled for ever. It was not dictated by wisdom and virtue, and might easily have led thee into a snare. But, if thou art justified in requiring this of thy friend, then likewise, on the other hand, take the admonitions, the suggestions, the remonstrances and reproofs of thy friend in good part, and with a grateful resentment. Respect and love him the more, that he may have less frequent occasions of giving thee such testimonies of his esteem and affection; and so run with him towards the mark of human perfection, to which every virtue, every species of happiness, and therefore friendship, infallibly conducts.

SERMON XXXV.

The Value of Civil and Religious Liberty.



O GOD, the creator and father of mankind, far hast thou elevated us above the beasts of the field! Of greater perfection and happiness hast thou rendered us capable. Thou hast imparted to us reason and liberty. And what blessings hast thou not granted us by them. What means of becoming ever better, ever wiser, ever happier! Yes, thou hast formed us after thy own image, and imprinted on us; thy children, evident marks of our origin from thee. By reason and liberty we can have communion with thee, and ever approach nearer to thee, ever gain a greater resemblance to thee, the first, the most perfect being. O God, with what privileges hast thou not endowed us, the inhabitants of the earth! How happy are we, in being that which thy love has ordered us to be! O might we but ever become more intimately sensible to our dignity and that of our brethren, and ever think and act in greater conformity with it! We are all thy children, all of divine descent, all endowed by thee with the same privileges, all ordained by thee to perfection and happiness; and as such we should all esteem and love each other, all live together as brethren and sisters, and none mislead another from his vocation or degrade him from his dignity, but all be aiding to each other towards the attainment and maintenance of it. This is thy will, thou gracious Parent of us all; and to do thy will is our glory and our felicity. O teach us then, with ever increasing fidelity to accomplish thy will, and evermore completely to enjoy that felicity. Worthily to use our own liberty, and to respect and promote the liberty of our brethren, should be the honor, the most zealous endeavor.

or of us all. Do thou, most merciful Father, put a stop to the oppression and tyranny of every kind, under the burden whereof so many of thy children on earth continue to sigh; break the bonds that disfigure and degrade the work of thy hands; revive and raise the sentiment of their dignity, almost extinct in such numbers of mankind, and let the triumphs of freedom over thralldom, be more conspicuous and glorious from day to day. Bless the meditations on thy word which we are now about to begin. Teach us all duly to estimate the value of liberty, and let the sentiment of it inspire us with all generous dispositions, with dispositions worthy of the man and the christian. Dispel by thy Holy Spirit, every prejudice that may weaken these good effects of truth; and hear our prayer, through Jesus Christ, by whom thou hast called us to the glorious liberty of the sons of thee, our God. With filial confidence we implore it of thee, as his disciples, and address thee farther in his name: Our Father, &c.



1 CORINTHIANS, vii. 23.

Be not ye the Servants of Men.

THE spirit of christianity is a spirit of liberty. Of this its doctrines, its precepts, as well as the character of its founder, and the whole temper it communicates to its true professors, allow us no room to doubt. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, says the apostle, there is liberty. Christianity promotes liberty of each kind, civil as well as religious, among mankind. If it any where is not so apparently favorable to it; if any where it seems to require

of its followers an unlimited and implicit obedience towards magistrates and governors; this was extremely necessary in the primitive times, for the confirmation and extension of it. The christian doctrine must have been clear of every thing that might excite suspicion of worldly aims, or fear of civil commotion. It must first disseminate more instruction and morality among mankind, before it had need to give incitement and encouragement to the vindication of their rights. A vigorous and lively sentiment of liberty in men who are but little cultivated, and have no firm principles, is often, generally speaking, more prejudicial than useful. But the spirit of christianity, the whole system of thought and temper it inculcates, has indisputably the advancement of both kinds of liberty in view. No doctrine whatever, causes a man to feel more forcibly his natural equality with all others; none more expressly preaches to him humanity and brotherly love, universal kindness and beneficence and generosity; none inspires him with a livelier sentiment of his dignity as a man; none is more fertile in great, generous, and elevated thoughts and sentiments of mind and heart; none teaches a man to consider death with greater composure, and to meet it with more firmness; none makes him readier to die for his brethren and for the public good, as Jesus died for mankind; and who sees not that no dispositions can be more manifestly at variance with slavery and bondage, and none more favorable to freedom than these? O were they but more general among christians, and that even rulers and governors would but learn to think in a more christian manner! How much advantage would accrue to the cause of freedom, and consequently of human happiness! Far be it from me to preach disorder in the state, or disunion and schism in the church! But to

preach and to promote liberty, and to render the greater or the smaller proportion of it you enjoy the dearer to you, is a duty of mankind, a christian duty, and to contribute something to the discharge of this duty, is the scope of my present discourse. In it I shall inquire into the value of liberty, civil and religious, and its influence on human happiness, and therein lay before you the importance of the apostolical admonition in our text; "Be not ye the servants of men." In this design, I shall, first, make a few observations for ascertaining the true notion of liberty, and its real value; then examine into the peculiar value of the two kinds; and, lastly, subjoin some suggestions in regard of our behavior towards it.

Civil liberty is there in its greatest perfection where we are only subject to the laws, and choose our own representatives in enacting those laws. In other constitutions of government there exists always so much the greater or less degree of freedom as the laws more or less bear sway, and as even the arbitrary will and power of the ruler is circumscribed by them. So likewise religious liberty is there in its greatest perfection where a man is subject in religious matters, to no other laws than the precepts of reason and his own conscience, and unimpededly may follow their impulses and injunctions. And when likewise here limitations are set, then does so much more or less liberty of this kind obtain as such limitations are more extensive or confined, as they relate to essential or unessential matters.

That we may rightly estimate the value of this liberty, it is necessary to make several remarks, and accurately to distinguish it from what is often called, but is not liberty.

Liberty, in the first place, is not licentiousness, not anarchy. To be free, does not imply, to act with-

out principles, without views, according to the dictates of unbridled inclination; not to break through and despise all restraints; not to reckon every law as a violent imposition and burden, and to reject it as soon as we think or feel it in the least degree inconvenient to us; not to set aside all that is fit, and to get over all that is decent; not to exist and live barely for oneself, without regard to others. No, laws accurately defined, inviolable, obligatory on all states and conditions of men, on princes and magistrates as well as on subjects, are the first and firmest foundation of liberty. Wouldst thou enjoy a liberty controled by no law, limited by no authority, in the full power of doing merely what thou art pleased to do; then get thee from the society of men; return to the woods, to the pretended state of nature; live among the animals thy relations, the beasts of the field; or lead the life of a hermit, divest thyself of all the privileges, and renounce all the comforts of social life. For, where men live together, and would live securely and happily together, there must be law, there must law bear sway, there must every one sacrifice a part of his natural liberty to the peaceful possession of what he retains. No, the greater the freedom of the citizen, so much the more sacred should all the laws of the state, the first as well as the last, be to him. The more freely the worshipper of God may think, the less he is tied to forms and confessions; so much the stricter and more conscientiously should he conform to the eternal and unchangeable laws of reason, and be guided by the precepts of a revelation which he confesses to be divine.

Farther. The love of liberty is not a querulous disposition, is not a spirit of opposition to all laws and ordinances, to all received notions and doctrines; a repugnance to all institutions, establishments, and usages, introduced into civil life and the public wor-

ship. No, the more sensible a person is to the value of his own liberty, the less will he be disposed authoritatively to set bounds to the liberty of others. The more unmolestedly he may follow the dictates of his own conscience, so much the more does he respect the conscience, even the erroneous conscience of his brother: The less he is tied down to opinions and formularies of doctrine himself, and the more sensibly he is hurt when his faith and his persuasions are made the objects of derision; so much the more indulgent is he to the opinions and persuasions of others, and the less will he allow himself to controvert or to rectify them otherwise than by argument, and in the spirit of humility and meekness. The unseasonable reprover, the biting scoffer in this way, is not solicitous for the cause of liberty, but for his own; he is not animated by the love of liberty, but by pride, and the lust of dominion.

Lastly, it is with liberty, as with all the other blessings of life; it is only of great value to them who know how to use it properly. Often is it made a fertile source of disturbance, division, tumult, and confusion to the citizen as well as to the worshipper, in the church no less than in the state. Often is it made instrumental to the passions, to pride, to vanity, to self interest, to pertinacity, to ambition; often does it degenerate into arrogance, into licentiousness, into fury; and then it can certainly produce nothing but misery. In the hands of weakness and vice, every thing becomes dangerous, even wisdom itself. But this detracts nothing from the value of liberty any more than of wisdom.

No, great, inestimably great, is the value of it! The happiness it procures or promotes, far outweighs the accidental evils that attend it. The subsequent considerations, intended to set its value in a proper light, cannot fail to convince us of this truth.

Liberty is the natural state and the warmest wish of man. Every thing that lives and thinks is panting and striving after freedom. The beast bears not the trammel without violence, and struggles under the yoke we lay upon his neck; and the more sentiment of self, the more reflection a man possesses above a beast, so much the more oppressive and intolerable must it be to him to bear similar or heavier shackles, and to sigh under a similar or a more galling yoke. No, man is not born for slavery, he is not designed for bondage. This appears from his dispositions, his capacities, his faculties, and the consciousness he has of them all, and the voluntary and deliberate uses to which he can apply them. Every man has these dispositions, these capacities, these faculties, and this consciousness, in common with all other men. No man is essentially distinguished from the others. No one belongs to a higher species or order of beings. All are equal with each other, as men; all are brothers and sisters in the properest sense of the words. To determine ourselves, to act by our own perceptions, is what exalts mankind above the beasts of the field, and makes us what we are. He who despoils him of this liberty, or arbitrarily circumscribes it, therefore degrades and debases humanity, and renders himself guilty of treason against the human race. He usurps a preeminence over his brethren, over creatures of his kind and nature, which only beings of a superior order to man can claim, like that which man maintains over the beasts of the field. This natural equality of men, and the rights that are grounded on it, are undeniable and unalienable. The unessential but accidental difference of weak and strong, of greater or less mental and bodily powers of men, may and should occasion mutual dependence, various connexions and regards, but not tyranny and slavery. Even the feeblest, the most limited man,

is still a man, who indeed is in want of a guide, a counsellor, an overseer and provider, but not a tyrannical lord. Civil as well as religious society should be that in the large, which domestic society is in the little. In them, as in this, should be father and children, teacher and scholar, leader and follower, head and members, lawgiver and subjects; but neither there nor here should tyranny and bondage be. This is the voice of nature, speaking aloud to all intelligent beings, and her behests and decrees should ever be sacred to every one who is still alive to the sentiment of himself.

Liberty, civil and religious liberty, brings, secondly, the mental powers of men into greater play, sets them in greater and more diversified action, and thus furthers their perfection. The more diversified and important the affairs which occupy the human mind, and whereon it is free to think, to judge, and to discourse; the more incitement has it from within and from without, to display, to use, and to exert its powers, and to strengthen them by these uses and exertions. And what can be more important to a man than the concerns of the state to which he belongs on one hand, and the concerns of the religion he professes on the other? To whom can his own personal happiness, and to whom can the means and ways by which it is advanced or retarded, be indifferent? And who can reflect and discourse on these subjects, if he be allowed to do so at all, without great attention and participation, without a manifold application and exercise of his mental powers? He, indeed, who is not allowed to think and to know more of matters of state or religion, than it is held expedient to let him think and know; he who is obliged to judge of what is true and right and good by prescriptions and fixed formularies; he has soon excogitated the matter; he will shortly become in-

different both to the state and to religion; will let others think and determine for him; will decline all research after truth; will suppress every doubt; and his mind soon sinks, in regard to his most important concerns, into a careless slumber, into absolute inaction. Only where freedom reigns, only there reigns the true life of the mind. There all its conceptions are brought forth, all its capacities unfolded and applied. There it takes a cordial interest in whatever happens, in all that relates to mankind. There it shrinks from no obstacle, is deterred by no difficulty that it meets with in its reflections and scrutinies, by no chimera of superstition, by no dread of man. There is unimpeded communication, unembarrassed circulation of every truth, of every doubt, of every thought that once excites attention; and each ray of light is reflected on a hundred benighted minds, each spark of celestial fire is communicated to a hundred generous hearts; one mind assists another in its investigations and efforts. And if mental perfection be thus promoted among mankind, who can refuse to acknowledge the value of liberty by means of which it is effected?

Liberty, civil as well as religious liberty, is, in the third place, the only efficacious preservative against servility, with all its baleful and degrading consequences. Where the former, where civil liberty is wanting, there station and rank supply the place of merit, gold and silver, greatness and power, dignities and titles, avail much more than the intrinsic qualities of the man whom they decorate or invest; there absolute command usurps the place of reason, arbitrary punishments and presents, that of all inward incitement and proper determination to act in this manner or in that; there the lowly crouch before the lofty, the poor in the presence of the rich, and the subject stands terrified at his prince; there one blindly ap-

proves what is said, and admires what is done by the other; there each thinks and lives far more in the opinion and the judgment of others, than in himself, and from his own feelings; there the art of flattering, the art of dissembling, the art of misrepresenting, are the most important arts of life; there no one undertakes or performs more for the national benefit than he is absolutely obliged to do; there every one seeks to evade the laws, to neglect his duty, to shrink from his obligations with impunity, and to seize on the reward of merit without desert; there men who are in all respects equal, there brethren live so together as if they were perfectly alienated from each other, as if they were creatures of a quite different kind. And how can this fail of stifling in the very bud every species of generous sentiment and action; how effectually must it not eradicate all philanthropy and patriotism! Where the other, where religious liberty is wanting, there religion appears generally under a gloomy and a horrid aspect; there is she by no means the familiar friend of man, his best and firmest comforter, but a woeful disturber of his peace, a severe and haughty despot, ever threatening and dictating, and arrogating an implicit credulity, an implicit obedience; there must her confessors be constantly doing violence to themselves, suppressing their natural feelings, and contradicting and counteracting the plainest declarations of their reason; there must they be filled more with a slavish dread of God, and of the future world, than with filial love towards their heavenly Father, and cheered by delightful prospects in a better life; there must they testify to men, as weak and as frail as themselves, the reverence and submission which are only due to God and truth; there will a man be often in thralldom to the most shameful superstition, and must groan under all the terrors and humiliations of it. And how can relig-

ion appear venerable and amiable to him? How can it be and afford to him what it is ordained to be and to afford to mankind? No, there alone where civil liberty prevails, a man is of that consequence a man should be; there understanding and honesty pass current for more than all outward distinctions; there mankind live together as so many brothers and sisters; there every one shews himself for what he is, and is accordingly esteemed; there truth and openness in the visage and in the manners, in words and deeds, may venture to appear; there, by a secret impulse, the laws are honored and observed; there manly, generous, and patriotic sentiments prevail; there each man understands and promotes, according to his means, the public welfare, and offers up to it, with satisfaction, his personal advantages and pleasures. There alone where religious liberty prevails, will religion be truly important to the understanding and the heart of man; there it employs them both; there it coincides with his whole system of sensation and thought; there it gives light and animation to them both; there it may become the constant guide and conductor of mankind, having reason and liberty for its companions; there it casts around neither fears nor terrors, but imparts courage and confidence to its votaries; there it exalts the mind of man, and expands and composes his heart; there it condescends to his comprehension, is in no contradiction to the actual world, with his natural feelings and experiences, requiring nothing of him which he is unable to grant, and interdicting him nothing that is harmless and good; there it ennobles all things in his eyes, inspires him with comfortable and filial sentiments towards God, and makes him regard every duty as a pleasure. And how distant is not all this from that servility which is one consequence of oppression and bondage! And what a value must it not give to liberty!

For the same reason, liberty is, fourthly, favorable to every species of virtue. A slave, as such, cannot be virtuous. He can obey; but he obeys, not from inclination, but from compulsion. He can abstain from evil and do good; but he has neither an inward abhorrence of the one, nor a perponderant love to the other. He abstains from the wrong and does the right, only insomuch as he is obliged to abstain and compelled to do. Thus does the man who is not animated by liberty observe the laws of the state, thus does he observe the precepts of religion. Both are oppressive, as a heavy burden forced upon him, which he would fain shake off if it could be done without danger. He accordingly discharges himself of it as often as he is unobserved; and can indulge the hope of escaping correction.—No, liberty is the principle, the soul of all real virtue, of all great endeavors and truly glorious actions. When I may myself examine and judge what I do or neglect, what I think and believe, what I am authorised to hope and what I ought to fear; when I may convince myself by rational and free disquisition, of the truth of my belief, of the equity and reasonableness of my duties, of the solidity of my hope or my fear, and then may follow my preceptions and convictions; then it is my own heart that impels me; then I adhere firmly to that which I acknowledge for truth; then I do that which I ought to do, willingly and readily, according to my best abilities; then actual hatred arises in me against every thing evil; and real, cordial love towards whatever is beautiful and right and good; then I am deterred neither by obstacles nor difficulties from hearkening to conscience, from the discharge of my duty; then do I, not barely that which I am obliged to do, but all that I am able to perform; then I think and act in secret, just as in the sight of the world; then harmony subsists in all that

I think and will and do ; then I strive constantly after purer and higher perfection ; and then alone I act virtuously and am truly virtuous. And where has virtue shone in greater lustre, where has she undertaken and achieved more glorious deeds, where has her sense and spirit more generally prevailed, where has she left fairer monuments of disinterestedness, of generosity, of fortitude, of painful and magnanimous sacrifices, of most extraordinary vigor and greatness of mind, than in places where she has enjoyed the benign influence of liberty, and been totally animated by its energy ?

Liberty, civil as well as religious liberty, is, fifthly, the parent, the guardain of arts, of sciences, of every kind of public and private prosperity. He that would attain to any considerable degree of proficiency in some liberal art, or carry it to a certain degree of perfection, must have a free and generous mind ; his understanding must not be fettered by prejudice, his genius not cramped by any dread of man, nor retarded in its arduous flight by traditonal authorities. He must give full scope to his reflections, to his feelings, and to his fancy ; must go in quest of truth, of beauty and perfection, on all sides, with unbounded liberty ; their images, their presence alone should inspire him with respect, their laws alone be sacred to him.—With the most important, the most exalted of all sciences, with the science of religion, the case is precisely the same. All violence, constraint and coercion are averse to her spirit. She is the daughter of heaven, and allows of no controul from men. The friend of liberty is her friend. To him she confides her secrets ; to him she appears in her native, her celestial form. The slave only perceives her in a tawdry disguise, tricked out in a garb of human texture, under which her true figure is concealed: There alone where reflection on religious

matters is not confined by established rules, not chained to human confessions of faith ; there alone where the right of free inquiry is retained by her confessors ; there alone can the knowledge of religion be constantly becoming plainer, more correct and complete ; there alone can it be purified from human interpolations, secured against human abuses, and become that universal dispenser of light and life it was ordained to be.—And, as religion, as arts and sciences flourish under the fostering energies of liberty, so also every species of public and private prosperity is cherished by the same genial influence. She communicates life and activity to all. She strengthens the weak, she quickens the slothful, she encourages and requites the active and industrious, facilitates and promotes the effects of all public spirited undertakings, the success of all kinds of manufactures and trade, and shews us fertile and smiling fields, and diligent and cheerful employment, where before was the gloomy wilderness and the uninhabited desert.

Yet more. Only in the sentiment and enjoyment of liberty, of civil as well as religious liberty, can a man support his real dignity as beseems the man and the christian. What more distinguishes the man from the brute ? What is his boasted preeminence, if it be not liberty ? That he needs not blindly follow an irresistible instinct ; that he is not obliged merely to move by mechanical laws ; that he can consider, reflect and choose ; that he can resolve and do that which he accounts the best according to his perceptions : Is not this the true dignity of man ? And how can the slave assert and enjoy it ; the slave who is loaded with ponderous and oppressive chains, who must implicitly follow the will of another, who feels himself thwarted in thought and manacled in action, by arbitrary prescriptions and control ? How

differently is the dignity of the man and the christian supported by him who knows the happiness of liberty! The freer a man is as the member of a community, the stronger, the greater, the weightier is the consciousness of himself. Whatever he thinks, and says and does, as such, acquires thereby a certain value. He is no indifferent or useless member of the state; he takes an interest in all that happens to it; has an influence, or thinks he has an influence, on it all; feels the prosperity of the whole society as if it were his own, and the damages it sustains as a detriment to himself; he works and toils for posterity as well as for his contemporaries, and hopes, in his descendants, or by his public spirited institutions and enterprises, to be the benefactor of his brethren long after his death. And how great must he not thus feel himself to be! What a dignity must it not give him in all his labors and actions? And thus likewise it is with religious liberty. The freer a man is, as a worshipper of God, as a christian, so much the more is he alive to the privilege of being so, so much the more worthily will he support it. He alone worships God in spirit and in truth, with understanding and sentiment. He alone is impelled by his real wants to all the duties of religion and worship, to every act of piety, and every exercise of devotion. He alone completely feels the happiness and the honor of the relation in which he stands with the Creator as his creature. To him alone is it the true food and recreation of his spirit, when he is busied in silent meditations on religion, when, with a tranquil mind, with a mind unfettered by prejudice and the dread of man, he can proceed farther and farther in investigating and applying the most important truths, when he can elevate himself with joy and reverence to the first, and most perfect being, and can entirely repose in

his idea of him, and in the sentiment of his love. The more freely mankind in general think and act, so much the more intimate and cheerful consciousness have they of the faculties and aptitudes of their nature, of their grand destination, of their affinity with beings of a superior order, and with the deity himself, of all that they at present are and shall hereafter be. And should not the liberty that exalts them thus, which unfolds and maintains this consciousness in them, be of infinite value in their eyes ?

Liberty, is lastly, the truest, the most comfortable enjoyment of life. No slave can be thoroughly satisfied with his life ; too often it is a burden to him ; too often does he voluntarily cast it off, as an insupportable load ; his faculties, his goods his time, his very life is not his own ; the possession, the use, the continuance of them depend upon the caprice of his lord. What he yesterday earned by the sweat of his brow, is ravished from him today ; and the plans and designs he is busied with today, will be defeated and frustrated tomorrow. He is, and has, and does, and enjoys, only what his owner will have him to be, and to have, and to do, and to enjoy. What great value then can any thing be of to him ! How tasteless, or rather how bitter to him must not the enjoyment of them be ! No, none but the free man can peaceably enjoy, and thoroughly relish their sweets. If he have civil liberty ; then as a man, and a member of the community, he has neither violence nor oppression to fear, while he is obedient to the laws. . . . What he is and has, that he is and has, not for the stranger, but for himself and his. What he has invented, wrought, or earned, is his, of it he reaps the fruits. He can pursue any lawful employment without molestation, prosecute any innoxious design at pleasure, and, even when he is working for his descendants, for futurity, has even then a far

greater assurance that his labors will not be in vain, that his purpose will not be defeated. He is neither forced to swell the treasures of the tyrant, nor to satiate the rapacity of his servants, nor to consume his faculties and his life in low and creeping slavery. He can dwell in his hut in security and peace, follow his employment in the calm of obscurity, enjoy at his ease the comforts of domestic and social life, and is not tormented with fears of being arrested unawares by some arbitrary order of government, or of being despoiled, by the machinations of any secret and powerful adversary, of his goods, of his honor, of his children, or the natural use of his freedom. Does he enjoy liberty of religion and conscience; then the religion he professes is actually his own religion, and the conscience he reveres is likewise his own. The considerations and reasons that have led and determined him, are his own considerations and reasons. His faith is the effect of his reflections, the result of his conviction. He needs not be alarmed at every error, at every doubt, at every novel idea, at every deviation from the beaten track, at every unusual elucidation so terrifying to the servile formalist. He is neither affrighted at the ghastly spectre of error, nor the superior brightness of truths but little known. He has principles to which he adheres, by which he tries all things, which console him and guide him safely, even while they leave him undetermined and doubtful. Whatever he knows of religious matters, he knows thoroughly; whatever he believes, he believes firmly; whatever he hopes, he hopes with confidence; whatever he thinks and does in all these respects, he thinks and does with earnestness and joy. And thus does the happy man, who has been nursed in the lap of liberty, who enjoys his proper freedom as a man and as a christian, pass his life in cheerfulness and comfort, uses and enjoys the goods

and advantages of it with confidence and courage ; and in that enjoyment has no fear of being disturbed by the arbitrary orders of a spiritual or temporal superior.

And now, my dear bretheren, judge for yourselves, whether liberty, whether civil and religious liberty, be not of great value, since it is the natural state of man, and the warmest wish of his heart ; since it so much promotes the activity and perfection of his mental faculties ; since it secures him from all servility ; since it is so favorable to virtue ; since it is the parent of arts, of sciences, of public and private prosperity ; since it is the firmest support of the dignity of man and of the christian, and the most delicious enjoyment of life. Yes, liberty is an inestimable blessing ; a possession without which almost all others would lose the greatest part of their worth, and by which they are all of them multiplied and enhanced.

But the knowledge, the conviction of the value of liberty, should not lie dormant in our breasts ; it should have an influence on our conduct.

If ye confess and feel the value of liberty, my pious hearers, patronize and protect it wherever it subsists ; enjoy your own happiness, but seek not to destroy or circumscribe the freedom of others. He that by any means undermines or diminishes liberty ; he that forges fetters for his bretheren, or brings them under a yoke, or prevents them from breaking and casting it off ; is an enemy of mankind, a traitor to the human race, an ignominious slave, who would fain reduce and debase all men to the same servile dispositions with himself. No, the liberty of our brother should be just as sacred to us as his property, as his honor, as his life, as his sum of happiness ; since, that once gone, all the others lose frequently the whole of their value. Of all crimi-

nals, the tyrant is the most atrocious, the little tyrant as well as the great, the servant of the prince as well as the prince himself; and no crime must draw after it more humiliation and shame and torment, in the future world, than this, as none is more manifestly in direct opposition to the will of God, to all his views and commands, to the spirit of true religion and christianity, to the whole of human happiness, than this.

This, however is not enough. If you confess the value of liberty, then also promote and advance it. Do so especially, you who shine in polished circles, who fill the higher stations, you that are in the classes of the learned, who are teachers and guides of the people, who as fine writers influence the taste and the principles of the times, or are distinguished above others by superior talents, and more generous sentiments. It is an indispensable duty incumbent on you to support and advance the cause of liberty. You are the curators of the nation, the guardians of its constitution, the interpreters of its laws, the arbiters between the government and the subject; and sad is your case if you do not employ the deference and respect and authority you possess, to the ends for which the Father of mankind, the Judge of the world, has invested you with them! Maintain then and protect the unalienable rights of mankind; defend and support the equally sacred rights of conscience. Neither degrade yourselves by a blind and slavish obedience, nor by a superstitious submission to the ordinances and traditions of men. Beware of becoming, either in one respect or the other, the servants of men. In both respects try all things, and cleave to that which, according to the soundest dictates of your judgment, is the best. Shew respect to the great and mighty of the earth; but flatter them not; shrink not in

their presence, as if they were creatures of a superior order. Judge of their actions with discretion; but judge of them by the selfsame laws as you pronounce upon the actions of other men; and neither applaud nor approve of any thing merely because it has been said or done by a man that is surrounded by particular pomp. Reverence the religion of the realm, and its teachers, and its rites. But decline not to examine the doctrines of that religion, to discuss the decisions of those teachers, and to judge of the propriety or impropriety of those rites. Allow full scope to the progress of human knowledge; discountenance no decent investigation of received maxims and doctrines, be the consequence what it may. Truth can at length be no loser by it; and one perspicuous thought, thoroughly understood and deeply felt, is of more value, and does more good, than ten others, heard of one man and repeated to another, and understood of neither from principle and conviction.

Lastly, the more liberty ye enjoy, the more let it effect that good which it is able and ought to produce. If you may worship God after your own principles, then worship him with so much the greater cheerfulness and ardor; adore him so much the more in spirit and in truth, with understanding and sentiment. Are you allowed to think and to judge for yourselves in religious matters; then reflect so much the more on those important concerns; let it be so much the more your most pleasant employment to explore and to know them; then endeavor the more to assure yourself of your faith by reason. Woe to him whom freedom to think, whom liberty of religion and conscience, renders indifferent to religion and truth, or inattentive to the voice of conscience! Instead of being free, and of being better and happier by liberty, he only bartereth to his loss.

one slavery for another; and though he be not oppressed by man, yet is he in bondage to his own lusts and passions. No, he who would not render himself unworthy of the privilege of seeing with his own eyes, and of pursuing his object in the way he has chosen for himself, should use his eyes with so much the more assiduity, and walk on his way with the greater circumspection. Do you enjoy civil liberty; then observe the laws of the state and of the society to which you belong, with so much the readier and stricter obedience; for the maintenance and observance of the laws is the ground of all freedom. Promote the welfare of that state, of that society, with so much the more zeal, as it is the more intimately connected with your own, as you have, and may have so much the more influence on its prosperity, as you find and enjoy in it so much the more protection and peace, security and happiness. Think and act in all respects with so much the more liberality and public spirit, the farther you are exalted above the state of slavery. Strive all of you, in the last place, my dear brethren, after that greater, that still more essential liberty of the wise man and the christian, of him who governs himself, who controls his desires and passions, seeks his happiness, not so much in externals, as in his intrinsic perfection, forgets not his dignity, supports it in every condition, uninterruptedly follows the precepts of his reason and his conscience, and wills nothing but what God wills, and does nothing but what is in conformity to the will of God. Yes, this the liberty which will compensate the want of any other, and will be constantly bringing us nearer to the mark of our high vocation.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Value of Learning.

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O GOD, from thee proceed intelligence and wisdom ; from thee proceed all the knowledge and sciences which lead and conduct mankind ; which bless and rejoice them in numberless ways. From thee, who dwellest in inaccessible light, and art thyself pure light, pure truth and perfection, from thee flow light and truth and happiness on us, and on all intelligent beings ! Thou hast planted in us all an ever active curiosity, a burning thirst after the knowledge of truth ; given us all capacities and powers for seeking and investigating it ; opened to us all various sources for assuaging our thirst. And how many benefits, how many recreations, how many satisfactions, how many blessings, have not thy children of mankind, already drawn from these sources ; and how much blessing and delight do they not daily and hourly draw from them ! Thanks and praise be to thee, the Father of all beings, of all spirits, for having made us rational, intelligent creatures, capable of knowledge and wisdom, and afforded us so many incentives and means for constantly more unfolding these our noblest capacities, and for proceeding ever farther in knowledge and wisdom ! Still indeed, in various respects, veiled and oppressed by night and darkness ; still often deceived by sensuality and error ; still only lisping children, still only feeble beginners in the school of wisdom ; yet capable of an incessant progress, of an ever advancing perfection ! And what does not this allow us to hope ! What prospects does it not open to us in all future times and eternities ! Yes, the truth that comes from thee, and leads to thee, should be

ever dearer to us, its investigation and its knowledge be ever more important; and nothing should render us dispirited and slothful in our pursuits after higher attainments in wisdom and perfection! And the more perfect here our knowledge is, the less we here can quench our thirst for truth and our longing after thee, its eternal source; so much the more should we rejoice in the hope of immortality to which thou hast raised us through Jesus Christ; so much the more zealously ought we to strive, by the best, the most faithful use of the light thou hast now caused to shine upon us, to render ourselves capable and worthy of a far greater and brighter light in the future world. Teach us thyself; O gracious God, ever to value more justly the worth of the advantages thou hast at present in this respect vouchsafed to us, ever to prize them higher, and ever to apply them more to the greatest possible promotion of human happiness. Bless to this end the considerations we purpose now to begin upon this subject, and let our prayer be well pleasing in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose blessed name and words, we sum up all our petitions, saying—Our Father, &c.



I KINGS, x. 8.

Happy are thy Men, happy are these thy Servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy Wisdom.

LEARNING, like the other prerogatives and advantages of mankind, is seldom judged of with strict propriety, is seldom taken for what it actually is. It has its panegyrist, who exaggerate its value, as well as its ignorant or haughty despisers, who refuse it the importance it deserves. Consid-

ered in its universal extent, to speak impartially, it has occasioned as much harm as good ; has so frequently appeared under the most venerable aspect, and so frequently in the most ridiculous figure ; and is compounded, in fact, of such a curious mixture of important and unimportant matters ; that, as well in regard to the various sides it has, and the various effects it produces, as in respect to the various persons that profess it, it must necessarily undergo various and opposite sentences, one while deserving applause and admiration, and at another reproach and contempt.—Taken at large, it seems to have been more highly prized, and more honored, in the early ages of antiquity, than in modern times. Probably because it was less common ; probably because the necessity and utility of it were in many respects more readily felt, and the helps it afforded were more indispensable ; or, perhaps, because it wore a more venerable or more mysterious countenance, and was attributed to a sublimer origin. Accordingly, the queen that we read of in our text, as coming from the wealthy Arabia to converse with Solomon, had a very high opinion of its value. She left her throne and her people, to hear and to improve by the wisdom, or, which in the language of those times is just the same, the learning or that monarch. Report having brought the fame of it into those distant regions, it at once excited her appetite for novelty and instruction ; and now, on finding the truth of the matter to exceed even what report had made it, she exclaims in admiration, “ Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom ;” Thus shewing that she preferred the erudition of Solomon before all his treasures, before all the splendor and magnificence of his court. And this judgment does her the more

honor, as it is so very seldom that the great and mighty of the earth are impartial enough to do justice to eminent endowments of the mind, and to esteem them more than their own dazzling distinctions.

Let us, then, my pious hearers, endeavour also to settle our judgment on this matter. Many of my audience are learned themselves, or make literature their principal employment; and most of the rest have much connexion and intercourse with that description of men. For both the one and the other it is highly important to acquire a due estimation of learning; and though I may possess but a small share of it myself, yet its properties, nature and quality, and its influence on human happiness, cannot be utterly unknown to me; and it is more than possible that I may be able to pronounce the more impartially upon it, by renouncing, on that score, all pretensions to fame. Let us, therefore, investigate the value of learning; and to this end, first, make some remarks for properly stating its worth; then set that value in its proper light; and, lastly, thence draw some rules for our conduct towards it.

By erudition or learning, I here understand the whole circle of human sciences and knowledge, that do not immediately relate to the satisfying the first wants of nature; all knowledge and sciences that are generally more necessary and peculiar to a certain class or body of men, than to mankind at large; whether otherwise they be distinguished for diversity and extent, or for solidity and method, be they of the historical or philosophical species and of more or less general utility. Every one that addicts himself to any one class or kind of such knowledge and science, devotes the greater part of his time and faculties to it, and thus distinguishes himself above others, bears and deserves the name of a man of

learning. And, for rightly appreciating the value of this learning, we must previously make several remarks.

The first and most important is this : The value that learning has is no otherwise, for the greatest part, due to it, than as being a means to higher aims, and not as an ultimate object itself ; and this it has in common with the generality of the other privileges and advantages that relate to human happiness. Particular kinds of knowledge, certain branches of learning, have, indeed, in themselves, a value, an intrinsic and lasting value ; but these are few in number. Under this head we may, perhaps, reckon most of our mathematical and astronomical knowledge, several of the deeper philosophical studies, a part of our religious notions ; whatever is eternal, unalterable, and everlastingly useful truth ; all propositions and ideas that are of account in heaven as well as upon earth, among superior beings as well as among mankind ; and though we may not possess a great many such propositions and ideas, yet are we not totally destitute of them, and they indisputably compose the most precious part of our knowledge. All that fall under this denomination besides has no value whatever, as an end, but only as means. It is only so far desirable, and is only so far deserving of our esteem, of our attention and our application, as it exercises the faculties of our mind, procures ourselves and others innocent and elevated pleasures, guides us in the track of truth and facilitates the knowledge of it, diffuses activity among mankind, improves their outward welfare, provides for their accommodation, promotes their security, and helps them in the prosecution of their business, or procures them any other adventitious benefit. Hereto belong the generality of historical, most of the mechanical and philological sciences, and the

greatest part of the learning of the theologian, the physician and the lawyer. They are only means, no more than implements, by which we may forward and attain certain good purposes in our present state ; and which when these ends are once obtained lose absolutely all their value ; and become useless, like old scaffoldings. That man, however, would think foolishly, who should suppose we might despise and reject them, while they are necessary to the prosecution of the building we are carrying on, before the structure be completely finished.

Hence spontaneously arises a second rule, of service to us in forming a right judgment of learning, and the several branches of it. It is this : The greater service and general utility it is of, the greater is likewise its value. Studies, absolutely unprofitable, when considered at least as means to farther views, are, indeed, no part at all of learning ; many parts of it however, are unworthy of the painful and indefatigable industry the great application of time and abilities that are bestowed upon them. Many debase and weaken the mind of a man, instead of elevating and strengthening it ; and benumb and contract his heart, instead of enlarging it, and quickening it to great and generous sentiments. Many lead off such as employ themselves in them from the design of their creation, from their proper perfection, rather than facilitate them in the prosecution of it. Such learned attainments and occupations are, indeed, of but trifling value ; often of much less value than the attainments and occupations of the artificer or the laborer ; and he that makes them his principal employment has no right to complain, if he be neither more respected, nor more happy, than so many others of the unlearned, who trifle away their time like him, and dissipate their powers. No, he alone deserves to be so, and

that in a high degree, whose learning is, in any observable way, beneficial and generally useful ; who can give an account to himself, and to others, of what he has done and performed for the advantage of his fellow creatures ; who effectually has kindled more light, and called forth more activity, in himself and about him ; who has learnt to think and to live better himself ; and has likewise, mediately or immediately, been the occasion that others think more justly, and live more prudently or happily.

A third circumstance, which falls under consideration in our researches into the real value of learning, especially in regard to particular persons, is this ; the more modesty and true wisdom it has to accompany and guide it, so much the greater is its value. If learning allow room to pride, it soon degenerates into arrogance and tyranny ; not unfrequently prevents its possessor from making greater progress in knowledge and science ; often renders it unserviceable to others, or of but little use ; and how very much must this detract from its worth ! Still less value has the learning which has no morally good influence on the mind and temper of the learned man ; which allows him to think as meanly, and to act as perversely and foolishly, and as slavishly to follow the calls of his lusts and passions, as the ignorant and the unlearned ; and in proportion as it procures but little real and durable advantage to himself, so much must this defect diminish its utility in regard of others, and weaken its influence on human happiness. No, then alone does learning display herself in her native dignity, in her full splendor, and suffer none to doubt of her high value, when she appears in the company of modesty and wisdom ! when she is not blind to her own infirmities and failings, and is not ashamed of her limitations ; when she readily communicates herself to

others; when she rather informs in the spirit of meekness, than decides in a haughty imperious tone; when she exerts herself in generous sentiments, in a beneficent and active zeal in the cause of truth, of virtue, of liberty, of human happiness, and by an eminently wise, manly, virtuous behaviour, worthy of the enlightened man.

This once premised, let us more closely examine wherein the real value of learning consists, and on what grounds it merits our respect.

Erudition is, first, mental perfection, and promotes mental perfection; and, if this be a real and covetable privilege of mankind, them must erudition be so too. The man of learning, who deserves that name, knows more of truth, sees farther into the principles and connexions of truths, goes more surely to work in the investigation of them, and is therefore less liable to be imposed upon by appearance. His acuter sight takes in more objects, his trained eye explores much farther; he thinks more perspicuously, more profoundly, more justly, than the generality of mankind can do; and who but must confess this to be a perfection, a prerogative? Allow that he sometimes misses of his mark; allow that he is liable to false conclusions and errors; let the whole amount of the highly useful truths he has made out, clearly explained, or first discovered, be, comparatively, never so small; yet he has been all that time exercising his mental powers, learning to use them better, to use them with greater dexterity, and has thereby been advancing their essential and lasting perfection.—A thousand things, it must be readily confessed, a thousand things that relate to grammar, to the history of nations, of nature and arts, and to other sciences, the knowledge of which comes under the article of learning, are in and of themselves not at all deserving of any pains in the study and

investigation of them ; but, not to mention the close connexion wherein they frequently stand with other more important matters, they cannot be investigated and known, cannot be reflected on, methodized, combined, and applied, without employing our understanding, our acuteness, our wit and our memory, without exercising our mental faculties and strengthening them by that exercise ; and this, undoubtedly, gives a great value and utility to every kind of knowledge which we acquire, not barely in a mechanical and thoughtless way, but by consideration and reflection ; it must give it a value and utility which will still abide by us, even when that very knowledge has vanished from our remembrance, and passed into complete oblivion. Thus, we all learn, in our younger years, numberless things which we can turn to no account whatever when we are advanced in life, and yet the learning whereof has been of great consequence to us, as we at the same time learned to think, to draw inferences, to determine, to revolve many subjects, to comprehend many, and connect many together.—Never neglect then, oh ingenuous youth, to learn any thing that exercises thee in thought, if thou have time and faculties and opportunity for it, though thou perceive not the utility it may be of to thee, and though probably thou may not use it. The real, the greatest utility it can be of to thee is, that, at all events, thou wilt be the more rational and the wiser for it.—Therefore, let no man peremptorily despise him who is apparently pursuing with too much earnestness, and too much industry, matters that, in and of themselves, are utterly insignificant, and promise no pleasure or advantage to any. All depends on the way and manner in which he employs himself about them. If he do it with intelligence and reflection, he may thereby learn to think as consecutively and justly as another.

er, who busies himself on the most elevated objects. In this respect, even an inferior art, an ordinary trade, may be as profitable to the man that duly exercises and carries it on as learning itself. Both the one and the other are, in more than one consideration, nothing else but the scaffold whose value must be adjusted by the edifice to the building whereof it serves.

Learning acquires, secondly, a great value from the noble and never ceasing pleasure the investigation and the knowledge of truth brings with it. So great as the pleasure of the traveller is, who leaves a perplexed and tortuous way, overgrown with thorns and briars, through a dismal and mazy forest, for an even and luminous path, or after the darkness of the night, perceives the first rays of the sun; so great, and far greater still, is the pleasure of the thinking man, on perceiving light and order, and consistency in his reflections, and that he can thereby proceed nearer to the knowledge of truth. And this pleasure the man of learning enjoys, not indeed absolutely, but in an eminent degree. Every application of his mental faculties that is not totally fruitless, every enlargement of his horizon, every augmentation of his knowledge and perceptions, every adjustment of his ideas and conceptions, every additional view he gets into the immense regions of truth, and every ray of light thence falling on his eyes, procures him this pleasure. And how diversified, how inexhaustible it is! Each stone, each mineral, each plant, each animal, each man, each part of man, the whole material and spiritual world, the visible and the invisible, the past, the present, and the future, the possible and the actual, the creature and the Creator; all charm, all employ the curiosity, the spirit of observation, and inquiry of the thoughtful scholar; all guide him forward on the track of truth; all point

out to him more or less of it; all shew him arrangement and harmony in the whole, and in the parts; all lead him to the prime, eternal source of being, of life, of power, of perfection; and by these very means procure him satisfaction, the purest, the noblest pleasure. A pleasure that often rises to ecstasy, when he has overcome any material impediment that retarded him in his reflections, has obviated some difficulty that bewildered him, solved some knotty point on which he had exercised his perspicacity in vain; when he is enabled to fill up any considerable chasm in his knowledge, to see through a series of ideas with greater clearness, to comprehend more fully some part of human science, to find some important and fertile argument or exposition, to make any striking application, any profitable use of his knowledge, or to detect a trace of the truths that ensure him a remarkable progress in tilling the field he has chosen to cultivate. How often, and how amply, must these pleasures requite the naturalist, the astronomer, the geometrician, the philosopher, the chemist, and every other inquisitive mind, for all its exertions and toils in the search after truth! And how little has such an one to fear, lest the sources of these pleasures should ever fail, or the enjoyment of them be turned into disgust! No, here are fountains of pleasure that never fail, which flow through all times and all eternities, and become the more bounteous, the more pellucid and pleasant, the oftener and more copiously we draw from them. And must not learning, which procures us pleasures of this kind, be of great value?

Learning, thirdly, possesses a great value, as a means whereby the general welfare of the whole community is promoted. How greatly have navigation and commerce been benefited by astronomical observations! How much have chemical researches

contributed to the improvement and perfection of manufactures ! How much are architecture, tactics, and every species of mechanical knowledge, indebted to mathematics ! What implement is there of the artist, of the artizan, or of the husbandman, that is not more or less improved and perfected by them ? How many productions of nature are understood, wrought up, and rendered useful to many important purposes, by the industry of the naturalist ! What beneficial institutes in common and civil life, what conveniences in regard of lodging and furniture, of order and safety, of trade and barter, are we not indebted for to learning, and particularly to geometry and the sciences related to it ! How much is due to the study of law for peace and quiet, and to medicine for life and health, however great the inconveniences of the one may be, and the imperfections of the other ! How much agreeable and useful knowledge, how many means of refined, social pleasure, and noble entertainment, have not been diffused from all these sources among all classes and conditions of men ! Compare the condition of a country where ignorance and superstition prevail, with the state of another where learning and sciences flourish : How much more barbarism and ferocity, how much more imperfection and confusion, will ye not find in one than in the other ! How many channels of industry, of art, of pleasure, of domestic and social happiness are not closed to the former, which run and disperse themselves throughout our happy country, bringing life and activity, profit and satisfaction, into all our borders ! And how much more profit and pleasure of these various kinds may not the whole society promise itself in future from learning, since all men are at present far more disposed to render it more generally useful and more serviceable,

to all ranks and descriptions of persons than ever they were before.

Sound learning has, fourthly, a great value, as a means of security against all kinds of superstition and fanaticism. It cherishes and extends the light of truth, which that brood of darkness cannot endure, and which often scares it back into the obscurity from whence it sprung. It promotes clear thought, nice investigation, sagacious doubt, modest and dispassionate inquiry into the causes, the designs, the connexion of things. It arms us against the deception of the senses, of the imagination, of the feelings; against the fallacious charms of the extraordinary, the wonderful, the mysterious; against the imposing vizard of a peculiar pensiveness and hidden wisdom, under which ignorance and fanaticism so often lurk. Wherever real learning and solid science lose their respect and influence, superstition is sure to rise upon their ruins, with all its lamentable and disastrous attendants, ignorance, dastardly fear, intolerance, the spirit of domination, persecution, spreading terror and thralldom and misery of various kinds throughout a land. Curiosity never totally forsakes the human mind. If a man cannot employ it in regular and rational meditation, he endeavors to satisfy it by conceits and reveries. The invisible, the world of spirits, the future, are always momentous to him. If, in his flights into that world unknown, he has not for his guide an enlightened and trained reason, but trusts only to obscure sensations, he is then liable to follow every bye way, every devious track that offers; he runs the hazard of becoming the sport of every artful deceiver, or every dupe of imposture. But who can think on all the hurtful and ruinous effects of superstition and fanaticism, and not ascribe great praise to erudition, which is always

counteracting them, and setting bounds to their dominion ?

Yet more. Considered as a stay of religion, learning which is not unworthy of that appellation, is of very great value ; and this should render it eminently dear to us, who profess and revere religion. The credibility and the divine authority of the christian doctrine rest at least in part on historical arguments ; and these can neither be defended nor known, nor duly weighed, without the help of learning. The understanding of the sacred books, which we revere as the sources of this doctrine, presupposes a knowledge of languages of antiquity, and of many other kinds within the province of learning. If we wish to see these doctrines defended against the objections of the infidel and the scorner ; if we would see their reasonableness evinced, see them purified from all human commixtures ; more unfolded and reduced to a connected and consistent whole ; delivered in a manner suitable to the wants of mankind and the exigencies of the times ; and if we would have them likewise worthy of all acceptance to the deep thinking man and the mind addicted to doubt ; would we hope to see them in security from all abuse ; our hopes and desires would be vain, without the means of various sorts of learned knowledge ; they can never be accomplished without the assistance of philosophical perspicacity, without an enlightened and habituated reason. Were it not for learning and solid science, religion would speedily degenerate into superstition and fanaticism. Whereas, the more flourishing and the more general they become, in a country or among a people ; so much the greater light is diffused over religion ; so much the more is it cherished in its native simplicity and its majestic dignity ; and so much the more general must its influence be on human perfection and happiness. **Is**

religion founded on truth, and does it comprehend all truth? Then every thing must of necessity be favorable and helpful to it, by which the scrutiny and the knowledge of truth is generally advanced. And what a value must accrue from hence to erudition, in the sight of every man to whom religion and truth are not indifferent objects!

Lastly, learning, when it is and effects what it may and ought to be and effect, is an excellent preparative to the employment and pleasures of a higher condition after death. Much, perhaps even the greatest part, of our knowledge, and the sciences as they are termed, will fall away as totally useless in the future life, as the toys and playthings of our childish years; yet must much of the rest still remain, such as are of a nobler kind, of eternal, unchangeable truth, of universal utility; and afford them, who take them with them into that better world, a greater or less advantageous outset, beyond those who are destitute of them: Though, for instance, what the astronomer knows concerning the heavenly bodies and their relations towards each other, be ever so little in comparison with what in the immense system of the universe is concealed from him, yet at least he understands some few letters in the alphabet of the skies, and seems in those superior regions somewhat less a stranger than the absolutely ignorant. But, if this be no more than a mere flight of fancy, yet, in all cases, the scholar, who in fact supports that name, is always exercising his mental faculties in a far superior degree; learns to survey, to comprehend, to combine more things together; raises himself in meditation farther above what is sensible and visible; habituates himself to more intellectual employments and nobler pleasures; acquires a greater love for truth than for all things else; finds in the research and knowledge of it the purest delight; feels more

sensibly the vanity and emptiness of all earthly things ; feels himself more forcibly attracted towards the things that are invisible, towards such as are infinite and eternal, towards God, the original source of all light and all truth, and proceeds on his way to his superior state with brighter prospects, with greater expectations. And must not this be a very suitable preparative to it ?

If such be then the case, my pious hearers ; if learning be an excellent habit and perfection of the human mind ; if it procure a man real pleasure, and the noblest and purest kinds of pleasure ; if it promote, by various ways, the general welfare of society ; if it be an efficacious preservative from superstition and fanaticism ; if it be a support to true religion, and a means of advancing it in the world ; if it be adapted to fit us, in more than one respect, for our future superior state ; then is it incontestable that it is of real and high value, that it may contribute and actually does contribute greatly to human happiness.

And, now, how ought we to behave in regard to it ? The learned, as well as the unlearned, have several duties incumbent on them in this respect. In conclusion, allow me to address a few words to the consideration of them both.

You, therefore, my dear friends, who devote yourselves to learning, or employ yourselves in it, take it for neither more nor less than it really is. Prize and pronounce upon it, in the whole, as in its particular parts, according to their proper worth ; use it according to its true destination. Acknowledge that the generality of it, though serviceable, and in many respects useful and necessary, yet is not near so important as prejudice and selflove would probably induce you to believe. Know and feel and confess the imperfection, the uncertainty of all human knowledge

and science. Frequently balance what you know, against what you do not and cannot know ; what you know with assurance, against what is only hypothetical and slightly probable ; what you can actually make use of, against what is barely instrumental and matter of exercise, or even deception and error ; what you may hope to carry with you into eternity, against what will be buried with you, and be lost in the night of oblivion ; and let all this teach you modesty and meekness. Let the sound intellect, the uncorrupted feelings of the heart, the wisdom that is grounded on experience, and shews itself in an active and busy life, have ample justice. Reverence and pursue learning only so far as it makes you better, more intelligent, more wise, and more useful ; and prefer the important to the less important, the serviceable to the less serviceable, as often and as much as your circumstances and the duties of your vocation will allow. Be not jealous of your acquirements, nor parsimonious of your information ; rather study to incorporate all you know that is good and useful, every truth that is of service to mankind, by all the ways and means in your power, into the common stock of human knoweldge. Let that greater light, which gladdens you, enlighten others also ; and hide it not, out of slothfulness or timidity, or selfinterested motives, from the eyes of the world. Herein, however, take heed that you do not shake the foundations of morality, or weaken the bands of religion. This, as the friend of mankind, you would not venture to do, even though you were persuaded that the former were false and the latter chimerical ; at least, not till you could furnish your brethren with more stable supports to their faith and repose. No, whatever promotes human perfection and happiness should be sacred to you ; and true religion, which certainly promotes it most, should be most sacred.

Content not yourself simply with being learned, but endeavor to be so in a respectable and amiable manner. Beware of the ordinary failings attendant on learning ; of unsociableness, of misanthropy, of despising and depreciating whatever lies not within your sphere, or relates not to your pursuits. Be not haughty nor domineering ; bear with the weak, the ignorant, the erroneous, in the spirit of love ; put them not to shame, but convey to them instruction ; decide not on all things, and never decide without reason ; lower yourself to each man's capacity ; hearken to their modest contradictions with calmness ; and learn, even from the unlearned, as readily as you teach others. Respect the perceptions, the advantages, the useful occupations of other persons, though they should even seem strange to you. Do honor, in fine, to learning, by the salutary influence you allow it to have on your character and conduct ; distinguish yourself even more by generous sentiments and employments of general utility, than by diffusive science ; and ever prefer doing to understanding, that is, virtue to knowledge.

And you, my friends, who belong not to the class of the learned, despise not that with which you are unacquainted, or of which you have only a glimmering and faint conception. Rather esteem and prize that of which you are able to discern a little by a few reflections, sufficient however to shew you that it is of great and various service to you and to the whole community. Contemn not the thing itself, because of its accidental abuses. Attribute not the faults and imperfections of the learned to learning itself. Require not of persons who, in general, lead and are forced to lead a solitary life, and who seldom have a mind totally free, the vivacity, nor the polished breeding, nor the agreeable manners, nor the interest in all that passes, which you may expect from persons

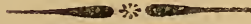
who live in the great world, and are present in all public diversions and pleasures. Respect the body of the learned, though perhaps all that belong to it are not respectable. Countenance and promote learning of every kind, by the esteem you shew to the learned, by the helps you afford them, by the assistance wherewith you facilitate their frequently expensive undertakings and pursuits, by the honor and rewards you bestow on their industry, and for the service they render the public. But profit, likewise, by the greater light which learning diffuses around you. Avail yourselves of it for rectifying and extending your knowledge, as far as is consistent with your calling and your other duties. But strive not after such learning, as in your station cannot be acquired without neglecting your most important occupations and affairs, and which, in the degree you would probably wish to possess it, would more confuse than settle you, would be of more prejudice than benefit to you. Neither pretend to an acquaintance with such kinds of knowledge and science as are either totally unknown to you, or of which you scarcely know more than the name; at most, have only some general notions. In many cases, it is far better to be ignorant, and not to be ashamed of one's ignorance, than to put up with superficial knowledge, and then to be as proud of it as if it were real learning.

Lastly, let all, both learned and unlearned, so think and so live as men sedulous to promote the benefit of one and the same family; as members of one body, whereof one is the eye, another the ear, a third the hand, and a fourth the foot, and who are all equally necessary to the support and well being of the whole body, whereof none can dispense with any of the others. So shall we all fulfil our duty,

all worthily maintain our station, and reach the superior design of our existence; all learn to love and esteem each other more and more, and each by means of the other become constantly more happy.

SERMON XXXVII.

The Value of more Enlightened Times.



O GOD, the father of lights, from whom every good and every perfect gift proceeds, we likewise, surrounded by thy light, are cheered by the light of truth as well as by the light of the sun ; and how much brighter shines not the former among us, than among so many other people and nations, who scarcely discern a few faint emanations of it. Yes, thou hast imparted to us, as men and as christians, many eminent means of instruction, of knowledge, of ever increasing improvement and intellectual perfection ! Thou hast transplanted us from the kingdom of darkness into the realms of light. And how much happier are we not thus become, and how much happier may we not be ! How greatly has thy kindness thus facilitated to us the path of life, alleviated the accomplishment of our duties, the attainment of our destination ! From what tormenting solitudes, from what oppressive burdens, from what servile fear, from what terrors has it not freed us ! By having brought us to the light, thou has called us to liberty, to serenity of mind, to purer virtue, to higher happiness. If this light be yet not so generally diffused among us, not so unclouded, not so strong as entirely to dispel the darkness, still the dawn allows us to hope for the bright rays of the morning, and then for the meridian sun. Yes, thanks be to thee, O Father of light, for the cheerful rising and the gradual progress of it. Oh cause it to shine ever brighter, to spread ever farther ; and grant us by its influence to

become ever wiser and better ! Grant that none of us may ever shut their eyes against it ; none of us hinder its activity and progress ; none of us abuse it to sin, none of us walk in darkness ! But let each of us zealously strive to advance ever farther in the knowledge of the truth, and by the truth to become ever more free, ever more virtuous, and ever more accomplished ! Let each of us in his place, and according to his station, prove a burning and a shining light enlightening far around him, and promoting the greater intellectual improvement of his brethren as far as he is able ! Assist us powerfully to this end, most gracious Father. Teach us to understand our privilege, and ever more faithfully to use it. Grant that we may all walk before thee as children of light, and thus assert the dignity to which thou hast raised us as men and as christians. Bless the reflections we are now about to make on these important objects. Let them awaken in us the sentiments of gratitude and joy for them, let them excite in us a desire and zeal in the unwearied endeavors after our proper perfection. These our supplications we offer up unto thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord ; and, stedfastly relying on his promises, address thee farther as he prescribed us : Our father, &c.



EPHESIANS. v. 8.

Now are you light in the Lord : Walk as children of light.

THE times wherein we live are frequently called enlightened times ; and, in fact, they are not absolutely undeserving of that epithet. Less ignorance in general prevails at present, less superstition

and blind credulity, than in the days of our forefathers. At present, undoubtedly, far more persons reflect upon moral and religious subjects than perhaps ever did before. There are now a hundred persons who employ themselves in reading, and in acquiring some notions and science, for one that did so, I will not say in the days of yore, but even at the commencement of the present, and in the course of the last century. Many kinds of knowledge are now disseminated amongst all classes and conditions of men, which were heretofore confined to the learned. In our times a man is ashamed of many errors, many prejudices, many superstitions, childish opinions and usages, which formerly were held sacred by princes as well as their subjects, by nobles as well as the vulgar. At present the pursuit of truth, and the free investigation of it, are more general than formerly. Accordingly there actually is more intellectual light, there is a greater proportion of knowledge, there are more means and incentives to it among mankind, though neither the one nor the other be near so great and so general as numbers pretend.— But does this greater intellectual light give our times a real precedence above the foregoing? Are they actually more valuable on that account? On this head the judgments are extremely various, according to the point of view from which the matter is beheld.

Indeed this accession of light, particularly at first, and before it be come to a certain degree of perfection, is attended with many evils of various magnitudes. It excites doubt; it makes the faith of many weak persons to totter; it puffs up the proud; it often begets scoffers; it occasions at times sad confusions and disturbances; it is often misused by the wicked, for excusing and palliating their vices and follies; in some respects it promotes or favors a dis-

position to luxury and ostentation, too great a propensity to dissipation and public diversions; it probably weakens and enervates many, by refining their taste, and employing their mind to the detriment of their body; it misleads numbers to meddle with things quite out of their sphere, with which they have no concern whatever, and thereby to neglect more important affairs; it frequently renders certain serviceable and useful institutions, methods, customs, and writings less effective, as people are enabled to spy out their defects and faults, but are not yet able to supply their places with better. All this is undeniable. And yet the greater proficiency of a nation in knowledge remains, notwithstanding, a real and desirable advantage; it is always far preferable to its opposite. The evils of the former are not general; they are at least only transient, and will be far overbalanced by the good which is the natural consequence of that proficiency. And this, my pious hearers, is the matter that I intend now to discuss. We are doubtless a people greatly enlightened, and we begin to enjoy the advantages of our proficiency. As the apostle in our text says to the christians: "Now are you light in the Lord: Walk as children of light:" As christians ye are brought to the knowledge of truth, think and live as persons who know the truth; so may we also address you: As men and as christians, you are in possession of more means of instruction and improvement than many other, perhaps than the generality of persons and nations; you are already, then, capable of being farther enlightened than they; it, therefore, behoves you to conduct yourself conformably to these privileges. In order to incite you to this, I will represent to you the value of the greater intellectual improvement of a people or community; and then draw from it a few rules for your conduct.

The gradual improvement of mankind is a natural effect of the dispositions and arrangements which God has established in the world, and the course he has prescribed to the human mind. As, in nature, the dawn succeeds the night, which likewise gives place to the shining day, and every creature feels itself produced anew to life, incited to the fresh exertion of its powers, and proceeding nearer to the design of its existence: So likewise the knowledge and perceptions of mankind are ever increasing in extent and perspicuity, and their minds are constantly striving after greater activity, after higher perfection, whenever the progress of the former and the endeavors of the latter are not forcibly impeded and limited. This general proficiency in knowledge is therefore perfectly in the order of providence, as a part of the plan laid down by God, in his government of the world. It must, therefore, be good; it must have a real and great value, even though we should not allow it. In this manner are we taught by religion to judge of it, and our reflections convince us that this judgment is true. For, what various and considerable advantages accrue from a more copious accession of light to mankind, to the nation that has it to rejoice in!

First, wherever it exists, it begets a far greater and more complete exertion and application of the faculties of the human mind. This no man will deny. But is not this use, this exercise, this improvement of our noblest faculties, highly desirable; and must it not be highly desirable in regard of all mankind? Is not the destination of all mankind, in essentials, the same? Are they not, in this stage of their existence, to rise from sensual to rational creatures? Are they not all to think, justly and truly to think, and to study to raise themselves more and more above the visible and the present? Are they not all

capable of a continual progress? Have they not all the same natural dispositions, capacities and powers? Can that which brings these dispositions into form, which unfolds and exercises these capacities and powers, be bad and hurtful? Or are they only to be formed, to be unfolded and exercised by the learned, by men of superior stations? Why then do all men possess them in common? Or is it right and fit that formation, this expansion, this exercise of the powers of the human mind, should be arbitrarily limited and controled? Who may arrogate to himself this right over his brethren? Do not these limitations, so far as they are just or expedient, necessarily arise from the particular condition of persons, of times, of circumstances, of means, and the actual state of things? And if, in general, these limitations were more dilated, what harm would ensue? Or is truth perhaps the exclusive property of the learned, or of the ruler, or of the opulent and noble? Is not every man ordained and called to the knowledge of truth? Is it not honorable and salutary to every man? Granting that it is liable to be mistaken by some, to be abused by others. Is it always to be mistaken, always to be abused? Does not the morning succeed to the dawn, and to that again the full light of noon? Should there then be no dawn, lest any deceived by its feeble light, should stumble, or lose their way? Is then the night more favorable to the traveller than the dawn? Is error, is ignorance, always harmless? Are not the evils that attend them much greater, and more various than those that may arise from the misuse of truth? No, whoever esteems and loves mankind, his brethren, who understands their nature and appointment, will spread light around him whenever he can, and is unconcerned about the consequences it may produce; since this he knows for certain, that light is better

than darkness. No, it is only the impostor, only the tyrant in the state and in the church that are interested in it ; it can only be necessary to the attainment of their despotic designs, that men should be kept in blindness and error, should be withheld from approaching the light, lest they should see through the veil flung across their intentions and actions. It is written, and may well be applied to this subject, "every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov- ed." And for the same reason it is, that he hindreth others from coming to the light, as far as lieth in his power.

Farther. Where a greater improvement of the intellectual faculties prevails, there is a more complete and more elevated use and enjoyment of the beauties and blessings wherewith God has embellished our earth, and by which he has revealed to us his greatness and glory. What are all the beauties, all the wonders of nature, all its bounties and delights, to the unthinking man, who lives amongst an unenlightened people ! How little will they be observed by him ! How much less will they be enjoyed in rational consciousness and cheerful elevation of the mind to God ! How seldom used to the ends for which they present and offer themselves to him ! How vainly do the heavens and the earth declare to him the glory of God, the Creator and Father of the world ! Cold and thankless he sees them with barren surprize ; he diverts himself with them, indeed, as a child is amused with the bright sparks he perceives in the firmanent at night, and the variegated colors with which the face of the earth is adorned ; he tramples under foot with equal indifference, plants and flowers and creeping things ; and takes no farther interest in them all, than as they bring immediate advantage or detriment to him. " His belly

cleaveth unto the ground," and so does his spirit also; he seldom raises himself above the visible and the present; and remains much closer allied to the beasts of the field than to spirits and superior beings. Confined to the narrow circle of his terrene occupations, and the pleasures of sense, he leaves the sun and the moon and the stars to rise and set, the parts of the day and the seasons of the year to perform their stated revolutions, one wonderful display of the scenery of nature to follow on another, without asking himself a single question about the causes, the designs and the connexions of these things; without rejoicing in them with consciousness and reflection; without being sensible to the greatness of God, to the bounty of his heavenly Father and to his own happiness. And is this truly a state, this the behavior worthy of a man? Does he thus, maintain the post he fills on earth as a rational creature, as the priest of nature? Does he thus, indeed, reach the end for which God has encompassed him with so many beauties and blessings, with so many demonstrations of his power, of his wisdom and of his goodness, and granted him a mind to understand them, and a heart to feel them? And must not the greater intellectual improvement, which promotes this end, and opens to every not absolutely inattentive man, at once the book of nature and his own eyes to peruse it, be conformable to the will of the Creator, and to the nature of man! Must it not possess a real and great value.

A greater intellectual improvement, thirdly, delivers mankind from many of the degrading and oppressive shackles of superstition and servile fear. Allow, if we must allow it, that the lower and more numerous class of men require narrower limits and a tighter rein, if we would have them not abuse their faculties nor neglect their duties; yet to this end

neither superstition nor thralldom are necessary, and evils that could only be guarded against by such means would cease to be evils. No, even in this respect we are not permitted to do evil that good may come. Superstition and bondage far too deeply degrade the human creature ; obscure by far too much the image of God, his Creator, in him ; keep him by much too remote from the end of his being ; are much too manifestly at strife with his perfection and happiness ; for us not to prize, revere and promote, as matters of the highest moment, whatever can secure or deliver him from them ; and this a greater degree of light undoubtedly does. It dissipates a thousand and a thousand idle terrors, which formerly perplexed and tormented mankind ; a thousand kinds of imposture and error which formerly held them in cruel bondage. It is only by such intellectual improvement, that the childish and pernicious belief in spectres, in necromancy and witchcraft, in supernatural arts and sciences, in the authority and influence of evil spirits, is weakened and destroyed. And how much does not this belief dishonor and disgrace the man, the christian, the worshipper, of the only true God ! How contradictorily does it not cause him to think, and how inconsistently and foolishly to act ! How often does it not deprive him of all spirit to good actions, and how often lead him to shocking crimes ! What anxious perturbations torment him on all sides, and how seldom can he rejoice in existence ! And how can true religion and solid piety find place, where superstition and servile dread prevail ! But are true religion and solid piety, are filial love to God and filial satisfaction in him, is the rational and cheerful enjoyment of life, the heritage of only a chosen few, or at most, of some ranks and classes of men ? Are they not the property of mankind as men ; of the christian as a christian ?

Can their sway become ever too general, or be too firmly established? Can their influence on human conduct and on human happiness ever be too great? And, if that be not possible, who can deny the value of that intellectual improvement, whereby they are so much advanced, or who shall presume to prescribe its bounds? No, whoever does so, must himself, though probably he will not confess it, must himself doubt of the truth, and hold the grounds of religion to be very fluctuating and uncertain, or the fear that either the one or the other might suffer by it would never enter his mind.

The more the times are enlightened, the more favorable they are to true religion. Indeed, not to every religion; not to the appendages by which even the true religion has been in all times encumbered and disfigured: These must assuredly by degrees fall off, where greater lights and free investigation obtain. But is this to be set to the account of profit or loss? Is it to be dreaded or desired by the friend of truth, the friend of mankind? Is it not the additions of men which so much restrain and enfeeble the effects of true religion, that render what is called religion so unproductive, and to many even hurtful? Examine the religion of an unenlightened nation, of a nation where implicit faith prevails. In regard of the generality of its professors, is it any thing more than a string of sentences repeated by rote, a round of ceremonies, lip service, and selfdeceit? The grossest conceptions of the deity, with a low, servile, and childish conduct towards him; the most superstitious notions of the miraculous effect of certain words and solemn rites and outward actions, and a totally blind confidence in these words and rites and actions; a tormenting scrupulosity about indifferent things, and inconsiderate disregard to the most important; slavish fears and

idle hopes ; zeal without knowledge ; faith without virtue ; devotion without philanthropy ; austere observance of arbitrary impositions and injunctions, and a general relaxation of indispensable obligations ; this is, generally speaking, the religion of every nation where men shun the light, and refuse it admission to the human mind. And is, then, such a religion indeed so respectable, so salutary, that I should esteem it inviolable and unimprovable, that it must be secured against all free investigation, and guarded from the light ? Admit, to our sorrow, that this investigation, that this light, may be attended by unbelief in one person, a disposition to cavil in another, and in a third indifferency. Will this be the fruit of them in all men, must they have these effects for ever ? Will they not produce in many, will they not probably in time be productive of sound knowledge of the truth, and of inward conviction of it, in the generality of men ? And do we not find, that where darkness and ignorance prevail, as much at least is found of unbelief, of doubt, of indifferency in regard of the most essential points, and perhaps still more ? And if the number of the outward professors of religion were reduced, what would it lose by the defection of such false or cold friends ? Would not the rational faith, the belief, founded on discussion and conviction, of the rest, be productive of more benefit, promote real virtue and happiness in them and around them, so much the more ?—No, true religion needs never to shun the light ; and he that diffuses this, is at the same time extending the reign of happiness and virtue. The christian, says our text, is light in the Lord ; if, then, he would maintain this character, he must behave like a child of light, as a friend and promoter of it.

Enlightened times are, fifthly, favorable to virtue. It is true that proficiency in knowledge and

virtue do not always proceed with equal pace. Nay, the former may eventually be detrimental to the latter ; but assuredly not upon the whole. The virtues of the cœnobite, the virtues of the hermit, the virtues of the fanatic of every denomination, if any will call them by that name, are confessedly sufferers by the dissemination of knowledge ; they are plants that thrive better in the bosom of darkness than by an influx of light. But certainly not the virtues of the useful citizen, of the sensible man, of the true christian ! What is virtue, if it be not founded on scrutiny and choice, but is the effect of necessity, of constraint, of servile fear, or merely of mechanical habit ? Does it deserve that venerable name ? Is it indeed consistent with itself ? Can it have much inward strength and firmness ? Does it confer any honor upon a man ? Will it guide and govern him in concealment as well as in the eyes of the world, in common and familiar life as well as in the solemn offices of devotion or in civil affairs, in the enjoyment of liberty and pleasure as well as under the heavy hand of power, or beneath the pressure of misfortunes ? No, only that virtue is thoroughly deserving of the name which is a daughter of light, the result of plain research and intimate conviction, which is founded on a true knowledge of our nature, our present and future appointment, our conduct towards God and man, towards visible and invisible things. She alone is always equal ; rests upon firm, immoveable foundations ; is ever the same in all times, in all places, in all conditions ; exalts and dignifies whatever a man does ; accompanies him wherever he is, and never deprives him of her counsel and support. She alone wants neither outward coercion nor mechanical impulse, and finds in herself inducement and ability enough for doing constantly what is right and good, what is fair and generous, what is the best in

every event. Admit that we may suppose such a virtue where there is no great degree of intellectual improvement: But must not whatever promotes and extends the latter be, sooner or later, favorable to the former? How much more sensible and tender must the moral sense, the conscience of the enlightened man be! How many more arguments, and how much higher and nobler arguments must he not bring forward to his mind, as often as he has to choose between good and evil, or between good and better! How much farther must not his sight pierce into the remoter consequences of his undertakings and actions! How much more accurately must he not apply the general rules of his conduct to every particular circumstance; how much more easily connect the present with the future! How much more nicely will he not discern semblance from truth, what has only the looks of virtue, from virtue herself! How much less will he be satisfied with only the inferior degrees of it! No, fear not, ye friends of Virtue, that the respect of your friend can be diminished among mankind, or her dominion contracted, by your enlargement of the kingdom of light. Truth and virtue are sisters, they are inseparably connected together; the true votaries of the one are also true votaries of the other; the prevalence of the latter is so much the more unrestrained, by how much the former is extended and advanced; their empire is one and the same.

In enlightened times, sixthly, mankind are more sociable, are brought nearer together, connect themselves more intimately with each other, and by more various ties. Their manners are rendered milder, more agreeable; their conversation more entertaining; their intercourse more pleasant and affectionate; their desires and endeavors to ingratiate themselves with each other are greater. The higher and lower

stations and classes of men are less dissevered, intermingle more, have more common pursuits and pleasures ; and thus the pride of the one is abated, and the decent confidence of the other encouraged. Social pleasures are multiplied, refined, and dignified in enlightened times. They are, in part, derived from sources absolutely shut up to an unenlightened people. The history of nature and art, of the generations of men and the planting of nations, personal and foreign experiences and observations, in one case, furnish the richest and most ample materials for discourse, for a useful as well as agreeable exercise of the understanding, the sagacity, the discernment, the wit, the imagination, for the maintenance and support of rational cheerfulness and mirth. Every man is more earnest to present himself on the most favorable side, to exchange information of one kind for information of another, and to impart as much satisfaction and delight, as to receive. And must not this be a covetable privilege above the condition of unenlightened men, whose manners are generally rude and ferocious, whose pleasures are altogether sensual, whose diversions are merely riotous and noisy, whose perceptions are to the last degree contracted, whose conversations are commonly trifling, whose mental faculties are undeveloped and unexercised, and whose deportment is seldom agreeable, but much oftener arrogant and disgusting ? And must not the advantages of the former be in perfect harmony with the intentions of religion and nature ? Is it not the aim of both to unite men progressively more, to inspire them with more and more love and esteem for each other, to render them continually more useful and agreeable to one another, ever more inclined to unfold their mutual capacities and powers by social wants and propensities, by social businesses and pleasures, by all these means to im-

prove the sum of their social happiness, and thus constantly to approximate them to the purposes of their existence, as one single closely connected family of relatives, dwelling together and making each other happy? Grant, however, that this greater sociableness, this refinement of manners, this intermixture of ranks, this extended action and activity, may have their unavoidable inconveniences and disadvantages. Grant that they often degenerate into vanity and frivolity; that they frequently are accompanied by dissimulation and falsehood; allow that they dissipate too much the attention and the faculties of many; allow that at times they infringe on the rules of strict propriety. Upon the whole, they always effect by far more good than harm, occasion far more happiness than misery; are always a step in advance towards the perfection of human nature an alleviation and sweetener of the troubles of this terrestrial life.

Enlightened times are productive of still more good. The stations and affairs of men are more dignified; and therefore we have fresh incitements to fill more worthily the former, and better to transact the latter. Indeed the first beams of stronger light often produce quite contrary effects. The youth who has acquired some knowledge, and thinks he has refined his taste, may easily be induced to despise the condition and calling of his forefathers, and to neglect their concerns, as thinking himself capable of greater and more elevated affairs. But is this evil, which only obtains in particular occurrences, and for the most part is soon remedied by the punishment that follows it, or by maturer judgment, is this to be compared with the general and lasting evils which the defect of improvement in this respect naturally brings on? How deplorable is the moral condition of a people, where no one sees farther than the contracted sphere of his own

art, his own work, or his own trade; where none is interested about what happens otherwise than as it regards himself; none thinks on the connexion of the whole, and on his own influence upon it; none acquires any knowledge but what he absolutely must; none ventures to tread out of the road which his sires and grandsires trod before him: Where every one works and employs himself more by compulsion than inclination; where every one is only animated by self interest, and guided by custom; and if he have any more time or means than what his mechanical labors require, he knows not what to do with either, and loses them both! But, on the other hand, let light but once have made considerable progress amongst a people; let men of all classes and conditions have learnt to reflect more; let them have acquired greater knowledge of their appointment and that of their brethren; be better acquainted with the wise economy of God upon earth, with the true value and coherence of things; be better informed in what real honor and dignity, in what perfection and happiness consist; let them set about whatever they undertake and do, less mechanically, with more rational consideration: How quickly will every man learn to prize his station, to understand the needfulness and utility of it, to carry on the business it requires in a more liberal manner, to enjoy the benefits it procures him more rationally and cheerfully, and to be in all respects more useful to the community! And how much more will he thus promote his satisfaction and his mental perfection! How differently will he find himself repaid for his diligence and industry! When can he be deficient in opportunities of useful employment, and sources of elevated recreation, even out of his peculiar circle! How important, how agreeable must the labors and affairs of the countryman, the

artist, the merchant, the artizan, by this means become, when he prosecutes them with a liberal mind, free from prejudices, with a cultivated understanding and accustomed to reflection, and feels the value of all he does ! And how considerably will not all this be gainers ! Indeed we are still very far short of this degree of culture. But, if it be desirable, then must likewise the way that leads to it be good, though it be beset with many obstacles. Even the best field is not free from every kind of weeds ; much less that which has so long lain fallow, which has scarcely been begun to be tilled, and which is sown with grain that can never be perfectly clean and unmixed.

More enlightened times are, lastly, preparative to that better state which awaits us after death ; and this so surely as, in that state, knowledge of truth and spiritual perfection are the foundation of our superior felicity. I am sensible that at present we can frame but very dark and indefinite conceptions of our future state, and can know but extremely little of the peculiar occupations and pleasures of it. I am firmly persuaded, as I observed in a late discourse, that most of our knowledge, considered as knowledge, of whatever species or kind it may be, must there fall away as totally useless ; and that, in this respect, the enlightened man, the man enriched with all the treasures of learning, will have no great advantage over the unlettered and ignorant. This, however, is very certain, that our future life is connected to the present, that it is a sequel of it, that the degree of inward perfection we here attain will determine the point of perfection of which we shall there be capable. This is very certain, that in that, as well as in the present state, we shall think, shall strive to find out truth, shall advance in the knowledge of truth ; that we shall do all this as

men, and that it will be so much the more easy or difficult for us to do ; that we shall advance more rapidly or more slowly, as we have more or less exercised ourselves in them here ; accordingly, whatever exercises us in thought, whatever promotes inward spiritual perfection; therefore greater proficiency in intellectual improvement as the strongest incentive and the best means to that end, must be preparatives to that superior state ; therefore must enlightened times have a real and great value in this respect also. Are we already, in this world, the children of light ; do we here already live in the kingdom of light ; are we eager to imbibe every ray of it, however feeble ; then must we become the fitter for its brighter influx, for its perfect splendor, in a better world !

This will suffice for displaying the great value of a considerable progress in intellectual acquirements, and place it beyond all doubt. I shall now proceed to draw from it a few suggestions in regard to our conduct.

If you are sensible to the worth of this advantage, then use all diligence to turn the portion you are blessed with of it to the most profitable account ; and let it, by your means, be productive of that good it may and ought to produce. The more enlightened the times and the men, in which, and among whom you live ; so much the more should you be ashamed of ignorance, of superstition, of blind faith, of thoughtlessness and indifference in respect to matters which it behoves all men, and consequently you, to know. Therefore, shut not your eyes against the light that shines around you. Walk not in darkness, since the day begins to appear. In regions where all is dark, where ignorance and superstition prevail without control ; there no man indeed need be ashamed of being ignorant and superstitious, to grope

his way in the dark, and to stumble or fall at every step he takes ; for there one is as weak and wretched as another, and yet neither believes himself either wretched or weak. But, to prefer darkness to the light that beams upon our eyes ; to stumble and to fall in a path enlightened by the sun, as though it were shrouded in the deepest night ; to remain still ignorant and superstitious amidst all the means to knowledge and a rational faith ; this indeed degrades a man, this renders him grossly criminal. And this, my dear friends, may be more or less the case with you. “ The night is far spent,” may we likewise exclaim to you with an apostle, the night is far spent ; “ the day is at hand,” the dawn has already appeared : “ It is high time to awake out of sleep.” The time is over and gone, when free reflection and inquiry was a crime, and implicit belief meritorious ; none of you, except by his own fault, can be deficient in means and inducements to reflection, to research, to the augmentation and improvement of his knowledge. Avail yourselves of these means and inducements, use them like men endowed with reason, and as christians who are roused to freedom. Remain not supine on the couch of tradition, in the place where prejudice and former instruction left you, as if they were the boundaries of all human knowledge. Implicitly follow no human leader ; from children proceed to be men, who thinking for themselves, go alone ; and have learnt to proceed with a firm and steady step along the path of truth. To think and act upon thoroughly tried and sure principles ; constantly to be striving after greater light, after farther certainty ; to love truth above all things, and to receive it with an open heart, without regard to prevailing opinions and outward circumstances, as it is exhibited to you ; is what should distinguish you from less enlightened men,

and your times from the times of ignorance and darkness.

Farther. If you confess the great value of intellectual improvement to a nation, then let every one promote it according to his station and in proportion to his abilities. Particularly you who are teachers of the people, or are farther advanced in knowledge than the rest. But do it with that prudence and affection, which should guide and animate us in all our affairs, and most in the most important. Every man is not capable of every truth. Every manner of producing and of disseminating even the most generally useful truths, is not the best. Few persons are strong and liberal minded enough at once to comprehend and adopt and rightly use truths hitherto unknown to them, or even a considerable part of them. A bright effulgence of light, not making its approaches by degrees, but suddenly intromitted in all its force, frequently dazzles more than it enlightens. No, in the moral as well as in the natural world, the transition from the darkness of night to the full blaze of noon must come on by degrees, if we would have mankind enjoy that light, and not be forced to shut their eyes against it. Take heed then not to favor falsehood and error by any means; and still more, not to profess and to teach them as truths. This is an infamous act of high treason against truth, and debases every man that does so, even if he do it in really good intentions.— But you need not therefore directly contend against every error; not furiously attack every thing that either is or appears to you to deserve that name; otherwise, you may at the same time shake the foundations of truth, which is often in more than one respect connected with error, and thus prevent its admission into the heart. As little may you venture to bestow or to obtrude every truth, without

distinction or exception on every human mind. As every kind of grain will not flourish in every soil, so neither is every truth adapted to the comprehension of every person. Even the proper field requires previous culture before it can be sown with any reasonable expectation of a copious harvest. If you would contribute to the intellectual improvement of your brethren, begin by setting their attention and curiosity in motion; bring them to the sentiment of their imperfections and intellectual wants; induce them to think, and assist them in their thoughts; conduct them into the footsteps of truth, and remove the principal impediments out of their way; make them see what they already know and believe in a clearer light, or understand it with greater perspicuity, and thus accustom them to clear and calm reflection, which will incite an eagerness after greater information. By this means you will best carry on your attacks against levity, sloth, sensuality, indifference in religious matters, the low, servile fear of man, false scrupulosity, hypocritical piety; and thus stop up the springs of error and superstition. Render truth respectable and amiable to all men, by the modesty and meekness with which you deliver it, by the hilarity and serenity with which you possess and display it, by the influence it has on your temper and manners. Recommend and disperse all good writings, that promote reflection among mankind; and are favorable to the knowledge of truth. Pay particular attention to the instruction and formation of young persons, and thus lay the foundation of greater proficiency for the next generation.

In fine, if you confess the value of greater intellectual improvement, and actually enjoy the benefits of it, then walk, as we are exhorted to do in our text, as children of light. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works,

may glorify your father who is in heaven. Conduct yourselves as men who profess the truth, and are become wise and free by the knowledge of it. Let its light not merely have an influence on your mind, but let it govern your heart and actuate your whole behavior. Live as you think. Exhibit your character as much, and even more, by generous sentiments and good deeds, than by just conceptions. Light, that does not at once animate, warm and fertilize, knowledge that does not make us wiser and better, is of no great value, is frequently more prejudicial than useful to us. Your progress in knowledge should be not so much an ultimate object, as means to higher aims ; means to purer virtue, to greater perfection and happiness. The truth that prevails in your ideas must likewise prevail in your feelings, in your views and endeavors, in your dispositions and actions, in your whole deportment. Only by judging in every concern, by being disposed in every circumstance, and by acting in every occurrence, as the nature of it requires, and is consistent with your correlative situation, will you be ever drawing nearer to perfection and to its supreme and eternal original, the deity ; only thus the knowledge of truth can and will become to you a never failing, a constantly augmenting source of happiness.

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Value of Afflictions and Tribulations.



O GOD, thou hast placed us here in a state of discipline and exercise. Here we are never entirely that which, according to our dispositions, according to our faculties and capacities we may and should be. But it is thy gracious will that these dispositions, these faculties, these capacities should here be gradually unfolded, formed, and brought into action. Here we are in the state of childhood, but by it we are gradually to grow up to maturity. Yes, here thou wouldst educate us for a better, a superior life, and prepare us, by various exercises to the employments and blessings of it. All that we here are and do, that we enjoy and suffer, all that happens to us, are so many means to this exalted purpose. All is calculated to render us more intelligent, wiser, better, more perfect. In this view hast thou, in thy wisdom, subjected us and all that is around us to so many accidents and vicissitudes, for our trial and exercise. To this end hast thou strewn our course with so many difficulties and impediments that call forth every effort every exertion of our faculties. To this end hast thou so closely and so variously interspersed light and darkness, joys and sorrows, progress and opposition, prosperity and adversity in our present state, leading us to our destination one while on a plain and even path and then by rugged ways. Oh might we suffer ourselves ever to be led and guided by thee, our Father, as obedient children! Even then submit to thy guidance, when it is at variance

with our inclinations and designs, when we are unable to discover the end and aim of it ! Knowing that even thy severest correction is the correction of a father, of the wisest and kindest of fathers ; assuredly convinced that thy purpose can never fail, and that thy purpose is and can be no other than to render us happy ! Yes, in this assurance we will resign ourselves entirely to thee with filial confidence entirely rest in thee and thy will ; and thankfully receive from thy hand as benefactions, good and evil, joys and sorrows. Oh lead and guide us by thy counsel ! Thy counsel is ever wise and good. Conducted by thee, we shall never go astray. Under thy protection and thy guidance we shall infallibly reach the mark of our high calling. O God, strengthen and confirm in us these pious sentiments and grant that the meditations we are now about to begin in this view may be blessed. This we implore of thee as the votaries of thy son Jesus, who has taught us to know and to love thee as our common parent ; including our petitions in his words : Our father, &c.



HEBREWS xii. 11.

No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

GOD loves his creatures of the human race. This all nature proclaims aloud. This is declared by all the capacities and powers that God has given us, all the arrangements he has made in the moral and the physical world. Happiness is our true, our total destination ; the destination of all that exists and lives, and is susceptible of happiness. To this end has he made us ; to this

end has he assigned us this part of his dominion for the place of our abode, and embellished it with so many beauties and blessings ; to this end has he placed us in the various connexions wherein we stand with the material and the spiritual world. He has likewise excited in us all a thirst, an ardent thirst after happiness ; and how is it possible that he, the Allgracious, should have raised in us this thirst and not have furnished us with the means of assuaging it !—No, we are surrounded on all sides with sources of pleasure and delight, inviting us to enjoyment, no less diversified than copious, and which we can never entirely exhaust, nor each of their several kinds.

And yet man, this creature so beloved of God, and so evidently ordained to happiness, frequently meets with grievous afflictions ; and no one yet of all our race has ever passed his life without having suffered more or less. Are then these afflictions at strife with our destination ? Do they block up our way to felicity ? Do they defeat the gracious designs of our Creator, the plans of Almighty goodness ? No, that is impossible ; even these afflictions must tend to something good, must possess a certain value, must contribute to the advancement of our happiness ; otherwise God, who loves us with paternal tenderness, and would have us happy and joyful as his children, certainly would never allow them to befall us.

And thus the matter stands. Even afflictions, even tribulations are good ; are benefactions of our heavenly Father. They are means, harsh and unpleasant indeed, but efficacious and salutary means, for our purification, for our amendment, our higher perfection. They lead us a rough and dreary way, a way often moistened with tears and the sweat of our brows ; but a way that terminates in happiness.

Of this our own reason and experience will not permit us to doubt; and the sacred books confirm what they teach us, in a manner the most express. "No chastening," says the apostle in our text, "for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:" All severity is repugnant and disagreeable to us while we feel it. "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby:" In the sequel it produces the best effects to them who allow themselves to be corrected by it, by rendering them good and virtuous. "It is good for me," says the psalmist, "that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." And the apostles of Jesus, in their own name and in that of their fellow christians, glory also in tribulations, knowing that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." May we then, my dear friends, learn to take the affliction and tribulations of our lives, no less than the proper blessings and joys of them, for what they are and may become, and apply them to the advancement of our happiness! My design is, by my present discourse, to give some direction to your reflections upon them. To which purpose I shall examine with you the value of afflictions and tribulations in regard to human happiness, and to that end first shew, how and to what amount afflictions and tribulations have a real value; and then what gives them that value, wherein it consists, how they may further our happiness.

Afflictions and tribulations have no value at ultimate objects but only as means. They are not in and of themselves either good or wholesome, but only in regard of their effects. Afflictions are and must ever continue to be afflictions; disagreeable, painful sensations. Tribulations are and must ever remain tribulations; accidents and occurrences that

are adverse to our nature, and hostile to our views and desires. While they are present, we think them unpleasant and grievous; and this, of themselves, they actually are. They are medicines, bitter medicines, which are not prescribed on account of the pleasantness of their taste, but only as good against diseases, and which probably we must be long plagued and tormented with before we are completely recovered. They are exercises, not enjoined us on their own account, but for the sake of their effects. The schools, considered as schools, have no great value. It is not the restraints they impose on our liberty; it is not the toilsome application they at one time induce and at another compel us to exert; not the chastisement they bestow on the negligent scholar, for his punishment and correction, that make them desirable. It is only the good consequences of these hard restraints, of this laborious assiduity, of this grievous chastening; only the useful knowledge, the better dispositions, the good habits, we thereby acquire, that give its whole value to every thing we do and suffer there. So also sicknesses, misfortunes, losses of goods and honors, losses of patrons and friends, the failure of plans and undertakings, poverty, humiliations, persecutions, and whatever else oppresses and afflicts mankind, have only so far any real worth, as by their means we become wiser, and better, and happier.

Hence it naturally follows, secondly, that they acquire this value only by the use we make of them. Not every man to whom medicine is administered, or who voluntarily takes it of himself, will thereby be healed. There must be vital powers yet remaining in him; he must not purposely hinder and diminish the effects of the medicine he has taken; he must do or abstain from many things, which at other times he need not do or abstain from, and so frame

his whole conduct as is befitting his present condition. Not every one who frequent the schools, and allows himself to be instructed or is forced to be taught, will learn what they are adapted to teach.— Many a one will leave them as ignorant and unqualified, probably more corrupted and vicious than he was before. It is only the attentive, the studious, the obedient scholar, who willingly imbibes instruction and profits by discipline, that returns from them enriched with the treasures of wisdom, and blesses the man that entered him there. If we would have afflictions and tribulations to be of real value to us ; then we must use them aright ; we must account them for what they are ; must consider them in their dependency on God and his will ; must reflect upon them, view them on their moral side, attend to the design of them, and demean ourselves in all respects according to our situation, as it is altered by them.

In short, afflictions and tribulations have a value only comparatively, only inasmuch as they snatch us from the dangers of an uninterrupted prosperity, and teach us what that could never inform us of, or lead us to a point of wisdom and virtue to which prosperity could never conduct us. On this principle they are not necessary to all men in the same kind and to the same degree. There are children who may be educated by pure affection ; there are others that require a stricter discipline. The former have a tender and sentimental heart ; feel the whole value of every kindness shewn to them ; think nobly ; and find no duty, no sacrifice too painful whereby they may testify their gratitude to their benefactors, their friends, their tutors and guides : The latter sort are obstinate, selfwilled, and perverse ; are by far less tractable, much harder to be governed, and therefore require to be more forcibly agitated, must be often feelingly chastised, before they can be brought to

submission and obedience. So likewise there are men of generous and noble souls, whom prosperity neither fascinates nor hardens, neither seducing them into folly, nor plunging them in vice ; who find in every benefit they receive from the hand of God, fresh incitement to justice and fresh energy to beneficence ; and who, thoroughly impressed with the love of God and man, require no other motives to make the best, the most generally useful application of all that they are and have. But possibly there may be a much greater proportion of such as know not how to bear uninterrupted success, who by it would run the risk of losing all sentiment of duty and virtue, all regard for religion, and all the feelings of humanity, and fall by little and little into the most abandoned profligacy ; and, if these persons are snatched from this danger by afflictions and tribulations ; if by their means every deadened sentiment to what is beautiful and good be restored to motion ; then certainly must afflictions and tribulations be to them of far greater value than the most flourishing prosperity.

And this, my pious hearers, is the true state of the case. To convince ourselves of it, we need only proceed to examine a little more circumstantially what it is that gives human sufferings and tribulations this value, or wherein it consists, and how they can advance our happiness.

Afflictions and tribulations are, in the first place, much adapted to lead a man to serious reflections on himself, on his destination, on his condition and the way to happiness, to imprint those reflections on his mind, and actually to set him forward on that way. How rarely are these reflections made amidst the captivating splendor, amidst the confused noise, the dizziness, the deceitful charms, the intoxication that commonly attend on prosperity ! How seldom there can serious thoughts obtain a hearing ! How quick-

ly are they scared away by the ostentation of the vain, the scoffs of the wanton, or the voice of the flatterer ! How seldom there does a man descend into himself ! How easily does he overlook and forget all his inward defects, all his spiritual wants, in the possession and enjoyment of so many outward advantages ! How apt is he there to exchange reality for appearances, to confound what he is with what he has, and to lose sight of himself and his proper felicity amidst the enchanting visions that float upon his mind ! But, when the scene changes ; when all these shining images disappear from his view ; when the companionable buffoon, the scoffer, the sycophant, the false friend, forsake his unhappy house ; when all is hush and quiet around him, and all things awe him into solemn gravity ; then he stands still, awakes from his dream, grows attentive to himself, discovers the emptiness of his heart, and the instability of fortune ; and what is more natural than for him to enter upon these or similar considerations : What is it then properly that is so much altered within me, or of me, or about me ? Is it myself, or is it the things that are without me ? Do they essentially belong to me, or do they only stand in a certain relation towards me for a period of time ? Does my whole, does my principal happiness consist indeed in them ? Is the loss of them utterly irreparable ? The riches I possessed, were they myself ? Were the honors and the magnificence that surrounded me, were they me ? My ruined health, was that myself ? Am I not just what I was yesterday and the day before ? Just as sensible, or just as senseless, just as good, or just as bad, as heretofore ? And what is, now, the purport of my existence ? Am I here that I may be rich and great, that I may shine and glitter among my brethren, that I may gratify all my sensual desires, that I may fare sumptuously and live joyously

every day? That does not depend upon me, that is subject to a thousand accidents! That neither can all men be and do! That neither can any be and do so long as they could wish! Would providence have permitted all these things to be liable to so many revolutions and changes, if they were our sovereign good, if we were to fulfill the design of our being on earth by the possession and enjoyment of them? No, that must be attainable in every station; it must be within the reach of the poor as well as the rich, of the low as well as the high, of the sick as well as the healthy, of the unfortunate as well as the prosperous; it must therefore consist in more essential, more permanent things. And must not wisdom and virtue, must not spiritual perfection, be this sovereign good? They are indeed intimately and inseparably connected with myself, with me. Of them no misfortune can rob me! They necessarily adhere neither to riches nor to poverty; neither to inferior nor to superior station, neither to health nor sickness! These I may possess, enjoy, and infinitely augment, in the humblest obscurity as well as in the blaze of a court, in a cottage as well as in a palace, in solitude as well as in the most numerous and brilliant assemblies! They can render me serene, contented, happy, in every condition! Even death itself cannot deprive me of them! I take them with me into the grave and into the future world! And can I then purchase them at too dear a rate? Can that be detrimental to me, can that be a misfortune which makes me a sharer in those goods, or which allows me to enjoy them more, and to a larger extent?—If then tribulations, my pious hearers, rouse and lead a person to such reflections, to such considerations, to such conclusions, what a value must they not be of to him!

Afflictions and tribulations teach us, farther, to

prize more justly the goods of the earth, to moderate our desires after them, and our love for them. How many a person, whose heart was entirely wrapped up in these goods, who was the slave of them, who knew no happiness but what they procured or promised him, has learnt in this school to esteem them as what they actually are! When, confined to the bed of sickness, and tormented with pain, he can no longer enjoy them; when trouble and anxiety render them tasteless and insipid; when he suffers under the loss of them; when a change of circumstances has shaken the proud edifice of his fortune, and threatens him with its fall; when death has ravished from him his patron or his friend; then the scales fall off from his eyes; he then intimately feels how much these goods were transitory and worthless, how incapable they are to render a man wholly and constantly happy, and how inadequate to the vehement endeavors that are made to procure them. Now the bonds that bound him to them are unloosed. Now he trusts no longer to the support of a frail reed, as though he leaned against a rock. Now he depends no more upon goods that were only lent him, as if they were his unalienable property; confides no more in distinctions that every accident may annul, in strength that may so suddenly be lost, in men that may die to-day, in a life that is so short and uncertain. And, since his avidity for happiness still remains equally keen, equally insatiable; he therefore directs it towards other goods, that are more durable, and more worthy of his endeavors. Now he learns to prefer internals to externals, wisdom and virtue before honors and wealth, intellectual joys before sensual pleasures, the invisible to the visible, the Creator to the creature. And how greatly must he not thus be the gainer! How much seldomer now does he exert his faculties in vain! How much more rarely do

his hopes and expectations fail him ! How much firmer is his welfare fixt ! And must not the tribulations which have helped him to this situation, be of great value to him ?

In like manner, afflictions and tribulations very frequently teach us temperance, self government, and the art of dispensing with many things. This we are first forced to by necessity. We cannot, we should not any longer do certain things, any longer lead a certain kind of life, any longer partake of certain amusements. We have lost the means and the right to them. We must now submit to certain restrictions. By degrees we become used to them ; they grow easy, agreeable to us ; we find many considerable advantages in them. Now we act from inclination, from principle ; we now feel ourselves more free, more independent on outward things ; find ourselves less affected by the inconstancy, and less liable to the strokes of fortune ; learn to endure quiet, to esteem privacy, to love and profit by retirement, and by all these things become better and more accomplished. What numbers have for the first time learnt to govern themselves, and to understand and enjoy true freedom, in these schools of tribulation ! What numbers have been snatched, indeed against their will, but to their real happiness, from a round of deceitful dissipations and diversions where they could never be right minded, could never enjoy their lives in complete consciousness, never be cheerful like rational beings, where they were the lamentable sport of their own passions and the passions of others ! How many have there been taught to subdue those desires to which they were formerly forced slavishly to obey, and to deprive themselves of a thousand things, and to forego them without uneasiness, which till now were to them urgent wants ! They are now, in several respects, more circumscribed, but on the

whole, more free ; are left more alone, but are more satisfied with themselves, and happier in the silent enjoyment of their own hearts.

Afflictions and tribulations are, fourthly, very often a school of humanity, and the milder virtues of social life ; and what a value must this also confer upon them ! But too frequently does uninterrupted success render us obdurate, insensible, unfeeling to the necessities of others. The prosperous man can seldom form to himself a just representation of the miseries of the distressed ! His station, his affairs, his companies, keep him commonly far away from the sight of them. The healthy and robust very frequently imagine the complaints of pain and disease to be exaggerated or affected, have had no similar sensations, and if they do not absolutely dispute those of others, yet their strong nervous system is but little moved at the recital of them. He with whom all things succeed, is but too apt to blame another, who laments over defeated plans, thwarted expectations, or frustrated labors and endeavors, and to charge him with imprudence and bad management. And how much must this not weaken his compassion ! But the man that has suffered himself, my dear friends, oh he feels the sorrows of his brother in a different way ; he smarts at the very sight of the sufferer of pain, he mingles his tears with the tears of the mourner, he feels every stroke that falls on another, as if he were smitten himself. Every scar his past sufferings have left upon his heart pains him afresh, and gives him so quick a sense of the sufferings of another, as will certainly not leave him either indifferent or inactive. He who has himself borne the burden of misfortune, feels also how hard it presses when he hears another groan beneath it, and finds within him the strongest impulse to alleviate that burden, if he cannot totally remove it. He who has

himself experienced how easily the wisest plans may be frustrated, how often the best undertakings fail, how often swiftness will not succeed in the race, nor strength in the conflict, nor prudence in business, how much in all these respects depends on fortune and favorable circumstances, he will certainly deem otherwise of him who actually suffers under these experiences, will judge him with much more lenity, not condemn him with severity, not impute his misfortune to him as a crime, and not shut up his heart to compassion for him. He who has himself experienced how sweet the participations, the comfort, the assistances of a friend are in distress ; how the heart is thus relieved, the prospect cleared up, the hopes revived, when a man can pour out his sorrows into the bosom of another, when he feels that he is not abandoned by all men, that he is not left to suffer alone, and may venture to assure himself of a guide and support even along the ruggedest path of life ; whoever has made trial of this, oh how will he run to open his heart to the sufferings of his friend and his brother, to give him a vent for his sorrows, to receive his complaints, and to dry up his tears ; how eagerly will he do all that in him lies to throw some light upon his darkness, and to console and revive him ! And how gentle, how complacent, how serviceable, how humane, how beneficent, must not these experiences and sensations render him in general to all mankind !

Afflictions and tribulations are often a school of many other virtues, and particularly of the sincerest devotion. How can we better learn resignation, absolute, unlimited submission to the will of God, than when his will is in opposition to our own, and he demands of us the sacrifice of such things as had the whole attachment of our heart ; and yet we submit to his will, and acknowledge his will to be right and

good and unblamable ; and yet without hesitation make him these sacrifices, let them be never so dear to us, and say to him in sentiments of the most perfect sincerity :—“ Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt—Father, thy will be done !” How can we more strongly testify our confidence in his sovereign wisdom and goodness, how shew our filial and full compliance with all his arrangements and dispensations, how our conviction that his thoughts and ways are far, far exalted above our thoughts and ways, and are infinitely better and more perfect than ours ; than when, even in the midst of misfortunes, we adore him as the allwise and the allbountiful, accept without reluctance whatever he ordains, or permits, or does, and compose ourselves by reflections on his superintendency, that he has nothing but perfection and felicity in view, and that his purposes can never fail ! How can we exercise ourselves more in faith towards the Almighty, than when we hold it fast and will not let it go, even when reduced to the depth of distress, even then believe and hope, though we do not see, though all about is darkness, though we seem to be forsaken by all, and every thing threatens us with perdition and ruin ? And if we are thus exercised and strengthened, by sufferings and tribulations, in resignation to the will of God, in confidence in him, in satisfaction with his ways ; if, by their means, we learn the hardest, but at the same time the noblest kind of obedience, the rarest but the purest devotion ; must not this evidently promote our advantage and perfection ? Must it not bring us nearer to the Deity, and render us more fit for his complacency and for the tokens of his favor ? Must it not prepare an ample recompence for our fidelity in a better world ? And must not this give a great value to every affliction and tribulation ?

Yet more. How important, how dear to a man

must afflictions and tribulations render the doctrines and comforts of religion! Religion, to which he formerly perhaps paid little regard, probably restricted it to certain opinions, or ceremonies and practices, which he but too often thought he could very well dispense with, or which only presented itself to him under a gloomy and uninviting form, and which he never understood as the friend, the guide, and the comforter of the human race! When we are afflicted, what is more natural than too look out for help? And how seldom with any certitude can we expect it from men! How much seldomer do we actually obtain it from that quarter! And to whom then shall we apply for it but to him who alone can constantly and certainly afford assistance, and does most readily grant it? Yes, Lord, when tribulation comes on, then does a man turn himself to thee! Then does the sentiment of an Almighty, an allwise and allgracious ruler of the world, a father in heaven, which had probably long lain dormant in the soul, again revive; then the inclinations and desires once more take their natural turn; they turn to their Creator and preserver, to the eternal source of being and benignity, to him in whom we live and move and are! Now has the troubled spirit, the soul tossed to and fro upon the billows of adversity, once more found a fixed point, to which she may adhere, from whence she may proceed, and to which she may return, a prop on which she can rely, a source of comfort from which she may draw refreshment. How differently does she now feel her dependence on the sovereign being, and the intimate and blessed relation that subsists between the creature and the Creator! She is now no more forsaken, no longer forcibly torn and severed from her former connexions, no more a solitary existence in the land of the living! She has now the Lord always before her, and knows

and feels that she walks in his sight, and is protected by his arm, that she lives in his kingdom, is one of his children and subjects, and is associated in the most various and intimate manner with the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual world, by him who comprehends and unites all things in himself. In what an altered light must she now view the doctrine of an all directing Providence and the government of the Most High! What comfort must she be inspired with, which she never tasted before! She now no longer appears to be the sport of chance and the creature of fortune; no more complains in sullen murmurs of the injustice she has undergone; is no longer tormented by rage and rancor against the proximate causes of her sufferings; no longer harassed by forming plans and devising means of requitting evil with evil. No, it is the Lord's doing; all things are under his supreme control; he distributes both prosperity and adversity, riches and poverty, health and sickness, life and death, according to his good pleasure, amongst the children of men; he elevates and he depresses, he wounds and heals, conducts to the grave and out of it again, and what he ordains and does must necessarily be right and good, must, sooner or later in this way or in that, turn to my advantage, and to the advantage of his whole family on earth! And this, my dear friends, this tranquillizes! This pours balm into the wounded heart! This gives all our sufferings a quite different, a much less terrible aspect!

And how important, how precious must not the doctrine of our immortality, of the future and better life be to the sufferer! When he so acutely feels the emptiness and insufficiency of the present, with all its goods and advantages and joys; when so many ties that bound him to it are dissolved or relaxed; when the part of his course that still lies be-

fore him is lost in obscurity and darkness ; when he meets with so many stumbling blocks, so many impediments and difficulties in it ; how reviving must be the prospect into a superior and a better life ! As reviving as when the weary, fainting, persecuted traveller descries from afar the term of his pilgrimage, the spires of his native land. And with how much greater ease, with how much greater fortitude will he not now bear the troubles of life ! How much more strenuously and cheerfully will he not now complete his course, when he runs not as uncertainly, but expects at the end of it the richest recompence for all, the glorious reward of his faith and perseverance ! Oh what a value must religion hence acquire in his sight ! And what a value must afflictions and tribulations have, which discovered to him the excellency of it, and caused him to apply to its comforts !

Afflictions and tribulations are, lastly, often the most efficacious means of improving mankind in general, of rousing them to a total change in their minds and manners. What all the arguments of reason and religion, what all the bounties of God, what all the remonstrances, exhortations, and intreaties of teachers and friends, what neither the still, small voice of conscience, nor its louder alarms and reproaches could ever effect ; has often been done by afflictions and tribulations. The former not unfrequently slide over the heart of the thoughtless and hardened offender, like water over the smooth surface of a rock, and leave no trace behind. The latter terrify and stop the inconsiderate wretch that is running headlong to destruction ; they forcibly and suddenly arrest him in his wicked career ; they strike more deeply into the recesses of his heart ; they withdrew, obscure, and dissipate, like dust before the wind, all the visionary forms of happiness that floated

in his mind and cheated his hopes ; and will permit him no longer to doubt that he is not what he took himself for, that he has not what he thought he had, that he is unhappy and wretched. His seducers forsake him, or laugh at his distress ; his flatterers are silent, and take themselves away ; the snares that surround him stand exposed to his view ; the precipice he was approaching strikes him dumb with amazement. He stands petrified with horror ; he turns his eyes inward ; he must bethink himself, must retreat, must seek other comforts, other pleasures, other friends, must find out some other way to happiness. No longer dazzled and deceived by outward things, he is and sees himself full of defects and infirmities, sees himself all disorder and confusion. And now, when reduced to this condition, with such experiences and feelings, if he hear the voice of religion, if her calls to amendment strike upon his mind, encouragement and instruction enter ; if the good providence of God supply him with some peculiar assistance, commission to him some messenger of peace, send to him some hearty and honest friend ; how much more disposed must he not be to listen to that voice, to follow that call, and to employ these means to his amendment !—I will not, however, pretend, that afflictions and tribulations do always, that they very often, produce such effects in vicious men. They frequently exasperate, frequently harden, frequently pervert them still more. Yet many have got the rudiments of reflection and amendment in this school. Many have here received the primary incitement, many have embraced the first resolves, have made the first steps of their return to the path of duty and virtue. Many have been forced to exclaim with the psalmist : It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went wrong, but now have I learnt thy judgments. I

thank thee, O Lord, for having humbled me by sufferings, for having thus mortified my vanity, taught me to tame my violent passions, brought me to a lively sense of my weakness and imbecility, and instructed me to keep thy statutes.

Thus chastening is productive of salutary effects in them that are exercised thereby, by rendering them virtuous and good. Thus, therefore, even afflictions and tribulations are of real and often of very great value. Thus are they the benefactions of Providence, and sources of happiness. If storms and tempests in the natural world drive destructive diseases away from our dwellings, and bring life and health and fertility with them; so likewise may the blasts of misfortune in the moral world rouse the supine from their dangerous slumber, drive away mists and vapors from the eyes, and awaken the torpid to new powers and action, sharpen the dull feelings of the palsied sinner, and restore to life the spiritually dead. Far be it then from us to let sufferings and tribulations slacken our confidence in the unalterable and neverfailing goodness of our Father in heaven; No, even they are effects and proofs of it. No, with filial reverence will we accept the cup of sorrow from his parental hand, and never doubt, even whilst drinking out its bitter dregs, that it is wholesome medicine, by which he restores us to health and life.

SERMON XXXIX.

The Value of a good Reputation.



O GOD, who art the father and benefactor of us all ! Who hast given us and still art ever giving us, poor and mean as we are of our ourselves, so many proofs of thy peculiar esteem and providence, intimating thereby that we should likewise mutually esteem, cordially love, and reciprocally promote, as far as in us lies, the happiness of each other, as thy children, as members of one family. To this end hast thou so intimately connected us together ; made us all in so many respects dependent on each other, and planted in our hearts so powerful an impulse to sympathy and benevolence. How kind and righteous is thy will, O God, and how happy were it for us, if we constantly fulfilled it with pleasure and fidelity ! Forgive us, merciful Father, that we so frequently behave as disobedient children towards thee, and as foes to each other. Teach us better to understand our common connexions and our proper advantages, and more strictly to observe the duties of justice, of equity, of humanity. Replenish us with a sincere esteem for whatever our brethren may possess of good and excellent ; and grant that we may never be misled by levity, by envy, by hatred or by vanity, to speak or to do any thing that may disturb them in the possession of the endowments and blessings bestowed on them by thee, or may injure or offend them in any other respect. Bless to this end the meditations we are now about to begin. Cause us to be so convinced of the

value of the good reputation of our neighbor, that we may henceforth make it to us an inviolable law never purposely to injure it in any manner whatever. This we implore of thee as the disciples of Jesus Christ, our blessed lord and savior, humbly concluding our petitions in his name and words : Our father, &c.



PROVERBS xxii. 1.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver or gold.

VERY often it happens that a man is negligent and careless about matters of great importance, only because he is ignorant of their value, or not sufficiently attentive to it ; or because he conceives not the privation of them to be so prejudicial and irreparable as it really is. This is but too frequently the case in regard to the time allotted us to pass on earth. It is not believed or considered to be destined to affairs, on the successful transacting whereof, not only our welfare in this world depends, but likewise our condition in that which is to come. It is not believed or considered, that this precious time is very liable to be lost, that lost time can never be recalled, and that the benefits which we suffer to escape us by the waste or the abuse of it can be compensated by nothing. It is not believed or considered, that each day, each hour of life, when regarded in its connexion with futurity, is of the utmost importance, that it may frequently be decisive. Hence it is that most men are so prodigal of their time ;

hence so great a part of it is trifled away either in doing nothing, or in childish amusements; hence it is that concerns of the greatest consequence are so much neglected; hence it is that one day is suffered to pass after another; one month after another, one year after another, before a man seriously sets about his improvement and his everlasting salvation.

Just as we do with our time, so do we not unfrequently with the good name of our neighbor. It not always happens, it happens indeed but rarely, that we say and do such things as are prejudicial to our neighbor's fame from wickedness and a desire to hurt. But it is not believed or considered that so much depends upon it; that it is so easily injured or lost, and that this damage can so seldom be repaired or made good. It is not believed or considered, that thereby not only the well being and comfort of the particular persons against whom the offence is committed are disturbed, but even the good of the whole society is injured in various ways. Hence it is, that a man so often gives full licence to his tongue in judging of his neighbor; so often sacrifices truth to wit, and christian affection and forbearance to the desire of pleasing; so often utters harmful or ambiguous expressions of others, without being fully persuaded that they are well founded, or making himself the slightest reproaches thereon. This being the case, my friends, there can be no better means of attacking this failing, and of rendering us more circumspect on this matter, than by representing it in its real complexion, and thus to excite in our minds a lively sentiment of its importance. This is what I now purpose to attempt.

I will shew you the great value of a good reputation, and remind you of the duties we owe in this respect to ourselves and to our neighbor. This consideration will, I doubt not, thoroughly convince

you of the truth of Solomon's expression in our text :
" A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver or gold."

By the reputation or good name of a man, I understand the general consideration wherein he stands with all those that know him personally or by the report of others ; and this consideration is grounded on the good opinion the public has of his understanding, of his integrity, of his temper and way of thinking, of his skill in certain businesses, arts, and sciences, or is supported by other advantages and merits attributed to him. On this good character, I say, extremely much depends ; it is of very great value ; for by it we are rendered much happier, much more generally useful, and not unfrequently morally better, than we should or could be without it.

Our good name, in the first place, promotes our happiness, especially, so far as it depends on our outward welfare. To this happiness thousands of persons must contribute out of what they have. It is a large and spacious edifice, that we indeed must plan ourselves, must lay the foundation of, to the carrying on and consolidation whereof we must constantly labor ; we can neither bring to any considerable degree of perfection without the assistance of others, nor properly maintain it when finished. One while we are in want of the sagacity and advice, then of the greater abilities and force, now of the assistance and support, then of the encouragement of our fellow-beings, for effecting our designs, for successfully prosecuting our affairs and undertakings, for quietly enjoying our possessions and profits, or for consoling us under adverse events.

But shall our fellow creatures serve us with their perceptions and advice ; shall they employ their abilities and force to our benefit ; shall they assist, sup-

port, and encourage us? Then must they have a stronger incitement to it than mere selfinterest can give them. These advantages are not always; they are but seldom; and some of them can never be purchased. They are the fruit of the esteem and the benevolence with which our brethren are affected towards us; and this esteem, this benevolence, is founded on the good opinion they entertain of us. In proportion as this good opinion is counteracted and enfeebled, as suspicion or disesteem take place; in the same proportion will their readiness and ardor to promote our happiness be diminishing, and their benevolence and obliging behavior towards us will change into coldness and indifference. — Only put the question to yourselves, my friends; why do you so readily, why is it so agreeable to you to afford all possible service to certain persons; and why do you find it so unpleasant, why are you forced to use so much constraint and self denial, to do for others any thing beyond what the strictest justice requires of you? Does it not principally proceed from this, that you have a good opinion of the former, and a bad opinion of the latter; that you esteem the one sort, and despise the other? How readily does a man communicate his intelligence and his best advice to him whom he accounts a sensible and an honest man, that knows how to esteem and to use good counsel! How cheerfully does a man lend a part of his consequence or his property to the person on whose sincerity and uprightness he can safely depend! How willingly do we afford help and support to him whom we believe to have no other than lawful intentions and projects, and would be ready, in similar cases, to afford the same help and support to us! How heartily does a man comfort him whose misfortunes cannot be imputed to his own faulty conduct, but to unavoidable and un-

accountable events, and whom he could sincerely wish to have been successful, for the sake of his good qualities and deserts! On the other hand, who would offer advice to the fool, or open himself to the artful? Who would trust his property or his countenance to the deceiver? Who would readily afford help and support to the base or the ungrateful? Who would endeavor to comfort the wilful transgressor? Certainly then a great part of our happiness or of our outward welfare, depends on the behavior of our fellow creatures towards us; certainly likewise their behavior towards us is determined by the good or the bad reputation we have in their estimation.

This is not all. We are designed for social life, for intercourse with other persons, for participation in our reciprocal joys and pleasures. Apart from all our rational fellow creatures, secluded from their societies and pleasures, left alone to ourselves and our solitary reflections and feelings, we could either not be happy at all, or not in so high a degree. The genial sentiment of benevolence and friendship, that pure and abundant source of pleasure, would soon be extinct, for want of a supply; and the opposite sensations of spleen, vexation, and misanthropy, would succeed in its place. But if social life should have charms for us; if intercourse with others should be agreeable, if they are to take part in what befalls us, and to admit us to a share in their joys and their pleasures; then must we stand in good repute with them. They must ascribe to us such qualities or dispositions as are of some value in their eyes, that render us not unworthy of their friendship and converse. At least they must not charge us with any thing, they must not believe us to be capable of any thing that merits contempt or abhorrence.

A natural and unconstrained behavior, a free and easy communication of our sentiments and feelings; a frank but not injurious opinion of what we see and hear, of what is said and done; a mutually earnest, but not a studied and troublesome endeavor to be agreeable; are undoubtedly the real delights of social life, the greatest charms of friendly intercourse. But can these subsist where the members of the society are not connected by reciprocal esteem? Will any one, who, whether by his own fault or not, stands in bad repute among the rest, be admitted to the enjoyment of these satisfactions? Will not people shun the conversation of one that lies under the imputation of a weak understanding or a wicked heart, who is reckoned a hypocrite, or a slanderer, or a harsh and sarcastic censor, or a sower of dissension, or to whose charge any other bad dispositions or actions are laid? And if we cannot absolutely avoid his company on account of our circumstances and situation, can it be imagined that we shall take much pains to promote his pleasure? Will people do justice to his character, his judgments, and his conduct? Will people shew themselves to him in their natural colors, and by that means furnish him with opportunity and encouragement to do so too? Will they not rather interpret his most indifferent gestures, his most harmless words and actions, nay his most insignificant looks, by the prepossessions they have imbibed against him? Will not his acquaintance be either utterly cold and reserved towards him, or, by a forced regard and friendship, rather confound than comfort him? Certainly, let a man have what eminent capacities and endowments of mind, what good qualities, what great merits soever; but let malice or levity spread injurious reports about him, reports which possess a certain degree of credibility; and he will soon be deprived of the best

part of the social satisfactions and pleasures which his talents, his qualities, his deserts, gave him great right to expect ; he will probably soon be reduced to live entirely alone, or at least to confine his conversation to the persons dependent upon him ; and how much must not this impair his happiness, how many sources of it must it exclude him from enjoying ! While to him, on the other hand, who is in possession of a good reputation, all these sources of pleasure and delight stand open ; and he may even with far less talents and merits, with far greater failings and infirmities, than the other has, receive from them various kinds of satisfaction and happiness. So certain is it that a good name is preferable to wealth, and favor to silver or gold.

But, as a good reputation contributes much to our happiness, inasmuch as our outward welfare and our intercourse with others depend upon it, so shall we thereby become more generally useful than we otherwise could be, and may contribute much more to the happiness of others, than we otherwise could do ; and this in various ways.

For being useful to society, it is not enough that we possess certain capacities and skill in many respects ; that we are masters of certain arts or sciences, or certain kinds of trade and commerce ; that we execute with industry and punctuality the concerns intrusted to us ; but others must likewise believe and know that we have these capacities and aptitudes, that we understand these matters, and that we may safely be trusted with them. And, as generally speaking we are not the only persons who can render these or other services to society, then mankind must be induced to accept them at our hands ; and to this end they must ascribe to us such qualities and distinctive merits by which we may attract their regard and conciliate their esteem. At least, we must

not have a base or doubtful character in the eye of the public, and our conduct must be irreproachable, if our services are to be preferred to those of others. We must therefore have a good name among our fellow creatures ; they must have a good opinion of us.

Of what service, in this respect, is wisdom to the wise, to the scholar his learning, to the patriot his vigilant and generous ardor for the common welfare, if men will not elect them to such offices, and place them in such stations as may enable them to shew their wisdom, their learning, their patriotic dispositions, and apply them to purposes of importance ? But will men ordinarily confer these offices and posts upon them, if they entertain a mean opinion of them ; if they take the wise man for an obstinate and fantastical fellow, the scholar for a cross-grained, upstart pedant, the patriot for a self-interested or ambitious pretender ; or though they should indeed allow their eminent qualities, yet at the same time should charge them with any such blemishes in their character as should take away all their lustre ?

The case is exactly the same with the artist, with the artificer, with the merchant, with the lawyer, and others. That the artist or the artificer may exert himself in his art or profession ; that he may bring himself to a certain degree of perfection in it, and so render himself truly useful to society ; he must have much work of art or industry to execute ; and this will not be given him, if they who are to employ him have not a good opinion of his talents or his skill, or a regard for him on account of his personal or moral qualities. That the merchant may pursue his affairs with success ; that, by an extensive and gainful commerce, he may promote the welfare of his countrymen, and of human society in general ; he

must be taken, both at home and abroad, for an intelligent, sagacious, active, and upright man; he must be thought to understand his business well, and to transact it with carefulness and caution; and in the degree that this belief is weakened or diminished, to the same degree will his activity for the general advantage be reduced, and his influence on the whole be lessened. That, lastly, the lawyer may be really useful by his knowledge of the laws of the land, and of the manner of proceeding in litigations, or even by his eloquence; he should stand, with the parties as well as with the bench, in the reputation of a well informed, acute, and solid man, as a friend to truth and justice, as a foe to all sinister evasions, every species of subterfuge and corruption; and the more general and unquestioned this reputation is, so much the more is he in a capacity, by discreet dissuasions from perilous suits or by friendly accommodations of controversies already begun, or by a resolute prosecution of right, to contribute to the common good. In short, without the help of a good reputation, no man will easily find opportunity to afford considerable service to human society; and by the loss of it, all the capacities and means a man may possess to that end will generally be rendered useless.

Still more. Though by means of the place we hold, or the office we fill in society we have the most frequent occasions of applying our talents to the general welfare; yet we shall seldom be able to do so with success, unless we bear a good reputation. The purity of our intentions will always be called into doubt; our best proposals will be rejected. Our most public spirited endeavors will fail, for want of countenance and support, or will even be attacked by violent and obstinate opposition. We shall very frequently exert our abilities and faculties

in vain, and always, even with the most sincere application of them, effect comparatively but little. Whereas the better the opinion men have of us; the more confidence they repose in our skill and integrity; with so much better success shall we do what we ought in virtue of our office and vocation; so much the fewer hindrances and difficulties shall we meet with in the execution of our good designs, or in the prosecution of salutary projects. Good men will support and animate us in them according to their means; and bad men will not easily venture to commence hostilities with us.

Of how great importance, in this respect, for example, is the good fame of a prince, of a minister, or a magistrate! So long as the ruler or the persons entrusted with the public administration are reputed to be the wise and good fathers of the people; so long as the public ascribe eminent abilities and virtues to them; so long as they are generally thought to be honest and faithful; so long will it be easy for them to govern the subjects according to their pleasure; to give currency and weight to their laws and ordinances; to accomplish their aims without opposition; and to unite, if not all, yet the majority of the members of the state, in the prosecution of them. But do men once begin to doubt of their abilities, or of their steadiness and integrity, and these doubts become general; do men once charge them with selfinterestedness, or tyrannical dispositions, or even indifferency to the common welfare; they will find but little support, even though they are sincerely acting consistently with their duty, and are laboring for the prosperity of the country; but will meet with much opposition. Mankind will not trust to their most express declarations and assertions; will find fault with their wisest measures; despise and transgress their most salutary laws; mur-

mur at their most reasonable demands ; and pay them no other than a forced, and of consequence a very imperfect and defective obedience.

How much, in this respect, depends on the repute wherein a public teacher of religion stands with his auditory ! Do they doubt of his integrity ; do they think they discover a contradiction between his doctrine and his conduct ; does he fall under the reproach of a hireling, who, for the sake of lucre or of an empty honor, maintains what he does not believe, and extols what he does not choose to perform ; then, let his talents be never so eminent, his discourses be never so excellent and melting, his diligence and zeal in discharging the duties of his function be never so great ; yet with all this he will accomplish but little ; it is likely he will effect not half so much as another, who, with far meaner talents, discourses not near so elegantly composed and delivered, and exerting a far more moderate zeal and industry, has a reputation for sincerity and an exemplary conduct.

And the case is just the same with us all, my friends, in whatever station we are placed. The better the opinion mankind entertain of us, the more easily and effectually may we be useful to others, and promote the general welfare ; so much the readier acceptance will our advice obtain ; so much the deeper impression will our exhortations, admonitions and corrections, make ; so much the greater influence will our good example have. Let the man who has once lost his good name, who, for instance, has once been pronounced a bigot or a hypocrite, let him perform never such generous actions ; let him never so feelingly exhort to virtue and piety ; let him exhibit never so much devotion, or meekness, or moderation, in his words and deeds, whom will all this move ? Whom will it allure to imita-

tion ? On the other hand, who does not account it his glory to follow him whom he himself esteems, and on whom a favorable judgment is passed by the whole community ? So very much depends the success of our endeavors, of the best use of our capacities and powers, and the ability of doing as much good in the world as we are able, on the good or bad repute wherein we stand !

Hence, in fine, it arises, that a good reputation may even contribute much to our moral improvement and perfection ; and that, on the contrary, the loss of it often misleads a man into the grossest profligacy, into a completely immoral and dissolute conduct. This, my pious hearers, is a circumstance that deserves your utmost attention, and sets the great value of a good reputation beyond all manner of doubt. If we know that we are generally allowed to possess certain abilities, good qualities, and virtues ; that we are held incapable of any unjust, or base, or sinister actions ; that much good is said of our understanding and our heart ; that we are acknowledged to be upright and estimable members of society ; what a strong incitement must it be to exert these abilities and good qualities ; actually to exercise these virtues ; carefully to avoid these bad actions ; to do honor to our understanding and our heart ; and to preserve the estimation wherein we stand by an inoffensive and a praise worthy conduct !

I am not ignorant, that he who is incited to goodness, and refrains from what is wrong, from these considerations alone, does not yet deserve the name of a virtuous man ; we neither can, however, nor ought to be indifferent to the judgment of our fellow creatures ; and when the concern for the preservation of our good name is accompanied and supported by some more noble motives, it may very lawfully be a means of facilitating us in the discharge

of our duties, and so, by rendering us more attentive to all our discourses and actions, promote our perfection. At least, the wrong is left undone, and the good is done ; and the more frequently, even in views that are not of the very first quality, we omit the one and do the other, so much in proportion must our disposition to the one be weakened, and our aptitude to the other be increased, and so much the more easily shall we be acted upon by the nobler incitements to integrity and virtue.

On the other hand, is the good name once lost ; then, with most men, that is lost which to them was the strongest preservative from follies and sins. They had before abstained from many obliquities of conduct to which they had sufficient inclination and appetite, for the sake of preserving the character of honest men, or of being respected by others ; they probably have done violence to themselves ; have performed many a just, reasonable, beneficent, generous action, in direct opposition to their own principles and propensities ; have probably, at different times, made a surrender of their private advantage to the public benefit, for the pleasure arising from fame ; they have, at least, avoided every thing that might be offensive to others and excite indignation. At present, finding they have missed of their aim, since mankind refuse them what they had a right to pretend to as a compensation for the violence they did to themselves ; since they are judged and treated as if they had done just the reverse ; they now no longer keep any measures, but wholly abandon themselves to their propensities and passions. They at once give up all hope of maintaining the reputation of honest, worthy men, and useful citizens ; concern themselves no more therefore about their fame ; despise the censures of their fellow beings ; and never inquire any more whether an action be

offensive or inoffensive, laudable or scandalous ; and thus, by constantly making farther advances in follies and disorders, they are ever becoming more averse to all good, and more incapable of it, till at length they sink into a state of insensibility and hardness of heart, that renders their amendment nearly impossible. So much depends in this respect likewise on the preservation or the loss of a good name ; and so certain is it that the worth of it far exceeds that of riches and all other outward possessions and advantages.

And now what conclusion are we to draw from all this ? How ought we to frame our behavior according to this truth, which we cannot deny ? It imposes a variety of important duties upon us ; and I will wind up this discourse with a few words of exhortation to the observance of them.

Is a good reputation of so great a value ? Does it contribute so much to the promotion of our welfare and pleasures ? Without it, can we, even with the best intentions, neither duly exercise our gifts and abilities, nor be really useful to mankind ? Oh strive then to your utmost to preserve this precious jewel, you that are in possession of it ! Set a watch, in this respect, over all your words and actions, and sedulously avoid every thing that may weaken the good opinion you hold in the minds of others. Suppose not that this concern is unbecoming a virtuous and noble minded man. It will be unbecoming if the desire of pleasing be the great motive of your actions ; if you only regulate your behavior, without regard to the rules of justice and equity, by the judgment of other men ; or if you prize their esteem and their applause more than the approbation of your conscience and the favor of God.

No, our first question must ever be, What is right ? What is good ? What is consistent with my nature

and the will of God? What is my obligation as a man, as a christian, as a citizen, as a father of a family? And, in determining these questions, neither the approbation nor the censure of mankind must be of any account whatever. We must act by certain principles, and to these we must ever adhere. By this means, however, we shall infallibly secure to ourselves the esteem of the best and worthiest part of the community, and, in the generality of occasions, shall obtain their approbation, without anxiously seeking it, or making it our principal aim.

But, an action in regard to that falls under no particular law; that we may either perform or neglect, wherein we may proceed in this manner or in that; if in that case we direct our conduct so as best to conduce to the confirming of our good reputation: By so doing, we not only are not chargeable with any criminal passion for fame; we act not only with prudence, but in perfect consistence with our duty, which enjoins us to do every thing by which we may immediately become useful to others, or acquire a greater and surer influence on the advancement of the general good. A good name may be weakened and lost not only by the actual commission of evil, but even by the appearance of it; not only by unjust and base, but even by innocent yet imprudent discourses and actions. Abstain then from all appearances of evil, and walk, as the apostle recommends, with circumspection and prudence; not as fools, but as wise.

If, farther, a good reputation be so highly valuable, then imprint it deeply on your minds, that you cannot attack the good name of your neighbor, or bring it by any means into contempt, without causing great harm to the whole society, and rendering yourself guilty of the most crying injustice, and frequently of the uttermost degree of inhumanity and cruelty.

Rather rob your neighbor of his goods ; wound him in his person ; plunge him into poverty and indigence ! You will generally hurt him less, and do him a more supportable injury, than by infamously depriving him of the esteem he possesses amongst his fellow beings. By this esteem he may repair the other wrongs you do him ; without it, as it frequently happens, neither opulence, nor station, nor life itself, have any charms for him. Regard not, therefore, the reputation of your brother, be his condition in life what it may, as a matter of sport, as a subject for merriment, on which we may boldly display our wit. Constantly reflect how easily the good name of the inoffensive may be injured, and how difficult it is to heal the wounds we give it. An ambiguous word, a mysterious look, an eloquent silence, a sneering smile, a malicious BUT, is more than sufficient to make the most unfavorable impression of the character or the conduct of a person on the unthinking, the credulous, or the malicious hearer, to occasion the most disadvantageous reports, or to undermine the credit of a harmless or deserving member of the community. Unhappily such a report may so quickly spread, the raised suspicion may so rapidly gain confirmation, it may collect so many circumstances together which render it credible, that it is often immediately no more in your power to repair the injustice you have done. In vain would you now recall your imprudent expressions ; in vain attempt to slur over the matter as a misunderstanding, an inadvertent escape, a jest, or an insignificant sportive conceit ; in vain will you even implore forgiveness of the injured man ! Probably this alteration of your language or your behavior will be attributed to fear, or to complaisance, or to selflove, or to certain private agreements or compromises since made ; it will be long ere you can effect a persuasion that

there was nothing at all in the matter, and probably it may require whole years before you can, even by the most earnest endeavors, be able to efface the impression you have made upon others to the prejudice of your neighbor. And if, with all your pains, you are unable to do this; then have you, probably forever destroyed the peace of an innocent man; sapped the foundation of his happiness and of those that belong to him; rendered a useful member of civil society unprofitable or of little service; you have probably deprived him of all heart to amendment had he been so inclined; and him whom a concern for his good name retained within the bounds of moderation and honor, you have rendered alike indifferent both to honor and to shame. What a flagrant enormity! How dreadful will it be to you in the hour of serious reflection, or in your dying moments! Can we then ever be too circumspect, too conscientious, when we have to do with our neighbor's fame? Surely no; the greater the value, and the more irreparable the loss of it, so much the more sacred should it be to us; and so much the more should we abstain from every thing that may lessen or impair it. Let us then bridle our tongue and keep a watch at the door of our lips, and banish from our heart all envy, all hatred, all bitterness and animosity against our brethren. Let us abhor and detest not only manifest lying and slandering, but likewise regard and avoid all base defamation, all hard and severe judgments on our neighbor, as sins which can by no means be made to consist with the philanthropy and the character of a real christian. Let us put on the bowels of compassion, friendliness, meekness, gentleness and patience, as becomes the children of God and the disciples of Jesus; bearing and forgiving one another with the

most cordial affection ; and so act with all men, and so judge of every one, as we should desire, in similar circumstances, that they would act by us and judge of our behavior. But, above all things, let us clothe ourselves with love, which is the bond of perfection.

SERMON XL.



Of Conversion from a bad course of Life.

O GOD, we present ourselves before thee this day to acknowledge our sins and transgressions. We would not conceal them, we would not attempt to justify ourselves in thy sight ; we could not answer thee one of a thousand. Notwithstanding all that thou hast done for us, most merciful father, to draw us to thee by making our duty a delight, we have yet refused to obey thee, and have swerved from thy commandments. Virtue and religion are not of so much weight with us as they ought to be with the wise, with christians ; sensuality, unbelief and doubt have weakened their respect and rendered some of us indifferent towards them , the world and its deceitful, fugacious pleasures too forcibly attract our inclinations and desires ; we are more bent upon gratifying our inordinate lusts and passions than on rendering ourselves worthy of the glorious name of christians. We are thy creatures ; but rebellious and guilty creatures : We presume to call thee our Father ; but we are mostly disobedient ungrateful children, who will not submit to thy chastening hand, who offend thee in thought, in words, in deeds. Neither thy benefactions nor thy chastisements have been effectual to bring about thy gracious designs upon us. Often have we vowed amendment ; but our vows yet remain unpaid. Often have we attempted to

set about the performance of our good resolves ; but they still remain unperformed. O God, of what unfaithfulness of what reiterated sins and transgressions are we not guilty in thy sight ! Yes, we confess them, we bewail them, we are ashamed of them. Our own consciences condemn us. How then could we subsist before thee, wert thou to enter into judgment with us ; before thee, who art a righteous judge, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ? Lo, as criminals worthy of death, we prostrate ourselves at the foot of thy throne. Spare us, O Lord, and be gracious unto us ! Remit the punishment we deserve for our sins, and deliver us from the power and dominion of them. Thou desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live : Thou rejectest not the prayer and supplication of those who flee to thee for succor : Thou hast sent thy son into the world, that the world by him might be saved : Let us also be partakers of his salvation, and for his sake, forgive us all our transgressions !

And that we may no more have the misfortune to displease thee, O God, grant us the assistance of thy holy spirit ! That it may operate and reside within us, dissipate all our prejudices and errors, cleanse and sanctify all our inclinations. Do thou eradicate from our hearts whatever is displeasing to thee ; rescue us from the violence of all base inordinate lusts and passions, let the sincere, effective desire, the earnest endeavor to please thee and to do thy will, govern the whole of our future behavior. Remove from us, by thy wise and kind providence, all temptations and allurements to sin ; and, if we be tempted, grant that we may not fall under the temptation, but that, strengthened by thy spirit, we may conquer all and persevere to the end in our fidelity to thee. Hearken to our supplications, O merciful God, for the sake of thy everlasting love, by Jesus Christ, in whose comprehensive words we conclude our prayers :
Our father, &c.

LUKE xv. 18, 19.

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: Make me as one of thy hired servants.

IT would lead us too far from the particular appointment of this day, were we to enter upon a circumstantial investigation of the prejudices and errors which furnished our Savior with an occasion for delivering the parable to which our text belongs. Let it suffice, in general to observe that Christ justifies himself by it against the unjust accusations of the Scribes and Pharisees, who imputed it to him as a crime that he conversed with sinners, took a concern in their condition, and vouchsafed them his instruction. And how could our Lord better refute the unfounded suspicion of a criminal intercourse with sinners which that accusation was intended to excite, and at the same time more confound his malicious accusers than by shewing them in several easy, beautiful and affecting parables, that nothing is in stricter conformity with sound reason, with the sentiments and conduct of all mankind, than to be principally concerned about that which is lost, to take all possible pains to recover it, and when that object is attained, to rejoice more over it, than over what we have long quietly possessed? Who must not, judging impartially, naturally draw this conclusion, that it was by no means unbecoming in the Savior of the world to concern himself about the informa-

tion, the improvement and the consolation of such persons as were utterly despised and neglected by their hypocritical teachers, though, as it appears, they were more sincerely desirous of the salvation of God, than their haughty despisers? Was not Christ sent into the world by God for the very purpose of preaching to the wretched, of announcing good tidings to the meek, of binding up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to seek that which was lost? Was it not rather the sick and the infirm that were in need of a physician, than the really or imaginary healthy and strong? This, my dear hearers, is the connexion wherein the words of our text stand with the purport to which they were delivered by our divine instructor. Let us now proceed to make a more general application of them, by considering the narrative of the forlorn son as the similitude of a penitent and converting sinner.

This edifying parable contains three particulars extremely interesting. The first comprehends what passed previous to the return of the prodigal son to his father. This will afford us an opportunity to speak of the motives to conversion, and of the preparatives to it. The second particular relates the actual return of the lost son to his father, and the manner and nature of it. This will teach us wherein true penitence and conversion properly consist. The third particular, lastly, represents to us the happy consequences of this conversion; and this representation will inform us of the various and great advantages of true penitence and conversion.

O God, let us not receive this instruction in vain. Grant that we may attend to it with diligence and with an unfeigned desire of salvation. We are thy children, but children that have rebelled against thee, their lord and father, that have forsaken thee, whose loving kindness is better than life, and thus rendered

themselves without thy aid undone. Ah grant that we may return to thee again, earnestly implore thy pardon, heartily apply to the performance of neglected duties, and henceforth pay thee a grateful obedience.

“When he came to himself,” says the parable, he said, “how many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” This, my dear brethren, it was that incited the forlorn son to his return; and these or similar sentiments and emotions are what awaken the sinner to conversion, and prepare him for it.—The lost son first becomes sensible of his misery. Till now he thought himself happy in having shaken off the authority and withdrawn himself from the vigilance of his father. The unbounded freedom he enjoyed, the extravagant and dissolute life he led, the tumultuous pleasures he met with on all hands, flattered his appetites. They beguiled his soul; they concealed futurity from his view, and he thought he had no reason to repent of his senseless choice. But now having run through all his means, fallen into the extremes of poverty and contempt, obliged to put up with the vilest servitude, and to content himself with the coarsest fare, and with all scarcely able to support his life: He wakes from his wretched delusion. The intoxicating visions of pleasure and happiness by which he has been hitherto deluded, are now vanished away. He finds himself cheated in his expectations. He can no longer conceal his wretchedness from himself. He severely feels the deplorable consequences of his foolish conduct; he groans under the burden of it; and these painful sensations compel him to think seriously on freeing himself from them.

Just so it is with the man that awakes from the lethargy of vice. He proceeds for a long time secure and careless in his wicked ways, breaks every tie of religion and virtue, refuses due obedience to his creator and Lord, and takes that for freedom which is in fact the hardest and most infamous bondage. The sinful appetites which he blindly follows, captivate him with their deceitful charms; they promise him a round of pleasures and joy; and he fondly imagines he has found out the way that leads to true felicity. The violent calls of passion stifle the voice of reason and conscience; the affairs and dissipations of this world guard the entrance to his soul against all sedate reflection, and, like a man intoxicated with the fumes of drink, sees not the danger that awaits him. But when the poison of sin has had its effect; when disquiet, vexation and disgust take place of pleasure; when pain and sickness, or other adverse events, stimulate him, as it were, to reflect on himself and his moral condition; when the loss of his property, the sudden death of his friend, the unexpected failure of his plans, or other striking occurrences fill him with dismay; when the light of truth in this suspension of the passions, in this silence of the heart, darts upon his mind, and the darkness of prejudice and error, which had hitherto blinded him, is dispelled: He then begins to understand the deceitfulness of sin, then its fascinating charms are dissipated before him. It appears to him in all its deformity, as ghastly and detestable as it really is; and he is seized with the utmost astonishment that he could ever be imposed on by such empty impostures. He now feels the degrading, the cruel shackles by which he is bound, and sees that he, who thought himself erewhile so free, is in fact the most wretched of slaves. He now tastes the bitterness of the fruits of sin, and experiences what sorrow and anguish of

heart it occasions when a man forsakes the Lord his God, and esteems any thing but him as his sovereign good. His false repose is now come to an end; his security makes way for trouble and affright; his foolish hopes are vanished; his conscience goads and condemns him. He now shudders at the danger he before derided with arrogant scorn; he feels the manifold misery he has brought on himself by his sins, and the disorder that prevails in his soul; he confesses that nothing can render him more deplorably wretched than he is; and this confession begets in him an earnest desire to be delivered and happy.

But to make this acknowledgment effective, and these desires wholesome, he must now faithfully follow the light that has dawned upon him. He must carefully cherish the good emotions that have succeeded to his insensibility, and apply himself to such considerations as may move him to adopt firm and unchangeable resolutions. The poor unhappy youth in the parable was not only sensible to his misery, but he compared his forlorn condition with the various and great advantages which he might have enjoyed in the house of his father. "How many hired servants," says he, "of my father, have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" If he had gone thoughtlessly on before, he now reflects with the greatest concern on the past, the present, and the future. How happy, thought he, how happy I formerly was, when I lived in my father's house, and under his inspection, when I was cherished by his complacency, and nurtured by his care! How tender was his affection for me! How active and unwearied his zeal for promoting my welfare! What would have been wanting to my happiness, had I but known how to prize and employ my advantages! How tranquil, how securely, how con-

tentedly could I have past my days had I but been prudent ! Dismal reflection ! How sadly are my circumstances altered ! How low am I fallen ! The pursuit of imaginary freedom has made me a slave ; my contempt for paternal authority has subjected me to the dominion of a strange and severe control ; my discontentedness with what I had has brought me to the extremest distress. And what dreadful prospects lie before me ! Soon must I perish with hunger. Death approaches me with hasty strides ; and I perceive him in his most dreadful form. Yet I still live ; all hope of deliverance is not yet extinct. I still discern a little escape before me, by which I may perhaps avoid my ruin. Have I not a father ; and is not a father endowed with indulgence and compassion ? Had I not better try all things than give myself up to despondency, or sink into comfortless despair ?

So thought the lost young man ; and so the repentant sinner thinks, who is in earnest, and anxious about his salvation. What a blessing says he to himself, have I voluntarily rejected by my sins and my follies ! Happy had it been for me if I had hearkened to the voice of God and of my conscience, if I had observed their affectionate admonitions and suggestions, if I had retained my innocence, and remained faithful to my duty ! How rational, how equitable, how reasonable are all the commands of God and how happy would the observing of them have made me ! The inestimable favor of the Supreme Being, peace of mind, contentment of spirit, the consciousness of my integrity, the esteem and love of all the good, the certain hope of everlasting happiness, would have delighted all my days ; they would have sweetened the cup of life, and have alleviated the burden of its cares ; they would have shed divine transport upon my soul. Under the protec-

tion of my heavenly Father I should have dwelt in safety ; and in the shadow of his wings have had no want or misfortune to fear. And these blessings have I sacrificed to the fallacious pleasures of sin ! I have shaken off the mild authority of my creator and benefactor, and am now under the cruel sway of the most shameful and the most corrupt desires. All the powers of my mind are debilitated ; disorder and contradiction disturb my soul ; wickedness is become as it were, a second nature to me ; and I feel myself too weak to enter the lists against it, and recover the freedom I have lost. God has hid his gracious countenance from me. I have brought upon myself his terrible displeasure, and live at a most deplorable distance from him. And what will become of me if death overtake me in this condition, if I am cited to appear in this sad condition before the judge of the living and the dead ? How can I support this look ? How can I stand before him, the Omniscient ! With what excuses can I palliate my premeditated and so often repeated violations of his law, or extenuate my ingratitude and my defection ! What a severe but righteous condemnation have I to dread ! How horrible will be my portion for eternity ! Oh that I had never sinned ! Oh that I had never forsaken my Father and my Redeemer ; never cast off the fear of God ! Who will now redeem me from this misery ! Where shall I find help and deliverance ! —But, continues the contrite sinner, is there then no precious gleam of hope, no ray of comfort, to my amazed soul ? Is no remedy at hand to rescue me from deserved condemnation, for still becoming happy ? Oh, I have read that the Lord is gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy ; that he will not despise the broken and contrite heart ; that such as return to him he will in no wise cast out that he will graciously look to him that is poor and

of a contrite spirit, and trembles at his word. I have read that he sent his son to be the savior of men ! and that all who trust in him, and follow his sacred precepts, he will again receive as his children ! Perhaps then he will have compassion on me, and give me grace for justice, if I humble myself before him, and turn to him with my whole heart. No, my misery is too great ! The danger I am in is too imminent, to allow me room to hope that any thing can snatch me from it.

Such are the agitations and fears of the returning sinner ; till, his spirit worn out with woe, his eyes dissolved in tears, and his heart all rent with compunction, he takes up the resolution which we may consider as the third stage of his conversion.

“ I will arise,” says the contrite youth, “ and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants.” I will immediately embrace the only means still left me to employ, for avoiding utter ruin, before it be too late and all repentance be in vain. I will exert the little strength I have remaining, to hasten from the abyss that lies open before me. The smallest delay may be fatal to me. To regain my lost contentment shall from this instant be my sole concern ; and nothing shall be too hard for me to undertake that can favor my design. Let the shame and confusion be as great as it may, into which the consciousness of my follies and the sight of my injured father will throw me ; let the reproaches I have to expect from him be as cutting as they will to my vanity and pride ; cost what labor and self denial it may at first to renounce my wicked habits, and to satisfy my so long neglected duties ; nothing shall prevent me from returning to him whom I have so senselessly forsaken and asking suc-

For of him who alone is disposed and able to help me. I will go and throw myself at his feet; I will prevent his reproaches by an humble and frank confession of my transgressions and failings; and, instead of thinking on evasion or excuse, will condemn myself, and cast myself entirely on his mercy. It is not an austere, an inexorable master; it is a compassionate and tender father with whom I have to do. What has not a son to hope for from such a father? Yes, his own heart will speak pity for me, he will shew mercy towards me; and this shall be my inducement to testify my gratitude to him by a willing and faithful obedience, and to render myself worthy of his favor by a total alteration of my sentiments and my conduct.

The repentant sinner takes up the same resolutions. He trusts not to a deceitful and inefficient sorrow. He is not contented with making bitter lamentations on his wretched condition, or barely wishing to become better, without putting his hand to the work. He wastes not his time in useless doubt or in dangerous hesitation. My life, says he, is passing quickly away; it may unexpectedly come to an end. Death, judgment, and eternity, are ever advancing towards me; they may seize me at unawares. Shall not I then hasten to deliver my soul? Shall I not work while it is day ere the night come when no man can work? There is but one way left to avoid the perdition. Shall I hesitate one moment about betaking myself to it? Life and death, blessing and cursing, are now before me. Still I have an opportunity of choosing between them. Who can tell whether that will continue to me if I stand longer doubting? Is it difficult for me now to subdue my sinful desires, to quit my bad habits, break with my bad companions, and reform my dissolute life; will it not every day become still harder? Will not my servitude be

growing constantly more severe, my propensity to vice more strong, my soul more corrupt, and consequently my amendment still more impracticable? Shall I not by these means be heaping sin upon sin, and punishment upon punishment, and so at length deprive myself of all hope of forgiveness? No! to day, that I hear the voice of God, while his grace is yet offered to me, to day will I follow his affectionate call, and earnestly implore that divine compassion which alone can make me happy. My resolution is taken, and nothing shall hinder me from bringing it to effect. I will arise and go to my heavenly Father, from whom I am now at so great a distance, whose favor and protection I have so madly cast off. I will bow myself before his offended majesty, acknowledge my transgressions, and intreat his compassion with a broken and contrite heart. I will solemnly renounce every sin, and devote myself to the service of God and the practice of virtue. Have I hitherto shaken off his just and gentle authority; it shall now be my greatest delight and my glory to pay him an unreserved obedience, and faithfully to fulfil the duties of a subject in his kingdom. Have I hitherto directed my life by my irregular desires and the corrupted principles of the men of the world; henceforward the law of the Most High shall be the sole and unalterable rule of my conduct. Have I hitherto provided only for my body and my earthly condition; henceforward, the care of my soul and my happiness in the future world, shall be the ultimate aim of all my endeavors. The support which God has promised to the sincere will be mighty in my weakness. He will assist me in conquering every difficulty; and I trust assuredly that I shall find his yoke to be easy, and his burden light; that I shall experience that his commandments are not grievous.

If the resolutions of the repentant sinner be thus formed ; if they be grounded on self inspection, on consideration and firm conviction ; if they be taken with seriousness and sincerity ; then will they certainly be brought to effect. The lost son suffered himself not to be turned aside from his purpose.— He immediately began to put it in execution. He arose and came to his father, and said unto him, “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” I have outrageously offended both God and thee ; I have rendered myself utterly unworthy of thy parental love. Thus did he humble himself before his father. He acknowledged his past offences, and sought no subterfuges, no extenuations of his guilt, but confessed them for what they really were. He owned that he had forfeited all pretensions to the privileges he had before enjoyed in his father’s house. He manifested a sincere remorse at his enormities, and petitioned for grace and pardon. He submitted himself anew to the discipline and authority of his father, promised fresh obedience to all his commands and returned effectively to his duty. And in this particular consists the true repentance and conversion which God requires from man. He must confess the multitude, the greatness, the enormity of his sins, and instead of thinking on his justification, must display in the most submissive humility all the circumstances that render his guilt most detestable. In the utmost dejection of soul he must cast himself down before his sovereign judge, address himself to his justice, and acknowledge that he has deserved nothing but displeasure and indignation, death and condemnation. He must confess his transgressions to the Lord, and give himself up to the shame and confusion which the sight of them produces in him. It must be a sensible affliction to him, that he has thus offended

so good; so gracious, so amiable a being; that he has affronted his creator, his father and benefactor; that he has transgressed such righteous, such wise, such reasonable laws; that he has counteracted the great end of his existence, so perverted and degraded his nature, and so far neglected the purposes for which God created him. These considerations must fill him with unfeigned and painful remorse at his sins. They must incite him to take refuge in the mercy of God, and to implore his grace and pardon. They must inspire him with a deep abhorrence of all iniquity, a mortal aversion to vice. They must strengthen him in the resolution of quitting the service of sin, and of living to righteousness; and to the execution of this purpose he must now set immediately and earnestly to work. He must effectually cease to do evil, and study to do good. He must settle his conduct on quite other principles and rules; or in the figurative language of the scriptures, become a new creature. Nothing now must be of so much consequence to him, as to combat the unruly appetites and passions that have hitherto had the dominion over him, to fulfil the duties he has hitherto neglected, and to exercise himself in all the virtues, though never so much against his corrupt propensities and his worldly advantages. This my brethren, this is the essential article of conversion, without which all previous sentiments and practices of repentance will be utterly vain. The unjust man must restore the property he obtained by unlawful means to its rightful owner; the unchaste, the adulterer, must burst the chains with which his lusts have bound him mortify his desires, and cleanse himself from every defilement of flesh and spirit; the avaricious man must alter his terrestrial disposition, must learn to regard the treasures of the earth with a generous disdain, and direct his thoughts, his wishes,

and desires to invisible things; the haughty must become humble, the rancorous gentle and forgiving, and the worldly become heavenly minded. Thus must every one abandon the perverse ways he has hitherto walked, forsake the vices and sins he has hitherto served, avoid all inducements and opportunities to them, and strive after holiness in the fear of God. That is what God, by the prophet required of his people. "Wash ye," says he, "make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Then come and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Yes, when our conversion is thus effected, when it brings forth the fruits of amendment and righteousness; then may we promise ourselves the greatest benefits from it:

We learn from the parable, that the ready return of the prodigal son was productive of the most happy effects. He found himself not disappointed in his hopes. On the contrary, the kind reception his father gave him surpassed his most sanguine expectations. No sooner did this tender parent descry his son, "while he was yet a great way off, but he was moved with compassion towards him. He ran to meet him, fell on his neck and kissed him." He forgot all his failings and transgressions. He immediately provided for all his wants. He restored him to his forfeited right of filiation, shewed him the most positive marks of his paternal clemency and love, and his heart overflowed with the liveliest emotions of satisfaction and joy. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the lord pitieth them that fear him. He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart,

and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Though he dwell in the high and holy place, yet with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. He looketh on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word. He is inclined to pity and to spare. He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." "Is not Ephraim my dear son," says God to his people, "is he not a pleasant child? Since I spake against him I remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." As soon as the sinner draws nigh unto God with a truly repentant heart; as soon as he forsakes his sinful courses, and turns himself wholly to him; so soon does God also graciously turn towards him. He forgives him his sins, he remits the evil consequences of them, he takes them again into favor, and imparts to him as his son, the free enjoyment of the goods of his house. And how manifold, how great are the benefits and blessings this happy alteration procures to the convert! His guilt is effaced, his sins are done away, his iniquities are pardoned, and will be remembered no more. His conscience is restored to peace. God vouchsafes him his complacency. Access to the throne of grace is open to him, and there he may and will find help and comfort so often as they are needful to him. The inhabitants of heaven rejoice at his conversion; they rejoice at having in him a new sharer in their bliss. Heaven is now no longer shut to him. Death and the grave have laid by their terrors for him. Futurity is no longer dreadful to him. It shews him the immarcessible crown of glory in the hand of his reconciled judge. It promises him a felicity which no mortal eye has seen, which no ear has heard, and which is above the conceptions of the human mind.

It assures him of the plentitude of joy and an eternity of blissful existence at the right hand of God. In the mean time, till his glorious hopes be fulfilled the convert lives more securely, as he lives in innocence. Peace and contentment accompany him, since he has God for his protector and friend, and is conscious of the rectitude of his heart. His moral corruption will daily decline, and every victory he gains over it gives him fresh cause to extol the grace of his Redeemer, and to feel the value of his regained freedom. His ability to goodness is ever increasing, and the practice of it grows daily more easy and pleasant. He advances from one degree of perfection to another; his habits of virtue will be continually improving; and with his virtue, his pleasures and his hopes increase. Happy situation! Inestimable advantage! Who would not take all possible pains to obtain it! Who would delay one moment to enter upon the way of repentance and conversion, which alone conducts us to the possession of this felicity! May we, my brethren, readily and in solemn earnestness resolve upon it. May we all put this resolve into immediate execution, and from this instant walk the path of virtue and piety with persevering fidelity. How blessed will then this day be to us! In what tranquil delight will the rest of our lives flow on! How sedately may we see our dissolution approaching! How confidently may we expect the glorious recompenses that are prepared for the righteous in heaven!

Every thing calls us to hearken to the voice of God, so affectionately inviting us to repentance and amendment. We yet live to hear this voice; but how long it may be allowed us, none of us can tell. Woe to us if we put off from day to day, till it be too late to devote ourselves obediently to it! Only with him, only in his service and in compliance with

his commands, are light and life and joy and felicity to be found ; remote from him, darkness and bondage, misery and death. are our only portion. Merciful father, into what perils has not sin beguiled us ! We haste to escape from them, and to seek grace and help from thee who alone canst help and save. Lo, we return to thee, unworthy to be called thy sons, but firmly resolved by a better conduct to render ourselves deserving of that glorious name. We are thine, O Lord, thine by creation, and thine by redemption. We will give ourselves up to thee as our only proprietor. Thee will we only and constantly obey. In thee will we seek our whole felicity. Oh do thou supply our weakness ; keep us by thy mighty arm from falling back into sin ; grant us to advance in goodness, give us to overcome the world, and by thy support to persevere unto the end.

Preached on a Fast day.

S E R M O N X L I .

The Blessedness of Beneficence.



O GOD, who art all benignity and love, who art always more ready to bless than to punish, and displayest thy infinite greatness by infinite bounty ; daily and hourly openest thou thy liberal hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness. Daily and hourly givest thou to us fresh proofs that thy mercy is over all thy works ; that thou lovest with parental tenderness ; that as a father thou providest for us and our real welfare. Lord, with admiration and humility we adore the riches of thy grace and love ; we rejoice in the multitude and the exceeding value of the unmerited gifts of thy bounty ; we are ready to render thee the thanks for them which thou requirest of us. Thou requirest, as a proof of our acknowledgement, that we should be kind, compassionate, charitable and bountiful like thee, that we should be followers of thee as dear children ; that we should share as it were, with thee the blessedness of beneficence. To obey thee O God, is our glory and our happiness. Thy commands are life and peace to all that keep them. Ah, let us ever confess it, and ever willingly be faithful to that confession. Do thou eradicate all seeds of avarice, of selfishness, of obduracy and cruelty from our hearts ; and fill them with the gentle, compassionate, affectionate, officious and disinterested dispositions which alone

can render us worthy to be called thy children and disciples of thy son. Bless, in this view, the lessons we are now to receive from thy word, and let the efficacy of them be manifest in abundant fruits of christian beneficence.— Thou father of an infinite majesty, let these our supplications find acceptance with thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy honorable, true and only son, our mediator and redeemer, in obedience to whose express command we address thee thus : Our father, &c.



ACTS xx. 35.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

THERE are times and circumstances, when we your ministers, ascend this place with heavy hearts, as having but little hope of the desired success in delivering to you the word of truth, and of reaping much fruit from our labor. This happens whenever our office, and a zeal for your real welfare, require us to lay before you your sins and failings, and among them such particularly as are the most rife among us, which are the least condemned by the world, and in behalf whereof self love, pride, custom, and fashion, have invented the most excuses, and the most plausible palliations. It happens whenever we have to deliver to you such doctrines and precepts as are manifestly at variance with the prejudices of the times in which we live, with the prevailing manner of thinking and acting ; and of such doctrines and precepts christianity, which derives its origin from heaven, and is ordained to

conduct us thither, comprises not a few. It happens especially whenever we labor to inspire you with the humble, the gentle, the compassionate, the heavenly dispositions, which are the distinctive characteristics of the disciples of Jesus, and which yet are so rarely found among those who call themselves his disciples. In these and the like cases, we are tempted at times to despondency, as having but little hope of reaching the aim of our exertions. And whence does this proceed? Our own sad experience but too strikingly informs us, how much the corrupted heart, and the unruly passions of men, oppose these doctrines and precepts; and how quickly the good impressions, they may occasionally make upon us in the house of the Lord, are obliterated in the tumult of the world.

But there are likewise other times, my beloved, when with bold and cheerful spirits we appear before you, because animated with the pleasing expectation, that we shall effect our good designs, if not with all, yet certainly with many. In such a frame of mind, in such delightful hopes, I meet you in this sacred place to day. I am to be the advocate, the intercessor, with you, for the poor, the friendless, and the wretched: I shall apply to you in their name; in their name did I say, I shall apply to you in the name of Jesus Christ, who owns these needy for his brethren, and in the most forcible manner recommends them to you, in the name of that exalted and beneficent Lord, our unalterable Savior, I shall intercede with you in their behalf. I shall in particular recommend to you the encouragement of a very necessary and useful institution; I mean the provision now set on foot for the correction of the dissolute, and the maintenance of the poor in this place; certainly a generous and agreeable employment! Happy shall I be, happy will it be for you, if I ex-

ecute it with that success I promise myself from your christian tenderness ! Nay, I know that there are many compassionate hearts among you, to whom discipline and order, religion and virtue, and the happiness of mankind that is founded upon them, are no indifferent things. I have on similar occasions addressed you with similar petitions ; and to the honor of your christian profession, you have not been regardless of them. Why then may I not hope, under the blessing of the Almighty, to reach my design to day ? In the mean time, though I presume upon these beneficent and generous dispositions in the generality of you, it will not be useless to employ the remainder of the time usually allotted to these discourses in endeavoring to confirm them in our hearts, and to awaken them in those with whom they are still dormant. And how can we better do this, than by calling to mind the blessedness of beneficence ? To this end the consideration of the beautiful saying of our Savior in the text may greatly conduce ; “ It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We will first state to you the justness of the assertion, and then reply to some objections that may be brought against it.

It is more blessed to give than to receive, is now become, as it were, proverbial among christians ; so little is the truth of it in general called in question. Is it not then, may some one probably think, is it not unnecessary to demonstrate a proposition which every one holds for proved and undeniable ? No, my friend, that is by no means the case with such general propositions and rules of conduct. In order that they should have a due influence on our behavior, and on that every thing depends, it is not enough that the truth of them is not doubted, the reasons should be often and forcibly stated why they are held to be true ; we should examine the partic-

ular ideas they comprehend, or the observations and experiences whereon they rest, we should bring home the application of them to ourselves ; we should view them in a various and perspicuous light if we would be convinced, affected, animated by them. And this is the purport of my following considerations.

It is more blessed to give than to receive ; since the former, in the first place, implies a happier condition than the latter. To the former belongs a certain degree of power, of affluence, of independence ; the latter has weakness, want, penury, dependence for its foundation. I will not say, that a man may not be happy in all stations. No, fear God ; keep his commandments ; maintain a good conscience ; secure yourself of the grace and loving kindness of the Almighty ; follow temperance and keep content ; think and live like persons who have here no abiding city, and whose country is heaven : So will you never be deficient in true felicity, be you otherwise high or low, rich or poor, in abundance or in want. But certain as this is, so certain is it likewise, that he is still the happier who, with all these essential advantages, has also the means of doing good to others in a larger or smaller proportion. In what does the supreme felicity of God consist ? Undoubtedly in this, that his power of doing good is infinite, and that he continually exerts it in the best and most perfect manner. Undoubtedly in this, that from his exalted throne, full streams of benefits and blessings incessantly flow on every part of his immense domain, devolving light and life, joy, energy and bliss on all the inhabitants of it.— Wherein consists the happiness of the righteous in the future world ? An enlarged capacity of doing good and of communicating with others in the most useful manner, will undoubtedly compose a considerable

portion of it. Here it not unfrequently happens, that men of the most humane, the most benevolent, the most patriotic sentiments, are destitute of almost all the means for acting in conformity to them ; and if they had less veneration for the dispensations of divine providence, would probably be often tempted to complain of the narrow limits that are prescribed them in these particulars. Yonder, in that better world, all these limitations will not indeed be removed ; they, however, will be considerably enlarged. There will these generous spirits unimpededly pursue their beneficent inclinations, and be able to apply in a far worthier manner all their faculties to the benefit of their less perfect fellow creatures. As having been faithful in the administration of the little that was entrusted to them, they will be appointed to the management of much. They will reign with Christ, and share in his glory, his power of doing good. The more therefore a man can dispense here on earth about him in any respect to the benefit of his brethren ; the more serviceable he can be to them ; the less need he has to set bounds to his generosity ; the greater means he has of encreasing the wordly or the spiritual, the temporal or the eternal welfare of his neighbor, and of diffusing comfort, satisfaction and joy around him : So much the nearer does he bring his condition to that of the blessed in heaven ; so much more resplendent in him is the image of God and Christ ; nay, so much the greater part has he even in the felicity of the first and most perfect of beings.

It is more blessed to give than to receive ; the former being, secondly, combined with a various, with a truly godlike pleasure, whereas the latter is commonly connected with unpleasant and painful sensations. How extremely grating is it not often, even to the humblest of those who suffer penury and in-

digence, how distressing is it not to them to make known their penury and their indigence, to ask for succor and relief, and thus to expose themselves to the risk of harsh censures, of cutting reproaches, of bitter scoffs, and at length to a sharp refusal of all pity and assistance ! What wretchedness, what misery, therefore, do they not often prefer to such dreadful situations as these, which oppress their souls, and fill them with grief and dismay ! Never forget this, ye whom God has blessed with earthly goods, and thereby constituted you, as it were, the guardians and fathers of the poor and needy. Render not the load that already oppresses them still heavier by your unfriendly and cruel behavior.— They are already enough to be pitied, that they are obliged to be dependant on you, who are men as well as they. Oh let them not feel this dependence in a manner injurious to human nature, and offensive to their creator ! Beware that at the very time when you are granting the succors they implore, you degrade and insult them ; and attach not your benefactions to such conditions as deprive them of all their value. Though they be benefactions in regard to those to whom you shew them ; they are not so in regard to God, who has imposed them as a duty upon you. Though your necessitous brethren cannot demand them of you as their due, yet God, from whom you have received whatever you possess, has a right to demand them of you, and he actually does demand them. But the mere act alone cannot satisfy him, the Omniscient, only the manner in which you perform it can procure you his approbation. Give therefore freely ; give liberally ; give in pure and good intentions ; give in a generous and engaging manner ; give as one friend gives to another, as a father gives to his children : Then, and not till then, will you taste the pleasure which is

connected with such bounty. And how diversified, how great, how sublime, is not that pleasure ! You know it, christians, you who exercise yourselves in beneficence with genuine christian sentiments ; you know what your hearts enjoy, what pure and heavenly transports pervade them, when you weep with them that weep, and are so happy as to dry up the tears of the mourner ; when you can take the forsaken to your care, and can administer help to the destitute ; when you have an opportunity to rescue the innocent, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to alleviate the distresses of the poor, to mitigate the pains of the sick and to assuage the anguish of the afflicted soul ; when you can compensate as much as in you lies, the widow for the loss of her spouse, and the orphan for the privation of his parents ; when you convey some rays of light, of comfort, of hope, of satisfaction, into the abodes where darkness, dismay and wretchedness, prevailed. You recollect the feelings of your heart, what streams of pure and sacred transports filled it, when you have been able to contribute somewhat to the advancement of discipline and order, of the glory of God and of religion, to the instruction, to the improvement, to the correction, to the spiritual and everlasting happiness of your brethren ; and then formed an idea of the blessed consequences these labors of love might have, and, under the blessing of the Most High, infallibly will have, in all the generations to come. Oh then it was you truly felt the exquisite worth of the earthly goods wherewith God has blessed you ; then you thanked him with tears of joy for the honor and happiness of being permitted, as it were, to occupy his place among mankind, and in his stead to revive them with what his providence has been pleased to grant you ; then your heart expanded, and could scarcely con-

tain the heavenly delight that rushed into it. Where, where is there an earthly, sensual pleasure to be found, that can be brought into comparison with this!

It is, lastly, more blessed to give than to receive; it having, when properly performed, the most glorious retributions to expect both in the present and in the future world. Already the pleasure that is connected with it, and which I have now rather pointed at than described, since it admits of no description; this pleasure alone, to a sensible and generous heart, is reward enough. But the merciful God, to whom beneficence is so highly grateful has decreed it still greater advantages and blessings. Hear how the Psalmist describes them: "Unto the upright," says he, peculiarly to the humane and bountiful "there ariseth light in the darkness! He is merciful, loving and righteous: The Almighty comforts him in his afflictions, and delivers him out of them all." "Happy the man who pitieth and lendeth, and guideth his words with discretion; for he shall never be moved: The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid at any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast and trusteth in the Lord. His heart is stablished, and will not shrink. He hath dispersed abroad and given to the poor: His righteousness remaineth for ever;" the blessing of his beneficence abides ever upon him; "his welfare shall be exalted with honor." And all this, my friends, is but little in comparison with the glorious rewards which the bountiful man may promise himself in the future world. Represent to yourselves that awful day, the day of judgment and of retribution which shall decide our lot for ever; and admire the glory and felicity that will then be the portion of christians who have here employed themselves in acts of beneficence.

The judge of the world, the son of God, will say to them, before the whole assembly of angels and of mankind: "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came to me.— Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Oh transporting scene! Oh inexpressible reward! Let us then do good, my brethren, and never be weary, that we may reap, in due time, this glory and this felicity. Let us not reckon that for lost which we give to the poor and needy, but for gain; since certainly it is far more blessed in all respects to give than to receive.

Unhappy men, by whom this is neither felt nor understood, who start objections against the performance of that duty which of all others is the most agreeable and blessed! However, we will hear your objections; we will try them; probably we may be so fortunate as to convince you of the weakness and futility of them.

It is true, you probably imagine it is more blessed to give than to receive. But, if we guide ourselves by this maxim, if we follow our propensity to beneficence, we shall injure ourselves and our families; instead of encreasing our property, we shall diminish it. Yes my friends, so you would, if the preservation and the augmentation of your substance depended solely on yourselves; solely on your diligence on your dexterity, on your frugality, your objection would be well founded. But if, as both reason and scripture assure us, most, if in in some sort all depends

on the blessing of the Almighty ; if without it the most sedulous application, the utmost dexterity, the strictest frugality, are utterly fruitless ; and if this blessing be annexed to beneficence ; then this objection loses all its force. And, for the confutation of it, may I not venture to appeal to your own observation and experience ? Do you know any person, who, merely by beneficence duly allied with prudence, has fallen into indigence or poverty ? May you not, on the contrary, be acquainted with several, who have constantly sought their satisfaction in beneficence, and yet, by the blessing of heaven, have not only preserved, but considerably augmented, their property ? No, “ he that giveth to the poor,” says the wise man, “ shall not lack.” “ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.” Suppose, however, that it should not seem good to the Almighty to reward your beneficence with worldly profusion ; suppose, that you leave behind you no great riches for your children ; is it then necessary for their happiness that they should inherit large possessions from you ? Are they always truly happy, who enjoy great wealth ? Does not experience rather teach you the contrary ? How dangerous to children at all times, how ruinous often, are the treasures they inherit from their parents ! Are there not far more honest ingenious, useful, virtuous and prosperous men, among those who are indebted to their fathers and mothers for little more than a good education and a virtuous example, than among those who have received from them much property, or even great affluence ? Is not this property, is not this affluence, most commonly a snare to them ? Do they not usually hinder them from employing their natural capacities and talents, and from becoming as useful and deserving members of society as they might have been ?

O ye whom God has blessed with children, and who so tenderly love your offspring as to be ever afraid they should miss of any thing, bequeath them the invaluable blessing that God has annexed to beneficence ; leave them the love and the pious wishes of the wretched whom you have revived, of the infirm whom you have supported, of the innocent whom you have delivered, of the poor whom you have relieved, of the forlorn whom you have adopted, of the orphans who, by your assistance, have been rendered useful members of the community, of the low among the people, whom you, by instruction, by prudent counsel, by effective succors, have lifted from the dust ; leave them the example of the fear of God, of industry, of contentedness, of discretion, of modesty, of moderation : So may you be far more certain of their future prosperity ; so may you hereafter part with them with a far more tranquil mind, than if, with the want of these advantages, you left them the greatest treasures. These treasures may, as the wise man says, take to themselves the wings of an eagle, and quickly forsake them ; nay on the slippery path of life they may easily overset them and plunge them into ruin. But that blessing of the Lord endures for ever ; those pious wishes open to them the treasures of heaven ; those poor and mean, those wretched and forlorn, who have so much to thank you for, who stand indebted to you for their preservation, or their welfare, will afford them numberless agreeable and useful services ; those examples of virtue and piety will secure them from innumerable deviations, and make them wise to everlasting felicity.

Neither let it be said : It is true, it is more blessed to give than to receive, but the times are no longer of such a complexion, as to allow us to distribute relief

with a liberal hand among the poor and neccsitous. One is obliged to retrench in all manner of ways ; we are forced to deny ourselves a great many conveniencies and pleasures, which we might otherwise have enjoyed without hesitation ; and therefore it is perfectly natural for a man to confine his liberality to narrower bounds. But, my dear friend, if you are obliged to retrench, and actually do limit yourself in all manner of ways and in all respects ; if you do and are obliged to do this in regard to your table, to your furniture, your clothes and your pleasures : Then we neither will nor can impute it to you as a sin, if the same thing happen, in due proportion, in regard to your alms and your acts of charity. But, if you do this barely, or principally, in this and not in the other respects ; if you are as profuse for yourself and your family in all, or in the generality of particulars, as your better days allowed you to be, and are only become more frugal and sparing in regard to the poor and needy : Then, my beloved, you undoubtedly commit a crime that no circumstances of time are able to excuse. You seize on the substance of the poor, on that portion of what you have in trust, to which your less prosperous brethren have, both from nature and religion, the most righteous claim, and of which you cannot, without cruelty, deprive them. You can no longer be called true and faithful stewards of the goods committed to your charge, since you employ them solely to your own advantage, and not to the benefit of those, whom he to whom they absolutely belong, has expressly recommended to your providence and help.

The christian, who rightfully bears that title, the christian in whose soul the genuine love of his neighbor abides and prevails, in similar cases acts quite otherwise. If the circumstances of the times require him to limit his expences : He complies, he does it

without reluctance ; because he has learnt to be content with his lot, and to be satisfied under all events : he begins not, however, with the poor and needy ; he begins with himself. He rather dispenses with many superfluous delicacies, many unnecessary accommodations, many innocent, but merely sensual and fugacious pleasures, than while he is in the enjoyment of plenty, the wretched should be left, who fly to him as a shelter from the storm and a refuge from distress, should be left to their misery ; and he himself be deprived of the godlike pleasure of relieving them. No nothing but necessity, nothing but actual indigence, can force him to do so much violence to his humane and benevolent affections, and to neglect that which has hitherto been his purest, his supreme delight.

Lastly, let it not be said : True, it is more blessed to give than to receive ; but who knows, whether those to whom we give will make the best, that they will make a proper use of it ? Who knows whether the noble institutions we are called upon to support are effectually of that utility we are promised will arise from them ? Who knows whether in times to come they may not be perverted to quite other designs ? Oh, my friends, in what a lamentable plight should we be, if God, whom we are bound to imitate his as children, were to deal with us according to these lessons of parsimony ! Do we always employ the bounties of his munificent hand to the ends for which they are bestowed ? Do we manage them so carefully, so faithfully, so conscientiously, as we might and ought to do ? Would not numbers, would not the majority, nay, would not all of us be divested of the capacities, the faculties, the goods of fortune, the privileges we possess, if God should resolve to strip us of all that we do not constantly employ to the best, or even that we at times

employ to evil purpose ? And yet this kind and clement God leaves us these capacities, these faculties, these goods of fortune, these privileges ; and yet he gives us from day to day fresh tokens of his unwearied beneficence. And should we be so much more austere with our fellow creatures, with our brethren, than God is towards us, his creatures and subjects ? Shall we, merely for fear lest they should misemploy our bounty, withhold our hand from doing them good ? Shall we leave numbers languishing in misery without their fault, uncomforted and unrelieved, because there are criminals who deserve no comfort and no relief ? Shall we punish the innocent, the upright, at once with the wicked, because we cannot at all times distinguish the one from the other ? Shall we refuse to support noble establishments and public spirited institutions, to the utmost of our ability because we have no complete assurance that the views to which they are destined will be attained, or that these establishments will in all future times be conducted on the most excellent rules ? No, my friends, this as christians you will not, you cannot do. Make use of a prudent circumspection in the distribution of your bounty ; this is your duty. Be obdurate, be inexorable towards those who you know for certain will misemploy it ; this the safety and welfare of human society demand. But be not rash in the judgments you form concerning the deserts, the sentiments and views of the necessitous. Be not an austere, but a compassionate and indulgent censor of your brother's conduct ; judge him so as you may reasonably desire that God should judge you. As it is far better that ten guilty should be absolved, than that one innocent person should be condemned ; so it is likewise far better that you should do good to ten undeserving persons, than for the sake of avoiding this possibility, that you should

let one worthy sufferer that applies to you for relief, be sent away without it. Require not in fine, that human institutions and establishments, should attain to a perfection which perhaps may exceed our human faculties ; and refuse not to promote and encourage things which are good or generally useful, because they might perhaps be better and more generally useful. Consider too, that God, whose good pleasure must be always of the utmost moment to us, looks more to the pious and christian intention in which we distribute our benefactions, than to the effects they actually produce ; and that, in his retributions, he guides himself more by them than he does by these. Our good works in numberless instances, resemble the seed that lies long concealed in the ground, and which at length shoots upward, and brings forth fruit, though even we may probably have forgot that ever we sowed it. Let us but do our duty ; let us do it with cheerfulness and without being weary, and leave the consequences of it to that God who knows and governs all things, and under whose administration no good deed can be done in vain.

Let us then at present make no account of these futile objections that arise from avarice or unseasonable parsimony, but fulfil the sweet and blessed duty of beneficence, according to our utmost abilities, now when I have to recommend to you a contribution towards the erection of work houses and houses of correction—now, when the foundation of an establishment is to be laid, which many of you, with the greatest reason, have so often wished for, and the utility whereof may extend to all future times, becoming greater and more various from day to day. And what arguments are wanting, on this occasion, to be liberal, and to lead us to expect from our liberality the most blessed effects ? The harder the times

and the dearer provisions may be ; the more certain it is that numbers of the poor look out for work in vain, and the more easily may they be tempted to unlawful attempts, and to predatory attacks on the public safety : The more undeniable, in short, it is, that wicked or unhappy men, by painful and ignominious punishments, usually become still more wicked and unhappy, and, on the other hand, by discipline and labor, often better ; so much the more needful are institutions like the present, and so much the less should we shrink from contributing of what we possess to the foundation and endowment of them.

The poor, who from no fault of their own are poor, and would willingly work, had they the means and opportunity, most certainly compose a class of human society that is entitled to all possible consideration and regard : But also those who by their own inadvertencies, or from the want of a good education are fallen into poverty, or even by poverty have been betrayed into acts of injustice and theft, are not totally unworthy of our care and compassion. They may probably be still capable of amendment ; they may probably still be made useful members of society ; they may at least be checked in their disorderly course of life, and be preserved from yet greater and more flagrant enormities. They have like us immortal souls that are capable of everlasting happiness ; and these souls may be brought to reflection by discipline and labor, may be penetrated with remorse and repentance at the sight of their sins and vices, awakened to better and more christian sentiments, and thus be rescued from that horrible perdition which awaits the hardened and impenitent sinner. And shall we not cheerfully do all that in us lies to the promotion of this generous design ? Wherein can we better employ the goods that God

has given us, than in providing for and in reforming so many poor and wretched objects who are still our brethren, both as men and as christians? Indeed, what we are now able to do cannot at once, and probably can never wholly, supply the various wants of this too numerous class of mankind. Indeed, the fruits of the good institutions we are now to promote cannot be so remarkably abundant in the first years of their foundation. But do not the best human regulations and attempts only by degrees attain to their perfection? Must we not first sow before we can reap? May not that, which at its commencement can only be serviceable to a few, in the future be useful and a blessing to thousands? Would not almost every charitable institution and generally useful establishment, have soon fallen to the ground if it had not been supported from other motives than the complete assurance of the best effects?

Oh let us then look not only at the present, but also at the future; and place our perfect confidence in the providence of God, that whatever is good he will certainly prosper. Let us frequently indulge in such animating reflections as these: I am now committing good seed to the earth, I now contribute, with an honest heart and in sincere intentions, what I can to the maintenance of discipline and order; that idleness, and the innumerable miseries and crimes that grow out of it, may be restrained; that the innocent may be rescued; that the transgressor may be chastened and reformed; that the poor who is in want of bread, or is obliged to acquire it by begging, may find a proper support. What numbers may hereafter bless the kind institutions I am now encouraging, that his dreadful pains and torture did not quite overwhelm him,* and that his innocence

* The abolition of the torture in 1771 gave the first occasion to the erection of these houses of correction and work houses.

was brought forth as clear as the day. What numbers will owe it to these institutions, that they were deterred from the ways of sin and ruin, or recovered from them ; that they were snatched from the extreme of misery and from despair ; that they found food for their body, and help and deliverance for their soul. What prospects ! Who can remain unmoved and cold at the bare idea of the manifold good that may and will arise from these institutions ? What generous, what christian heart will not make it his duty and his joy to contribute what he is able to the realizing of these glorious hopes ? This is what you will do ; I expect it from your christian and beneficent dispositions : And if ye do it heartily and in sincere intentions, I can confidently promise you in the name of God, who through me is inciting you to beneficence, that you will be acceptable to him, and that he will give you his blessing.

SERMON XLII.

The Value of Human Happiness itself.



O GOD, the eternal, inexhaustible source of all life and happiness, on us thy children, life and happiness of various kinds and in rich abundance incessantly flow down from thee ; and in which we here rejoice before thee , for this we thank thee with united hearts. No, thou hast not doomed any of thy creatures, any of mankind to misery ; thou hast devoted and called them all to happiness ; and even the misery that with or without our fault befalls us, must be and is the means and way to that desired end. This we are taught by the various dispositions and capacities of our nature ; this we learn from the several arrangements that thou hast made in the material and in the intellectual world ; of this we are certified by what thy son Jesus has communicated to us and done for us. Innumerable sources of pleasure and delight are daily opened around us, whence we may all draw, and which we never can exhaust. We daily receive from thy liberal hand innumerable benefits and blessings, demanding of us gratitude and joy. And if sometimes those sources of delight are troubled by our tears, and these benefits lose a part of their value to us by sufferings ; yet the agreeable and the good with which thou dost bless and gladden us, retains a great preponderance over the disagreeable and evil that thou findest good to dispense among us. Yes, O God, thou art love it-

self ! Thy will and operations tend solely to happiness ; and thou dost will and effect it even when we least think so. Thanks and praise and adoration ever be to thee, the All-gracious, the Father of mankind ! Happiness and salvation to us and all thy creatures in heaven and on earth ! Oh that we were ever more attentive to thy bounties, ever more sociable in the enjoyment of them, ever more satisfied with thy dispensations and ordinances, ever more faithful and blithe in the use of thy benefits. May even now our reflections on these important subjects shed a clear light upon our minds and much serenity and joy in our hearts ! Bless them to these ends O gracious God, and hearken to our prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we farther address thee, saying : Our father, &c.



PSALM civ. 24.

The earth is full of thy riches.

IT is a matter of great consequence to know how to form a right estimate of human happiness, or of the stock of delight and pleasure, of the sum of agreeable sensations subsisting among mankind. He that makes the amount of it too great, he that looks on the earth as a paradise, and the present state of man as a state of continued enjoyment, must be so often and so grievously deceived in his expectations as to become dispirited and impatient. On the other hand, he who overlooks, if not the whole, yet at least the greatest part of the various kinds of ben-

effit that are in the world and amongst mankind, or does not ascribe to them the value they really deserve ; he that imagines he perceives, on all sides, nought but imperfection, wretchedness and want, near and at a distance around him ; who sees, as it were, tears gushing from every human eye, and sighs arising from every human breast ; how can he revere the creator of himself and all mankind as the all bountiful parent of the world ! How can he rejoice in his existence and the existence of his fellow creatures ! How enjoy the advantages and benefits, the satisfactions and comforts of life, with a grateful and a cheerful heart ! And how prejudicial must not this be to virtue and piety, to his inward perfection ! How negligently at times will he fulfil his duties ! How easily will he grow languid and weary in acts of justice and beneficence ! We should be on our guard against this gloomy and pernicious way of thinking, my pious hearers, if we would enjoy our lives, and faithfully fulfil the duties of them. Let us not charge God, the best the most beneficent being, the father of mankind, with being deficient in kindness. Let us not shut our eyes and our hearts to the beautiful and good that is diffused throughout the world and distributed among mankind, nor misapply our discernments to the vilification of it. Let us appreciate human happiness for what it actually is, and in the sentiment of its copiousness and magnitude exclaim with the psalmist in our text, "The earth is full of thy riches." Indeed it is difficult, it is even impossible, exactly to weigh the satisfaction and the disgust, the pleasure and the pain, the happiness and the misery, which subsist among mankind against each other, so as to obtain the just amount of either. This can only be done by him who holds in his hand the balance that contains them both, who proportions them among his creatures accord-

ing to his wise and good pleasure, who comprehends them both in his almighty mind, and perceives all their possible and actual effects in every event. We may, however, form a juster estimate of human happiness than is usually done. We may survey it on many sides but little noticed, and direct our attention to many collateral circumstances and things which we probably have hitherto overlooked. And this is the design of my present discourse. I would offer you a few suggestions on the proper evaluation of human happiness. To this end I shall do two things first, lay before you some considerations on the nature and magnitude of human happiness in general; and then deliver you a few rules for rightly appreciating it in particular occurrences.

There is, absolutely, happiness among mankind. Of this our own experience, of this what we see and observe in regard to others, will not permit us to harbor a doubt. For, how can we refuse to say, we and other men have various agreeable conceptions and sensations; we see, hear, feel, think and perform many things with satisfaction and delight; we and others frequently enjoy pleasure and mirth; we and others are often contented with our condition, and we are comfortable in the consciousness and contemplation of it? And is not all this, when taken together, happiness?

Indeed human happiness is not unalloyed; it is not perfectly pure. Not one of us all possesses purely agreeable conceptions and sensations; no one enjoys pure pleasures and delights; no one is perfectly and at all times satisfied with whatever he is and does, and with every thing that befalls him; no one experiences purely desirable occurrences. To every person is distributed his measure of dislike, of displeasure and pain from adverse events. Every one must taste of the cup of sorrow as well as of the goblet of

joy. Even our most agreeable representations and feelings are adulterated with a greater or less commixture of ingredients that are distasteful and bitter. But this is the necessary and unavoidable consequence of our nature, and the present constitution of things; and so must it be, unless it were proper for man to be dazzled by happiness and intoxicated with joy.

As human happiness is not unalloyed, so neither is it uninterrupted. It does not fill up each day, each hour, each moment of our earthly existence. As light and darkness alternately succeed each other in the natural world, so likewise in the moral, but much seldomer, bad days succeed to good, and misery to happiness. Pleasure and pain, joys and sorrows, tread very closely on each other; often suddenly interchange, and often arise from each other. Excessive pleasure becomes pain, immoderate joy turns into sorrow; superabundant happiness is frequently overwhelming. Our connexions with outward things, their relation to us, and their influences upon us, are not always the same may tomorrow be quite different from what they yesterday were; and these very things are all fluctuating, transitory, and of short duration. So far as our happiness is built on outward things, so far must it be frequently interrupted. And even in ourselves, in our train of thought and dispositions, in our own mutability, are causes already sufficient to prevent its consisting in a stated, firm and linked series of purely agreeable representations and feelings.

Human happiness is, thirdly, not equally great to all men, and cannot be so. All cannot inhabit the same zone, and enjoy the same goods and the same amenities; all cannot have the same education, be invested with the same station, carry on the same business, or attain to the same degree of politeness and intelligence. All have not the same disposition

and capacity for pursuing, for finding and for enjoying a certain greater proportion, or certain nobler kinds of happiness ; as all have not the same attentive and regulated understanding, the same formed and refined taste, the same sentimental and participating heart. All, in fine, do not conduct themselves in the same manner ; and but too many think and act in such a way as if they were determined by no means to be happy, but ever to become more wretched. As great, therefore as the difference is between all these circumstances and things, so great must likewise be the difference of the portions of happiness among mankind.

But even the same person is not always equally sensible to the happiness allotted him, nor always alike satisfied with it. Time and enjoyment but too often weaken the sentiment of the goods we possess. Little uneasinesses and vexations not unfrequently deprive all the advantages and comforts we have in our power of their value. And, then, neither our body nor our mind is constantly attuned to the same lively and vigorous sensations, as to enable us to enjoy, with consciousness to enjoy, the beautiful and the good within us and without us, at all times alike. In this respect all depends either on the degree of our natural sensibility, or on the particular humor and temper of mind in which we are at the time.

But though human happiness be neither unmingled, nor uninterrupted, nor equally great, for every man, nor even for its possessor equally sensible and satisfying at all times ; yet it is still real ; it is manifold ; it is great, abundantly great ; it is capable of a constantly progressive augmentation. Four particulars that will place its nature and value in a clear point of view.

It is real. Human happiness is neither fancy, nor imposture nor self deceit. It is founded on repre-

sentations and feelings, of which we are as positively and intimately conscious as we are of our existence and our life ; and when these representations and feelings are agreeable, when they occasion us satisfaction and pleasure, then no man will make it a matter of dispute, that it is well with us, that we are more or less happy. And where is he that has not had, that has not frequently had such representations and feelings, and has not felt himself happy in the consciousness of them ? Human happiness will also stand the test of reflection and consideration. It is not the work of deception, not an agreeable dream, that on our awaking vanishes away. It does not shun serenity and silence, willingly takes reason for its companion, and always remains what it previously was. Nay, only under these circumstances does it appear to the thinking and sentimental man in its full capacity and its real magnitude. Recount, O man, recount, in some calm and tranquil hour of life, all the benefits thou possessest, and which endow thy mind, thy person, and thy outward station ; all the advantages in temporals and spirituals thou hast, and mayst acquire ; all the pleasures and delights thou enjoyest, and art capable of enjoying ; all the good that is in thee, and is effected by thy means ; all the prospects into a better futurity that lie open before thee : Reckon all these together, examine them as severely, as impartially, as thou wilt ; ask thyself whether these benefits are not real benefits, these advantages not real advantages, these pleasures and delights not real pleasures and delights, this good not actually good, these prospects not desirable and consoling ; and if thou canst not deny it, then it remains clear, that the happiness flowing from them is real happiness.

No less diversified is human happiness than it is real. It is as diversified as the necessities, the capa-

cities, the inclinations, the behavior, the temper, the circumstances, of mankind require. A thousand kinds of benefit and advantage are common to us all ; a thousand sources of satisfaction and pleasure stand open to us all. Are we not all enlightened by the same sun ? Are we not all cheered by its light and its heat ? Are not the beauties of nature displayed before us all in their splendor and glory ? Are we not all transported with the view of them, when we regard and observe them ? Does not every thing that lives and moves inspire us with joy, when we open our ears and our hearts to its voice. Does not every thing elevate our mind to the creator and father of the world, and invite us to praise him as the allbountiful God ? Do we not all find the most agreeable most delicious taste in the food and the drinks which his providence has granted us for our recreation and refreshment ? Are we not susceptible of numberless agreeable sensual impressions and feelings ? Are not thousands and thousands of the creatures of the universe of service to us all ? Are not earth, water, air, fire, are not all the powers of nature devoted to our welfare, and employed in the advancement of it ? Are we not all a thousand times gladdened by the shining sky, the mild refreshing breeze, the field clothed with food and smiling with plenty, the tree fragrant with blossoms or laden with fruits, the shady forest, the limpid stream the rising joy of every living thing ? And how variegated is the pleasure that we all enjoy ! Do we not all enjoy the pleasure of life, and of free and voluntary motion ; the pleasure of thought and consideration, of investigation and discovery ; the pleasure of labor and of rest ; of prudent designs, and of their successful execution ; the pleasure of the retired enjoyment of ourselves and of social converse with others ; the pleasure of received or afforded

assistance ; the pleasure of cautiously avoided or of heroically conquered danger ; the pleasure of love and of friendship ; the pleasure of rational piety and devotion ? What sources of happiness ! How different, and yet how rich and common ! From whom are they totally debarred ? What man has not used them ? Who may not daily draw from these fountains of pleasure ? And how various must not the happiness be that is daily drawn from them ! Does not each age, each sex, each station, each course of life, each charge, each connexion ; does not every season of the year, every climate, every country, every greater or smaller society, derive from them its peculiar advantages, pleasures and joys, its own causes of agreeable sensations, of happiness ? And who, amid this diversity of sources and means of pleasure and good, need go empty away ? Who, but by his own fault can be wholly unhappy ? No ; Lord, the earth is full of thy riches !

If human happiness be various, so likewise is it great, abundantly great. Great in regard of the multitude of agreeable sensations ; great in regard of the vivacity and strength, as well as of the continuance of them. Who can enumerate the agreeable conceptions and sensations, which only one man has in one year, which only one man has in the whole course of his life ? Who is able to reckon up the multitude of agreeable ideas and sensations which at once exist in all living men in every hour, in every moment. To what a sum of happiness must not the whole result amount ! And how often do not these sensations proceed to transport ! How often do they not burst forth in tears of joy, in hearty mirth, in shouts of jubilation ! And how often do not whole years, and still longer periods of life, glide away in calm satisfaction to a man, wherein he constantly feels pleased with his existence, and finds no cause of

dissatisfaction or complaint ! Indeed, at the same time a thousand sorts of unpleasant ideas and feelings take place among mankind ; indeed, at the same time the tears of pain and sorrow are flowing from a thousand and a thousand eyes ; but if this seem to diminish the bulk of human happiness, yet does it not remove it ; it still remains not only great but preponderatively great. Where is the man, who, in the aggregate, has had more disagreeable than agreeable ideas and feelings, that has experienced more pain than pleasure ? And if there be such persons, how small is their number in comparison with the number of those that have had the contrary to rejoice in ! No, the preponderance of happiness above that of misery is great, and so sure as that there is more life than death, more health than sickness, more superfluity and satiety than hunger and want, more free and unimpeded exertion of mental and bodily powers than total inaction or painful restriction of them, more love than hatred, more hope than fear, more desire for prolongation of life than for its abbreviation amongst mankind ! No, for one mournful hour we pass in sighs, we may serenely and cheerfully live an hundred ; for one tear extorted by pain, we may shed a thousand tears of generous sensibility ; or of sedate and pious joy ; for one misfortune that happens to us, a thousand of known and unknown benefits fall to our lot.

Lastly, human happiness is capable of an ever progressive increase. And this uncommonly enhances its worth ; this puts all complaint of short sorrows and transient misery to silence. Human happiness is not confined to the narrow limits of this life ; it is immortal, like the man that enjoys it. The happiness we here enjoy, enjoy as rational and good beings, is the path to still purer and higher happiness in a better world ; and the enjoyment of that capaci-

tates us for the enjoyment of this purer and superior happiness. Let therefore human happiness be never so much alloyed at present, never so much interrupted, never so much circumscribed, what an importance, what a sweetness must it not receive from the prospect of its never ceasing, but always continuing, always improving, always becoming greater and more perfect, and at length totally vanquishing all evil and misery !

These, my pious hearers, are the general ideas which reason and experience give us of the nature and magnitude of human happiness. Allow me to subjoin a few rules for rightly appreciating and judging of it in particular cases, or in regard to particular persons.

Wouldst thou, then, my christian brother, wouldst thou justly pronounce on the value of human happiness in particular cases, and poize it against human misery ; then confound not prosperity and happiness together. Argue not from the defect of the one to the want of the other. That is far more rare than this : That consists in outward advantages and goods that adorn us, and are sometimes beneficial to us, and sometimes hurtful ; this, in images of the mind and sensations of the heart, which procure us satisfaction and pleasure ; that is not in our power, this depends greatly on ourselves : Either may subsist independently on the other, they are often divided asunder ; and as prosperity is not always attended by happiness, so neither is the former a necessary requisite of the latter. Indeed, if only the rich, the eminent, the great, the mighty, only such as are surrounded by splendor and opulence, only them that fare sumptuously every day, and pass their lives in tumultuous pleasures, are to be and to be accounted happy, then wilt thou find but little happiness amongst the sons of men ; for, comparatively but few

can be rich and eminent and great and mighty ; but few can distinguish themselves from others by pomp and splendor, or by a luxurious and voluptuous life. If, however, there be but few such darlings of fortune, then are there so many more happy, so many more cheerful and contented persons ; and whom thou mayst find in every station, among all the classes of mankind ; whom thou mayst and wilt very often find in the meanest cottage of the countryman, in the unornamented habitation of the artificer, not unfrequently in the tattered garb of poverty, and even under the squalid appearance of woe.

Wouldst thou, farther, judge rightly of human happiness in particular instances ; then take as much care, on the other hand, not to account misfortune and unhappiness as one and the same, or always from the presence of the one, to conclude on the presence of the other. No, misfortune does not always imply, does not with wise and good persons imply unhappiness ; and our heavenly Father, who has ordained us to happiness has so constituted our nature and the nature of things, that we may experience much misfortune and yet be happy, and still rejoice in his bounty and in our present and future existence. Let it be, that by untoward events, I suffer loss in my property, in my outward distinctions, in my health, in my fame, that some sources of my pleasure fail, that my friends and intimates forsake me ; let it be, that all this shakes the stem of my happiness, that it weakens and brings it to the ground ; is it therefore wholly and forever destroyed and overthrown ? May it not still, like the tree which has been bent by the storm to the earth, lift up its head again, and again be rich in blossoms and fruits, when the tempest is over and gone, and serenity and peace are once more restored ? Have I, then,

by these adverse events lost all the agreeable ideas and feelings I formerly had? With these outward goods and advantages, am I then likewise despoiled of my inward spiritual perfection, and the consciousness of what I am, and shall hereafter be? Are, then my relations with God and the future world, which afforded me so much comfort and repose, dissolved? Do not, then, a thousand other sources of delight and joy still stand open to me? Do not time and reflection and business heal the most painful wounds inflicted by misfortune? Beware, then, of supposing every unfortunate man to be unhappy! Misfortune is transitory: Happiness can stand out a thousand attacks of it, ere it can be torn from the spot where it has once taken root. On the same principle, beware too of always supposing trouble and misery to be wherever thou seest tears to flow. They flow as often, and probably oftener, from sources of delight than of pain; and we have commonly mingled sensations, in which the disagreeable is far over balanced by the pleasant; sensations arising from the most cordial feelings of benevolence and affection to the human race, of virtue and greatness of mind, and not unfrequently are connected with the most enchanting recollections of blessings already enjoyed, and with the most delightful prospects of future bliss.

Wouldst thou, thirdly, my christian brother, judge rightly of human happiness in particular cases, and in regard of particular persons, and not overlook the greater proportion of it; then do not dwell merely, not principally on the extraordinary, the shining kinds and scenes of happiness, which attract the eye of every beholder: They are not indeed extremely frequent in the world; but take likewise, and still more, into consideration, the placid, domestic pleasures and joys which lie concealed from the view.—

Bring into the account the permanent advantages and benefits a man enjoys, though because of their being constant, they excite in him no very strong emotions of joy and delight. Seldom indeed can we enjoy the lively pleasure of returning health and of restored life ; but daily the calmer pleasure of the uninterrupted continuance of both. Seldom indeed are we able to bring great matters to effect, rarely to taste the delight of being the benefactor and the redeemer of our brother ; but daily may we comfort and cheer ourselves in the reflection on having performed something good and useful in our station and calling. Rarely indeed can we accomplish such remarkable and desirable alterations in our condition, as shall fill us with a peculiar and hitherto unknown delight ; but daily may we enjoy the innumerable agreeablenesses and advantages of it. Seldom can we perhaps, partake of public diversions, more rarely approach the bright and dazzling lustre of the fashionable circles of persons far above us in rank ; but daily may we enjoy the pleasures of domestic life, of familiar intercourse, and the friendly conversation of our family, walk daily in the genial light which peace and satisfaction shed around us. Seldom perhaps, does our devotion kindle into transport ; but daily may it procure us comfort and repose and tranquil joy. And is only that, is not this likewise happiness ? Shall the good and the agreeable that we may so often, that we may daily enjoy, lose its value for the very reason that it so often, that it daily procures us satisfaction and pleasure ? Ought not this circumstance to render it so much the more precious to us ? Does it not therefore contribute so much the more to the sum of our agreeable ideas and feelings, and therefore to our happiness ?

Wouldst thou, fourthly, my christian brother, rightly appreciate and rightly judge of human hap-

piness, and that especially in regard of particular cases and persons ; then consider man not merely as a sensual, but likewise as an intelligent and moral creature, and take also into the account the benefits, the advantages, the pleasures he enjoys as such.— Or have we only then agreeable representations and feelings, are we happy only then, when our senses procure us pleasure and delight, when our appetites are flattered, when our animal cravings are satisfied, when we feel and enjoy the value of health, of bodily strength, of riches, and outward welfare ? Are we not as much and more so, as often as we apply our mental faculties with consciousness, and not without successful effects : As often as we meditate on important matters, or matters we hold to be important ; as often as we discover any traces of truth ; as often as we adjust or increase our knowledge of whatever kind ? Are we not also happy as often as we feel the dignity of our nature, the grandeur of our destination, our blessed connexions with the deity ; as often as we maintain, like free and rational beings, the dominion over ourselves, and over the things that are without us ; as often as we thence obtain a victory over evil ; as often as we observe that we are drawing nearer to christian perfection ? Are we not so, as often as we form a good design or bring it to effect, as often as we are actuated by benevolence and affection towards others ; as often as we are employed in beneficence ; as often as we have completed some useful work, or faithfully discharged our duty ? Are we not so even then when we sacrifice something to duty and to virtue, or to the common interest ; when we bear and suffer for others from magnanimity or friendship ; when we endure adversity and misfortunes with fortitude, and become wiser and better by them ? Oh, how much more contented, how much more happy is, frequently,

the obscure, but reflecting and virtuous moralist, the suffering but pious christian, than the opulent and dignified voluptuary, who is all flesh, and knows no other pleasures than what his senses procure him ! How much more real and lasting pleasure does often one hour of calm and clear contemplation on important objects, and the sedate enjoyment of our mental powers afford us, than whole days of noisy and tumultuous joys ! How much more does one generous or beneficial deed contribute to our satisfaction, than the rushing torrents of sensual amusements which quickly pass away ! And yet how seldom are these purer pleasures, these sublimer joys brought into the account, in taking estimates of human happiness !

Wouldst thou, lastly, O man, evaluate properly thy own and thy brother's happiness ; then consider the human creature not barely in certain epochas or times, but in the whole capacity of his life and fortunes. Connect the past, the present and the future so together in thy thoughts, as in the nature of things they are connected together. If this or that period of the life of a man appears cloudy and wretched, another will cast the more light upon it, and evince more happiness enjoyed. The first entrance on business, on active life, is generally difficult and toilsome, and its progress brings comfort and pleasure. Sometimes youth, and sometimes manhood is wealthier in happiness. Often is there more enjoyment in this life, often more qualification and preparation for future enjoyment. Wouldst thou state the sum of thy own or thy brother's happiness ; then set all these against each other, reckon all agreeable and cheerful sensations together, the innocent sportive delights of childhood, the livelier joys of youth, the more rational, nobler pleasures of the mature and advanced age. Think on all thou hast enjoyed, and

still enjoyest, of agreeable and good, and also what thou mayst hope to enjoy in future ; and all that thou art and hast and dost, that is good and profitable, and that thou mayst and wilt be and have and do in all succeeding times. Forget not that thou art immortal, that thou art ordained to everlasting happiness, that thou art already happy in hope ; and, from the first fruits, conclude of the full harvest ; from the sweets of the foretaste, of the deliciousness of complete fruition. These rules will guide thee safely in appreciating human happiness and enable thee to perceive its true nature and magnitude.

On the whole, my christian brother, conclude, that man was not made for misery by his creator and father, but was formed for happiness : That to this end he is endowed with dispositions and capacities for it ; that he finds in himself and without him the most various and abundant sources of satisfaction and pleasure ; and that it is almost always his own fault when he does not draw from them contentment and joy.

Farther, conclude that human happiness is no insignificant, contemptible matter, as the unfortunate and the melancholy at times represent it to be, that none but the misanthropist can wholly be blind to it, none but the inconsiderate and thoughtless can hold it for a trifling object. And assuredly conclude, that there is far, far more agreeable than disagreeable sensation, far more happiness than misery among mankind, far, far more good than evil in the world. In fine, exalt this comfortable idea by the just and grand sentiment ; that in the kingdom of God, the God of love, happiness will always abide, and be augmenting and spreading ; and that, on the other hand, misery will be ever diminishing and at length entirely cease, and be succeeded by

perfection and bliss. So wilt thou think worthily of God, and justly of the state and destination of man. So wilt thou be always cheerful in the present life, and be constantly more fitted for the future.

S E R M O N XLIII.

Settlement of our Notions concerning Human Happiness.



O GOD, the eternal, inexhaustible source of life of joy, of happiness, from thee flow life and joy and happiness on every part of thy immense creation. Whatever thou, Allgracious, hast created, thou hast formed for happiness, and thy wisdom never fails of its ends. However various the methods by which thou leadest thy creatures to their destination, they by one way or another, sooner or later infallibly reach it. Us, too, thy children on earth, hast thou our merciful Father, destined to happiness, made us susceptible of it, and pointed out and opened to us numerous and rich sources both within and without us, from which we may draw satisfaction and pleasure. To none of us all are these sources entirely shut, none draw from them in vain. Might we but seek our happiness there alone where it is really to be found, and as worthily use, as thankfully and cheerfully enjoy that portion of it which thou hast decreed to each of us as is necessary to thy views and to our welfare ! Might we ever better understand, what human happiness really is, ever form sounder notions of the way that leads to it, rightly distinguishing it from semblance and deception, and learn with ever greater circumspection to walk that way ! Might we even now, that we are about to meditate on this subject, pursue our reflections with that seriousness and attention which the importance of the matter demands. Enlighten us by thy light, and guide us by thy

holy spirit. Let thy truth dissipate our prejudices and errors, and grant that we may obediently follow its directions and precepts. Oh hearken to our supplications, which we present unto thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, reposing our entire confidence in his promises, and farther invoking thee in his words : Our father, &c.



LUKE xii. 15.

A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

EVERY living and thinking creature, my pious hearers, is striving and panting after happiness, childhood and youth, maturity and hoary age, the rough uncultivated man of nature and the more civilized and polished member of society, the ignorant as well as the learned, the volatile as well as the grave, he who has reflected on happiness and explored its various sources, as well as he to whom both the term and the idea are alike unknown and strange. Every one is desirous to rejoice in the life and the faculties which he feels within him ; every one to enjoy as much property, as many accommodations and pleasures, as he knows and can acquire ; every one abhors and shuns all disagreeable, painful ideas and feelings ; every one, on the other hand, wishes to augment the sum as well as the vivacity and force of his agreeable ideas and feelings. If the

one acts with consciousness and consideration ; the other, in the same pursuit, follows merely an inward irresistible instinct, an obscure sensation. If the one acts upon principles and determinate views ; the other suffers himself to be blindly led by the impressions and collisions of outward things, or by his sensual animal feelings. All run after the same object ; but the ways they strike into to that end, tend very far asunder. None even entirely miss of their purpose ; but most of them attain to it along very toilsome roads, after long and dangerous deviations, after many vexatious disappointments ; attain to it only late, only very imperfectly, and pains and sorrows mark most of the steps they have made.

But, since the longing and the endeavoring after happiness is so natural to man, and is so intimately blended with all that he thinks and wills and does ; it is undoubtedly of the utmost moment, that he should give them the proper direction ; that direction whereby he may the most certainly, the most safely, the most completely accomplish his desire. Whoever is once arrived at that stage of human culture that he can reflect on happiness and misery, and on the means and sources of it, and is frequently and cogently summoned to reflect upon them, should not satisfy himself with obscure and confused ideas on these subjects. Otherwise he would be still farther from the mark than his unenlightened, entirely sensual brother. He should rather strive to adjust and ever more accurately to ascertain his ideas on these important matters. We, my pious hearers, we are at that stage of civilization ; as persons who are acquainted with their intellectual faculties and understand the use of them ; and as christians, who have a superior light to enlighten and to guide them on the way of truth. Let us assert our privileges by forming to ourselves just conceptions of human

happiness. This is the design of my present discourse.

A man's life consists not, says Jesus in our text, no man lives, no man is rendered happy, by the abundance of his possessions. This expression of our divine teacher points out to us the track by which we are to seek, or not to seek our happiness. Let us pursue this track by circumstantially weighing wherein our happiness consists or does not consist, and by what way we may most surely arrive at it. Subjects of reflection, certainly meriting our utmost attention and our most cordial participation.

A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions; therefore, human happiness consists not in the possession of outward goods and advantages, not in wealth and affluence, not in elevation and power, not in those things that mankind reckon worldly prosperity. Experience teaches us that a man may have all these things, that he may possess them in an ample, a superfluous degree, and yet be unhappy; and that on the other hand he may be destitute of all or of the greatest part of these things, and yet be happy. Or, are all, are even most of the rich and great and powerful happy? Are they content, pleased, satisfied? Are they truly comfortable in what they have and possess? Do they find in the use and enjoyment of it, all that they hoped and expected from it? Do they enjoy it without apprehensions and without cares? Do these advantages shield them from all the troubles and vexations of life, from pains and sicknesses, from the effects of envy and jealousy, from the pernicious violence of inordinate and corrupt passions? Are not their wants very often only so much the more numerous and great, their desires and appetites the more violent and insatiable, in proportion as they have more means and opportunities to comply with them, and

to give ear to their impetuous cravings? Does not frequently their dependence on others, their bondage, their actual slavery, increase in proportion as they want more things and persons to the gratification of their desires and to the execution of their projects? On the other hand, are all those unhappy who live in an inferior station, who are destitute of the goods, of fortune and outward advantages? Are all, are many of the sources of pleasure, shut up against them? Are peace of mind, content, delight unknown and foreign to them? Do they not frequently enjoy them in a far superior degree, far more carelessly and freely, than those pretended favorites of fortune? Does not the lowliness and obscurity of their station secure them from a thousand dangers and troubles? Have they not all that nature and religion offer to the man and the christian, in common with the rich and the mighty? Is not generally their taste less vitiated, and their sensibility stronger and more lively? Is not their happiness less dependent on accidents and vicissitudes? Cannot a man very often be far more blithe in himself and his existence, in silence and in solitude than in noise and tumult? No, my dear friends, outward welfare, wealth, superfluity, elevation, power, pomp, and splendor may in and of themselves consist with happiness; they do not always discard it; they may rather, as means, when rightly estimated and used, promote it: But they form no necessary, no essential part of it. The absence of them is not always, is not in most cases, attended by the want of happiness. This can very well subsist without them, it is seen very often without them. Of this neither reflection nor observation will allow us to doubt. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses.

Just as little necessary is it to human happiness, that all our undertakings should succeed, that all our plans and designs should be accomplished, all our wishes fulfilled, all our desires be gratified. Our desires are but too often sordid and corrupt, our wishes foolish, our plans and designs injurious to ourselves and others, our undertakings unjust, or incoherent, or impracticable. Were it not for the various bounds prescribed us by the nature and the course of things and the overruling providence of God, there would certainly be far more pain and suffering, more grief and misery among mortals; and never would creatures who see no farther than we do be more happy than if all went with them according to their wishes. Were it not for the numerous obstacles and difficulties that we meet with in the world, were it not for the opposition that checks us on all sides, and forces us to reflection and consideration, were it not for the painful experiments we so frequently make of our weakness, of our temerity, of our ignorance and folly, and of the facility with which we err, and are deceived, we should never become intelligent and wise, never rightly judge of our faculties and capacities, and never use them in the best manner, never distinguish between semblance and reality, the shadow and the substance, and consequently never learn to build our happiness on a firm and durable foundation. No, even unsuccessful attempts and efforts, even frustrated plans and designs, even unaccomplished wishes and ungratified desires may well consist with human happiness. By that means many greater and more continued evils and pains, injuries and impositions are removed or averted from us. By that means we are exercised in the use and application of our faculties in the most diversified manner, and they acquire an ever truer and firmer direction.

By that means our reason is ever gaining a completer mastery and authority over our sensuality, and at every step by which we approach towards perfection we at the same time approach towards happiness.— By that means, in short, we learn ever better to understand the mark after which we are striving and the way that leads to it, and ever more circumspectly and cautiously to walk that way.

Hence it follows, that human happiness cannot consist in a state of purely agreeable ideas and sensations, much less in the enjoyment of merely rapturous delight and lively pleasure. Both the one and the other would be manifestly at variance with our nature, and with the nature of the other things that surround us and with which we are in connexion.— A body, formed of dust, destructible in its nature, which is so liable to injury, to harm, to dissolution; a place of abode that is subject to so many alterations and vicissitudes, on which all is unstable, all as it were in a perpetual ebb and flow; a mind that in regard to perceptions and faculties is so limited, which so often mistakes and errs, and whose operations depend in so many respects on that earthly and frail body; a life that has such a variety of wants and imposes on us so many duties which we cannot adequately perform without great pains and toil; a society of persons, in short, who are as limited, as weak and frail as ourselves; all this renders it utterly impossible that we could have none but agreeable ideas and sensations, or could endure a state of uninterrupted, continual, ecstatic pleasure, if it were even possible. We ourselves and all the objects that surround us must be quite otherwise constituted; we must not be men, the place of our abode must not be the earth, our goods and possessions must not be transitory, our perceptions and faculties must be far greater and more independent, for rendering such a state conceivable. And whoever should ac-

count that to be human happiness and strive after it, would deceive himself, and pursue a vision which he would never be able to attain.

No, human happiness, summarily to comprize what has been said, human happiness depends more on what we ourselves are, what we think, feel and will, than on what is without us, or what we possess of outward goods and advantage : It depends more on the use and the application of our faculties themselves and on the method in which we use and apply them, than on those things that we perform and execute by them : And it consists in the preponderance of our agreeable ideas and sensations over the disagreeable. If order and tranquillity prevail within us, in our sentiments and feelings, in our desires and affections, then no kind of disorder and dissention from without can make us really unhappy, though they may weaken and disturb our pleasure : If by the application of our faculties we exercise and expand them, and do so with consciousness and consideration, we feel that we are thus becoming more intelligent, more expert, more perfect, that we are proceeding from one step of culture to another, and this sentiment must procure us delight, even when we do not produce the alterations without us, to the production whereof we applied our faculties in each particular case : If, in short, we experience and enjoy more good than evil ; are oftener able than unable to employ our faculties ; find more opportunities and means than obstacles and opposition to our improvement and perfection ; and have more causes for being satisfied than dissatisfied with ourselves and our condition, then our agreeable ideas and sensations thus gain the preponderance over the disagreeable, and the more remarkable this preponderance is, so much the greater and more complete is the human happiness which we can here

on earth enjoy. As various and different as the sum and the vivacity and strength of agreeable and disagreeable ideas and sensations are in human souls; so various and different are also the degrees of happiness which they enjoy. Perfectly pure and unalloyed happiness is peculiar to the most perfect mind alone. The greater the distance of any kind and class of beings from this supreme perfection; so much the greater is also the mixture of the good and the evil, the agreeable and the disagreeable in their condition and in the ideas and sensations which they have. Human happiness is therefore not outward prosperity, not the accomplishment of all our wishes and designs, not the uninterrupted enjoyment of pleasure and delight, but a state that procures us more satisfaction than dissatisfaction, more pleasure than displeasure, more agreeable than disagreeable ideas and sensations.

And how arises, whereon is grounded this preponderance of the good over the evil, the agreeable over the disagreeable in human souls? On what therefore rests their happiness? It is grounded and it rests on wisdom, on virtue, on piety. These, my dear friends, are the three principal and most abundant sources of human happiness. Let us approach these sources, more circumstantially observe their salutary efficacies, and see in what connexion they stand with our happiness and what influence they have upon it.

The first source, the first ground of human happiness is wisdom: The good use of the understanding and the proper application of it to all the occurrences, businesses, advantages and goods, joys and sorrows of this life. This wisdom teaches us to estimate the objects that surround us, with which we are in connexion, which we enjoy or have not, after which we strive or do not strive, and to esteem or

despise, to love and seek or to abhor and avoid them, proportionably to their value, their destination, their relations, towards us and others, and towards the whole to which they and we belong. It teaches us to distinguish semblance from reality, form from substance, momentary pleasure from permanent satisfaction, transient often salutary pain from actual misery, the means from the end, possession from enjoyment and use ; it teaches us to hold every object for what it really is, for as dispensable or as indispensable, for as transitory and fugacious, or for as untransitory and permanent, for as important and great, for as insignificant and small, for as covetable or for as indifferent, as, in regard to its real nature and quality and the whole scope of its consequences and effects, it is. And if we learn this, what an influence must it not have on our happiness ! How very much must it not facilitate and smooth to us the path to its sanctuary ! How much seldomer should we be deceived in our expectations ! How much seldomer exert our faculties in vain and fail of our designs ! How much seldomer be surprised or impatiently grieve at what happens to ourselves and to others ! How much more easily dispense with what has only the semblance of good, and endure what has only the outward form or is only the first advertisement of evil ! How much more completely enjoy the good that is and remains good in itself ! Is not the want of this wisdom, this just judgment of the value of things, one of the primary sources of all the defeated hopes, all the frustrated expectations, all the disappointments, all the fruitless undertakings and exertions, all the sorrow and all the remorse, all the discontent and all the misery of mankind ? They seek what is no where to be found, or seek it where it is not to be had ; they expect from mankind and things, far more than either the

one or the other is capable of affording; they run in quest of every deceitful phantom, every empty shadow, with as much eagerness as if they were in chase of the substance itself, and then break forth into bitter lamentations on discovering their error too late. Wouldst thou avoid these mistakes on the career of happiness, O man; incline thine ear unto wisdom, apply thy heart to understanding, let them guide and conduct thee; so shalt thou make but few unavailing steps towards the mark.

Another source, another ground of human happiness is virtue; the overbalancing, predominant love for whatever is true and beautiful, right and good, the constant readiness to act conformably to truth, to order, to the nature and relations of things, and to do the will of God. This virtue reduces all our inclinations to order and harmony, directs them all to the best, worthiest, most permanent objects, gives them all their proper pitch, and strengthens and weakens them according to the nature and importance of the subject. Virtue secures us from innumerable follies and puerile wishes, from vain, extravagant affections, from inordinate violent passions; she helps us to the mastery over ourselves and outward things, and teaches us to make a good; in every case the best, use of all that we have and befalls us. And how much, how infinitely much do we not thus gain in regard to happiness! What sources of disappointment, of uneasiness and vexation, of dissatisfaction are annihilated where neither envy, nor pride, nor selfishness, nor covetousness, nor sordid ambition contract and infect the heart! And what sources of satisfaction are not opened, where modesty and affection, where generous, magnanimous sentiments and inclinations bear sway! How many things cannot the virtuous man dispense with without trouble! How many others lose with-

out vehement pain ! How easily is he pleased, with what satisfaction does he not behold all that is consistent with the laws of order, with the laws of the greatest possible good ! How multiplied, how enhanced are his satisfactions, his pleasures, his advantages by the share he takes in the pleasures, the satisfactions, the advantages of his brethren ! How easy a matter he finds it to bear, to suffer, to work for others, and how agreeable to him are not frequently the sacrifices he makes to the general benefit, to the welfare of any of his fellow creatures ! Yes, the less virtue, so much the more misery ; the more virtue, so much the more happiness. Both constantly increase in the same proportion ; both are susceptible of infinite augmentation.

The third source, the third ground of human happiness is piety, or the virtue that is founded on religion, which does and endures, dispenses with and enjoys all things from obedience and from love towards God. It calls us to consider all things, the evil as well as the good, the adverse as well as the desirable, in its dependency on God, to revere them all as ordinances and dispensations of his sovereign wisdom and goodness, as infallible means to the attainment of his all comprehending designs, as the way to superior perfection. It teaches us, in all that happens and does not happen, in whatever befalls us and others, in small matters as in great, in the deepest night of affliction as in the splendor of prosperity, to adore the hand of our Father in heaven as holy and unblameable, and to expect from him only good, and constantly the best. It opens to us prospects into a better world, where the ways of God with mankind will be more discovered, where we shall better perceive the combination of our fortunes, where many disquieting difficulties and mysteries will be solved, where at last pure truth, pure

order, pure happiness will prevail ; prospects that even here already greatly enhance the value of whatever good the pious man enjoys, and considerably diminish the pressure of all the evil he experiences and beholds. Yes, in his eyes most objects acquire a quite different aspect. He stands firm and undismayed amidst a thousand formidable appearances and events, by which others are stupified and overthrown. In favor of him many restrictions and troubles are converted into benefits, many sorrows into joys, many evils into sources of greater good. Darkness itself is often light to him ; and he sees causes and reasons for calmness and content, where others find only matter for lamentation and complaint. So true it is that in this respect also godliness is profitable to all things, and is the firmest ground, the richest source of human happiness.

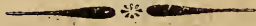
Yes, wisdom, virtue, piety, to you will we expand our hearts ; you shall be our guides and companions on the way of happiness. You shall teach us rightly to judge, rightly to choose, circumspectly to act. You shall dispense light to our minds, peace and tranquillity to our hearts, truth to our thoughts and sensations, order and harmony to our whole deportment. You shall teach us to understand our faculties and our destination, to use the former in the best manner, and to advance towards the latter by the directest way. Under your guidance and conduct, in confidence and courage, we will pursue our course towards the mark, and ever be as sure of seizing it as if we had hold of it already.

SERMON XLIV.

The Difference between Prosperity and Happiness.

O GOD, thou hast ordained us to happiness and made us capable of the enjoyment of it. We are constantly longing and striving after happiness and thy parental kindness is ever opening to us the most various and abundant sources of it. Might we not so often thoughtlessly and negligently pass them by, but draw from them as much pleasure and delight as they are able to afford ! Alas, we are too often deceived by appearances ! We are often dazzled and misled by the glittering forms of pleasure and happiness, which are not and yield not, what they pretend to be and to yield ! Yes, we frequently spend our strength in vain, and with wearisome, fruitless ardor, seek our happiness where it is not to be found. We frequently shun and avoid, as misery and unhappiness, what would prove a real benefit, a permanent blessing to us. We too often pursue the shadow with childish impetuosity, and let the substance escape. And yet complain of misery and want of happiness as of inevitable evils, as necessary consequences of the present constitution of things. No, Lord, thou art righteous, thou art benignity and love, but we think and act often foolishly, often confound semblance with reality, and seek not so much what is really true and good and remains true and good forever, as what glitters and shines, and promises us transient, fugacious joys and advantages. O God, do thou thyself draw us back ever more from these deviations. Teach us rightly to think and to judge of what may make us happy or unhappy, and

to choose between them with true christian wisdom. Let thy light, the light of truth, enlighten us, and thy spirit guide and conduct us in all our ways. Bless, to the furtherance of these designs, the exercise of reflection we are now about to begin on these important subjects. Let thy holy spirit in all things direct and rule our hearts, and hearken to our prayer through Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord, in whose name and words we address thee as we ought : Our father, &c.



PROVERBS iv. 20, 21, 22.

My son, attend to my words ; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes ; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

COULD I call your attention, and make it a matter of consequence to you, my pious hearers, to remark the difference between some few words and the objects they denote, which in all languages are more or less confounded, and used as synonymous, I think I should very much contribute to your moral improvement and your happiness. These words are : Prosperity and Happiness, Adversity and Unhappiness, Fortunate and Happy, Unfortunate and Unhappy. That the objects thereby signified are essentially different, may and must be presently discovered by every reflecting person. Reflecting, however, as well as unthinking persons but too frequently confound words and things in their

minds and judgments, in their discourses and actions ; and thus the former as well as the latter, though in an inferior degree, are led into numberless errors, false and shallow judgments, into transgressions and follies, into anxieties and troubles. Whoever should constantly avoid this confusion, avoid it in thinking as well as in speaking, in common life as well as in scientific exercises ; whoever in this respect should think precisely and speak precisely ; such an one would certainly, in point of satisfaction and happiness, of wisdom and virtue, far excell every other who should not do so. The subject therefore well deserves that we should employ ourselves somewhat longer upon it. It seems at first to relate merely to words ; but they are words that have an extraordinary influence on morals, that do far, far more good or harm among mankind, than is usually imagined. And therefore the signification and use of them is not an object of idle curiosity, but must stand in the closest connexion with whatever we are most concerned in. May these remarks excite you to attention, to continued attention to my present discourse and to the careful application of it ! My design is accurately to state the manifold and essential difference between prosperity and happiness and the words and objects relating to them ; and then point out to you, what a beneficial influence this distinction must have on your judgments, dispositions and actions. If, in pursuance of the admonition in our text, in this respect too, we let not wisdom depart from our eyes ; if we hearken to her dictates, and follow her precepts, we shall be prudent and happy, or intelligent persons.

By prosperity we understand all outward goods and advantages, all vicissitudes and events that are conformable with our wishes and views, that can promote our welfare, that promise us the gratification

of our wants, or the removal of our troubles and the cessations of our sufferings, or means of accommodation, of pleasure and joy ; and the greater and more covetable these things appear to us, the more we feel the want of them, the less reason we have to expect them, and the more unexpectedly they fall to our lot : So much the greater, in our estimation, is the prosperity that we experience. To such goods of fortune belong riches, superfluity, station, rank, eminence, power, honor, authority, health, strength, success in our businesses and undertakings, deliverance from danger and distress, execution of our projects, attainment of our views, and the like. Adversity is the opposite to all this. It is loss of our property and advantages, loss in health and strength, in influence and power : It consists in adverse events, unforeseen impediments and difficulties, in pain and sicknesses, enemies and perils, and the like.—Happiness or unhappiness, on the contrary, is the state of pleasure or displeasure, of content or of discontent, in which the man is ; and which is principally determined by the thoughts, sentiments, desires, propensities, views, appetites, that predominate in him and over him, by the degree of his moral goodness and perfection. Hence, my pious hearers, it already plainly appears, that prosperity and adversity, happiness and unhappiness, are not necessarily connected together, that they are not the same things, that they rather are essentially different from each other. There are cases enough where every man makes the proper distinction between these words, because there the mutual interchange of them would be too glaringly absurd : And this shews, that they are really distinct from each other, and in like manner in all other cases ought to be distinguished. Let us now consider this difference on several other sides, in order to imprint them more deeply on our minds, and then

proceed to draw from them consequences of the greatest importance to us, which may have the most influence on our judgments and on our behavior.

Prosperity and adversity are somewhat without us ; happiness and unhappiness somewhat that is within us. Riches and poverty, elevated and humble station, health and sickness, progress and opposition, are without us, relate to our outward condition, to the relations and connexions in which we stand towards the rest of mankind and visible things, to our body, which is not ourself, but which our soul at present inhabits and employs as its instrument. Pleasure and displeasure, on the other hand, content and discontent, are within us, relate to our internal condition, to the way of thinking and temper of our soul, to its relation towards truth and virtue, towards God its creator, and the invisible the spiritual world ; they are peculiar to our spirit, and determine its being, its life, its activity.

Again : Prosperity and adversity depend not always, and never entirely on ourselves, on our own will and endeavor, but on a thousand accidental circumstances and things, that are not in our power, that we can seldom foresee, seldom bring to pass, seldom combine with our views, and as seldom employ to the furtherance and attainment of them according to our wishes. It never depends on us in what station we shall be born and educated, in what character we shall appear on this scene of things ; and seldom, extremely seldom is it, to any considerable degree, in our choice, to become as rich, as powerful, as great, to be as healthy and strong, and to pursue our way to this or the other aim, as unimpeded, as we might wish. Neither prosperity nor adversity is so combined with the moral character and the moral conduct of mankind, as to enable us to draw conclusions from the one to the other, and

to consider them both as cause and effect. They are goods and evils distributed by the father of mankind among his children, from reasons very diverse, and for the most part concealed from us. Happiness and unhappiness, on the other hand, depend mostly, depend in some sort entirely upon us. According as we think and judge thus, or otherwise, are thus or otherwise disposed, thus or otherwise behave towards God and man : So are we pleased or displeased, contented or discontented ; so all surrounding objects appear to us thus or otherwise, with a brilliant or with a gloomy aspect ; so troubles and evils change for us into advantages and benefits but likewise goods and joys into want and pain.— Though it frequently does not depend on us to be prosperous, that is, to be rich, eminent or mighty ; Yet it certainly depends on us to be happy, that is, to be contented and pleased, and to rejoice in our lives. Though we cannot avert and remove from us all misfortune, all adverse events, yet certainly we can avoid unhappiness or misery, if we do but earnestly resolve on it. If we are not able to change outward things according to our pleasure ; yet can we so alter our representations of them, our whole turn of thought and temper, as reason and our own benefit require us to do.

Yet more. Prosperity and adversity are somewhat transitory, somewhat extremely changeable and transient : Happiness and unhappiness, on the other hand, are far more stationary and lasting. The aspect and the worth of the former vary with every alteration of age, of health, of mode of life, of taste, of the outward connexions and relations of the man. According to the variety of these circumstances, prosperity often changes into adversity, and the latter into the former. Power and distinctions are frequently but splendid burdens, and the loss of them

procures freedom and repose. And is not all that is termed prosperity and adversity subject to the greatest instability, to the most various and sudden vicissitudes ? Is it not entirely confined to this terrestrial life ? Will not both of them be buried with us ? Do not both the one and the other remain behind, on our passing over to another state ? Happiness and unhappiness, on the other hand, how much more unchangeable and lasting ! Pleasure and displeasure are and remain everlastingly pleasure and displeasure, in recollection as in enjoyment ; content and discontent are and remain everlastingly content and discontent in every age, in every station, in every mode of life, in every connexion, while we live and when we are dying, on this side and beyond the grave, in this and in the future world. The habit of mind and temper of the man alter not so easily as his outward condition. The former make deeper, more durable impressions on the soul than the latter ; impressions which neither death nor the grave efface, which accompany him into eternity, and there form the basis of his superior felicity, or his greater misery. Be we as fortunate or unfortunate as we may, yet we must at one time cease, yet we must soon cease to be so ; happy or unhappy we may be and continue for a whole eternity. Not prosperity, but happiness, passes over with us in all future worlds and eternities : Not adversity, but unhappiness and misery, can also pursue us thither.

This is not all. Prosperity and adversity have their stated magnitude, a highest summit which they cannot overtop. The nearer they approach to that, the nearer they draw to their end, the more sure and infallible is the declension of one and the cessation of the other. Happiness, on the other hand, knows no bounds ; it is, like the perfection whereon it rests, capable of an augmentation and

elevation to infinity. The sources of pleasure and of content are no less various than inexhaustible to every intelligent mind, that has learnt to prize and to use them ; and their enjoyment is not attended with satiety and surfeit, while the possession of prosperity easily excites languor and disrelish. But likewise unhappiness may arise to a very high degree, so as to exceed by far all the hardships and pressures of adversity. It can overpower all the capacities and faculties of the man, and fill them all with pain and anguish. It attacks him in his very heart, and is as closely, as intimately connected with him as his own thoughts and sensations.

To conclude : Prosperity is a means ; happiness is an ultimate end. Happiness is the mark at which we all run ; unhappiness the abyss we all endeavor to avoid. We seek riches, honor, and various outward advantages, in order to be happy ; we shun poverty, lowness of station, contempt and the like, in order to be not unhappy. We seek those goods, and shun these evils only in so far as we hold them to be fit means for leading us to that mark, or for preserving us from this abyss. As certainly, then, and essentially as means and end, mark and way to the mark, are different from each other ; so certainly and essentially are prosperity and happiness, adversity and unhappiness different from each other.

From the difference between these words and objects, which after considering it on various sides, we have found to be undeniable on all, let us proceed to deduce some of the most important of consequences, and make the application of them to our judgments and our behavior.

One perfectly natural consequence of the difference we have observed between these words and the objects signified by them is this : Not every one can be prosperous ; but every one can be happy.—

Not every one can escape adversity, or remove all adversity from him ; but every one can avoid unhappiness, and defend himself from misery. The matter is selfevident, and needs no demonstration. Not every one can be healthy, strong, beautiful, rich, powerful, great ; but every one can think reasonably and judge justly, every one can learn to will and to seek only what is best, every one can get the mastery over himself and his sensual appetites, square his life by the precepts of wisdom, addict himself to virtue and piety, and by these means lay a firm foundation for lasting content and durable pleasure. Not every one can avert from him want, loss, meanness of condition, scorn, pain, bondage, adverse events ; but every one can weaken the unpleasant, hurtful effects and impressions of these things upon him, can learn to bear them with patience and fortitude, can use them to his moral improvement, and maintain notwithstanding them, the cheerfulness of his mind and the serenity of his soul. If prosperity and adversity depend on a thousand accidental things that are without us ; yet happiness and unhappiness depend on our own choice, on our own will and endeavor, purely on things that belong to ourselves, and over which we have at least more power than over any thing else.

Another consequence, flowing no less naturally from it, is this : The prosperous man is not always happy, and the unhappy not always unprosperous. If the nature of the thing itself did not inform us of this, history and experience would not allow us to doubt it. Or is then every rich, every powerful, every titled, every healthy and strong man happy ? Is, on the other hand, every poor, every indigent, every low, every sick and weak man, every manservant, every maidservant, all of those called the vulgar, unhappy ? Are then the former always content

and pleased, always brisk and merry ; and the latter always displeased and dissatisfied, always sad and dejected ? How frequently do not the former envy the better lot of the latter ? How often do they not wish to exchange their splendid misery, their glittering burdens for the seeming penury and the unnoticed obscurity of the latter ! How frequently does not the gaiety, the tranquillity of mind, the unsolicitous content of these, put to shame the corroding care and disquietude, the anxious solicitude, that prey upon the others. No, here semblance and reality, form and substance, are not always perhaps, but rarely found together. So easily do prosperity and adversity blind and deceive us, so easily do happiness and unhappiness lie concealed from our eyes. The former attract and effect observation and noise : The latter love, and seek silence and retreat, and are apt to withdraw from every prying observer.

A third consequence from our foregoing remarks is this : The prosperous may indeed be at the same time happy, but he will not be so and is not so merely by the possession of his good fortune ; whereas the happy man is not necessarily in want of prosperity in order to his happiness ; he can be happy without it. Indeed the rich, the powerful, the great man, may be also happy, he may be pleased and contented. But he is not and will not be so, at least he is not and will not be so for any long time, not in a lasting and substantial manner, merely because he is rich, because he is powerful, because he is great. In order to be and to become thus happy, he must be also intelligent and wise, virtuous and pious, he must understand, possess and enjoy nobler, more durable goods and advantages, he must make the best, the worthiest use of his outward prosperity. Whereas, if the man, by a just, noble way of thinking and acting, by well regulated affections and ap-

petites, by an innocent, virtuous life, by true, christian piety, has brought peace and serenity within, and expanded his heart to the influences of the love of God and man : Then he needs neither to be rich nor powerful, nor great, nor healthy and strong, nor to possess other outward advantages, in order to be happy, and to be ever becoming happier. He can dispense with all those things, can be divested of them all, and yet be at his ease ; and yet be contented, cheerful and gay.

Not prosperity therefore, this is a fourth consequence, not prosperity, but happiness is the mark after which we should strive ; not adversity, but unhappiness is the evil that we should shun and avoid with all our care. Unless we observe this distinction, and regulate our behavior accordingly, we shall waste our powers to no purpose, we shall miss of our aim, and shall sooner or later repent of our error. Thus it frequently happens that we strive with unwearied efforts after riches and abundance, as after the sovereign good of man. But are then riches and abundance one and the same thing with happiness ? Can we then tell before hand, whether riches and abundance will be profitable or pernicious to us, whether we can and shall, with them be happy, pleased and contented ? Thus we frequently exert all our faculties, in working upwards from obscurity and humbleness of station, and to rise into eminence, as though we could only live and be happy in that eminence. But is then eminence and happiness one and the same thing ? Do we then know before hand whether eminence or lowness of station be better for us, whether we should not turn giddy on the pinnacle of prosperity, and tumble headlong down in shame and misery.

No, my dear brethren, would ye make the proper use of these considerations ; then never confound the

means with the end, the mark with the way to the mark. Strive more after happiness than after prosperity. Seek the former as your ultimate object, the latter as means. At no time sacrifice the former to the latter. Be more afraid of unhappiness than of adversity. Never consider that as a necessary consequence of this, and never this as a necessary cause of that. Therefore do not immediately think yourself unhappy, when adversity meets you ; fancy not that you have lost all, not the principal, by the loss of outward goods and advantages ; do not refuse yourself all the sources of pleasure, if by chance some of them are drained or troubled. Neither, however, rejoice at every prosperous event, as you would have reason to rejoice at true and lasting happiness. Carefully discriminate prosperity and happiness, adversity and unhappiness, in your reflections and judgments, as well as in your efforts. This is the foundation of all true wisdom, of all genuine virtue, of all lasting content.

Do the same also in the judgments you form concerning others. Esteem, if ye will, the rich, the powerful, the great as prosperous ; but esteem them not happy. With all their advantages, they may as probably be wretched as happy, if they are deficient in wisdom and virtue and piety. So, on the other hand, pity the poor, the indigent, the low conditioned man as unprosperous, as a man to whom outward circumstances are not favorable. But pity him not as unhappy. With all these deficiencies, he may still be pleased and contented, may be happy, if he have wisdom and virtue and piety for his companions on the road of life. Oh may they accompany and guide us all on our plain or rugged, or obscure or shining path ! How totally otherwise, how much more justly shall we then regard riches and poverty,

elevation and lowness, health and sickness, life and death ; how differently shall we learn to judge of them, to desire or to dread, to seek and to use them ! How certainly and safely attain to the goal of happiness !

SERMON XLV.

View of the Sources of Human Happiness.



O GOD, our most gracious and affectionate parent, how happy might not we all be even here on earth; did we but so prize and employ the sources of satisfaction and pleasure which thou openest to us, as men and as christians, in a manner suitable to their destination and to thy gracious will ! How manifold, how rich, how inexhaustible are these sources ! How great the preponderance of the agreeable and good over the disagreeable and evil, that subsists in the natural and in the moral world, within us and without us ! Yes, on all sides we are surrounded by the most diversified, the most glorious demonstration of thy paternal providence and love. On all sides we behold thee, the Allbountiful, diffusing life and energy and joy of numberless kinds over all thy creatures. On all sides we find the commodious, the agreeable, the delightful, intimately connected with the necessary and indispensable. Heaven and earth, mankind and brutes, nature and religion, reflection and experience, all exclaim with an audible voice, that perfection and happiness is the ultimate, the only aim of all that thou ordainest and dost, that thou dost decree and permit, that thou commandest and forbiddest, that thou givest and takest and away. Yes, thou wouldst that we should all be happy, that we should be already so even here on earth and if we are not so it is solely by our own fault. Alas, how do the purest, the richest sources of satisfaction and pleasure, invite us to enjoyment in vain, how often do they flow to us unused and unobserved, or are rendered turbid

and tasteless to us by follies and sins ! Oh might we better understand our riches, and more worthily use them !— Might we more plainly perceive, more sensibly feel the multitude and the value of the benefits with which thou art daily and hourly blessing us, and honor thee by a cheerful and grateful enjoyment of them ! Bless then, most gracious God, bless the considerations which we are proceeding to enter upon concerning these objects, Let them call forth our utmost attention to the manifold and abundant sources of happiness which thou hast prepared for us, and quicken us to a diligent and faithful use of them. We ask it of thee in filial confidence, as the votaries of Jesus, and address thee farther in the form he gave us : Our father, &c.



PSALM xxxiv. 8.

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is !

BUT too often, my pious hearers, a man reckons himself poor, because he is ignorant of his wealth, or has not learnt to prize it, and to calculate it properly. But too often he accounts himself not happy, or even unhappy, merely because he does not observe, or does not attend to the various, ever flowing sources of satisfaction and pleasure that are open to him on all sides, and seeks with great trouble at a distance what lies close beside him, offering itself to his enjoyment. But too often he reckons only particularly fortunate incidents, particularly desirable and satisfactory events, only exceedingly agreeable

ideas, or rapturous, extatic sensations, as forming what he terms his happiness, without taking into the account a hundred other things, which just as well, though in an inferior degree, procure him satisfaction and pleasure. If he have surmounted obstacles, or conquered difficulties, which he held to be unsurmountable and unconquerable ; if he be freed from certain troubles and afflictions that pressed him long and pained him sorely ; if he obtain some particular advantage for which he had been hitherto longing to no purpose ; if some of his peculiar hopes be fulfilled, the accomplishment whereof he would not think very probable ; if certain events happen, which he wished indeed, but could hardly expect ; if he enjoy pleasures and delights that captivate his whole soul, and in the moment of enjoyment leave him nothing to wish for more ; yes, then, but only then, he thinks himself happy. All these things, however, cannot frequently happen, can but seldom occur. Not every day, not even every year of our life on earth, can be marked by such fortunate events, by such wished for occurrences, by such ravishing joys, by such signal alterations in our conditions and fortunes. Therefore the man in whose eyes this alone is happiness, perhaps accounts himself, during the greater part of his life, to be not happy, or even to be unhappy. And all this while there stand open before him and beside him, always, today as yesterday, and tomorrow as today, sources of satisfaction and pleasure, no less pure than copious, courting him to enjoyment. But he esteems them not, overlooks them, passes by them, or draws from them without clear consciousness, without consideration. Would we be happy, my dear friends ; then let us avoid these but too common errors and mistakes. Let us, to this end, take a slight view of the principal sources of our happiness, and calculate the amount of our

actual riches ; omitting all the unusual, the extraordinary and rare, from the account, and only setting down what is constantly in our possession, what is always in our power, what can daily procure us satisfaction and pleasure. So shall we certainly, according to the expression of our text, taste and see how gracious the Lord is, how bountiful and kind our maker is, and how liberally he has provided for the happiness of his intelligent creatures,

The consciousness of self ; the actual use of our faculties ; the enjoyment of nature ; the pleasure of reflection ; the pleasure of virtue and beneficence ; the agreeableness of social, the comforts of domestic life ; and the joys of piety ; these, my pious hearers, are the chief sources of our happiness ; sources that stand open to us all, and from whence we may draw satisfaction and pleasure from day to day.

First, then, the consciousness of self, or the sentiment of what we are, and what we may and should become ; the sentiment of the natural and moral endowments that we have, the faculties and capacities that we possess, the relations wherein we stand with God and with the world ; what an abundant, never failing source of agreeable ideas and sensations, of happiness, must it not be to persons of reflection ! As the rich man is flattered in counting his riches, in measuring his acres, in reckoning up his means of pleasure ; so much and greatly more must it rejoice the reflecting man, when he feels the dignity of his nature, and holds himself to be that which he really is. But would we draw pleasure and delight from this source, my pious hearers ; then should we frequently reflect upon ourselves ; we should not, in the multitude of outward objects that occupy and distract us, lose sight of ourselves ; we should not, like the generality of mankind, exist and live more

without than within us. We should rather cherish and sharpen, by reflection, the consciousness of self. We should frequently say to ourselves, in silence : What am I, what have I, what can I not do, however little and mean, however weak and feeble I may be in other respects ! What powers, what advantages, do I not possess, as a man, as a reasonable, free, and moral creature, as a citizen, as a member of a polished, enlightened society, as a christian, as an heir of immortality and of everlasting life ! How far does not all this raise me above the whole inanimate and the brute creation ! How far even above a considerable part of my brethren on earth, who are less fortunate than myself ! And of what enterprizes and affairs, of what great matters, of what ever progressive improvement, am I not capable ! To what lengths may I not proceed in the knowledge of truth, in the command of myself and of outward things, in the most arduous and generous virtues ! And shall I know and feel this, without hearty satisfaction, without cheerful gratitude to God, my creator and father ! And shall I not daily rejoice in it, since all this essentially appertains to me, since I have and am and remain all this, at one time as well as at another, let my condition and my outward circumstances be constituted and alter as they may.

Another source of our happiness is the manifold actual use of our capacities and abilities, and the pleasure that is connected with the legitimate, useful application of them, and particularly with an industrious, busy life. What alterations and effects, within and without us, may we not all, each in his station and in his place, with our intellectual and corporeal faculties, daily produce ! How many matters, useful to ourselves and to our brethren, commence, continue and complete ! When passes a day in which we cannot think, contrive, do, promote, perform much

real good. And if we did it with more consciousness and consideration ; if we felt and reflected more that we are the favored, the eminently endowed creatures, that can think and contrive and do and perform all this ; if we more frequently thence drew conclusions of the excellency of our nature, of our dispositions, of our capacities and powers, of the grandeur of our destination, and more resigned ourselves to the joyous presentiments, the beautiful prospects into futurity, which this yields and opens to our view ; how very much would not the sum of our agreeable ideas and sensations be augmented ! How much happiness should we not already enjoy in the proper use, in the good application of our capacities and faculties, without regard to the consequence ! How seldom should we then complain of exertion, toil and labor ! How much pleasure should we not find even in this exertion, this toil and labor ! How easily should we pacify ourselves on every fruitless or apparently fruitless undertaking or attempt, by the reflection ; I have, however, thought and acted as an intelligent, reasonable being ! I have, however, felt my preeminence over the inferior classes of creatures and my relationship with spirits of a higher order ; I have maintained the post allotted me by my maker ; exercised the faculties he gave me, and strengthened them by exercise ; labored at my improvement, and forwarded myself more or less towards my completion ! And may not the enlightened, the reflecting, the well disposed man, daily say this, and daily find satisfaction in the sentiment ! Let him be otherwise busied as he will, employing his faculties to what purpose he will, whether he perform much, or little, or nothing with them ; yet he has used them conformably to the ends for which they were given, conformably to the will of God ; and if he do it with intelligence and

consideration, then he has not employed them in vain, he has thereby furthered his perfection, and this is, the straitest, the surest way to happiness.

A third source, in confluence with the last mentioned, is reflection ; the reflection, on whatever we feel and think and do, on whatever we see and hear and learn, on all that surrounds us and happens to us. The more we reflect on all things ; so much the more light is shed on all ; so much the more do chimerical and imaginary difficulties vanish from before our eyes ; so much the brighter and plainer is the path of our life ; so much the more connexion and order and wise design do we discover in what otherwise would perplex and disturb us. This reflection, when we are once expert in it, and have tasted its sweetness, is a perpetually flowing source of happiness, in the profoundest silence as well as in the midst of noise and tumult, in the most perfect solitude as in the most numerous company, in the darkest night as in the splendor of the meridian sun. It is the source of delight, which least of all depends on outward things, on events and turns of fortune ; is most of all in our own power ; is continually nearest at hand ; is most seldom and never entirely dried up ; to the use whereof we least of all are in want of extraneous help, and the enjoyment whereof most of all makes us feel our dignity, raises us highest above visible and transitory things, and brings us nearest to superior beings, even to the deity himself. From this source have all the wise and good of every age and every nation, drawn that repose and contentment, that consolation and joy, by which they distinguished themselves from other men, by which they were enabled to dispense with and to lose so many things, without uneasiness and without regret, to bear and to suffer so many things with calmness and serenity of mind, to do

and to perform so many things with complacency and delight ; and, in every station, in all the vicissitudes of outward fortune, to be pleased and happy. Oh draw from this source, all ye who live amongst polite and enlightened persons, and have so many means and incentives to reflection. Cultivate your understandings cultivate all your mental faculties with diligence and care ; give a new edge to your attention and your observation, be on your guard against heedlessness and levity ; view, remark, enjoy, do all things as thinking, rational creatures ; pursue every ray of light that touches you, every track of truth that presents itself to you ; so will you never experience the oppressive burden of langour and disgust, so destructive to happiness ; so will you understand how to be continually employed, and how to be ever agreeably employed ; and, instead of leading a dream like life, your life will be truly joyous in the clear consciousness of what you think and do.

The pleasure of virtue and of beneficence is a fourth source of human happiness, which stands open to us all, and whence we may daily draw. And how pure, how abundant is this source ! What day passes by without affording us an opportunity of strengthening ourselves in some good disposition ; of combating and controlling some bad propensity, of stifling some inordinate inclination, some corrupt passion in its very rise ; of gaining some victory over ourselves and the world ; of exercising ourselves in some manly virtue, in the fulfilment of some arduous or painful duty ; of bringing some offering to God, of making some sacrifice of conscience ; and thereby of giving proof of our faithfulness and integrity, and likewise of advancing our moral perfection ! What day affords us not opportunity for doing various offices of civility and acts of kindness to others ; for freeing them from some difficulties and burdens ; for

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alleviating their troubles, their labors, their businesses in various ways ; for contributing, now in this manner, then in that, one while more, at another less, to their support, to their comfort, to their pleasure, to their satisfaction ; and therefore of being variously useful and beneficial to society in general, and to many individuals of it in particular ! And, if we understand and feel the worth of virtue, the worth of a generally useful life, how much solid and pure satisfaction must not every victory gained over ourselves, every duty faithfully discharged, every good deed performed, every proper application of our faculties and ingenuity, every greater or smaller contribution to the happiness of a brother, every approximation to perfection, procure us ! And how very much does not the enjoyment of this source of happiness depend on our own behavior ! How much more is it not in our power, than all outward goods and distinctions, after which we so ardently strive, and which we yet so seldom obtain !

A no less copious source of satisfaction and pleasure, is fifthly, the contemplation and the enjoyment of the beauties and productions of nature. And surely, whoever pays attention to the energies, the activity, the course, the designs of nature, in the whole and in the parts ; whoever considers her works with open eyes and an attentive mind, and has a taste and feeling for her no less striking than numberless beauties and charms ; whoever, with a benevolent and expanded heart, takes an interest in the existence, in the life, in the manifold occupations and pleasures, in the various exhibitions and expressions of joy of all living creatures ; whoever opens his heart to the agreeable sensations which the view of the heavens and the earth, which the scenery and activity of the day, and the solemn stillness of the night, which every revolution of the sun and the

moon, every return of the seasons, which the breath of the spring, the magnificence of the summer, the profusion of the autumn, and the greater repose of the winter, excite in sentimental souls, and then raises his thoughts to God, the creator, the governor, the father of the world, and beholds him dispensing all around with so liberal a hand, life and energy, bounties and joys, of innumerable kinds, over all his creatures ; what sources of satisfaction and delight must not offer themselves to him which way soever he turns his eyes ! With how much greater alacrity and satisfaction must he not continue to pursue the path of his life ; how many more agreeable ideas and sensations must not offer themselves to him, and as it were press upon him, than if he did not attend to all this, did not see any value upon it, and walked with an inattentive mind and an insensible heart among all the bounties and beauties of nature, without acknowledging and honoring the traces of the benign presence of their author ! No, my dear brethren, would you taste and see how gracious the Lord is ; so far from being indifferent to his works in nature, the frequent attentive contemplation of them, and their silent enjoyment should be one of the principal sources from whence you derive your happiness. It stands open to the poor as well as to the rich, to the low as well as to the high, refreshing and rejoicing every one who seeks from it refreshment and joy.

Add to this a sixth source of human happiness, I mean the various comforts and satisfactions of social life. A source of delight, entirely shut against no man, and which stands more open to us, who have attained to a higher degree of cultivation, and live in the middling stations, than to many others, if withal we are truly sociable, and susceptible of the nobler satisfactions arising from social intercourse.

Yes, my pious hearers, if we frequent the society of our brethren with a capacity for happiness ; that is, with an unenvious, benevolent, affectionate heart, with a heart that takes an interest in all that others have and do and enjoy that is amiable and good ; with a heart that readily rejoices with the joyful, and laments with the mourner, and unreluctantly opens itself to others ; if we bring with us an eye more inclined to spy out the good than the bad, rather the advantages than the defects of a fellow creature, and had rather dwell upon the former than upon the latter ; if in our intercourse with others, we are modest, discreet, complaisant, officious willing and ready to contribute what we can to the pleasure of the company, and kindly accept and use what they afford us in return : What sources of agreeable ideas and sensations do we not find ! How much of what is beautiful and good do we not see, hear, experience, enjoy, communicate and receive ! What a charming drama to the friend of mankind does the diversity of abilities, of talents, of ingenuities, of advantages, of the expressions of joy and pleasure he observes amongst his brethren, present ! What bright and lively prospects does it not open to him in regard to their future appointment and destiny. What may he not hope and expect from such creatures ? How clear and brilliant in them often appear to him the lineaments of the image of God, the traces of his higher origin, the dispositions to future greatness ; and what delight must not all this procure to his humane and generous heart !

And then, my pious hearers, the comforts of domestic life, as well as the charms of friendship, what sources of satisfaction and pleasure do they not offer to the man who knows how to value and to use them ! What repose, what freedom, what genial relaxation after the burden and heat of the day, what

recompense for toilsome labor and the fatigues of business, what a variety of pure enjoyment of nature, of innocence, of truth await him in the little circle of his family and friends whom he loves, and by whom he is beloved ! How can his heart refuse to expand, to enlarge, to impart, and surrender itself to every agreeable idea and sensation, every noble sentiment of his inherent dignity, of his virtue, his progress in goodness, his faithfully discharged duty, his finished day's work ! How much satisfaction and pleasure may not here be given and received ! And how much light, how much comfort, how much encouragement and consolation does he not find in the enjoyment of friendship ! What troubles does it not alleviate, what pain not mitigate, what cares and disquietudes does it not assuage !— And how much does it not heighten and multiply all his advantages and joys ! How often do not the comforts of domestic life and those of friendship compensate superabundantly the want of all the outward goods of fortune, and render the poor and humble man an object of envy to the rich and great who know not those comforts ! And it is not generally our own fault if we know them not, possess them not, enjoy them not, and are not happy in the enjoyment ? Can it ever be entirely the case with the wise man, the virtuous man, the christian who is in deed and in truth a christian ? Does he not always bear about with him the fairest dispositions, the greatest sensibility, the richest materials, and can it be very difficult for him to surmount by degrees the obstacles he meets with, and by a mild, affectionate temper, by generous sentiments and actions to conquer every thing that may be at variance with the enjoyment of these delights !

In this survey of the sources of human happiness how can we pass by one of the purest and most

abundant of them all, I mean the joys of piety, and the prospect of everlasting continuance and everlasting happiness? What absence of outward goods and advantages, what loss of them cannot this supply! What enjoyment of good do they not sweeten and elevate, what sentiment of evil, what load of affliction do they not weaken and alleviate! Yes, when I soar in spirit to the realms above; when I behold every thing in its dependence on God, in its connexion with him; when I contemplate all as the work, as the arrangement, as the dispensation of his hand, as means to the greatest possible perfection; when I meditate on the intimate, the blessed relaxation in which I stand to the Almighty, the Allwise, the Allbountiful; when I think and feel that I am his creature, his subject, his child, that I am related to angels, and of divine descent; when I pour out my heart before him, as to my father who is pure love and benignity itself, commend all my fortunes and those of all my brethren to his supreme disposal and resign myself to his providence and to his promises; when I rejoice before him in my immortality, when I rejoice in the hope of drawing ever nearer to him, the Infinite, the supremely perfect, and of eternally increasing, in knowledge, in virtue, in happiness; how great, how blissful must not I then feel myself! What pure, what sublime delight then overflows my heart! What preponderance then do not my agreeable ideas and sensations acquire over the disagreeable ones! How inconsiderable must the latter be in comparison of the former! And who hinders you, men, christians, who hinders you from drawing daily to the full out of this source of satisfaction and pleasure.

No, in sources of happiness you are not wanting, my dear brethren; the brief survey we have now been making is a proof of it. They stand open to

you all. No human power can shut them against you without your consent. They invite you all to enjoyment. They offer you all refreshment, comfort, satisfaction, pleasure, to the poor as well as to the rich, to the low as well as to the high, to the unlearned as well as to the learned. They are no less beneficial than innocuous, as pure as they are copious. Every one may draw from them in full measure, without the least detriment to another ; none can draine them dry ; none can find them tasteless but by his own fault. No, nought but our own inattention and perverseness, nought but follies and sins can shut them against us, or disturb and weaken them and deprive them of their efficacy. Surely, my dear brethren, he that, surrounded by all these sources of satisfaction and pleasure, pants for satisfaction and pleasure in vain ; he that, with all these means of happiness, is yet unhappy ; he is so by his own fault ; let him not accuse nature, not the author of nature, not any dire necessity, but only himself. Prosperity and adversity rarely depend on us ; but happiness and unhappiness, are always in our power ; they entirely depend on our temper and mode of thinking, on the judgment we pass on ourselves and on outward things, and on the use we make of them all. Attention and reflection, wisdom and virtue and piety so certainly render us happy, as certainly as we resign ourselves to their influence and their direction. Conducted then by these guides, make use, my dear brethren, of the sources of happiness which your bountiful Father in heaven opens to you, and points out to you in his scriptures ; use them with caution and perseverance ; taste and see, in the enjoyment of them, how gracious the Lord is ; and glorify him, your sovereign benefactor, by a grateful, contented, and cheerful enjoyment of his bounties, which are not less various than they are great.

SERMON XLVI.

The Christian Doctrine concerning Happiness.



O GOD, thou hast ordained us all to happiness, and furnished us with all the capacities and means for becoming actually happy. But how few of us reach this glorious object! How slowly we approach it! How frequently, fascinated by error and sin, do we mistake the way to it? In what byeways and mazes do we not often pass the greater part of our lives! And then we complain of a deficiency of happiness; proceed to censure thy wise arrangements and ordinances, murmur at thy dispensations, and bewail the melancholy lot of human nature. And yet it is we who load ourselves with the heaviest burdens of life, and the misery under which we so often sigh, is misery of our own seeking, most of the sorrows that oppress us are the fruits of our own folly. O merciful God, O compassionate Father, have pity upon us; do thou lead us back from our deviations. Yes, thou hast not abandoned thy erroneous, thy guilty children; thou hast not left them to themselves. Thou hast sent as thy son from heaven, in him thou hast given us an infallible teacher of happiness, a safe and faithful guide to felicity, a mighty deliverer from all misery! Oh might we justly acknowledge thy parental kindness, and gratefully and worthily use it. Might we hearken to the voice of Jesus, who warns us, from thee, against every devious and erroneous path, and calls us back to the way of life; might we entirely submit to his guidance, and willingly follow his

directions to happiness. We are met in thy presence, O God, to imbibe his instruction on this subject ; grant that it may be salutary to us all. Let us learn from it the way to true happiness, and then walk cheerfully and resolutely on it. We implore these blessings of thee in the name of thy son Jesus ; and, as he condescended to teach us, we farther address thee : Our father, &c.



MATTHEW v. 2, 3, 4—10.

And he opened his mouth and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace makers ; for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake ; for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

IT is somewhat singular that the notions entertained by mankind concerning what belongs to happiness, and the means by which it is to be attained should be so various and contradictory, while they agree together in nothing more than in the desire, the earnest, the ever active desire of being happy and of ever becoming more happy. All are running and striving after one and the same object, after happiness ; all imagine they are pursuing the direct road to it ; think they perceive that object before them ; think themselves quite near to it ; and yet proceed such very different ways, frequently ways that are as directly opposite as evening to

morning, as darkness to light. How then can there be any other than deceived and weary travellers on the pilgrimage of life, how can it be otherwise than that most of you should fail of their mark, and when they think they are on the point of seizing the prize, discover, to their great astonishment, that they are farther from it than ever?—But why then do you venture without a guide in a wilderness, where there is only one right and safe way, and ten thousand devious turnings? Or why do you make choice of guides, who are themselves unacquainted with the right way, or suffer themselves to be drawn aside, by every lure, by every glimmering and deceitful light? Why do ye rather choose to go where you are carried away by the clamor of sensual appetites, the impetuous cravings of violent passions, the torrent of prevailing manners and opinions, and the tyrannical example of the multitude, than where the light of reason shines before you, where you see the footsteps of the most venerable of mankind, where you are accompanied by calm consideration, authentic certainty and the serene expectation of a desirable issue? Why not avail yourselves of the directions, the encouragements, the example of the guides and harbingers whom God has sent you from heaven for the express purpose of conducting you through this labyrinth, of teaching you to avoid every devious turning, and to strive after the mark of the prize along the smoothest, the safest path, and thus to be your light in darkness, your safeguard in danger, your staff and support under all impediments and difficulties, your precedents in doubtful cases? Why not follow Jesus, who, along the very way that you are called to go, has actually attained to the summit of glory; and will take to himself all those who voluntarily and resolutely follow him, and will make them partakers of his glory?

Oh submit to be taught by him what bliss implies, and how we may attain to the possession and enjoyment of substantial permanent bliss. He is worthy of your entire confidence ; the only infallible teacher of truth ; a shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, a guide, a ruler, who sacrificed himself for those whom the father gave to him, who died for them, and who will as certainly guide us aright, as certainly as God has raised him from the dead, and has placed him over all at his right hand in heaven. Receive then his doctrine in our text, concerning what confers real prerogatives on man, and promises him permanent bliss. Observe how widely his doctrine on this matter differs from the general notions of mankind, compare them both together, and then try whether his declarations do not commend themselves to the sound judgment and the conscience of all reflecting persons. It is the christian doctrine concerning happiness that I now intend to lay before you. We will discuss the important question : Wherein christianity teaches us to place our greatest prerogatives and to seek our bliss.

Come hither then, all ye who are panting after happiness, and perhaps have been long panting after it in vain ; come and hear what suggestions and directions heavenly wisdom gives you thereupon by her chief authentic teacher, Jesus.

Perhaps, (she calls to you by this her confident) perhaps ye think that to be happy riches are necessary, that a man should live in superfluity in order to live pleased, that he requires a large store for many years or even for centuries, that he may have no solitudes about future days. Perhaps you are dazzled by the splendor that surrounds the wealthy, the elegance of their dress, the magnificence of their dwelling ; the privileges that are granted them in society, the deference that is paid them, the respect

that they generally procure. But beware of mistakes; let not this fallacious outside deceive you, Means to happiness are not happiness; and the more easily those means may be misemployed, so much the farther do they commonly lead men off from that object. No, blessed are the poor, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Though wealth, as wealth excludes no man from the kingdom of heaven; though of itself it renders no man either incapable of being a christian, or of enjoying the bliss of the future life: Yet it renders both difficult to but too many of its possessors. To too many it is a burden, indeed a splendid burden, still however a burden, that weighs them to the earth, renders their progress on the path of life extremely dangerous, causing them to make a thousand trips, and misleading them into the grossest iniquities. To them the injunctions of christianity are but too often an unsupportable yoke, its promises have but few charms for them, and their sensual, worldly taste incapacitates them for the enjoyment of the purer delights of heaven.— And when christianity brings sufferings on its confessors, when it requires costly sacrifices of them, it must be extremely difficult for the rich man, it must be often impossible for him to prefer his duty to all things else, and by self denial and fidelity to secure to himself the recompences of the future world. It is well for the poor in spirit at such times, well for them whose desire of riches is moderate, whose hearts cleave not to earthly things, who know how to be content with a little! Their expectations will far seldomer fail them, their desires are far more easily and completely gratified. The road is free from a number of snares and stoppages; no anxious cares pursue them on it; to them the commands of christianity are far easier; to them no sacrifice of earthly goods that virtue or religion may require, appears

too burdensome ; to them the better futurity presents itself in the most charming form, and the treasures of heaven even now attract their principal inclinations.

Perhaps you think, (celestial wisdom farther addresses us by Jesus) perhaps you think that they alone deserve to be accounted happy, who live sumptuously and convivially every day, who shun every serious thought, every sentiment of sadness and woe, who turn away their eyes and their heart from every thing like trouble and misery, who are continually roaming about in a larger or smaller circle of noisy and fascinating amusements, and as it were sport, laugh and trifle away the whole of their lives. But be not deceived ; this is not the road to real, lasting happiness. Levity is the character of fools, and folly degrades and lessens the man, and punishes him sooner or later with remorse and trouble.— Mere sensual pleasure is seldom harmless, still seldom lasting, is frequently pernicious. Wild tumultuous joys are generally attended with surfeit, disgust, painful sufferings ; and all these things, even when they are the most innocent, leave the heart empty, and never satisfy the mind, which requires nobler food and employment. No, blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted. Blessed is the man to whom seriousness and reflection are neither strange nor burdensome, who frequently in the solemn hour of solitude bewails his sins and failings and those of his brethren, is indifferent and insensible to no species of human misery, is not ashamed of the tears of repentance and remorse, of grief, of pity, of affection, which a tender conscience, a sensible, a sympathising heart and the ardent aspiration after superior perfection, so frequently cause him to shed ! His seriousness promises and procures him far more real unadulterated

pleasure than the levity and wantonness of the fool. His sorrow will procure him lasting joy ; his generous and humane tears will open to him the richest sources of comfort. The testimony of a good conscience will bless him, peace and serenity will reign within his breast and when the world with its lusts are passing away and the pleasure of the sinner is changing into pain, then will joy embrace him, and his happiness will begin to be truly great.

Perhaps you think, thirdly, my pious hearers, that in order to be happy, in order to maintain our consequence and to live securely in the world, we should not patiently put up with any injury, should let no affront pass unresented, should submit to none, yield to none, assert all our rights to the uttermost, and hearken to the demands of every roused or irritated passion. But be not deceived, calls Jesus to us ; this is not the way that leads to content and peace of mind. Thus you will open to yourselves inexhaustible sources of disquietude, of trouble, of perplexity and remorse. Thus will you repulse your brethren from you, and close their hearts against you. Thus you can never have the true enjoyment of life. No, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed is the man, who has the command over himself, who knows how to control his anger, to subdue his aversions, and is not under the authority of any violent passion ! Blessed is he who is of a friendly meek and inoffensive spirit, who has learnt to have indulgence, to overlook failings, to support losses, to suffer wrong, to forgive injuries. He will live far more securely, will enjoy his life far more quietly and fully, will love more and be more beloved ; and the blessedness of love and the sweetness of peace of mind and the elevating sentiment of self command, will make every sacrifice easy to him and superabundantly compensate every loss.

Perhaps you may hold, fourthly, all the bounds in general which the precepts of religion and virtue set to your appetites and passions, as troublesome, as obstacles to your happiness ; perhaps you may imagine, that you would be completely happy, if you could with impunity break these bounds, if you could entirely give the rein to your desires and endeavors after worldly goods, after outward distinctions, after sensual pleasures, if you could throw off the restraints of religion and virtue ; perhaps you pity them as unhappy who have nothing so much at heart as to be ever becoming wiser and better and more pious. But how little are they, how much are you to be pitied ! You seek your liberty in bondage, your honor in what degrades mankind, your satiety in things that are ever whetting your desires, but never satisfy them. No, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled. Blessed are they who understand the whole value of virtue and piety, feel their entire beauty and loveliness, resign themselves entirely to their service with whom their intrinsic spiritual perfection is every thing, and who as earnestly long after it, and as strenuously strive after it as the hungry and the thirsty after food and refreshment. Their desires are directed towards the worthiest objects, towards objects that are worthy of their most cordial affection and their most zealous endeavors, and never are these noble desires deceived, never does God, the protector and rewarder of righteousness and virtue, allow them to want means for their gratification. They are sure not to miss of the mark after which they strive, and as they eternally proceed from one stage of perfection to another, so they advance from one degree of happiness to another.

Perhaps, fifthly, (celestial wisdom addresses us by Jesus) perhaps you imagine, that the man who would

be happy should think merely on himself, care solely about himself, concern himself about others only in so far as his own interests permit, shut his heart against all disagreeable sensations which the sight of misery may excite in him, and not suffer himself to be disturbed in the enjoyment of pleasure by any participation in the distresses of another. But believe me, this is not the way to happiness. By this means you contract your heart and the sphere of your activity. By this means you exclude yourselves from many ample and pure sources of pleasure. By this means you can neither promise yourselves the good pleasure of God nor the love and assistance of your fellow creatures. No, blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed is the man whose heart is pervaded by benevolence and compassion and officiousness towards all his brethren, is moved at the misery of another as at his own, who is apt to weep with them that weep, hastes to relieve the wants of the poor and needy, and does good to all men according to his ability. Thus both his heart and his sphere of operation expand alike, he lives in others as well as in himself, multiplies as it were his existence, and he enjoys the purest, the divinest joys ; the joys of beneficence. Him God will not be extreme to judge, him will the merciful parent of mankind treat far more graciously and indulgently still than he treated his brethren, and all his fellow creatures will vie with one another to shew him justice and indulgence, and to afford him help and relief in the time of need.

Perhaps you think farther, my pious hearers, that a continued attention to one's self, an unremitting vigilance over all the desires and appetites of our hearts, the care to submit them all to the will of God and to keep them all innocent and pure, the defeat and

mortification of all inordinate fleshly lusts, which religion and virtue enjoin, that these are endeavors and performances that set the most grievous bounds to your pleasure and are not compatible with your happiness. But from what follies and iniquities, from what enormities, from what thralldom and what misery will you be secure, unless order, innocence, purity prevail in your minds, unless you keep your heart, that primary source of human happiness and human misery, with all diligence? No, blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God! Blessed are they who keep free from evil thoughts and desires as well as from bad words and works, who war against all falsehood and impurity, who think and live in a godly manner, keeping clean from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit! Their virtue is not mere outside show; it is real and effective; it is firmly grounded, is immoveable; and just as real and durable is the peace of mind and the happiness that accompany it. They may comfort themselves with the eminent favor of God, the purest and holiest being, are capable of his more intimate communion, of his peculiar influence, and will hereafter in a better world be among his confidants, and be vouchsafed a nearer access to him, the fountain of all truth and perfection.

Perhaps you think, seventhly, you who wish and strive to be happy, that the peaceableness which religion and virtue recommend is incompatible with this happiness, that it betrays weakness of mind, that you cannot thus be sure of your property, of your honor, your distinctions, that for the preservation of them you should avoid no uneasiness, no troubles, no strife or contention, that by patience and forbearance you debase yourselves and should demand satisfaction for every injury. But mistake not, (says Jesus, the teacher of happiness sent from God)

this way can never lead to that object. It will carry you ever farther from it. Every advantage that you thus acquire, that you purchase with the loss of your peace of mind, the violation of your brotherly love, which is so rich in blessedness both to you and to your brethren ; and strife and discord are inexhaustible sources of confusion, of trouble, of misery. No, blessed are the peacemakers ; for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they who have patience with the failings and infirmities of their neighbor, who love and promote concord, to whom all that connects man with man and confirms reciprocal love and harmony among them is sacred, and who are ever ready, even at their own cost, to cement again the friendship that has been dissevered, and to knit faster the tie that binds friends together. They are like minded with God, the parent of us all, in regard to mankind they imitate him, the original of all perfection ; they are ever gaining a nearer resemblance to him in benignity and love ; they are his followers, are his children in an eminent signification, and as such may assure themselves of his peculiar favor.

Perhaps you think, (heavenly wisdom thus addresses us by Jesus) perhaps you think, that every loss of worldly property, every trouble, every affliction is in direct opposition to happiness, and that the advantages and satisfactions of virtue and piety are much too dearly purchased by the sacrifices they sometimes demand of their votaries. You lament over the virtuous, the pious, when under the pressure of unmerited poverty and contempt, if they are ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, if they are obliged to take up their cross and follow their master in patience and sufferings. But how little do they stand in need of pity even when God leads them along dark and rugged ways to perfection ! How much happier

are they even then than the voluptuary, who views every affliction with horror, sinks under every burden, confines all his hopes and prospects to this momentary life, and for every trifling advantage or transient pleasure denies the truth and acts against his conscience ! No, blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven ! Blessed are they who adhere faithfully to truth and virtue, to whom no affliction, which they cannot avoid without sin, is too heavy, no sacrifice which God and their conscience demand of them, is too dear ; who look more at invisible things than at visible, more at the crown of the conqueror than at the pains and toil of the conflict, and count all things for gain which brings them nearer to the mark of perfection. Great hereafter will be the reward of their fidelity, exuberant the compensation for the losses they have sustained, glorious the recompense of their sufferings, the prize of their fortitude and perseverance ! To share in the privileges of the victor will be their portion ; lofty, divine joys will they reap from having sown in tears, be the most blissful among the blessed, and take the highest ranks of honor, of power, of glory, in the kingdom of God.

These, my dear friends, these are the lessons, these declarations of the teacher sent from God, the restorer of human happiness. What conclusions are we now to draw from all this ? How learn from it the way that leads to real happiness ? How follow along it our divine leader and precursor ?—Learn—thus all these his lessons and declarations say to us—learn rightly to discriminate between prosperity and happiness, between prosperous and happy persons. All outward distinctions and property are prosperity ; all inward perfection and the content and satisfaction founded upon it is hap-

piness. Jesus is not our conductor to prosperity ; his doctrine promises us neither riches, nor high station, nor power and authority, nor a soft, voluptuous life. But he is our conductor to happiness ; his doctrines procure us rest, content, satisfaction, spiritual perfection. Prosperity, of all changeable inconstant things, is the most changeable and inconstant ; it falls to the lot of the fool as well as to the wise, to the wicked as to the good ; forsakes the man frequently in his life time, forsakes him certainly at his death, remains for ever locked up in his grave, and nothing but the good use of it accompanies him into the future world. Happiness is the end of the possession and the enjoyment of all the goods of fortune ; the only thing that is entirely and for ever our's ; the only thing that can be the exclusive property of the wise and good ; the only thing that, if it be once firmly fixed, neither death nor the grave can ravish from us ; the only thing that we can take with us into eternity, and that we there may incessantly enjoy, incessantly increase. Strive therefore not so much to be prosperous as to be happy. The former rarely depends, the latter always depends on ourselves. The former is a gift of providence, generally dispensed without regard to merit ; the latter is the fruit and reward of wisdom and of virtue.

Seek therefore your happiness, not in earthly, transitory things, not in riches, not in elevation and power, not in a soft voluptuous life. Seek it within you, and not without you. Seek it in the qualities and advantages of your mind and your heart, and not in the advantages of station, of rank, of honor and of respect. Reduce your appetites, your desires, your inclinations, your passions to order. Submit them all to the laws of truth and of christianity. Set bounds to your desires in regard to worldly things, give all your inclinations the best direction, let rea-

son, let the love of God and man bear rule over all your passions.

Seek your happiness in virtue, in the willing and resolute performance of your duty, in the unremit-
ted endeavor after higher perfection, in innocence of heart and purity of life, in a meek and gentle spirit, in the enjoyment and promotion of peace and concord, in benevolence and beneficence towards all men, in magnanimous sacrifices for truth and integrity.—Seek it in whatever is profitable to you and promises you pleasure, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, in whatever has the approbation of your conscience, the approbation of all the wise and upright, the approbation of God, and secures to you the loving kindness and the gracious retributions of your lord and judge, your father in heaven.—Seek, in short, not to seem happy, but actually to be so. Be not so merely in the opinion and in the judgment of others, but in deed and in truth. Prefer the quiet, unobserved enjoyment of real and lasting goods and advantages, the enjoyment of rational, sedate and cheerful reflection, the enjoyment of a good and quiet conscience, the enjoyment of a virtuous heart and life, the enjoyment of the satisfactions of beneficence, the enjoyment of a fervent devotion, the enjoyment of an assured and joyful prospect into a better world, prefer these enjoyments to all the marks of respect, all the pleasures and amusements that occupy the senses more than the mind, gratify the eyes more than the heart, afford more tumult than serenity, and shed more false lustre than gentle light around them. Seek only that, revere and love only that, strive only after that which can calm, rejoice, and bless you at every time. in every state, in silence as well as in noise, in the hour of reflection and devotion as in the hour of recreation, in death as in life, in the future as in the

present world. By these means, with such sentiments and efforts, ye will as certainly be happy and ever become more happy, as certainly as God, the father and giver of all happiness has promised it by his son Jesus.

SERMON XLVII.

Arguments against Vanity.



O GOD, our destination is great ; and thy goodness leaves us in no want either of means or encouragements for being and ever more completely becoming that to which thou hast destined us. Intelligent, wise, virtuous beings ; creatures, raising themselves from one stage of perfection and blessedness to another, thus ever coming nearer to thee their creator and father, and ever farther capacitating themselves for a superior better life, and for communion with thee ; is what we all might and should become. Hereto hast thou called us as men and as christians. Hereto hast thou given us, in thy son Jesus, the most perfect precursor and leader. But alas, too frequently, O God, too frequently we lose sight of him and of our destination, and of the dignity of our nature and the grand designs of thy wisdom and bounty ; unmindful of what we are and ought to be ; think, judge, act, as ignobly, as meanly as though we were creatures of a quite different, far inferior kind ; instead of allowing ourselves to be guided by that generous ambition, that avidity for real, durable perfection, which thou hast planted in our hearts, submitting to be governed by childish vanity ; and thus instead of rising, are ever falling lower ! O God of all mercies, do thou preserve our nature, the work of thy hands, from its total downfall. Do thou raise it again, by teaching us to think more justly, to strive after better and worthier objects and to hasten with unabated ardor towards the glorious mark which thou hast set before us. Let us ever perceive more

more plainly the folly and the danger of whatever might remove us from it, and ever avoid it with greater caution.— Bless to this end the lessons now to be delivered. Grant that we may thoroughly perceive and feel their truth, accept them freely, lay them up in a good heart and make a faithful use of them. For all this we beseech thee as the votaries of thy son Jesus, addressing thee farther in his name and words : Our father, &c.

PHILLIPIANS ii. 3.

Let nothing be done through vain glory.

THERE are faults and vices, which so manifestly appear to be what they really are, and the shameful nature and injurious effects whereof present themselves so clearly to the eyes of every person not totally destitute of thought, that none will venture a word in their behalf ; which all men every where, wherever they are found, and under whatever form they assume, immediately pronounce to be faults and vices, and abhor them as such, or at least account them worthy of detestation and abhorrence. This is the case, for example, with robbery murder, perjury, avarice, lying, open vengeance, the grosser and more depraved kinds of gluttony and voluptuousness. Their very name is infamy ; the bare suspicion of them pollutes ; and their baleful influence on the welfare of the whole community is so undeniable and apparent that they are

ever opposed by the majority, and therefore can never become universally prevalent, nor dare to hold up their heads in public without exciting horror.

But there are also other faults and vices, my pious hearers, that are so seldom entirely taken for what they are ; that artfully lurk under such a variety of harmless, or agreeable, and seducing forms ; and whose pernicious consequences are so little striking, and so little effect the generality of mankind : That we see them spring up, extend, multiply, and by little and little become more prevalent and universal, without shewing the smallest concern whether society in general, or individuals in particular, are likely to be injured by them. To this class, for instance, belong levity, a propensity to a life of dissipation, an extravagant fondness for social pleasures and pastimes, pomp, luxury, pride, vanity. All of them faults and vices which the more easily strike root; and may the more surely become predominant as their exterior is so very deceitful ; as the ideas we are apt to form of them are so vague and fluctuating ; as they excite so little dread and detestation, and consequently meet with so little resistance. But do they therefore cease to be what they are ? Do they therefore effect less mischief, because they do not occasion it directly, not immediately, not in so shocking and disgusting a way, but more silently more slowly, and more unobservedly ? Are not their attacks on our welfare so much the more dangerous, as they do not openly lay siege to it, but undermine it by stealth ? And now, if, understanding all our security and indifference, there be still real danger, nearer or remoter danger, ought not, at least, the public teachers of wisdom and religion to advertise us of it ? Nay, they should not only watch with us, but even for us ; and watch even then when the

generality abandon themselves to an improvident and heedless slumber !

Well then, allow me to do my duty this day in regard to one of the forementioned faults ; and this fault is VANITY. To me it appears more dangerous than perhaps it may seem to you. Probably I may have reflected more upon it, and more impartially than many of you. At least, it is my duty to tell you what bad and mischievous effects I fear it may occasion ; and it is your parts to see that they be prevented or removed. It is not petulance, but love, that may you firmly believe, sincere and real love for you, my dear hearers, an earnest desire of promoting your intrinsic perfection, which has suggested to me all I have to say on the subject ; and in same dispositions I hope you will hear and employ it. I shall by all means avoid particular applications. They shall be entirely left to your own judgment. The faults of which the apostle Paul warns christians in our text, are the faults whereof I intend to warn you. He says to them, “ Let nothing be done through vain glory,” or from a vain propensity to please. For making the properest use of this admonition, I shall now do two things : First, shew what vanity is, how it exhibits itself, and how it becomes criminal and vicious ; and then lay before you its mischievous effects, and thus provide you with the necessary weapons for warring against it.

Confound not vanity with allowable and generous emulation. This impels us along the way of wisdom, of virtue, of a beneficent and generally useful life, with a laudable ardor for obtaining the esteem of our countrymen and of mankind, or rather to make ourselves worthy of it, whether we succeed or not : The other, vanity inclines us to seek preeminence in all things, and particularly in trifling, little, estimable, or quite insignificant matters ; to be ever

hankering after approbation and praise ; and accordingly to place every thing that has any value only in regard to us, and only in any way belongs to us, or stands in connexion with us, in the most favorable point of view, and by all manner of means to give it consequence.

Confound not likewise vanity with pride or haughtiness. They are both faults, but faults not entirely alike ; and do not always go together.— Each may subsist of itself alone. If pride be not unfrequently connected with vanity, yet does it as often, probably still oftener, exclude it ; as vanity in return, is very frequently, nay, generally, without pride. Many are too proud to be vain ; many, very many, are only therefore vain, because they are not proud enough, or have not materials enough for pride. Pride founds itself more on the sentiment of inward power, and is the excessive dignification and evaluation of it : Vanity has more to do with outward things, which do not belong to ourselves, and possess no intrinsic value. It is on this account a still meaner fault, a still more ignoble quality than pride, and on the whole, occasions much more harm. However, the boundaries of these two faults cannot always be defined with exact precision ; they frequently run into one another ; are often confounded together in common conversation ; and if in combating them we should likewise confound them, we shall always be only taking one foe to our welfare for another, but never mistake a foe for a friend. Therefore, to the point !

What is vanity, and how does it appear ? Vanity has a very ample range ; it shews itself in very various ways. It in general consists in the fondness for and the endeavor to attract regard, to be distinguished from others, to set its advantages in the fullest light, and to give them an air of importance.—

As various as these advantages are, so various are the kinds and exhibitions of vanity. Thus the witty cause their wit, the rich their riches, the great their grandeur, to shine before men. Thus will beauty make others feel its sway, accomplishments their charms, talents their claims on admiration, science its influence on the human mind, and at times, even virtue her inherent authority over the human heart, and by the display and use of their privileges demand esteem, approbation, praise, submission, reverence; and if from such motives, and in such views, they speak, keep silence, act and shew themselves, then vanity mixes with the behavior of the virtuous, the learned, the skilful, the accomplished, or the fair; and, if these motives, these views determine frequently, if they habitually influence their discourses and actions, if they have greater weight with them, and act more forcibly upon them, than love towards what is good and true, more than the desire to please God, and to be useful to their fellow beings; then does this vanity with them become a vice, and deprive their advantages of the greatest part of their value.

We should closely attend to this distinction, my pious hearers. The desire of pleasing is natural to us all; it incites us all to shew ourselves to others on the best side; and to it we are undoubtedly indebted for many gratifications and advantages, more especially in regard to social intercourse. It prevents many sallies of base and hurtful passions; spares us the disgusting sight of many indecent and vulgar scenes; lessens the number of scandals and offences in the world; frequently gives rise to good actions; may even by imperceptible degrees, have a salutary influence on the dispositions of mankind; and is always a homage we pay to virtue and to the dignity of our nature. So long as the propensity is not the principal, not the predominant propensity, in

our soul, so long as it is kept in due subordination to what we owe to God and to religion, to truth and to duty ; so long as it employs no lawful means of gratification, none that injure and disunite mankind ; so long may we account it a good principle of action, and need not pronounce it criminal vanity.

But if this lust of pleasing has once got so far the command over us, that we no longer ask, what is true, what is right, what is agreeable to the will of God and to our particular duty ; but only, what will please ; what will procure us approbation and praise ; what will set our advantages in the most favorable light ; if it govern us so, that we strive to please every man, the fool as well as the wise, the vicious no less than the virtuous, such as are children in understanding, as well as those that think like men ; does it govern us so that we endeavor not only to display our advantages, but at the same time to obscure and diminish the advantages of others, and to bring them into suspicion ; does it govern us so as that we make serious business of whatever relates to outward figure, ornament, presentation and address, or the like, and bestow much time and care on such generally insignificant things ; does it in fine, so govern us, that, for the sake of pleasing others we allow ourselves to be persuaded to do even what is bad, at least what is ambiguous, that we dare not say and do what is right and fit, because probably it is not quite current, and adapted to the taste of the multitude, and not perform the duty, not adequately perform it, the neglect and omission whereof is probably thought an honor : Then, indeed our desire of pleasing, and of displaying our advantages is highly criminal ; then is it base and mean vanity ; vanity that is totally unworthy of the man and the christian !

And now how much do I wish to convince you my pious hearers, of what a multitude of corrupt and baleful consequences are produced by vanity in general, and in particular the propensity to please by outward things ! Accompany me in these considerations with silent attention, and thus lay up materials for farther reflection.

Vanity commonly deprives a man of what he inherently possesses, of that originality which makes him to be personally that and no other individual ; the turn of mind which causes him to view and to judge and to treat the things that are without and around him, on this and not on another side, and whereby he accordingly gives occasion to others to consider hundreds of things on a new and unobserved side, or in new and unusual combinations, and by that means to enlarge their horizon, to correct their judgment and their taste, and the like ; all this is generally impracticable among men that are swayed by vanity. No one will venture to be and to appear that which he actually is ; so to see, to judge, to treat other men or things as they all actually appear to him ; so to walk and to behave, as prompted by his sagacity, his dispositions, his taste, and his wants. Each will direct himself by the prevailing fashion ; each will be, or appear to be, what others are or seem to be. Accordingly, one will judge as the other judges ; and all of them so, as some few persons do, whose hap it is to prescribe the tone. Accordingly, one will behave himself like the other, manage his looks like the other, dress himself like the other ; and all so as chance, or the humor of some unknown person, or the folly and levity of a stranger, has thought fit to determine that men shall behave, and demean and dress themselves. Accordingly each man a hundred and a hundred times belies his taste, his understanding,

his feelings, for the sake of doing what others do ; is thoroughly sensible of the burden that oppresses him ; sighs under it in secret ; knows not properly who it was that laid it upon him ; and yet does not dare to cast it from him. Accordingly, he always frames and models himself by others ; is continually circumscribing himself on all sides more and more ; allows himself continually to be bound with more bands ; is continually becoming more and more unlike himself ; and shows himself a hundred times in his borrowed mask, for once that he appears in his natural mein. And hence necessarily arises a tiresome, disgusting uniformity in discourses, conversations, judgments, manners, and usages ; a pernicious stop, or a very slow progress, in the development of the human faculties and capacities ; nature is stifled by art, and the man is lost under the multitude of cases and coverings in which he is enveloped and disguised.

Vanity, particularly, in regard to outward and borrowed things, usually implies weakness, want of real merit, a deficiency in truly respectable qualities ; it is almost always the fault of empty heads, and little souls. Whoever is alive to personal worth, as a man, as a citizen, as a christian, as an upright father of a family, as a worthy mistress of a house, whoever knows and feels that he duly fills his station, does honor to his office, conscientiously discharges his duty, performs useful service to society : He likewise knows and feels that he merits approbation, esteem and honor ; he therefore does not seek it with anxiety, makes no parade of outward, little, insignificant advantages, which, when brought into competition with the former, are mere nothings, and which he himself can never regard as meritorious. But whoever is destitute of such real advantages ; feels no inward vigor and force in himself ; dis-

tinguishes himself from others, neither wisdom, nor virtue, nor a generally useful life ; possesses no actual merit ; and finds himself neither fitted nor inclined to acquire them, and yet would make some figure in human society, play a certain part, and force himself into attention and regard : He must indeed have recourse to such little artifices, and endeavor, by his pomp, his garb, his decorations, his figure, his outward carriage, to conceal, or in some measure to compensate the want of real advantages and intrinsic desert. A consideration that ought to deter every person, in whom one spark of generous fire is left, any sentiment of native dignity and power, from all vanity, and cover him with shame as often as he is tempted to seek his worth or his fame, in outward accidental things, that form no part of himself.

Vanity is, thirdly, the parent of innumerable errors ; it hinders a man from rightly perceiving and appreciating the value of things, and from honoring himself and other men according to the proper standard, and from judging of every object by what it really is. Vanity is the sworn enemy of truth, and the manly sentiment. Wherever that prevails, there will all deceive, and all be deceived ; there semblance will rarely be distinguished from reality ; every one is dazzled by show, takes art for nature, grimace for sincerity, lives more in an imaginary than in an actual world. What does not glitter is despised, rejected, though it were even the most precious of gems ! That alone which strikes the eye, which sparkles, is esteemed and prized, though it were even the flimsiest tinsel ! Where vanity prevails, there will wisdom, in her simple attire, there will virtue in her native beauty, pass unnoticed and unknown ; and if they venture to step forth into observation, they run the hazard of being hooted and derided. But folly, in her party colored, tawdry

dress, and vice in her pomp, and with her gorgeous train, will command attention, approbation, esteem, encomiums and reverence, from all ranks and conditions of the vain unthinking crowd. I will speak more plainly. Where vanity prevails, and gives the law, there will a man not be esteemed as a man; there the rich man will be respected because he is rich, and the poor man be slighted because he is poor; there no inquiries will be made about wisdom, none about virtue, but about appearance, incomes, and refined, engaging manners; there it is a matter of no concern, who is the humanest person, the usefulest citizen, the best christian, but who is the most agreeable companion, has the finest taste, is the most perfect echo of the prevailing fashion; there no one entertains a thought about merit, but about the semblance of merits; there the clothes determine the worth of the man; there are amiable vices, and odious virtues; there will ten moral faults, ten really bad actions, be more readily overlooked, than one sin against the rules of good breeding and fashionable deportment.

Vanity is, fourthly, a manifest and continued affront to the whole society. The vain man is seeking for ever to blind us, to impose upon us, and to lead us into errors; to distort, to disguise every object, and to exhibit it in a false point of view. We are to take him for more than he is worth; to attribute to him more than he has; to trust him beyond his means; to have a better opinion of him than he deserves. He is ever busied in extorting from us the esteem and reverence due only to merit; ever striving to appropriate the deference and respect, which of right belong only to wisdom and virtue, to himself and his clothes and his equipage and his borrowed outward splendor; or to steal away himself and his person from our merited contempt,

amidst the bustle and glare that surrounds him. Certainly an affront that should induce every wise and good man to be so much the more on his guard not to suffer himself to be cheated, and never to bow the knee before the idols of vanity.

This is not all : Vanity enervates a man : Renders him delicate and soft ; deprives him of all taste for what is really great, what in itself, and at all times, is beautiful and respectable, the taste for a noble and exalted simplicity ; it unfits him for all difficult, toilsome, magnanimous actions, from which no praise, no renown is to be expected, all the domestic tranquil virtues, all generally useful activity in concealment ; supports and feeds him with impertinences and trifles ; teaches him to play with words and sentiments with which he has no concomitant thoughts and feelings ; deludes him with lying flatteries ; conceals from him the deficiencies and wants of his understanding, and robs him at length of all sentiment of intrinsic dignity, and a superior destination. It keeps him constantly amused with airy bubbles ; ever artfully rendering them of greater importance, and by that very means making what is really important ever more indifferent or more difficult to him. It gives every trifle, every transient glare, every fleeting charm, so much value in his eyes, that he has neither time nor abilities left for caring about any thing of consequence, any thing lasting, any thing valuable.

Hence it follows, sixthly, that vanity, and in particular that which regards externals, degrades the man, and is in opposition to his dignity. And indeed my pious hearers, when I represent to myself a creature such as man, a creature that is formed after the image of God, that is so capable of greater things, that is immortal, that is ordained to strive after ever improving perfection ; a creature that is

able to proceed so far in knowledge and in virtue, and may make such various, noble, and in their consequences unceasingly profitable uses of his time and his faculties : When I represent to myself man, as he truly is, and then call to mind one who employs a great part of the day, and consequently a great, and that the best part of his life, in attending to his perishable body, in giving his figure some additional charm, in properly adjusting himself in regard to his dress, his decoration, his whole exterior, exactly according to the newest predominant taste and fashion ; how earnestly he reflects, attentively considers, advises with himself, chooses, rejects, and chooses again ; when I thus figure to myself a man, I must avow it—I am tempted to be ashamed of this man, of my brother ; I pity him for being so deeply fallen from his dignity ; so far beneath his destination, so very forgetful of his high descent, of his affinity with superior beings, and with God himself, and that he is so little that which he might and was designed to be !

Yet more. Vanity, particularly in regard to outward things, is the strongest nourishment to levity. He who has been frequently, so long, so earnestly, occupied with trifles, who ascribes to them so much value, is ever living and moving in trifles and among trifles, constantly making them the subject of his conceits and fancies, taking a zealous part in all the vicissitudes they undergo, as well as in all kinds of sensual amusements, often making them his principal business, how can he ever have a taste for serious, truly great and elevated objects ? How perceive and feel their worth, their importance ? How ever become a man, and learn to think in a manly way ? Is not his life, how far soever he may have past the years of youth, a progressive, an ever renewing childhood ? How can the thoughts of God, of religion, of a fu-

ture and better life, find access to him, acquire his utmost attention, entirely occupy his thoughts, and present themselves to his mind in their full effect? How can these thoughts connect themselves with all his affairs and business, with all he thinks and does in ordinary life, at home and abroad, and thus be efficient to his improvement and happiness!—How often, on the contrary, will not his vanity call him off from the practice of domestic devotion! How often prevent him from participating in the public worship of God! How often distract him when there, and turn his attention to quite different objects from those to which it ought to be directed! How quickly will the sight of some object of vanity efface the good impressions he has there received! How insipid will every thing imperceptibly become to him, that does not relate to splendor, show, gentility, elegance, sport, amusement, and the like! And where levity prevails how can a person become wise and virtuous, how a christian, how can he labor with intense application at his improvement, how attain the ends of its being, how qualify and prepare himself for that superior life, which most assuredly does not consist in fopperies?

Where vanity prevails my pious hearers, and this too is a highly corrupt effect of it; where vanity prevails, there also prevails envy, jealousy, harsh judgment and slander. The man will not only shine, but he will shine more than others, he will shine alone. He will have the handsomest figure, the most agreeable manners, the genteelest carriage, the finest taste, the best manner of life, the newest mode; is determined to outdo, but not to be outdone. With what acute and piercing eyes does he therefore contemplate those who have the same pretensions! How curiously does he spy out their failings! How eagerly swell them! How willingly

does he hearken to the ill that is said of them ! How artfully does he diminish or disguise what is good or beautiful or eminent in them ! And when he is not able to do this, when he is forced to do them justice, whether he will or no ; does he see them with the same hearty, brotherly benevolence with which the wise man and the christian behold whatever is beautiful and good ? Does he then feel no mortifications of his self love ? Is he not thus frequently deprived of all social pleasure ? And may then no emotions of hatred and animosity arise in his heart, no secret grudge have birth ? May not the affection we owe to each other, as men and as christians, be weakened ? Are not, however, all these low, disgraceful passions ; and must not vanity, which engenders and feeds them all, be low and disgraceful too ?

In fine, vanity is in direct opposition to the spirit of christianity. Christianity, which every where preaches to us modesty and meekness ; which requires us to be virtuous in silence, and to endeavor more at pleasing God than man, to look more at invisible than visible things. What beautiful precepts on this head do the apostles of our Lord particularly address to the professors of the christian doctrine that are of the softer sex ! They are to distinguish themselves from others, not by the putting on of costly apparel, but by good and generous actions. And whoever does so, whoever aims at this distinction, needs none of the arts of vanity for procuring esteem and honor. They are to adorn the hidden man of the heart, that which is not corruptible, to adorn their minds with knowledge, with wisdom, with virtue, and to excell others in the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. This, says the apostle, is in the sight of God of great price ; this is, even in his eyes, of great value ; this pleases him, on whose judgment and complacency all depends.

And what an example on this head has Jesus also left us! Not only of no foreign, borrowed, exterior privilege did he boast; no, he boasted not of even real, intrinsic, actually great prerogatives: He rather concealed them; used them not in empty views; never did any thing for the sake of being admired; displayed his wisdom and his superior perceptions, not for astonishing, but for awakening his hearers. Were it possible, that a vain man should possess but even a small portion of the power and prerogatives of Jesus, what regard, what noise, would not he excite with it! How much would he obscure, confound, and lay prostrate all about him! How far was our Lord from all faults and weaknesses of this kind! How justly did he judge of the value of men and things! No semblance could deceive him; no approbation, no praise could dazzle him; truth, intrinsic goodness, sincerity and uprightness were all with him. And how little did he seek his own! How much he forgot himself in his zeal for the salvation of his brethren!—And we, how are we to be christians, the scholars, the followers, the friends of this Jesus, in some sort filling his place among mankind, while we allow ourselves to be governed by vanity; while we are anxiously protruding and displaying, by all possible means, every true and false, every personal and borrowed advantage, and more particularly outward and most insignificant things, and thus losing time and ability and inclination for better and more noble concerns, for truly christian exercises and actions! No, no, vanity is manifestly in opposition to christianity, as well as to reason; is in opposition to the dignity of human nature, to our intrinsic perfection, to the good of the whole community.

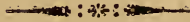
And now, let every man judge, whether it be so slight a fault as is generally imagined; whether it is

not attended with the most corrupt and pernicious effects ; whether we have not the weightiest reasons for cautioning such as we love from this terrible source of folly and evil. I am well aware that vanity does not yet prevail among us to such a degree as it may elsewhere in cities and larger towns, and that therefore all its bad consequences are not yet so conspicuous among us as they may be there, and as I have represented them to be in its natural effects. But, what it is not, and does not yet, it may and will, sooner or later, become and do, if it meet with no restraint. I likewise very well know, that the generality of outward things, that, in particular, whatever relates to dressing and decorating the body, in and of themselves are quite indifferent ; but in their principles, in the manner of regarding and treating them, and in the influence they may and actually have upon our way of thinking, they certainly cease to be indifferent. I, lastly, very well know, that the single expression, “ one should not distinguish one’s self, one ought not to be particular,” is sufficient of itself, with the generality, to defeat at once all that the teacher of wisdom and religion can say on this subject. But how pointless soon would all these terrible weapons of vanity be, if only a few, truly wise, good and respectable persons would unite together to stem the torrent, and content themselves with the sentiment of their own intrinsic worth, and the approbation of a small number of eminently intelligent and virtuous persons ! What a mortal blow would not thus be given to vanity ! And may not this, soon or late, be expected, be hoped for among christians ? In the mean time, however, I will, as I said at the beginning, make no particular application, censure none, prescribe no laws to any, not peremptorily condemn or blame what, abstractedly considered, is totally indifferent,

My design has been only to furnish matter for reflection to such as are able and willing to think, and to strew seed, that probably here and there may fall into some generous hearts, there strike root, spring up in concealment, and in time bear fruit. “He therefore that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

SERMON XLVIII.

Rules for rightly Appreciating the Value of Things.



O GOD, who art pure love and benignity, and intendest only happiness, how many capacities, how many means for being happy hast thou also granted to us ! Our senses and our mind, nature and religion, the visible and the invisible, the present and the future, all numberless sources of satisfaction and pleasure, all promise and procure us delight, all are ordained and adapted to render us constantly more perfect and happy. Yes, thou, the affectionate, beneficent parent of the universe, providest for our body and for our soul, for our animal and for our intellectual wants, for outward welfare, and for our inward perfection, for our first, terrestrial, and for our superior, eternal life, for what may facilitate and render agreeable our course to the mark, and what can secure to us the actual attainment of it. O God, how gracious, how bountiful thou art ! How much hast thou done for us ! With what parental care provided for our welfare ! Oh that we but loved ourselves as thou lovest us, and provided as carefully for our own happiness, as thou providest for it ! Thou hast made us rational, freely acting creatures. It is our business to choose between the good and the bad, between the better and the worse, to distinguish between semblance and reality, to elevate ourselves above the sensible and the visible, and to learn to connect the future with the present. Our happiness is to be the consequence of our wise and good behav-

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ior ; and this must give it firmness and stability, and sweeten to us the enjoyment of it. But we frequently err in our judgment and in our choice ; we frequently suffer ourselves to be deluded by the semblance of things ; we often let sensuality get the better of our reason ; often prefer deceitful, fugacious, transient goods and pleasures to the most essential and durable advantages and blessings. And therefore it is that we are so often discontented and wretched ; therefore we are so often compelled to complain of the want of satisfaction and happiness. O God, O merciful God, lead us back from our deviations. Teach us better to understand thy kind, beneficent designs, and to think and act more conformably with them. Let the light of thy truth shine constantly more on the path of our life, that we may walk it with ever increasing intelligence and safety. Grant that we may ever judge more justly of the various goods and advantages that we meet with on it, offering us satisfaction and pleasure, joy and felicity, and learn ever more wisely to choose between them. Bless to this end our reflections on the doctrines of religion which are now to be delivered to us. Let us perceive and feel their truth, and make use of them as a light unto our feet and a lantern to our paths in the whole of our future deportment. We ask it of thee as christians with filial confidence, addressing thee farther in the name of thy son, after whom we are called : Our father, &c.



PSALM iv. 6.

There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ?

MAN may possess a variety of goods, enjoy many pleasures, acquire many advantages, seek and obtain many kinds of perfection and happiness ;

but all of them are not of equal value, and rarely can we possess and enjoy them all, and much seldomer all in the same proportion or degree. These goods, these pleasures, these advantages, these kinds of perfection and happiness, are not always compatible with each other. The acquisition and the possession of one frequently militates with the possession and the acquisition of another. The one frequently cannot be purchased or acquired without the loss or the voluntary sacrifice of the other. There are cases where I can neither duly cultivate and improve my mind, nor enjoy the pleasure arising from the proper discharge of my duty, without weakening my body and hurting my health; cases wherein I cannot maintain and secure my peace of conscience and serenity of mind, without manifest loss of many earthly advantages; cases wherein I must choose between the good pleasure of God and the approbation and esteem of mankind, between inward perfection concealed from the notice of the world, and outward splendid distinctions; between sensual and intellectual pleasures, between present and future happiness; and must relinquish one for the sake of the other. Persons who act not upon firm principles, who neglect to take wisdom and virtue and piety for their guides, are very liable in such cases to be confused and thrown into distress. The less a man knows of the value of things; the more he suffers himself to be dazzled by outside appearance and show; and the more wavering his sentiments and inclinations are; so much the more uncertain will he be in this election; and so much the oftener will he prefer the evil to the good, the worse to the better. To guard you against this tormenting and dangerous uncertainty, and to furnish you with sure motives of determination in such cases, is the scope of my present address. Accordingly, I mean

to answer the question in our text : " There be many that say, Who will shew us any good," or What good, What is the best on every occasion ?

We have already, at various opportunities, poized the value of the principal objects that relate to human happiness, or such as are generally thought to belong to it. We have investigated the worth and excellence of life, of health, of riches, of honor, of sensual, of intellectual pleasure, of piety, of virtue, of devotion, of religion, of public worship ; we have examined the advantages of solitary, of social, of busy, of rural life, of domestic happiness, of friendship, of liberty, of learning, and others ; and we have found that they all in and for themselves deserve our regard and esteem, that they all more or less contribute to our happiness. Let us now compare these things together, or see which of them we should prefer to the other, which we ought to sacrifice or relinquish for the sake of the other, when we cannot obtain or possess them at once. Wouldst thou proceed safely in thy choice, my christian brother, then let the following rules and decisive arguments be the guide of thy conduct.

In the first place, prefer the necessary to the agreeable and convenient. That is the foundation of happiness ; this a part of the structure thou art to erect upon it. Of that thou canst not be deprived, without being miserable ; the want of this only lessens thy prosperity and thy pleasure. It is agreeable to increase riches and to live in opulence : But necessary to have unsullied conscience, and not need to be ashamed before God or man. It is agreeable to be esteemed by all men ; but necessary to be assured of the good pleasure of God, and to be satisfied with one's self. It is agreeable to acquire a various and extensive knowledge of all that can content and gratify the inquisitive mind ; but necessary to be concerned

about acquiring solid notions of the affairs of our station and calling. It is agreeable to form various connexions with many other people, and to enlarge our sphere of action; but necessary conscientiously to comply with the demands of the closer connexions in which we stand, as parents, as spouses, as citizens, and to be active and useful in the narrower circle wherein providence has placed us. It is agreeable to live long, and in the enjoyment of a vigorous health; but necessary to live virtuously and piously and generally useful. It is agreeable to be decked with outward distinction, and to be surrounded with a certain splendor; but necessary to acquire intrinsic perfection, and to provide for its constant improvement. It is convenient to be free from all kinds of constraint, to follow one's inclinations of every sort, to have others at one's service, and to divide one's time between pleasure and repose; but necessary to discharge faithfully the duties of our station and calling, and to repay, by reciprocal service, the services we receive from society. All the former we may dispense with, and not be unhappy; but with the latter not. Prefer, therefore, in all cases, what is necessary, that without which thou canst not be happy, to what is merely agreeable and convenient, what merely in certain respects increases or raises thy happiness; prefer a good conscience to all riches; the being well pleased to God, to all human applause; the knowledge necessary to thy post and calling, to every other kind of knowledge; thy domestic and civil connexions and relationships, to all other connexions and relationships; a virtuous and generally useful, to the longest and healthiest life without virtue and general utility; thy intrinsic perfection, to all outward distinctions; thy duty, to all conveniences and independency:—Be ready to sacrifice all these with joy whenev-

er thou art obliged to choose between them.— The former are necessary and essential to thy happiness; of the latter thou canst be deprived and yet be happy.

Prize, farther, if thou wouldst rightly judge and choose, prize those benefits and advantages which thou hast thyself acquired as the consequences and recompense of thy wise and good behavior, at a much higher rate than such as have fallen to thee, without thy procuring and without thy desert, by means of some favorable concurrence of outward things; even though they may be in and for themselves far greater and more brilliant than the former. A moderate livelihood, that thou hast earned by prudence and honest skill, by assiduity and labor, is of far more value than the greatest riches thou hast inherited, or hast acquired by any fortunate occurrence. The lowest dignity, the most inconsiderable importance, to which thou art raised by thy own abilities, and the services thou hast rendered to society, confers upon thee more real honor than all the lustre accruing to thee, however great by birth, or that can reverberate upon thee from the high and mighty with whom thou art connected. The advantages of mind and heart, which thou mayest consider as the fruit of thy virtuous efforts, of thy unremitted struggles after higher perfection, should be dearer to thee than all the gifts and talents, though never so great, for which thou art indebted to nature or the first rudiments of education. The testimony of a good conscience, founded on the inward sentiment of thy integrity, and the recompense of thy blameless and prudent conduct, should be of more account with thee than the flattering approbation and the loudest applause of men, who seldom know thee thoroughly, and who, for the most part, judge more from semblance than from reality. The esteem and affection

shewn thee on thy own account, on account of what thou actually art and dost, which is bestowed upon thee as an intelligent and good person, as a useful member of society, should be of far more worth to thee than the profoundest reverence paid thee on account of thy quality, thy office, or thy wealth. For all the goods and distinctions that accrue to thee more from thyself than from fortune, thou canst neither obtain nor preserve without the use and application of thy nobler capacities and powers, without becoming actually wiser and better, and more perfect; and this wisdom, this moral benefit, this perfection remains with thee forever, abides by thee even when thou hast lost all those outward goods and privileges, when thou passest over into a state wherein they will no longer avail, and cease to have any worth.

Prefer, thirdly, my christian brother, who wouldst form a right judgment of the goods, the pleasures, the advantages of this life, of what belongs, or is deemed to belong to human happiness, and wouldst choose from amongst these things like a wise man, prefer what is in thy power to those things which depend not on thee, but purely on outward circumstances and accidental causes. After the former thou wilt not strive in vain; they are what thou mayst assuredly, thou mayst constantly have and enjoy: Whereas, in pursuit of the latter, thou wilt frequently throw away thy time and dissipate thy faculties, and wilt never be sure of their continuance. It is in thy power to maintain the command over thyself, to shake off the yoke of error, of prejudice, and of moral servitude; but it depends not on thee whether thou shalt rule over others, or be in subserviency to them; whether thou shalt fill the post of commander, or that of a subordinate. It is in thy power, by a wise and christian temper, to acquire

the blessedness of a serene and contented heart ; but it depends not on thee to enjoy the boon of wealth, of might, or of exalted station. It is in thy power to cultivate thy mind, to purify and to improve thy heart ; but it depends not on thee to render thy outward circumstances as flourishing and brilliant as thou couldst wish. It is in thy power to do what thy station and calling exact, with consciousness and integrity ; but it depends not on thee to effect so much good by it, about thee, and to have so much influence on the general welfare, as thou fain wouldst. It is in thy power to distinguish thyself above others by sincerity and virtue ; but it depends not always on thee to exalt thyself over them by extraordinary talents and endowments, or by peculiar merits. It is in thy power to enjoy the complacency of God, thy sovereign ruler and judge, and to rejoice in his favor ; but it depends not on thee to obtain the applause of thy contemporaries, or to secure the favor of the great and powerful of the earth. It is in thy power to gain the love of thy fellow creatures by gentleness, kindness and beneficence ; but it depends not on thee to be honored, admired or promoted by them, or even to be esteemed and rewarded according to thy desert. It is, finally, in thy power to live virtuously and piously, and thus to prepare thyself for a superior state, but it depends not on thee to perform a great and shining part on the theatre of this world, or to attain to the extremest pinnacle of the age of man. Waste not, therefore, thy time and thy abilities in striving after goods, after eminencies, after pleasures that depend not on thee, and which as often and still oftener fall to the lot of those who have never sought nor deserved them, than to such as have earned them, and to whom they are due ; but apply them to what is in thy power, so wilt thou

never employ them in vain, and thy aim, thy felicity, will infallibly be thy reward.

Prefer, fourthly, if thou wouldst judiciously determine between the objects that relate to human happiness, or are reckoned of that number, prefer activity to rest. Rest, inactive rest, is properly only defect, only limitation, only the effect and indication of weakness. Activity alone is life, is enjoyment, is happiness. The more active thou art and the more prudent, the more beneficial thy activity is; so much the more perfect art thou, so much the more dost thou resemble the deity. Wilt thou then triumph in existence, wilt thou be happy, and happy in an eminent degree; then strive not after rest as thy object, but enjoy it only as the means to greater activity; and prefer always that which occupies thy faculties in a proportionate degree, and which promises thee recompence and enjoyment after labor and toil, to that which leaves thy powers unemployed, which lulls thee into sloth, and promises thee pleasure or benefit that costs thee nothing. Think therefore for thyself, and decline not study and research, rather than barely let others think for thee, and simply repose in their opinions and decisions. Rather labor thyself, and by laboring exercise thy talents, than merely let others labor for thee, and enjoy the fruits of their labors in indolent repose. Prefer a busy mode of life, an office, a trust, that keeps thy mind in greater activity, and leaves thee little leisure to any other mode of life, to any other charge that employs thee but little, or not at all, even though this be far more profitable and considerable than the other. Prize the pleasure that is the natural fruit of thy reflection and industry, that thou hast purchased with labor and toil, in the sweat of thy brow, far before any other presented thee by chance, and which thou mayst simply enjoy, without any

previous preparation and any desert of thy own.— The former will render thee far more perfect, far more contented and happy than the latter; and no endeavors, no toil is lost, which conduces to this end; but thou wilt find it gain, and gain still abiding with thee, when the languor of inactive repose, and its surfeiting enjoyment, leaves thee nothing but melancholy reflections behind.

Wouldst thou, fifthly, my christian brother, learn rightly to deem of the goods, the privileges, the pleasures that constitute human happiness, or are reputed to do so, and wouldst choose between them as a prudent man; then prefer the intellectual to the sensual, that which renders thy spirit more contented and perfect, to what procures thee pleasure and delight by means of thy senses alone, or promotes thy outward welfare. Animal life, health, and vigor of body, abundance of earthly goods, are undoubtedly desirable things; but intellectual life, health and vigor of mind, riches in knowledge, in wisdom and virtue, are far, far more desirable.— The former may as easily become prejudicial as profitable to us; may as probably render us wretched as happy, and a thousand accidents may deprive us of them; these are and constantly remain substantial goods; can never be pernicious to us; but render us continually and forever happy. The former are without us, belong not necessarily to ourselves; are only connected with us for a longer or a shorter time: These belong essentially to self, are indissolubly connected with us, and subsist as long as we ourselves subsist. Never hesitate then, to sacrifice the health of thy body to the health and the life of thy soul, the riches that consist in gold and silver to the riches of wisdom and virtue, thy outward circumstances to thy inward perfection, if thou art obliged to choose from between them, if thou

canst not possess and preserve them together. The former are only the occasions, the means of happiness : These are happiness itself. Beware of preferring the means to the end, or of striving as earnestly after them as after these. Station, rank, might and authority, are certainly brilliant distinctions ; but a cultivated understanding, preserved integrity, uncorrupted faith, pious, christian dispositions, a pure heart, a blameless, beneficent life, greater similarity to Jesus, greater similarity to God, are far, far more valuable distinctions. The former belong to thy outward condition, and change immediately with it : These adorn thy spirit, and are, like thyself, immortal. Let not them then, but these be the ultimate aim of thy endeavors and desires.— Sensual pleasures are undoubtedly real pleasures, and, when they are moderate and harmless, are worthy of thy wishes and thy proportionate endeavors ; but far purer, far nobler still are the pleasures of the mind and the heart ; the pleasure which the knowledge of truth procures, the discharge of our duty, beneficence towards our brethren, advancement in goodness, communion with God, and gladness in him, the animating prospect of a better life. The former we hold in common with the beasts of the field ; the latter connect us with superior existences, and with the deity himself. Those frequently leave heaviness, disgust, and pain behind them ; these are as beneficial as innocent, and never lose of their value nor their sweets. Therefore let them not hinder thee in the acquisition and enjoyment of these ; let not sensuality, but reason, be thy guide in the selection of thy pleasures ; prize that which satisfies and cheers thy mind and thy heart far above all that flatters thy senses ; and make no hesitation to offer up these when thou canst not enjoy them both. So wilt thou prefer reality to ap-

pearance, the essential to the agreeable, and fix thy happiness on a solid basis.

Wouldst thou, in the last place, rightly appreciate the advantages, the pleasures that relate to human happiness, and discreetly choose between them, in cases where they cannot subsist together ; then prefer the durable to the transient, the eternal to the temporal. Thou wishest not merely for a few days or years, thou wishest to be happy forever. Seek therefore thy happiness, not in what lasts only for a few days or years, and then vanishes away ; seek it principally in such objects as are unfading and ever permanent. All outward things that now favor and please and delight thee, are transitory, and of short duration ; only thy inward perfection, the perfection of thy spirit remains forever. What is more uncertain than the possession of riches ? What more transient than earthly elevation, than the respect and the honor of men ? What is more deceitful than their favor ? What more fleeting and vain than sensual pleasure ? What more perishable than health and strength, than life itself ? To what accidents, what changes and revolutions, are not all these advantages and possessions liable ? Who can confide in them but for a year, but for a day, but for an hour with perfect assurance ? And how inevitable is, sooner or later their total loss ! Nothing of them all will remain with thee in death and in the grave ; nothing of all these will accompany thee into eternity ; nothing of all these will retain even the smallest value in that better world to which thou art hastening ! No thither thou wilt be only attended by thy intellectual advantages, thy good dispositions and actions ; there nothing will avail thee except wisdom, virtue, integrity, a sound understanding, a well regulated heart, and a happy alacrity in the exercise of justice and mercy. These alone are last-

ing advantages and possessions; advantages and possessions that are not subject to the vicissitudes of things which neither death nor the grave can ravish from thee. If thou learn here to think rationally and nobly; if thou learn here to govern thyself, to conquer thy lusts; if thou learn here to use all thy faculties and capacities according to his will who gave them to thee, and to the good of thy brother; if thou learn to love God above all things, and thy neighbor as thyself; if thou acquire here an abundant, effective inclination to all that is right and good, to all that is beautiful and great; if thou make at present the discharge of thy duty, thy joy, and beneficence thy pleasure; then art thou happy, and wilt remain so forever, even though thou art neither rich, nor great, nor powerful, nor healthy, nor vigorous, nor of long life. Oh never forget then, that all visible things, however brilliant and charming, are transient, and only remain for a little while; but that thy mind is immortal, that thy future destination is great, that this life is only a preparation for a higher, and that therefore in regard to thy real felicity, thy whole concern is this, that thou advance the perfection of thy mind, answer to thy grand destination, and render thyself capable and worthy of that superior life.

And these, my pious hearers, are the decisive reasons, these the rules that should guide us in our judgment and our choice of the objects which relate to human happiness, or, are so reputed, and will certainly guide us aright. If, in regard to all the goods, the affairs, the advantages, the pleasures and joys of this life, we prefer the necessary, to the merely convenient and agreeable, what we acquire by reflection and skill, to what accident and fortune bestow, what is in our power to what does not depend upon us; if we prefer activity

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to rest, the spiritual to the sensible, the lasting to the transient, and eternal to temporal: Then shall we make no step in vain on the way that leads to happiness, and as certainly lay our hand on the glorious prize as we pursue that way.

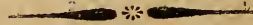
SERMON XLIX.

The Vanity of all Earthly Things.



OGOD, the inexhaustible fountain of being, of life, of happiness, thee we adore in the profoundest humility as the one Eternal and immutable; and the thought of thee, our creator and father prevents us even under the deepest conviction of our vanity and the vanity of all earthly things, from being spiritless and dejected. Yes, we feel that we are extremely feeble and frail, and that all that surrounds us, is as weak and transitory as ourselves. By every day that we pass we approach nearer the term of our course, and with it the moment, when every thing visible vanishes from our view and sinks into night. Though here thou conferrest on us many blessings, many satisfactions and pleasures; yet their possession is extremely uncertain, their enjoyment is but of short duration. Nothing could console us amidst this manifold vicissitude, nothing satisfy our minds ever panting after happiness, were we unacquainted with thee and thy gracious dispositions towards us, did we not believe and know that thou art goodness and love from everlasting to everlasting. Yes, in this sentiment we have a firm, immoveable ground of serenity and content. By thee we are, by thee we subsist, by thee we already enjoy innumerable benefits, and by thee we may hope to continue eternally, and be eternally happy. Oh might this grand, this blessed sentiment be constantly present to us; might it be our guide, our teacher, our comforter on every path of our lives! How justly should we not then judge of all things, how wisely use all things, how safely and confidently proceed

to our destination ; Oh teach us then to hold the things of this world for what they are, to moderate our wishes and desires in regard to them, and to look more at the invisible than at the visible. Bless likewise to the promotion of these views the meditations we are now about to begin. Lead us to know the truth, and by the knowledge of it to become wise and blessed. We implore it of thee with filial confidence, as the votaries of Jesus ; and, reposing a firm faith in his promises, farther address thee saying : Our father, &c.



ECCLESIASTES i. 2.

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

SOME truths there are which every person allows to be as certain as they are important ; and yet, in regard of most men, are as barren and unfruitful as if they deemed them trifles, or doubtful hypotheses. We ought not to be surprized at this. Man, corrupted man, is a creature seldom consistent with himself, and whose actions are generally in contradiction to his knowledge. Whence does this arise ? He hardly stops at common notions, which, because they are common, affect him but little, or even not at all. He loses himself amidst the prodigious multitude of the objects to which they relate. He gives himself no concern about the particular relation every truth has to him and his moral situation, knowing beforehand that such investigations must end in his humiliation, his con-

fusion, his embarrassment, and his disquiet. Who doubts, (that I may explain what I advance by a familiar example) who doubts for a moment about the vanity of all earthly things? Who does not believe that our lives are uncertain and short; that all the preeminences, possessions and pleasures of the earth, are frail and transient; and that, at length, the figure of this world passes away? But, does the acquiescence that all men give to these truths produce the fruits of virtue and piety it is so naturally adapted to bring forth? Does it, in general, render them humble, and heavenly minded? Does it moderate their attachment and love for that which is visible and transitory? Does it teach them to make a faithful and conscientious use of the advantages which God has given them, and of the inestimable time he affords them? Does it inspire them with a true zeal in providing for futurity, and induce them to prepare for that never ending life, to which they are every hour, every moment approaching? Does it move them to hold such a conduct as becomes the citizens of heaven and the candidates for a blessed immortality? No, the most woeful experience demonstrates the reverse. These truths are sufficiently believed; but they are not thought upon with steadfastness and frequency enough; they are too soon lost sight of; they are sometimes purposely banished from the mind; at least, we do not often with sufficient attention and impartiality turn our reflections on ourselves and our conduct: And hence it arises, that we feel not their salutary influence. I conceive it, therefore, my duty, pious hearers, to admonish you and myself of these truths; and to devote the present moments to the subject of the vanity of all earthly things. May these meditations make a deep and lasting impression on our hearts; may they have a blessed influence on the whole of

our future conduct, and render us wise to everlasting happiness !

You know who was the author of this just and well known sentence which we have taken for our text ; and when you consider the principal circumstances of his life, it will not be difficult for you to perceive that his judgment in this matter ought to have great weight ; as it is grounded on an accurate knowledge of earthly things, and a long experience of their agreeableness, on one side ; and of their insufficiency and emptiness on the other. Were it some gloomy moralist, some anchorite or misanthropist, who, destitute of all the conveniences of life, from his dismal solitude, surrounded by the shades of death, called out to you, that all was vanity ; you would probably vouchsafe no attention to his voice. His testimony would make little impression on you. You would be more disposed to pity him, than to submit to his precepts, and take his word in such a matter as this. You would pronounce him incompetent to decide on the value of things, which perhaps he had never seen, had never possessed, had never enjoyed ; and which he only reviled, as you might imagine, because he was obliged to forego them. Is not this very often the precipitate and partial judgment you pass on the admonitions of your teachers, and by which you not unfrequently destroy their effect ? When we represent to you all that is terrestrial and visible as empty and vain ; when we discourse to you of the honors, of the possessions, of the joys of this world, as of things that deserve but small estimation and love ; when we maintain that the possession and enjoyment of such things can procure no real happiness to a rational and immortal creature ; when we tell you, that we are here upon earth in a state of exercise and discipline, and that this is not the place of our destina-

tion ; when we exhort you principally to aspire after what is heavenly and eternal, and to provide for futurity ; with how many persons do these declarations and admonitions lose all their weight, because they imagine and that frequently without the slightest foundation, that it is in a manner from constraint, and more from duty than from conviction, that we so judge and discourse ; and that we probably should soon change our language, were we thrown into another way of life, or if we were placed in different, and, according to the general opinion, more fortunate circumstances ! I will not now examine the weakness and insufficiency of these evasions and excuses ; I will not say, that truth, virtue and religion, always remain truth, virtue and religion ; and that they therefore always, as such, deserve our esteem, our obedience, and our submission, let their teachers and defenders conduct themselves as they will. I shall at present only appeal to the expression of the author of our text, against whose testimony no one, not even the corruptest of the worldly minded, can bring any specious accusation either of ignorance or partiality. It is Solomon who makes his appearance as the teacher of the human race, calling out to deluded mortals, “ It is all vanity, it is all vanity ! ” And who was this Solomon ? Was he some unfortunate prince, who met unsurmountable difficulties in whatever he undertook ; who was hated of his subjects, harassed and persecuted by his neighbors ; who, by a long series of disappointments, had lost all heart and taste for every beautiful and charming object of the earth ; or who knew not the more refined and nobler pleasures of life ? No. He was, as history informs us, the wisest and the happiest monarch of his times. Beloved of his subjects, feared by his neighbors, respected by remoter nations, he enjoyed a flourishing and uninterrupted prosperity. The

most extensive and uncommon knowledge adorned his mind ; and his power left him in want of no resource for executing and extending his views, and for satisfying his desires, if they were to be satisfied. The splendor and magnificence of his court, the exuberance of his treasures, and the wisdom he displayed in his actions and discourses, made his very name renowned in foreign lands. “ His wisdom, as the scripture speaks, excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. Nay, he was wiser than all men.” With these advantages he possessed whatever can flatter the senses, all that his heart could desire to satiate him with joy in superfluous abundance. To him no kind of pleasure was unknown ; and his days were spent in jollity and mirth. Hear how he expresses himself on this subject : “ I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards ; I made me gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees : I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house ; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me : I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces : I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them ; I withheld not my heart from any joy.” But hear likewise what judgment he passes upon all his pleasures : “ Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do ; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” This is what he also maintains in other passages, and indeed throughout the whole of his book whence our text

is taken. Ye who love the world and what is in the world, more than God, who place your highest felicity in the possession and enjoyment of earthly things, and seek your entire satisfaction in them, what have ye to offer against such testimony as this? With what arguments can you invalidate it? How can you excuse and justify your folly? Should it not make the deepest impression upon you; should it not awaken you from your carnal lethargy, and bring you to reflection, when you hear so wise, so powerful and fortunate a monarch; when you hear the acutest judge, the most tranquil possessor of whatever is beautiful and charming that the earth contains, declare, "that all is vanity; that all is vanity?"

Yet his evidence, strong and incontrovertible as it is, is not the only, is not the firmest foundation on which the truth of this position rests. The very nature of the thing, the constant, and unvarying experience of all mankind and of all ages, our own sensations, and the testimony of our own hearts, set it beyond a doubt. We need only to turn a glance of observation on the quality of the matters we treat of; we need only compare them together on their different sides; we have only to ask ourselves how far they contribute to make us happy, for acquiring a perfect conviction of the justice of Solomon's assertion. Riches and honors, the pleasures of sense, wisdom and knowledge, life itself, all is vanity. That is, all these advantages are fleeting and inconstant; they last but a short time; they are not capable of satisfying the human heart, of coming up to its desires, and of filling it with a real and durable felicity. Let us examine them somewhat more particularly apart.

The greatest riches are vain. I will not here take notice how much labor and toil, how many sleep-

less nights, how many base and servile actions, how many abnegations of the most innocent pleasures, it costs the generality of mankind, to acquire a superfluity. I will not remark what a considerable portion of their life is spent before they have reached their aim, how often they lavish their abilities in vain, and how often they miss of the goal towards which they run with the most anxious solicitude. We will allow that they have surmounted all these difficulties, and that they are in actual possession of the greatest treasures. What sort of treasures are they? Are they not, in their very nature, fleeting and inconstant? Are they not treasures which moth and rust corrupt, which thieves break in to steal? Are they not treasures which, as the sagacious monarch observes, often make themselves wings, and quickly leave their possessor? May not a man be deprived of them by a thousand disastrous events, which he is neither able to foresee nor prevent; may he not, when he is least aware of it, be plunged from the height of opulence down to the depths of poverty and indigence; and is he ever perfectly sure that this will not happen? And will these treasures follow him into the other world? Must he not at his death forsake them for ever? As he came naked into the world, is it not certain that he can carry nothing out? Can these things satisfy their possessor, be they of long or of short duration? Can they make him truly happy? Does not constant experience convince us, that the thirst of gold and silver is always increasing in violence, and that it is never to be allayed; that "he who loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase?"—Or can these possessions assuage our pains? Can they give us health and strength when we lie languishing in disease? Can they heal our spirit when it is wounded, or remove cares and

disquietude from our hearts? Can they restore us the loss of a darling spouse, an only son, or a trusty friend? Can they shield us from the terrors of death? Must they not rather make the sight of the grave more hideous to us than it is in itself? How true it is, in all these respects, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth!

But, perhaps, the honor of this world is less vain than riches? Perhaps that may be more adapted to procure us an essential and lasting felicity than they? How egregiously, my friends, should we err, were we to pay the slightest attention to this supposition! Wherein, then, consists the honor of this world? In the advantageous judgments which other men form of our advantages, of our endowments and abilities, of our virtues and merits. And on what is this judgment founded? But seldom is it the effect of a mature and impartial consideration, a true knowledge of our character and conduct, an undissembled esteem for the worth and virtues we possess. It is founded in general on the outward appearance we make, which vanishes away on a closer inspection, or upon some fortunate incident, or on mean selfinterest, or on treachery and falsehood. One will honor us, that we may do honor to him in return. Another will praise our accomplishments, that he may acquire the reputation of being a discerner and a patron of merit. A man will applaud virtues in others, that he may conceal the want of it in himself; and that he may be reputed among the number of her friends. We are frequently flattered for the sake of gaining our favor, our assistance, our support, or for more effectually doing us an injury. And who are they whose approbation and applause compose what is usually called the renown of the world? They are for the most part men that

are destitute of all respectable and praise worthy qualities themselves ; who suffer themselves to be guided by their fancies, their passions, their fears and their hopes ; with whom prejudice and caprice do the office of principles ; who trust to every ambiguous or doubtful report, and never afford it their investigation ; who frequently know not what is either truly great, or honorable, or noble ; and therefore, according to the expression of the prophet, call light darkness, and darkness light. They are men who, for the most part, only pronounce on the generality of actions according to their success, without attending to the motives and the intentions of them ; who admire and revere whatever is uncommon, whatever makes noise and parade, but disregard unostentatious virtue, and value not the truly magnanimous actions which the wise and good man performs in the noiseless tenor of his life. What then is more fickle and inconstant than the judgment of mankind ? How small a matter is necessary for making you forfeit their favor ? How often does it happen that they dislike, reject, depreciate, and condemn today, the very things they yesterday approved and extolled ? Is not history full of examples of such persons as have been for some time the darlings of the people, and on a sudden have become the objects of their bitterest hatred and most implacable fury ? Shall then the honor and applause of this world, which commonly rests upon so slight a foundation, which is distributed by such partial judges, which is so easily lost and turned-into disgrace, which procures us no essential advantage, which ordinarily, on the contrary, poisons our hearts, and render us insensible to the infinitely more precious approbation of God and our conscience, puffs us up with a ridiculous but criminal pride, which at length must fade and be buried with us in the grave, can it

satisfy our spirits, and secure us a real and lasting felicity? Can it be any thing but fancy, folly and vanity?

And must we not pronounce the same of sensual pleasures, which such numbers of deluded mortals take for their greatest comforts? How vain, how fleeting, how instantaneous are they? They elude us the moment we begin to enjoy them; they die, as it were, in their birth; and never answer the expectation of him that pursues them. We look towards them with the greatest desire, we seek them with painful anxiety, we promise ourselves the most ravishing joy in their possession, and esteem ourselves happy in the prospect; but no sooner is our desire assuaged than we find ourselves cheated; we awake, and the shadowy vision, that delighted us in our dream, is gone; our rapture is turned into surfeit, aversion and uneasiness; very often giving place to the deepest confusion, the most pungent sorrow, and the sharpest stings of conscience. The most exquisite sensual delights, by repeated enjoyment, lose their charms; and the narrow circle of worldly joys is so soon run through, that no diversification is able to compensate their intrinsic defects. Our senses become enfeebled by degrees, our powers exhausted, our passions less active, and what caused us at first the most delightful sensations, becomes shortly indifferent to us, or even extremely burdensome. We all find ourselves obliged, sooner or later, to "say of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?" But can pleasures of such a nature satisfy our soul? Can they suffice our capacious desires which expand to infinity? Can we, without purposely deceiving ourselves, seek in them a true, a durable happiness, a happiness suited to our capacities? Ye who follow your inclinations, and lead a sensual life, we appeal to your own experience. Can you deny it, that the

pleasures you so eagerly pursue very often deceive you, that they very often border on dissatisfaction, and that it commonly follows them close behind? Can you deny it, that you frequently feel a secret remorse disturbing you in the midst of your delights, and embittering their enjoyment; and that your heart, amidst every thing delicious and charming this earth can afford you, remains empty and unsatisfied? And, if you cannot deny this, you confess that all sensual pleasures are vain, and incapable of procuring a solid felicity to man.

But may not the pleasures of the mind, which promise human wisdom and knowledge to their votaries, be exempt from these defects, may not they be adapted to procure us what the others are unable to bestow? No, my friends, they are likewise vain; "In much wisdom is much grief," says the preacher, "and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." And indeed when we consider how much time and toil, how much reflection, how much difficult, and sometimes unpleasant investigation, are necessary to acquire what is called wisdom and knowledge; and how little we obtain by the most unremitting application, and the most strenuous efforts, how short we fall of our designs, after the exertion of all our powers; and what a task it is to distinguish ourselves by discoveries important and useful to human society, discoveries that tend to its real improvement, from the great multitude of such as are called the wise and learned; when we reflect how many insurmountable difficulties and obstacles, how many enemies and dangers we meet with on the way that leads to truth, how often our understanding deceives us, obscured by prejudice, or blinded by passion, how apt we are to take appearance for reality, how often one single ray of light points out to us the vanity of what we

have been laboring upon for several years, and represents the most ingenious system, which we held to be immoveable, as having no foundation at all but in the flimzy materials of our own imagination; when we consider the weakness of our reason, the shortness of our view, and to what narrow limits, all our faculties are circumscribed, how imperfect and insignificant is human knowledge, in comparison of what we do not, and of what we cannot know, and how obscure, how vague, how doubtful and incomplete the most of our conceptions are; when we, in short observe that the wisest of mortals are most sensible of their weakness, and most clearly perceive the scantiness of their perceptions, that new depths are continually opening before them which they cannot fathom, and that nothing is competent to satisfy their unbounded curiosity: I say when we ponder these things, we cannot deny the vanity of human wisdom, we are forced to confess, that "it is hidden from the eyes of all living creatures." "The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and all their judgments are uncertain." And how much is not the value of this wisdom lessened by its being, like all other things, subject to inconstancy, and of very short duration? Let the scholar, the philosopher, collect ever so great a stock of curious knowledge; let him understand all languages, all the works and monuments of antiquity, the whole compass of ancient and modern history, all the experiments mankind have made for explaining the latent operations of nature; all the conjectures that have been formed upon them; let him comprehend all the arts and sciences, as perfectly as they can be understood; we will acknowledge his merits, and not refuse him the honor that is so justly his due; but will he retain this knowledge in the grave? Will he take it with him into the other world?

Will it there appear to him either so great or so important as he now thinks it to be? Certainly not. He will forget the greatest part of it for ever. He will, if he still recollect it, blush at his childish errors, his precipitate judgments, his perverse decisions. He will consider most subjects in a quite other manner, and then, for the first time, come out of darkness into light. In this respect what the Preacher elsewhere says is true; "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we go."

And how soon are not mortals overtaken by this revolution! Our life itself is altogether vanity. It lasts but a very short time; and the greatest part of it glides imperceptibly away, unused, and unenjoyed. We are continually advancing to the silent tomb, and to the endless ages of eternity; and before we are aware of it, we are standing on the verge of our earthly career. We are on no day, at no hour, in no moment, secure from death. Neither youth, nor health, nor strength, neither riches, nor honors, can defend us from this king of terrors. The unconscious child, the blooming youth, the vigorous man, as well as decrepid and trembling age, must obey his call. But few reach the extreme period of human life; and the greatest part must away before they have tasted the comforts, the advantages, and the pleasures of it; before they have well begun to live. And how far then is this period from us? Is it perhaps a thousand years remote, is it whole epochas before us, which yet, when compared to eternity, would be but as the twinkling of an eye? No, "the days of our age are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labor and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are

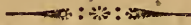
gone." Can we then, in any of these respects, doubt in the smallest degree of the truth of Solomon's exclamation, "All is vanity; all is vanity?"

But shall we stop short at the mere confession of these truths? Should we content ourselves with the conviction of their certainty? A lamentable certainty this would be, if it were of no farther utility to us! A certainty that would in that case embitter our whole life, render all its pleasures insipid, deject us at every the least misfortune, represent death to us under the most frightful images, and entirely overwhelm us at its approach. If we would render this truth salutary to us, we should make a totally different use of it. It should be continually present to our mind, and have a permanent and practical authority over our life and conduct. It should moderate our esteem and affection for the goods and advantages of the world, and make us treat them with a generous contempt. It should induce us to seek our happiness and joy where they are only to be found, and to pursue with all our ardor the possession and enjoyment of those things that are constant and everlasting. And what are these things? God, my friends, God is eternal. He has always been, and will for ever be. His mercy is unchangeable; it is the inexhaustible source of light, of life and happiness. Whoever is in communion with him, of the number of his friends, may promise himself an eternal, an uninterrupted felicity. Our spirit is everlasting. If it had a beginning, yet it will know no end. It will never discontinue to think, to will, to be happy or unhappy. It will live when our body is crumbled in the grave, and reduced to dust and ashes. Truth and virtue are eternal; no change of time can destroy them. They will survive the destruction of

the world. They will be in the new heaven and on the new earth, what they are at present. They will then be the perfection and happiness of all rational creatures. These are things that merit all our attention, and all our cares. They should therefore be the object of all our desires, our views, and exertions. If we place ourselves in the way of repentance, of faith and sanctification, we assure ourselves of the favor and complacency of the Supreme Being ; if we make the redemption and the salvation of our immortal spirit our principal business ; if we seek in earnest the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; if we strive ever farther to advance in the knowledge of revealed truth, and in the practice of the christian virtues, and to become rich in good works ; then our happiness rests upon a sure foundation ; then we walk the way that leads to true enjoyment, to solid and eternal bliss ; then may we be tranquil amid the vicissitudes of all earthly things, and behold with indifferent eyes their emptiness and vanity. Then, let the heavens and the earth pass away, let the elements melt with fervent heat, and every work of man be destroyed ; we shall still remain ; we shall rise above the ruins of a demolished world, and our hopes will never be put to confusion.

S E R M O N L.

Of the practical Character of Jesus Christ.



O GOD, we are here assembled before thee to awaken in our minds such ideas and sentiments as may fit us for worthily celebrating the holy communion. Of what important, what salutary transactions does not this season remind us ! How ungrateful, how insensible should we not be were we to remain cold and unaffected at it ! It is consecrated to the commemoration of Jesus and his great work on earth ; to the commemoration of our authentic teacher and guide, our magnanimous deliver and savior. And in this commemoration we find whatever can appease, comfort, quicken and rejoice us ! Light in darkness, strength under the sentiment of our weakness, fortitude in afflictions, hope in death ! Oh might the image of our loving, suffering, dying Lord, who by his love, by his sufferings and by his death brought salvation to the world, be ever before our eyes ! Might all, and particularly his last discourses and actions, be deeply engraven on our hearts, bringing forth in them fruits of amendment and comfort an hundred fold ! Yes, blessed be to us the commemoration of our divine teacher, who has brought down to us from heaven every truth that can improve and comfort us, and has transplanted us from the regions of darkness into the kingdom of light ! Through him we know thee, the only true God ; and know thee as our Father, who loves us, provides for us, and even vouchsafes his grace to his disobedient, prodigal children,

when they amend and return to thee. Through him we know the way that leads to thee and to eternal bliss. He has discovered to us the way ; has cleared and smoothed it for us ; has gone before us on it ; has impressed it with his venerable footsteps ; has confirmed his doctrine by his entire life, and by his most holy death, and thus secured us against all fear of deception. Yes, may his doctrine be ever dear to us as divine truth ; may it be the guide of our life and our comfort in death ! Blessed be to us the commemoration of the Harmless, the Holy and the Just, in whose mouth was no guile, who never did wrong, who never did any thing but the best ! Who went about doing good, taking under his care the ignorant, the erroneous, the sorrowful, the wretched ! Whom compassion and philanthropy, light, liberty, relief, deliverance and joy accompanied in all his ways ; whose words were pure truth and wisdom, whose deeds the expression of the sublimest virtue ! O God, what a pattern of the height of human perfection hast thou not given us in the example of thy son Jesus ! How venerable, how amiable does innocence of heart, love towards thee and all mankind, and entirely virtuous, holy generally useful life appear to us in the person and in the conduct of our Lord ! Assist us then, most merciful God, in following him, in striving after him, in ever gaining a near resemblance of him, in ever becoming more conformable to him ! For these unspeakable benefits we cannot worthily address thee but in that form of prayer which he himself vouchsafed to give us. Lord, teach us to pray, Pray thou thyself in us. Our father, &c.



PHILLIPPIANS ii. 5.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

IN the words of our text, the temper and conduct of Jesus Christ are proposed to us as a model for our own, to the imitation of which we are under the

strongest obligations, and which we should constantly endeavor more and more to resemble. This is a proposition which in the scriptures of the New Testament very frequently occurs, is repeated on all occasions, and earnestly inculcated on christians. Certainly it must be of the greatest importance ; it must be very closely connected with the design of christianity ; it must be an essential part of it. No doubt but it is. We render ourselves unworthy of the name of christians, we forfeit all title to the privileges and blessings combined with it, if we follow not the example of our Lord and Master, and use not all diligence to express it in our whole deportment. Indeed Christ had many prerogatives that elevated him far above us and all mankind, and which render it impossible for us to do what he did in all particulars. He was the Son of God ; he was an extraordinary prophet and teacher ; The Mediator and Redeemer of mankind. As such he transacted many affairs and performed many actions which we cannot imitate, as neither our abilities, nor the relations in which we stand towards God and man, nor our vocations, nor the circumstances in which we are placed are adapted to them. But the virtuous, the pious, the beneficent and magnanimous temper, which is the principle of all the discourses and action of Christ ; the pure and generous views he had in them ; the ardor, fidelity, and resolution with which he executed the will of his heavenly Father, and the purport of his mission on earth ; the humility, the meekness, the patience, the philanthropy he displayed in his whole behavior : These are what we should propose for our pattern and rule in every part of our conduct. In these particulars we may and should have that mind in us which was also in him ; and so walk as he also walked. To excite you, pious hearers to this, I shall endeavor by the divine as-

sistance, to collect the principal features in the practicable or moral character of our Savior which are dispersed in the evangelical history, and hold up to your view the charming portrait of his virtue and piety. May this picture, incomplete and defective as it will be, affect our hearts and be continually before our eyes ! May it render virtue and piety truly venerable and amiable to us, and forcibly impel us to the practice of them !

I feel the difficulty, my friends, I feel how hard it is to delineate the great, the exalted, the amiable character of our Lord and Master, and to place it in its proper light ; and, if I were ever desirous of greater abilities and talents, of a nicer sensibility to moral beauty and excellence, it is at this moment when I am venturing on such an astonishing object. In it every thing that is great, that is beautiful, that is good, that is excellent blend and unite. It is a portrait without a flaw ; a virtue without defect ; an entire life, composed of unspotted rectitude, of unsullied dignity, of unremitted beneficence in sentiments and actions.

Christ was perfectly free from all faults and failings. No sin, no infirmity, no mean views, no low desires, no negligence or inactivity in goodness, ever once obscured the lustre of his resplendent merit. " He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." " He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He could, with the greatest unreserve, appeal even to the testimony of his enemies ; and say to them as he did, " Which of you convinceth me of sin ?" Peruse the history that the evangelists have transmitted to us of his life ; and you will not find either in his speech or his actions, any the slightest indication of pride, or ambition, or hatred or revenge, or sensuality, or any other baleful passion ; but you will always meet with the plainest

demonstrations of the virtue that is in opposition to every fault.

How pure, how exalted, how constant and active was the piety of our dear Redeemer! The profoundest veneration, and the tenderest love towards God, his heavenly Father, filled and employed all the capacities of his soul. They animated and directed the whole of his conduct. Solitary and familiar converse with his sovereign Being was the nourishment and invigoration of his spirit. He not only attended carefully and regularly the public worship while he sojourned among mankind; he not only observed all the established usages of it; but he walked always in the presence of God. His thoughts and affections were incessantly directed to him; he was constantly engaged in meditation and secret prayer; and neither the wearisome labors of the day, nor the terrors of darkness could hinder him from passing whole nights in devotion.

His obedience towards God, his heavenly Father, was as voluntary as it was constant and unchangeable. "Behold, I come says he, to do thy will, O God! Yea, thy law is within my heart." He reckoned it "his meat and his drink to do the will, of him that sent him, and to finish his work." It was his pleasure his delight, to fulfil the designs of divine compassion, and to accomplish the redemption of mankind; and this he infinitely preferred to all sensible pleasures and earthly joys. His will was entirely submissive to the will of his heavenly Father. He humbly adored the divine providence in all its ways; he revered the wisdom of the Most High in all the dispositions it had made for the deliverance and the salvation of sinners: He rejoiced in it, and rested entirely in the good pleasure of his Father. "Yes, Father," was he heard to say on various occasions, "yes Father, for it so seemeth

good in thy sight." Even in the last and dreadful scene of his life, when he saw nothing but opprobrium and shame, sorrow and torment before him; when he was surrounded by the terrors of death, encompassed by the pains of hell; even then he remained stedfast to the purpose of perfecting the will of God. He overcame the horrors the sight of these agonies occasions to human nature, and said, with the most absolute submission, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

What a pure, what an active zeal for the honor of the Most High shines through all his discourses and actions! How exact, how careful, how indefatigable was he in the performance of the weighty business he had to do! How worthily did he maintain the character he bore! No slander, no malice of his enemies could once turn him aside from his course, or impede him in fulfilling the duties of his office in their largest extent, and with the most punctual precision. No obstacles, no difficulties, were able to deter him from it, no opposition to dishearten or dismay him. His business, as the savior of the world, was to seek the lost, and to preach the gospel to the poor. As the physician of Israel, he was to heal the sick and to support the weak. And this he did at all times and in all circumstances, though the pharisees and theologues despised and insulted him for it, calling him the companion of publicans and sinners. Never did he lose the object of his mission from his view. Never did he neglect an opportunity of calling the attention of his hearers to it, and of instructing them in the purpose of his appearance in the world. If he heal the sick, he requires them to have confidence in him as a condition of their recovery, as all the surprising actions

he performed were directed to this end, to recommend his person and his doctrine to mankind, and to convince them that he was sent from God, that he was the Messiah. Do they bring him word : “ Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee ;” he immediately replies, “ Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Do they give him the account of the unhappy people whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices ; he makes no observation upon it, but gives a weighty admonition to his hearers : — “ Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things ? I tell you, Nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Do they ask him from a criminal or an idle curiosity, “ Lord, are there few that be saved ?” He gives them no direct reply, but endeavors to call the attention of those that ask him, as well as those who stand by, to more essential concerns : “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Thus had Christ his high vocation constantly before his eyes ; and he was concerned about nothing but the glory of his father, and the work he had given him to finish.

But, if the piety of our Savior was so pure, so lofty, so active, it must necessarily have produced the noblest fruits in his dispositions and deportment towards mankind. And here the amiable character of our Lord displays itself in the most radiant colors. The most sincere, the most ardent, the most unconquerable benevolence had full possession of his soul. “ Mercy is better than sacrifice. It is more blessed to give than to receive.” These were the grand principles on which he built the whole of his conduct ; and he testified the importance of them on

all occasions, both to his friends and his foes. The view of the miserable condition of his countrymen, in regard to their knowledge, their religion, and their morals, excited in him the tenderest compassion. The burdens their teachers imposed on them, the wretched instruction they gave them, the disordered state of their public affairs at that period, and the far greater calamities he saw approaching, touched him uncommonly near, they filled his whole heart with emotion, they drew tears from his eyes. "When he saw the multitudes," says Matthew, "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Come unto me," says he, therefore to them, "all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Even in regard to their corporeal wants he was by no means indifferent or insensible. "I have compassion on the multitude," says he to his disciples, "because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." Does Christ pronounce a woe upon Chorazin and Bethsaida; it is only as a warning to the inhabitants of those towns, to call them to reflection and amendment, to deplore their unhappy condition, and to show that he takes a compassionate concern in their welfare. Does he speak of the righteous punishment that is shortly to overtake Jerusalem and its inhabitants; does he represent to them their obstinate opposition to all the pains he takes for their salvation, he is heard to say with cordial tenderness and sorrow, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings;" how often have I offered you grace and deliverance, how often have I invited you to become subjects of my kingdom, and to take part in

the benefits of it; “and ye would not!” While describing the calamities he foresaw advancing towards this famous but in the highest degree corrupted city, he displays the most animated compassion towards it. He laments that their present circumstances would prevent their escaping them by a hasty flight. He even wishes them who still adhered to the Jewish ceremonies, and consequently were enemies to his doctrine, not only no harm, but he gives them the most wholesome advice:— “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.” Nay, even when he was bearing the burden of the cross; when he was going to meet the most ignominious death, when he had the greatest cause to complain of the inhuman procedures of his brethren after the flesh; even then these tender and compassionate sentiments were predominant in his heart: “Weep not for me,” said he to them that were affected by the lamentable situation he was in; “but weep for yourselves and for your children.” And who but must admire the greatness of his love; who is not forced into astonishment at the energy of it, when he hears the crucified Jesus in the midst of the most cruel torments, addressing himself to God, “Father forgive them; they know not what they do!”

But perhaps the philanthropy of our Redeemer was barren and dead? Perhaps it consisted barely in good dispositions, in tender words and pious wishes? No. It appeared in a universal, in the most liberal, in the most unwearied beneficence. He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their schools, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people, or, as the apostle Peter expresses it: “Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.” He went about, doing good, is

the abbreviated history of his whole life. Helping the miserable, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, instructing the ignorant, reforming the wicked, promoting the temporal and eternal felicity of mankind; this was his principal, his peculiar employment. Never did he refuse his assistance to any that applied to him for it: Never did he waste a moment in hesitation about granting whatever he was asked for, unless it were bad or unseemly in itself. Does an afflicted father come and solicit his aid for a dying daughter; it immediately follows, "And Jesus rose up and went with him." Does a humane and compassionate master address him to heal his slave; his answer is, "I will come and heal him." Do they bring little children to him, that he may lay his hand upon them, and give them his blessing; he says to his disciples, who testified some displeasure at it, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of God consists in simple hearts like theirs. And he embraced and blessed them. Instead of terrifying the timid, or rejecting the feeble in mind, Jesus like a tender father, speaks courage and confidence to them.— "Be of good cheer," says he to the poor afflicted creature, who, from modesty, would not venture publicly to lay her situation before him; "Daughter be of good cheer, thy faith hath made the whole; go in peace." "Fear not," said he to an elder of the synagogue, to whom they brought the dismal tidings of his daughter's death; "believe only, and she shall be made whole."

Even to the most unworthy our Savior was beneficent and kind. He had an affection for his very enemies, and did them more good than we can sometimes afford to our friends. He knew from the first, says his historian, John, who it was that should

betray him. And yet he did not strike out this base betrayer from the number of his disciples. And yet he vouchsafed him, for several years, his instruction, his attentions, his intercourse, his friendship. And yet he honored him with the important commission of announcing the kingdom of God, as well as his trusty followers, and imparted to him no less than to them, the gift of shewing signs in his name. How ought this magnanimous conduct of Jesus to have affected the heart of the ungrateful disciple, and have inspired him with more virtuous and generous sentiments, if he had been capable of them! Yet, in the evening, when he designed to execute his horrid purpose, our affectionate Lord endeavored to make him privately feel his reproof, and bring him to a better mind. "Woe to the man," how grievously I pity the man, "by whom the son of man is betrayed." And with what wonderful meekness does our Master accost him when he comes to deliver him into the hands of his cruel enemies!—"Friend," says he to him, "wherefore art thou come? Dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss!"—Nay, what an extraordinary proof of his magnanimous, his unconquerable love, that he should die for mankind, and voluntarily sacrifice himself for our salvation! His beneficent affection, his unalterable tenderness, triumphed over opprobrium and pain, it stood unchanged and undismayed in the valley of the shadow of death, and mounted thereby to the summit of perfection.

As uncircumscribed, as universal, as unremitted as his philanthropy and beneficence were to the human race, so tender and constant was his friendship. "Lazarus, our friend, says he is asleep; I go to awaken him." And how full of affection was his gentle heart, when he came up to the grave of his friend! This sight, and the lively idea of human

misery that it suggested, drew tears from his eyes. He wept; and the standers by exclaimed, "See how he loved him!"—With what a firm and generous friendship did he unite himself to his disciples! A friendship which all their failings, all their infirmities could neither dissolve nor diminish.—Having once loved any, he loved them to the very last. How pungently was his soul afflicted on thinking that one of the twelve, one of so small a number, whom he had hitherto honored with his confidence, should betray him, by discovering to his persecutors the place of his nightly solitude! How great was his solicitude for the welfare of his friends in those alarming circumstances! "If ye seek me," said he to those who were come to take him, "then let these go their way." And what a strong instance of the most exalted friendship did he not give but a few hours previous to his sufferings! Forgetful, as it were of himself, and the dreadful sorrows that now surrounded him; unmindful of the ignominious and painful death that now awaited him, that he might comfort, strengthen, prepare and preserve them against the terror of his crucifixion. "Let not your hearts be troubled," says he to them, "you believe in God, believe also in me." You have confidence in God, have confidence also in me.—Ye now have sorrow! But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—Only read yourselves my pious hearers, the last discourses of our Savior, which John has left us. I think you will not read them without tears. I am sure you cannot without emotion, if your hearts are capable of generous and friendly feelings.

But we must proceed to remark something of the other amiable qualities and conspicuous virtues of our Lord and Master ; yet, as the magnitude and excellency of the object will not allow us to trace a perfect likeness of it, we must be contented with detached and feeble strokes.

How condescending, how friendly, how affable was Christ in his social manners ! The dignified gravity he displayed in all his actions and discourses so consistant with his character, hindered him not from being accessible and social. He shunned not human society ; he condemned not the indifferent customs he found in it ; he denied himself not its innocent pleasures. On the contrary, he sometimes participated in them ; he honored with his presence the marriage at Cana in Galilee. He aimed at nothing particular in his daily converse ; but conformed on these occasions to the established usages whenever they were neither sinful nor superstitious. “ I am come eating and drinking,” says he ; I eat and drink as other men do, that is, without distinguishing himself from them by an austere and extraordinary abstinence.

How admirable were his gentleness and indulgence towards his disciples, as well as towards the Jews of his time ! They, no less than these were imbued with the grossest and most servile prejudices in matters of religion ; and all his remonstrances, and apposite representations were not only incapable of removing, but insufficient to weaken those prejudices in any degree. They, as well as these, had such rude conceptions so little perspicacity and observation, that they frequently mistook his plainest propositions, and could not comprehend his easiest apologies. Was he therefore fatigued with instructing and explaining ? Did he deliver himself up to the impatience and dejection which any other teacher, in

similar circumstances, would have felt and sunk under? No. He bore with patience their infirmities and failings. He even did not always rebuke wickedness, when that rebuke would have been productive of irritation rather than amendment or advantage. He thought it better to redouble his zeal in instructing; he accordingly repeats his doctrines, one while delivering them in this manner, and then in another to adapt them to the capacities of his hearers. And when, notwithstanding his scholars did not yet comprehend what he meant; when they still, after all he had done, and all he had said, entertained a reprehensible distrust of his pretensions; he shewed that he had more compassion for their mistakes than anger or displeasure at their inconsiderateness and levity. "O ye of little faith!" said he on one of these occasions, "why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"

What a generous and noble impartiality Christ exhibited in his judgments on all occasions! He esteemed, he applauded integrity and virtue wherever he found them. Very far from condemning all such as were not in communion with the Jewish church, very far from pronouncing that all their virtues were but splendid sins, we hear him publicly admiring the pious dispositions of a heathen officer, and proposing him as a pattern to others. "I have not found," says he, "so great faith, no not in Israel." "O woman!" (thus he addresses the Canaanite, who, with persevering constancy, implores him to relieve her daughter) "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Though that young man who asked him, "Good master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life," was still

far short of perfection ; had yet such failings as rendered him unfit to be a follower of Christ, and improper for the apostolical office ; it is however said, Jesus, beholding him, loved him ; he was well pleased at the high veneration he had for the divine law, at his desire to become happy ; and he rejected not these good qualities, though they were not sufficient to happiness.

What a disinterested sincerity and openness of heart shone forth in all the actions and discourses of our Redeemer ? Does he endeavor to conceal or extenuate the dangers that awaited his disciples, though he found them still so weak in faith, so deeply imbued with numberless prejudices, and so totally destitute of courage and fortitude ? Does he endeavor to attach them to him by cherishing their false but specious hopes of temporal prosperity ? No. He tells them expressly : “ I send you forth as sheep among wolves. You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake ; you shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.” And as for me ; “ the son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain.” Or, does he strive to bring entirely over to him such as had some esteem for him, who were not altogether alienated from him, at least by tacitly upholding them in their erroneous notions of his kingdom, and by concealing from them the hardships that were the unavoidable consequences of becoming a follower of him ? Nothing of all this. He tells them plainly ; “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me ;” that is, he that will follow me, must renounce all worldly pleasures, and be ready to tread the thorny path which I pursue. “ Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.” “ Whosoever he

be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

But, though the sincerity of our Lord and Savior was so great ; yet his prudence and circumspection were no less conspicuous. How often did he escape from the malice of his enemies ; how often would they have laid hands on him ; how often would they have put him in prison ; how often did they attempt to stone him ; so often did he defeat their aim ! How many captious questions did they propose to him, and how dexterously did he escape their wiles ! He used the means true prudence prescribes on such occasions. He frequently withdrew himself from his opponents, he retired from their fury, he betook himself for a time into a solitary region, and forbade on such occasions even those he had healed to speak of what he had done, lest that should irritate the spirit of persecution in his wicked foes against him ; that they might not deprive him, before the time, of the power of doing good, and of preaching the kingdom of God. How careful was he to prevent whatever might incite the populace to tumult, or to any violent enterprize ! So soon as he observed, that, astonished at his actions, they were desirous of making him their king, he went and concealed himself among the mountains. And what a divine wisdom did he shew in the answers he gave to the insidious questions of the theologues and pharisees, who frequently attacked him in the design of taking him by surprise, and of having an occasion to make him hated by the people, or guilty before the procurator of Rome ! At the same time, it was no worldly wisdom he put in practice, no criminal subtlety, no mean device, for palliating the vices and failings of men, that he might gain or preserve their friendship. Whenever the cause of God, the cause of truth and virtue, was in question, then our Redeemer discov-

ered the liveliest ardor, though he knew beforehand that he should thus draw upon him the hatred and malice of the mightiest and foremost of the nation. Read the xxiii chapter of the Evangelist Matthew, and admire the heavenly zeal, the majestic gravity, the heroic constancy, with which he warns the deluded people of the pretended sanctity of their superiors ; and, taking from them the mask of hypocrisy and feigned devotion, overwhelms them with shame and confusion.

But, if his zeal on such occasions were just and laudable, so also in the highest degree respectable were the gentleness and patience he displayed on other occasions, that related, not so much to the honor of God his father, as to his own person and his own concerns. His whole life was a continued exercise of this excellent virtue. Was he traduced by his enemies, and loaded with the vilest abuse ; was he withstood by them in the most opprobrious manner ; did they take up stones to throw at him ; he never returned evil for evil ; when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; but met their fury with a sedate and sublime tranquility ; and opposed their unjust accusations by rational principles and solid replies. Would the disciples, from too quick a sensibility at a slight offence, have him call fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans ? He rebukes them for their violence, and sternly says to them, “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Do the disciples shew so much indifference and insensibility at the very time when his heart was full of grief and affliction, and when he had most need of their comfort and support, and notwithstanding his repeated admonitions to watchfulness, as to suffer themselves to be overcome by sleep ? He reproves them for it indeed, but at the same

time excuses it himself; and his very reproof is without anger, only proceeding from friendship and compassion. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour! The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Your bodies are oppressed by fatigue. Is he at length unjustly accused and condemned? Is he the greatest benefactor to his brethren, most shamefully insulted by them, derided, crucified and slain? Is he suspended, as a transgressor, between two malefactors, on the accursed tree, to be a mark for the general scorn and the most cruel sport? Even in these dreadful circumstances he preserves his spirit in a perfect calm, and free from all the disorder of passion. No angry, no malicious, no vindictive expression, proceeds from his mouth; he prays for the barbarous instruments of his unmerited sufferings; he comforts a sincere, though late repenting sinner; he provides for his deserted mother, and for the disciple who had always been his favorite; and then surrenders his spirit, full of confidence and fortitude, into the hands of his heavenly Father.

All these virtues, pious hearers, all these merits were accompanied with the greatest humility, and thence acquired additional splendor. Our Redeemer was not ostentatious of those prerogatives which elevated him so far above all mortal beings. He held it not robbery, says the apostle, after the words of our text, he boasted not that he resembled God, that he was his son, his beloved, and in intimate union with him. On the contrary, having these preeminences, he laid them all aside, and took upon him the office of a minister. He concealed his prerogatives, he never made use of them, except when the nature of his office, and the design of his mission, required. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him. He ascribed those wonderful acts he performed, not so much to himself, as

to his heavenly Father, from whom he received the power. The son, says he, can do nothing of himself but what he sees the father do. The doctrine that I preach, is not mine, but his that sent me. The Father who is in me, he doth the works. I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me, and what an effecting instance of his humility did he give but a short time before his sufferings, by washing the feet of his disciples; and by condescending to such services as are only becoming to the meanest domestics ! Nay, how plainly did his whole conduct shew that the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many !

These my dearest friends are the principal features in the venerable and amiable character of our Savior Jesus. This is the charming example of piety and virtue he has left us ; and to which he has so forcibly enjoined us to conform. I am perfectly sensible that the picture I have presented to you is far, very far inferior to the excellency of its original ; and I am inclined to believe, that it is not possible for creatures so feeble, so frail, and so corrupted, as we are, to do it complete justice. Can we, however, contemplate this picture, all imperfect as it is, without astonishment, without gentle transports ? Can we contemplate it without having the highest veneration for Christ and his holy religion, without being enamored with the piety and virtue that appears in every part of it, without feeling a fresh zeal to act up to the bright example with all possible firmness and perseverance ? Unhappy they who can consider such a pattern of moral goodness and integrity without emotion, or without being inspired with the most ardent desires of becoming like it ! Such insensible, such grovelling souls, must be lost to every thing that is beautiful, that is good, that

is generous and noble ; they must be lost to virtue, to religion, to heaven. Yes, my friends, if we would be the disciples of Jesus, if we would be happy, we must thus be affected by the example of our Lord. It must by degrees destroy in us all the seeds of inordinate desires ; it must produce and strengthen in us every good, every amiable, every generous disposition ; it must inspire us with a well conducted ardor in the benèficent actions which are well pleasing in the sight of God. To this end we should keep this example constantly before our eyes, frequently examine ourselves by it, and make it the model of our whole carriage and demeanor.— We should be like minded with Jesus, and so walk even as he walked. Happy for us if we sincerely do so, and persevere in it even unto death ! Christ will then acknowledge us for his relations and successors ; and as such we shall live and reign with him in the other world forever.

Good Friday.

SERMON LI.

Of the Imitation of the Example of Jesus.



O GOD, who hast given us thy son Jesus, to be a teacher, a guide and precursor on the way of virtue and happiness, grant that his doctrine may continually manifest its divine energy in us ; grant that his example may attract us to the imitation of it. As thou didst commit to him the noblest, the most salutary work, the work of the redemption of mankind, thou hast likewise committed to every one of us his particular business to transact on earth. Thou hast assigned to each of us his station, his calling, his sphere of operation, in which we may exercise our faculties, be useful to ourselves and to others, and promote the welfare of the whole. Grant that we, like our great Precursor, may perform our work with fidelity and fortitude, that we, like him, may ever have our mark before our eyes, and be ever advancing towards it. Let us not indulge in sloth, but lay aside all irresolution, all thoughts of fatigue. Strengthen us by thy good spirit in our endeavors after permanent perfection and happiness. Let us constantly look to thee and to thy will, and faithfully and gladly perform it. Bless to the promotion of these views, the considerations that are now to employ us, and hear our prayer through Jesus Christ, in whose name we farther call upon thee, as, Our Father, &c.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

THE important precept of the apostle Paul, which we have read to you, and which we should consider as a fundamental law of christianity, has already lately furnished us with an opportunity for entering upon some meditations on the moral character of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ : On that occasion we held up to you the charming picture of his piety and virtue, shewing you what his mind and his conduct were towards God and man. The purest devotion, the profoundest veneration, the most ardent love, the most cheerful obedience towards God, the completest submission to his will, the liveliest zeal for his honor, and universal and unconquerable philanthropy, and unwearied beneficence, the noblest magnanimity, the tenderest friendship, the greatest affability and condescension, the most perfect impartiality, sincerity, open heartedness, prudence, gentleness, humility and patience : These, pious hearers, were the principal lineaments of the picture that we presumed to trace of the excellent character of our Redeemer.-- Though this portrait was extremely defective and imperfect; though far beneath the beauty and the lustre of its original : Yet was it, however, in its very nature adapted to attract our attention, to affect us and to excite emotion in our hearts. I confidently hope likewise, that, at least with some, it produced correspondent effects, by making a good impression on them. We must indeed to a very great

degree be corrupt ; we must have lost all sentiment for what is beautiful, what is good, what is sublime, if we are unmoved by the temper and conduct of Jesus Christ, if they fail of filling us with esteem, with reverence and love towards him, if they confirm not our faith in him and his divine doctrine, if they convince us not of the excellence of virtue and fail not of rendering it venerable and amiable to us. But this is not enough. We should not only esteem and love virtue, but actually praise it. We should not only admire the example of our Lord, but actually follow it. This mind should be in you as our text says, which was also in Christ Jesus. On this every thing depends. This is the primary object of the holy life of Jesus, and the proper use that should be made of it. This it is to which we are particularly bound by a participation in the holy communion, since we thereby publicly proclaim ourselves the disciples of Jesus, and acknowledge him as the chieftain and lord. It will therefore be perfectly suitable to the design of our meeting to day, if we endeavor, under the divine assistance, to excite you to the imitation of the excellent example of virtue and piety given us by our Savior.

The method in which we should imitate this example, and the reasons that oblige us to it, are the two particulars in the consideration whereof your attention and devotion will be employed. How happy will it be for us, my friends, how boldly may we present ourselves at the table of the Lord, and there receive the pledges of his love, if these considerations produce in us the sincere resolution to proceed henceforth in the footsteps of our Savior, and so to walk as he also walked !

We lately remarked that Christ performed many things wherein we cannot pretend to imitate him. He was placed in various relations and circumstances,

as the son of God, as an extraordinary prophet, and teacher, as the mediator and Redeemer of mankind, in which we can never be. As such, he possessed prerogatives and abilities far superior to ours. He could and was to do such works as we neither can nor should. But it is not so much the particular actions of our Savior, as the way and manner in which we performed them ; it is his disposition of mind, and his whole character, which we are to propose for our example. We are to regulate our conduct by the same rules of righteousness, of philanthropy, of magnanimity ; we should be actuated by the same pure and generous views to the honor of the Most High, and to the promotion of the general welfare ; the same spirit of humility, of gentleness, of patience, of reconciliation that animated Christ, must animate us also. We are to practice the virtues he practiced, though we cannot in all particular cases give the same or so powerful a demonstration of them. Every one of us should strive to fulfil the duties of his calling, and the end of his existence, with the same fidelity with which Christ accomplished the design of his mission upon earth. We should, like him, employ all our faculties in conformity to the will of God, and earnestly seize all opportunities for doing good, and for rendering ourselves useful to others, though these faculties and these opportunities be very different, or though they be seldom or never totally alike. Like our Savior we should bear all the trials which God lays upon us, all the sufferings he dispenses to us, with steadfast patience, and meek submission to his will, though these trials and these sufferings be, neither in their nature and quality, nor in respect of their intention exactly similar to those our Redeemer met with.-- This is to imitate the example our Lord ; and thus even such of his actions as were extraordinary,

and superior to our abilities, serve us for instruction and example. However various then and great were the prerogatives which he possessed ; however different his station and calling from ours ; notwithstanding this, his life may and should be the pattern and rule of ours. The condition of a menial servant is doubtless very much inferior to the station of his master ; we may, nevertheless, with the greatest propriety exhort him to imitate the example of his prudent and beneficent master ; Not that he can give the very same proofs of prudence, of beneficence, and of love ; but because he may display the same prudent, affectionate, and beneficent dispositions in all those actions that are suitable to his condition. The case is the same in regard to the example of our venerable and amiable Redeemer.—A few particular exemplifications will set this matter in the clearest light.

Christ came into the world to seek the lost, and to render them happy. He came to announce to mankind the will of God, to deliver and redeem them from their aberrations, and to conduct them to the supreme felicity ; and to this purpose he devoted his whole life. We cannot indeed do exactly the same. We are not all called to the pastoral office, much less can we promote the salvation of men to the very same degree as he did. But does it thence follow that we can contribute nothing to that end ; or, that we may be quite indifferent to the salvation of our brethren ? May we not, on one hand, do harm to our acquaintance by our imprudent and sinful behavior, seduce them into wickedness, or harden them in it ? May we not, on the other hand, edify and incite them to goodness by our advice, by our example, and by our affectionate suggestions, admonitions, and exhortations ? May we not, by our conduct, render religion and christianity either con-

temptible or respectable, and is it not incumbent upon us to avoid the one, and to do the other? Have we not relations, friends, acquaintances, for whose spiritual and everlasting welfare we are particularly bound to provide? Can we not then, and should we not imitate our Savior in this respect, so as to promote, each of us, according to his circumstances and abilities, the salvation of our brethren, by contributing and striving as far as we are able, to prosecute these endeavors with upright intentions and a willing heart, and to allow no difficulties to deter us from them?

Farther; Christ humbled himself to the lowest degree. He quitted heaven, and the glory he had with the Father; he submitted voluntarily to all the hardships and miseries of life; even to a painful and ignominious death; and thus afforded the most astonishing proofs of humility, of denial, and of obedience to God, his heavenly Father. It is certainly impossible for us to give such strong demonstrations of these virtues, since our circumstances are totally different; and therefore we are not called to do so. Nevertheless, we can and should endeavor to imitate our Savior also in this respect, and we effectually do so when we testify the meekness and modesty in all our words and actions, and never boast of our advantages, or magnify ourselves upon them; when we prefer the good pleasure of God, to all the satisfactions and delights of the world, willingly submit to all his dispensations, and never murmur at them; in short, when we are ready and firmly resolved rather to forego all things, and even to forsake whatever is most agreeable and delightful here on earth, than to transgress the commands of God, and to act against our duty.

Still more: Our Redeemer, as we lately saw, travelled about from one place to another, every where

doing good. He restored the dumb to their speech he gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead, and reduced the insane to reason. All his time, all his abilities were devoted to further the spiritual and temporal welfare of mankind, and his generous and helpful love sanctified every day and every hour, as it were of his public ministry by fresh proofs and effects. Now, though it be utterly impossible for us to perform the same acts of beneficence which he performed; impossible for us to afford the same assistance to our brethren, to administer to them the same relief as he did; yet we can and should have like him, a sincere, a constant and effective desire to do good. Like him, we can and should endeavor at becoming as useful to others, and to afford them as much and as important services as our capacities admit, we can and should, like him, make the sacrifice of our personal advantage to the general good, and promote our neighbor's real happiness to the utmost of our power; and, when we do so, we imitate the philanthropy, the compassion, and the generosity of our Redeemer, though we evince these virtues according to the various circumstances in which we are placed, by different instances and demonstrations. And thus it is in general with the other particulars of the life of Jesus. The imitation consists not so much in our leading the same manner of life that he led, and performing the same actions that he performed; as in every event that befalls us, being so minded as he was minded, in letting our mind be guided and governed by his, in framing our moral character upon his, in making his way of thinking and acting the model of ours. And what manifold and cogent reasons have we not for such an imitation of the excellent example of Jesus!

First, this was one of the principal purposes for which our Savior appeared in the world, and dwelt for a time among mankind. He came not only to purchase for us by his expiatory death a blessed immortality and everlasting life; he came not only to instruct us, by his divine doctrine in the gracious will of the Most High, and to admonish us of our duties; but he was likewise to give us a perfect and engaging pattern of behavior towards God, our neighbor and ourselves. He was to place the beauty and the value of virtue in the clearest light by his example, that he might incite us to the love and practice of it. He was to shew, by his own conduct, that it is not impossible, even in a corrupted world, to lead a holy and godly life; and that human nature, under the guidance and support of the spirit of God, is capable of attaining to a very high degree of moral perfection. The express declarations of our Lord himself, as well as the reiterated testimony of his apostles, leave us no room to doubt that this was the design of his conversation on earth. How clearly the Savior explains himself hereupon, in saying: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all; for even the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." The apostles of our Lord are ever enforcing the same.—Would they incite us to holiness; they give us the precept: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Would

they encourage us to patience and firmness in afflictions ; they bid us, “ Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” They remind us, that “ Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps.” Would they inspire us with an humble disposition ; “ they say, “ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” or, gloried not in being equal with God. Would they incite us to love, to gentleness, to placability ; they exhort us to “ Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Bearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. To be conformed to the image of the son of God, we must live not to ourselves, but to him. We must be pure even as he is pure. He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked. Because he laid down his life for us ; we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Thus runs the language of Christ and his apostles. Could they have expressed themselves more plainly and pointedly on this matter than they do ? Can we therefore doubt for one moment, that such is the purpose and the will of God, and consequently that it is our duty, to follow the example of our Redeemer, and to be constantly approaching nearer to a resemblance with him ?

The extraordinary excellence of this example is another consideration, inviting us to the imitation of it. It is a pattern entirely blameless and complete, free from all imperfection and defect, beautiful, consistent, and harmonious in all its parts, which we may safely follow without fear of danger, by which we

may guide ourselves without hesitation in all the events of life. While we tread in the footsteps of Christ, we cannot possibly err ; and so surely as we are persuaded that God was satisfied with his conduct ; so certainly may we be assured that he likewise will be graciously pleased with ours, if we form it upon that model. It is also the noblest and the grandest example that was ever proposed to the world. Nothing can more dignify our nature ; nothing can procure us more real greatness of mind ; nothing can bring us nearer to the deity, and make us more capable of communion with him, than the being animated with that mind which we admire in our Savior. It is a universal and most instructive example, adapted to all times and places, to all ranks and orders of men, which may constantly guide and improve us, be we high or low, rich or poor, fortunate or unfortunate. While our Lord was amongst us, he was in such a variety of circumstances ; he stood in such a diversity of relations ; his whole life, during the time of his ministry, was so busy and active, that we may learn from him how we ought to behave towards God and man, what we have to do both in regard to the present and the future, in all the vicissitudes and events of life. It is, in short, an example of the greatest, the most necessary, the most useful and most beneficent virtue ; an example of such virtue as in part to appear very difficult, as to be totally disregarded by the generality of men, and yet is indispensably necessary to our happiness, and to the practice of which we are every day, on one account or other, repeatedly called. But can we think this example so excellent as it actually is, and yet doubt of our obligation to adopt it ? Would not this argue great inconsistency ? Should we not thus deny by our conduct what we confess with our lips ? Should we not betray a sordid disposition, and shew

ourselves as enemies and traitors to virtue, in refusing to conform to a rule which we ourselves confess to be faultless, a model which we are obliged to admire and revere ?

The relations in which we stand towards Christ, and the benefits we have received from him, are a third reason forcibly impelling us to the imitation of him. Even the example of a mean and obscure person, of a stranger to us, one with whom we have no intimate connexion or relationship, who has not the smallest power over us, to whom we owe neither obedience nor gratitude, even the example of such an one, if it were good and virtuous, should incite us to imitation. How much more then ought it to do so in a case directly the reverse of all this ? The pattern of virtue and piety which our religion holds out, is the example of a person invested with the highest prerogatives, and the greatest authority, who merits our utmost esteem and affection, with whom we are connected by the most indissoluble bands, to whom we owe the most willing and the most cheerful obedience. It is the example of our lord and master, our chieftain and savior, the founder of our religion, the author and finisher of our faith, the judge of the living and the dead, under whose sovereignty we stand, whose subjects we are, on whose sentence our everlasting lot depends. It is the example of our best friend, our magnanimous and faithful Redeemer, who condescended for us to the deepest humiliation, who laid down his life for us, who did and suffered for us while we were his enemies, far more than any friend ever did and suffered for another. It is the example of our greatest benefactor, without whose aid we should have been totally ignorant, vicious, comfortless and wretched ; to whom we stand indebted for all the light, all the comfort, and all the happiness we enjoy, and which

we have in future to expect. Every virtue we should learn of him, he has himself exemplified in the most glorious manner. He that commands us to do good to others, has himself done us infinitely more good, than we could have ever hoped for. He who requires that we should love our enemies, and forgive them their failings, loved his enemies, and shed his own blood for the remission of our sins. How much are we bound by all this to the imitation of him ! How insensible, how ungrateful, how despicable must we be should we refuse it ! Certainly we should render ourselves utterly unworthy of being called the disciples of Jesus ; we should forfeit all the advantages and blessing that are promised us under that distinction.

We have, fourthly, the same cause to lead a pious, a holy, a godly, an humble, a heavenly minded life, as Christ had so to do ; and consequently we are, for this reason, bound to follow his example. Or, do we not stand in the same relations towards the supreme being in which Christ himself stood, considered as a man ? Have we not the very same nature as he had ? Ought not the honor and glory of God to be the ultimate end of our whole behavior, and his will the only and unalterable rule of it ? Are we not just as much strangers and sojourners here on earth, as our Lord and Savior was ? What greater reasons have we to love the world and the things of it more, and more highly to prize them, than he had ? Are riches, honors, and sensual pleasures more our peculiar and highest good than they were his ? Can they contribute more to our true and everlasting felicity, than they could contribute to his ? Are they less dangerous to us than they were to him ? Is it an easier matter for us to conquer our corruption, to perfect our holiness, and to work out our salvation, than it was for him to do the work the Father had

given him to do? Have we less need of devotion, of zeal and application, of selfdenial, and of vigilance to that purpose than our savior had for the accomplishment of his? Can the humility, the gentleness, the patience, which sat so gracefully on Christ, the son of God, and redounded so much to his glory, be unbecoming or disgraceful to us, miserable sinners? Can what rendered his character so beautiful and venerable, degrade ours, or militate with our condition? Is it less salutary and needful to us than to him, to be made perfect through trials and sufferings? Are we too great to desire to render ourselves acceptable to the Most High, and to be happy by the same way that Christ obtained the approbation of his heavenly Father, and entered into his glory? But, since we cannot assert this, as every man must allow, without the greatest absurdity, then neither can we deny that we are under the strongest obligations to make the pious, holy, godly, humble, and heaven-minded life of Jesus the pattern and rule of our own.

Our future destination obliges us, lastly, in like manner, to imitate the example of Christ, and to let that mind be in us which was also in him. We are made for immortality. We are to quit this world, after a short and uncertain abode in it, and then to pass into a better and more perfect state. As christians, we have the lofty hope, that, after death, we shall go to Christ, our chieftain and savior, that we shall be with him for ever, that we shall be closely united with him, and be partakers in the glory he possesses at the right hand of God. We are, as the scripture tells us, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. We are to live and reign with him. As we here have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so shall we hereafter bear the image of the heavenly. But how can we hereafter bear his likeness, if we

have not here done our utmost to resemble him ? How can we have fellowship with him, and enjoy his blessed society, if our mind and desires be in opposition to his ? How can we share in his authority, if we have not sought it in the way of obedience and fidelity, of piety and virtue, by which he obtained it, as our forerunner and guide ? Can we be capable of the holy, the divine life he leads in heaven, unless we study purity and holiness here on earth ? Or, can we imagine that he will acknowledge us to be his, and as such admit us into his heavenly kingdom, if we stand in no other connexion with him, and have no farther similarity with him, than that we are called by his name, hold his doctrine to be true, and shew him an outward reverence ? What have we, in this case, to expect, but that dreadful, yet righteous sentence, “ Depart from me, ye workers of wickedness ; I know you not ! ”

So many and such strong reasons have we for following the example of our Redeemer, and for being like minded with him. And so certain is it, that unless we do so, we neither support the name of christians, nor can be happy. These are doctrines so essentially inherent to religion and christianity, that we cannot refuse our assent, to them, without at once rejecting all religion and all christianity. And yet how little are these important doctrines thought of ! How slender is the influence they have on our conduct ! Do all our words and works testify, do all the effects of our capacities testify, that we are the disciples and followers of the holy and righteous, the humble and gentle, the beneficent and divine, the heavenly minded Jesus ? O christians, how far inferior are we still to the pattern of virtue and piety set us by our Lord and Savior ! How little resemblance there is between his way of thinking and acting, and ours ! How little conformity between

our lives and the sanctity of the doctrine we confess, or the conduct of the Lord to whom we belong ! How cold and unfruitful the love we bear to Christ, our Redeemer, and how imperfect and inconstant the obedience we pay him ! May these reflections awaken and alarm us ! May they fill us with the most sensible remorse and trouble at our negligence and ingratitude ! May they excite in us a lively zeal to walk worthy of our vocation, and to discharge our duties with more carefulness and fidelity ! Yes, my christian brethren, here at the table of our Lord let us renew these sacred resolutions with all possible sincerity and devotion. Here, where we shall receive the symbols and pledges of his magnanimous love, let us solemnly vow to our beloved Redeemer, no longer to live to ourselves, but to him, and to conform to his likeness. Here let us learn the gentleness, the philanthropy, the selfdenial, the contempt of the world, the obedience towards God, the zeal for his honor, the perseverance in goodness, of which our Savior has set us so bright an example by his life and by his death. Here let us offer up to him our bodies and our souls, which he purchased so dearly and are his, by solemnly and for ever renouncing all the sinful lusts, all the sordid maxims and wicked customs of the world, that are at variance with his mind. So shall we actually do honor to our Redeemer, who has so loved us as to lay down his life for us. So shall we give him the thankfulness that is his due, and which he has such a right to demand. So shall we adorn the name of christians ; we shall make it an object of esteem and reverence ; we shall edify others by our behavior, and shine as lights in the midst of the corrupt generation of this world. But so likewise shall we arrive at the end of our faith, everlasting felicity. If we, like Christ, our leader and head, be dead unto

sin, and alive unto God ; if we, like him, overcome the world, and, by perseverance in good works, strive after praise, and honor, and immortality ; then shall we also, like him, be exalted to glory. We shall, like him, be filled with joy and bliss at the right hand of God ; we shall find, in his blessed society, and in the closest intercourse with him, the completion of all our wishes.

Communion.

SERMON LII.

Of the Pastoral Office.



O GOD, the Father of mankind, how much hast thou not done in us thy children, and how much dost thou not daily for us ! Every thing reveals to us thy glory and grandeur, thy grace and parental affection towards us. Every thing informs us of thy will and of our grand destination. All things incite us to the accomplishment of thy will, and to the ever completer attainment of our desination. Nature as well as religion ; the reason with which thou hast endowed us, as well as thy more immediate revelation. Thanks and praises be to thee, the All bountiful, for the various means of instruction and knowledge thou hast imparted to us ! Thanks and praises be to thee, more especially for the advantages which thou hast vouchsafed to us in this respect as christians ! Yes, by thy son Jesus thou hast caused a brighter light to rise upon us. By him we are come nearer to thee, our Father, and to the knowledge of the truth. By him we have learnt to form juster conceptions of numberless important, consolatory objects. By him we have attained to greater certainty concerning thy will and thy gracious dispositions towards us, more hope and assurance both while living and dying. By him hast thou instituted amongst us the pastoral office ; and what means, what incitements, ever to proceed farther in knowledge and virtue, hast thou not thus bestowed upon us ! How greatly facilitated to us the way to perfection and happiness ! Oh might this important office be ever more faith-

fully administered by all who bear it, and ever diffuse more light and comfort and joy, ever more good dispositions and actions among mankind ! Do thou cleanse and sanctify thy church, most gracious God, that both teachers and hearers may be ever advancing together towards that which thou wouldst have them to be. Oh pour out thy spirit and energy upon us all who are ordained to declare thy will to our brethren, and lead them to thee and to happiness ; teach us rightly to discern the truth, to believe it firmly, to follow its dictates faithfully, to deliver it with conviction to others ; and thus open to it an access to the understandings and to the hearts of them that bear us. Cause our hearers also to bring with them ever greater docility and attention to the discourse of their teachers, and ever to apply it with greater care to their improvement. Oh might thus the kingdom of thy son Jesus, the kingdom of truth and virtue, of liberty and happiness, come, ever farther extend, ever more be established, and ever gain more glorious victories over error, and vice, and misery ! Bless to the furtherance of these views, our reflections on the wise preparatives thou hast made to that end ; and hear us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we farther call upon thee, saying : Our Father, &c.



EPHESIANS vi. 11.

He gave some—pastors and teachers.

THE pastoral office, which is every where introduced into the christain church, and dates its origin from the times of the apostles, is certainly an institution of extreme utility ; an institution which would insure to Jesus and his disciples one of the

foremost ranks among the benefactors of the human race, were we only to consider them as wise men, and not as peculiar plenipotentiary ambassadors from God to mankind. No where do we find in the ancient world, as far as it is known to us, any such teachers of the people; teachers that instructed their brethren, without distinction of ranks, of ages, of sexes, or manners, in their obligations towards God and man, in their duties, and the objects that concern their present and their future state; who instructed them at stated times, not far asunder, on the most important subjects; who led them to consideration and virtue, comforted them in their sorrows, and in such various ways promoted their contentment and happiness. — But we find priests of idols, and ambitious leaders of the people, every where, throughout the ancient and modern, the heathenish, or the not christian world; men who could make use of the ignorance and weaknesses of their fellow creatures to the establishment of a tyrannical and cruel power, to the extorting of rich presents and hard tributes, or to the attainment of other selfish views, who spread fear and terrors around them, and by all the solemnities of their religion and worship promoted neither wisdom nor virtue, but were favorable to superstition and vice.— I am well aware my pious hearers, that even the christian pastorate has been very often and very shamefully misused, and is still misused; that it not always, and not thoroughly, is and effects what it might and should effect and be: And this is not at all surprising, since it is supplied by men, who are subject, like all others, to mistakes and errors, and are so liable to be deceived by the passions. At the same time, it has certainly done an infinite deal of good; still, upon the whole, does much good; and will—as we may assuredly hope—in the course of time effect

still far more good. The christian teacher undoubtedly therefore merits esteem, on account of the office he bears, and the usefulness he thereby obtains. But, for rendering this a rational esteem, and giving it a salutary influence on our conduct; if we are desirous that it should neither degenerate into superstition, nor gradually give place to disrespect and contempt; it should be grounded on right notions of it, and on what christian teachers are and ought to be. We should not require and expect more from them, than we can with justice require and expect. And to settle these notions, and to render them more common, is the design of my present discourse. It is said in our text, that Christ appointed or ordained some in our text to be pastors and teachers. These are the very persons whom we at present commonly call preachers; and purport of whose institution we will study more clearly to understand. To this end, we will investigate the relations wherein a preacher stands to his flock; or shew you what the preacher properly is and ought to be in regard to his congregation. In order to this, we must first remove the false notions that are formed of the relations, and then shew the true nature of them.

In the first place, the preacher is no priest in the strict and usual acceptation of the word, but only in that sense wherein it is used by the compilers of our liturgy. He is not a person that stands in any nearer degree of affinity with God, or has a closer and more familiar intercourse with him than the rest of his worshippers; he is not a person who, when we have sinned, can free us from the merited consequences of the sin, by offerings, or rites, or intercessions, and reconcile us again with our offended Maker. He may and ought to announce to us favor and life on the part of God, set the value of his bounties and blessings both in nature and religion in their

proper light, and excite us to be glad and rejoice therein; but he cannot dispense either the one or the other according to his pleasure. He may and ought to promise us the pardon of our sins and everlasting happiness, on certain conditions, in the name of God; but he cannot actually confer them. He may and ought to explain and inculcate the divine commandments; but he cannot discharge any from the observance of them. Of his own authority he can neither impose nor invalidate any vow, any obligation, or any duty. He is, therefore, no such manager between God and man, as that he can give a greater value to our acts of worship than they would otherwise have; or impart, by certain sanctified words, to the water in baptism, and to the signs of the body and blood of Jesus in the holy communion, any power or efficacy which they had not before; or, lastly, whose prayers are more acceptable and effectual with God, than the prayers of any other sincere and upright christian.—Jesus Christ is represented to us in the writings of the apostles, and particular in the writings of the apostle Paul, as the sole high priest and mediator between God and man, for tranquillizing mankind, and more especially the Jews, on the recent abolition of the priestly office and the sacrifices in use, by the introduction of christianity, for inspiring them with a filial confidence in God, and for assuring them, in a sensible manner, adapted to their comprehensions, of his protection and favor. All notions of peculiar priests and sacrifices, that have been adopted in the christian religion and the christian worship, are superstitious; they are in direct opposition to the scope and the spirit of our holy religion, and of this pure and rational worship; they mislead us from the God to whom Jesus has opened us free access, and whom he has taught us to regard and to love as our

father ; they are relicts of the feeble Jewish way of thinking, which the christian doctrine by degrees abolished, and of which, among christians, who are no longer children, but should be men in knowledge and in faith, no traces ought now to remain.

The preacher is, secondly, no curate of souls, in the strictest meaning of the word, and as it implies a person on whose pains and behavior the salvation or the happiness of the rest, if not altogether, yet greatly depends ; who can and should contribute as much or still more than themselves to their moral improvement, to their spiritual and eternal welfare ; and whose future lot is indissolubly connected with the lot of the souls entrusted to his care. No, every individual must be the curate of his own soul, bear his own guilt, and give an account to God for himself. Every person must fulfil his duty according to the utmost of his power ; but none can be security for the consequences, much less fulfil it for another. And what sensible man would take the postoral office upon him, if he should thereby oblige himself to answer for the conduct of all such as belong to his congregation, or to concern himself for the happiness of each of them in particular, as a father concerns himself for his children, or a domestic tutor for his pupil ? If this were to be the case, he ought to be thoroughly and intimately acquainted with every person in his parish ; they should at all times and in all circumstances exhibit themselves to him as they really are ; they should make him the confidant of their most secret dispositions and sentiments ; he should be the witness of their conduct in domestic as well as in civil society ; he should have the right and the licence to give them the most determinate precepts on all their concernments : And even if all this were done, which yet is not, and will not, and cannot be done, still it must be an effect of

the most audacious termerity for a man to assume to himself the peculiar and sole guidance of so many persons of such various capacities and tempers, and to stand as surety for them in the day of judgment.

No, my pious hearers, when you call us, preachers, your curates, you cannot reasonably exact any thing more of us, than that, according to our best insights and to your necessities, we should shew you what you ought to do, and how you are to set about it, for delivering your soul from the captivity of error, of sensuality, of vice, or to caution you against them; for adorning it with wisdom and virtue; for rendering it both in this and in the future world as perfect, as happy, and as agreeable to God, as it is capable of becoming. In this design, with no less earnestness than affection, we are to instruct, to exhort, to admonish, to reprove, and to intreat; to call your attention to whatever may be in an eminent degree useful or prejudicial to you at all times, and on every alteration of your condition; and all this for sincerely promoting the cause of truth, of virtue, and your happiness; and never to be weary and disheartened in so doing, though attended by the worst consequences. Thus we are to care for your souls, as we must give an account how we have instructed you, and of the use we have made of the times, the circumstances, and the occasions afforded us for that purpose.

We may also, in a stricter sense, be considered as your curates, if you afford us opportunity and encouragement to make what we here deliver and teach in public more profitable to you by friendly and private conversation, apply it more closely to your station and your present occasions, remind you of your particular duties, failings, and transgressions; to labor with you in maintaining or restoring domestic harmony, or to supply you with stated pre-

cepts and means for your proficiency in knowledge and virtue. At the same time, as every one readily perceives, the preacher cannot execute this duty of fraternal admonition and particular exhortation to goodness, without the concurrence, or against the will, of his parishioner. Neither is this a duty peculiarly incumbent on him : He possesses it in common with every other christian ; only in so much as in particular cases and with certain persons, from the greater respect they have for him, and the greater sagacity they may allow him to possess, he may fulfil it with better success than another.

The mistaken and superstitious idea annexed to the office of a clergyman is in nothing so apparent as in regard to the sick and dying. But too frequently almost the whole hope of the salvation of a man is built on the presence, on the discourse, on the prayer of the curate. How sadly are the assistants concerned, that the sick person should die without this preparation or succor ! What can we conclude from hence, but that they attribute to the clergyman far greater ability and influence than he actually has ? We are by no means disinclined to attend when called to the sick and the dying ; and when we can excite or cherish any good, any christian reflections and sentiments in them, when we are able to administer any thing to their comfort, or for soothing their passage from this into the future world, we do it with all our heart. But it is absolutely impossible for us, or any other man, at such a time, to make a good man of a bad one, or as it were to open the gates of heaven to a sinner who has been a slave to iniquity and vice his whole life long, and to be security for him against the penalties he has to dread. And then the visitation of the sick is a duty not obligatory on us alone, but we have it in common with all other christians. It is their duty

mutually to support, to comfort, and to exhort and encourage each other, in their afflictions and troubles, and to make supplications for all men. In the primitive church, in the times of the apostles and their immediate successors, when it was better seen, or more believed, that the portion of a man after death depended not on the manner how he spent the last days or the last hours of his life, but was to be determined by his predominant dispositions and the whole of his foregoing behavior; it was not then peculiar to the office of the teacher to visit the sick and the dying, but it was the duty of the elders and the prefects of the flock; and in regard to the other sex, it was the duty of the matrons or widows to perform that office. These took charge of the sick and the dying with cordial affection as brothers and sisters, consoled them, prayed with them, provided, if they were poor, for their support and nourishment, tended them, and did them numberless personal services. And these are undoubtedly the best offices that can be afforded a person at such times, and which every one should perform according to his means.

A preacher is, thirdly, not a man of a different kind or species from other men. He is no divine, so far as this term is used to imply either a man completely perfect, or one elevated above all sensible and terrestrial things. This mistaken notion proceeds from the abuse of the term; or, to speak more properly, the epithet itself was misapplied for the purpose of procuring in the earlier times to the teachers of religion a superiority over other men, and of placing them in higher respect. It was then, and it is at present, not unfrequently understood to imply a man that is absolutely indifferent to every thing sensible, to all visible objects, to whatever cheers or saddens others; who despises all such matters; whom neither honor nor disgrace, neither riches

nor poverty, neither pain nor pleasure can at all affect; who is constantly employed in religious contemplation and peculiar exercises of devotion; whose thoughts are unremittedly directed to the most important and most exalted objects; in whose sight cheerfulness and joy, wit and good humor are horrible transgressions; whose presence is baneful to all pleasure, and whose looks diffuse a sullen gravity on all around. No, my pious hearers, such men are we not, nor such ought we to be; and if we either could or should be such, we should be either deserving of contempt or compassion, and in any case be prejudicial to society. No, we are entirely like you in whatever constitutes a man in respect to his infirmities, as well as in respect to his better side; and when any of us excell you in wisdom and virtue, it is from no prerogative of our station, but a personal advantage which any one of you may have over us.

It is true, our station and office afford, or seem to afford, us some resources for improving in wisdom and virtue which you have not. We employ ourselves frequently, and much oftener and more continuedly than you, in reflections on God and his will, on the destination and duties of man. But how vigilant must we be over ourselves, how much attention must we necessarily exert, in order to prevent these circumstances, so advantageous in themselves, from becoming detrimental to us! For the very reason that we are obliged to employ ourselves so often, and so often solely in regard to others, in the doctrines of religion, and this even at times when we have no particular motive and are not disposed to do so, for this very reason they may lose much of their force in respect of us. These reflections, by their frequent recurrence, may become so habitual to us, as to make us think that we understand and feel the subjects themselves, though all the while we are only

thinking of barren words. Hence it happens, that difficulties and doubts are frequently augmenting in proportion as we advance farther in knowledge; and that on the other hand, the pleasure attendant on meditation and devotion may lose much of its poignancy by the abundance of enjoyment. What a comfort must it be to the christian merchant, or artificer, or any other who is not a clergyman, when on having conscientiously performed the business of the day, in the evening he recollects his scattered thoughts, and can converse, for a shorter or a longer time, with God, and reflect upon his weightiest obligations! Certainly, the pleasure this occupation procures him, must frequently be far more lively than ours, just as a repast is much better relished by a man who has fasted long, than by one who has been almost all the day sitting at a plentiful table. Besides, we preachers commonly have not so many opportunities and means for exercising ourselves in wisdom and virtue, and for applying their precepts to the various occurrences of common life, as he who stands in more diversified connexions with other men, who has such various affairs to mind, such various duties to fulfil, and so many dealings to transact with persons of such different opinions and manners; and likewise in this respect may a well informed, honest christian, who is no clergyman, easily excel us in wisdom and virtue.

As to the rest, we have no other duties and obligations, that are not also incumbent on you.—What is true and right and good, that same is true and right and good, for you and for us and for all mankind. Whatever is false and wrong and bad, is equally so both to you and to us. What is allowable for you to do, is allowable for us. What God forbids us in his word or by the light of reason, he forbids the same to you. We have all the same law.

We must all walk the very same way to praise, to honor, to immortality. If we must give an account how we have discharged our clerical office, so must you likewise render account how you have fulfilled your civil offices, how you have pursued your calling as a merchant, as a manufacturer, as a workman, how you have maintained your post as a master, as a guardian, as a servant, and the like ; and of you and of us, in all these respects fidelity and integrity will be required.

We ought indeed to abstain from many things which you may do, or at least which you do. But, either these things are in and of themselves bad, or they are not. Be they in and of themselves bad ; then have you as little right and leave to do or to use them, as we ; and they are not to be excused by any distinction between clergyman and laic. Poison will ever remain poison, let who will find pleasure in taking it. But are these things not bad, and we yet refrain from them ; we then do so out of respect to certain prevailing prejudices, which cannot perhaps be directly opposed or despised without harm ; we do it, that we may not give offence to the weak ; we do it, that, by our total abstinence in these respects, we may probably prevent still greater abuses, and at least evince, by our example, that a man may deprive himself of them, and yet be contented and happy.

In fine, we should by all means set a good example to others ; and if we really wish our doctrines to be believed and our precepts followed, we shall certainly be extremely careful to testify to all men by our whole behavior, that we believe these doctrines ourselves, and acknowledge these precepts to be right and good. For the rest, we have these duties to observe in common with all you. No man is to give offence or scandal to another. Every one

should let the light of his virtue shine before men. We should all mutually excite one another to good works. Our example can, however, never be so extensive and instructive as yours. Our mode of life is too uniform. Our connexions and businesses are not sufficiently diversified. Besides, the notion that we do many things solely on account of our office, which otherwise we should not do, often deprives our best examples of all their efficacy. How frequently is it said, when we do any thing tolerably good, "Yes, that he does because he is a clergyman; if such persons did not do so, who should? We are no more than common christians, who cannot be expected to carry our christian perfection to such a length; nothing of this sort is to be expected of us!" How often is it said: Yes, he must needs do so, or abstain from this, if he will do honor to his profession, if he would act consistently. Were it not for this consideration, were he not restrained by fear, were he in our place, he would behave in a very different manner!" Thus do prejudice and partiality but too often enfeeble the influence of our example. With you this is not the case. Your good example operates more unimpeded and complete. When the merchant gives proofs of great probity and conscientiousness; when the opulent and the noble are modest and humane, shewing by their conduct how little their outward advantages avail in their eyes, and how little he that is poor and lowly ought therefore to be scorned; when the man of the world, or the layman as he is called, testifies a reverence for God and religion, and mankind can discern his unfeigned piety; when any one, who, in respect of his fortune, might indulge in luxury and magnificence, and revel in all kinds of amusements, yet lives in a becoming and orderly manner, and

moderate himself in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures ; when persons adorned with the charms of youth and beauty seek to distinguish themselves, not by childish ostentation and vanity, but by wisdom and virtue, display indeed an open countenance and a cheerful disposition, but not thoughtless and frivolous behavior ; this, my dear friends, this strikes a far deeper impression on all beholders, than our discourses and actions can generally do.

Having hitherto been encountering prejudices no less hurtful than common, we shall now find it so much the easier to illustrate the subject before us according to its true nature and quality. If therefore this be not the relation in which the preacher stands towards his congregation, what then ought it to be, and what actually is it ?

First, he should be the teacher of the people, or of the congregation. Certainly a very honorable, but at the same time a very arduous employment ! How important the subjects he has to inculcate ; and how much depends on the method in which he inculcates them ! He should be a teacher of religion and of generally useful wisdom. As a teacher of religion, it is his duty to instruct his hearers in the regards wherein they stand towards God, their creator and preserver, their father and benefactor, their lawgiver and judge, and towards Jesus Christ, his son and ambassador, their deliverer and lord. It is his duty to furnish them with adequate and worthy conceptions of the majesty and perfections of God, of his protection and love towards mankind, of the sanctity and equity of his laws, of the wisdom and goodness of his providence, and of the benefits he has vouchsafed them by Jesus and his work on earth. He is to tell them how God is disposed towards them ; what he requires of them ; what they have to hope or to fear from him according to the difference

of their conduct ; to what they are appointed in the present and in the future world ; and what they should do for being and becoming that which, according to the gracious purpose of God, they ought to be and to become. He is to shew them how they are to apply the doctrines of religion to themselves ; how they are to use them in all the events of life ; how they are to fight with them against temptations to sin ; to facilitate the practice of goodness to them, to exalt their taste for the comforts and satisfactions which God has permitted them to enjoy, and to render supportable the troubles and burdens which he lays upon them. He therefore should chiefly labor to improve and to calm them ; to incite them to the abhorrence of all ungodly behavior and all worldly lusts, and to a temperate, just and godly life ; inform them concerning their relations and duties towards each other, and strive to animate them with kind, beneficent and brotherly dispositions towards all their fellow christians and fellow creatures. He must form them into good and public spirited citizens, peaceful and loving spouses, faithful fathers and mothers of families, affectionate friends and sincere worshippers of God. He should exhort them to conscientiousness in their dealings, humility and temperance in prosperity, fortitude in afflictions, hope and cheerfulness in death. In short he should guide them on the way of virtue and religion, to tranquillity of mind, to continued advances in perfection and happiness. Thus should a preacher declare to his hearers the whole counsel of God to their felicity. Thus should he preach to them Jesus Christ, and him crucified, that is, the doctrine of Jesus Christ the crucified, in contradistinction to the Jewish expectations of a worldly Messiah, and in opposition to the idolatries of the heathens. A doctrine which is of a large and indefinite comprehen-

sion, and which certainly excludes nothing that has a tendency to render mankind wiser and better.

No, my pious hearers, as often as I preach such truths as tend to promote human perfection and happiness; the truths that have a practical influence on the moral behavior, and on the repose and satisfaction of mankind; so often do I preach Christ and him crucified; so often do I contribute to carry on his work on earth; so often do I proportionately supply his place among my brethren. For he came, he lived, he taught, he suffered and died, he arose again from the dead, and is now the head and the lord of his church, for disseminating truth and virtue and happiness among the human race; and whatever advances them is his work, is consistent with his aims, enlarges and confirms his kingdom; even though it be not immediately connected with his history, nor expressly contained in such of his discourses as are come down to us. Though truth is unchangeable in itself, yet its extent and the manner of its delivery admits not of being fixed and established for all times and for all mankind. Each age, each society of men, has its own horizon, its own circuit of comprehension, its peculiar exigencies, its peculiar obstacles and means of assistance; and the teacher of religion should conduct himself accordingly, if he be resolutely bent on doing his duty, so far as his frailty allows him, and determined to perform what Jesus or his apostles would have done, had they been placed in his situation.

The teacher of religion should therefore also be a teacher of wisdom in a more general sense. He should deliver to his hearers, and particularly to the youth he instructs, not only the peculiar doctrines of religion, but should likewise subjoin such other useful knowledge as either is previously requisite to the knowledge of religion, may lie as a foundation

to it, promote and settle it, or may otherwise contribute to the repose and improvement of mankind.— And here but too often do persons form wrong conceptions of the office and appointment of the christian teacher. They take it amiss, they even impute it to him as a sin, if he do not frequently, if he do not constantly discourse on the mysteries, as they are called, of christianity; that is, of things which we either do not understand at all, or but in an extremely imperfect manner. It is taken amiss if he do not continually enforce the peculiar articles of faith as they are termed, if he annex to them a variety of ideas as unavoidable, as harmless, and does not account every error to be as dangerous and fatal as vice. It is scornfully called philosophical and moral preaching when we discourse of the nature and destination of man, of the true value of the possessions and satisfactions and occupations of this life if we speak of particular duties and virtues of their influence on our present happiness, of the arguments which even sound reason affords for the fulfilling of these duties and the practice of these virtues and of the method in which we ought to fulfil and practice them in every occurrence. But how unjust are not these reproaches! Is not reason then a gift and a revelation of God? Is not all truth in perfect harmony with itself? What value then can a blind implicit faith possess? Of what consequence is a faith without works? A religion without morality? Is not this the ultimate end of that? Is not the aim of all religion to make us wiser and better? And is any thing to be rejected that promotes this end? Can the foundation of our virtue and hopes be too deeply laid, or too firmly settled?

No, the preacher, according to the present state of things, is the only public teacher of generally useful wisdom to the generality of mankind; and to main-

tain this character should be at once both his endeavor and his glory. By his means such persons as have no other opportunities of instruction, should be brought to rational reflection, to the better use of their mental faculties, to greater attention to moral, invisible, and distant objects ; by his interposition should all prevailing prejudices and errors, which have a noxious influence on the conduct and serenity of mankind be refuted, the most generally useful, philosophical knowledge be ever farther spread, and by little and little, the sum of truths which every one knows and adopts, be incorporated into the common stock. He should, however, strive to deliver what he has to say in a manner adapted to the comprehension of the unlettered mind, and to this end not employ the language of the dogmatists or of the schools, but the language of common life in use among people of gentility and good breeding. If he do this ; if he be thus at once a teacher of religion and of wisdom, he will certainly so much the more contribute to the improvement and happiness of mankind. To promote and to further this is the whole of his duty ; and whatever has a tendency to that is consistent with his office and calling.

The preacher, should, secondly, be the intermediate person, through whom the congregation are united in their public worship, and the various acts of it socially performed. There should be order in every society ; and when certain matters are to be transacted in common, one of the society should take the lead ; he should be the organ whereby the rest express their sentiments, their desires, their joys, their hopes, and the like. And this the pastor, or the preacher is. He reforms the several acts of divine worship, he reads the scriptures, utters the prayers, and delivers such instruction as is adapted to the circumstances and exigencies of the congrega-

tion. He is, as it were, their mouth, when they confess their sins before their sovereign judge of the world; when they humble themselves in his awful presence, and adore his majesty; when they implore his grace and succor, thank him for his bounties, and renew their protestations of obedience. He unites himself with the whole society of the worshippers of God and of Jesus Christ in these devout sentiments and feelings; and strives to express them in their behalf in such manner as may best serve to raise and support their devotion. In like manner, as president and minister of the congregation, he admits members by baptism into the fellowship of the christian church; and on these occasions, admonishes the rest concerning what, as christians, they are and ought to be; to remember always that baptism doth represent unto us our possession which is to follow the example of our savior Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. So likewise at the administration of the holy communion, he takes the place of the father of the family, distributing the bread and the wine among those that present themselves with him at table; exhorting them to take and eat in remembrance that Christ died for them, and to feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving; to drink of the cup in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for them, and to be thankful; thus directing their thoughts and their hearts to the awful concerns of this solemn celebration. But he performs all this, as I have already observed, not as a person whose meditation can confer on our acts of devotion any greater value, or on our sacred rites any peculiar

efficacy, independent of the sentiments and piety of the partaker ; but he does it because order and the common edification require that certain persons should be ordained to the performance of this solemnity, and because he is commissioned to do it by lawful authority.

Lastly, the preacher is also to be the friend and the counsellor of his flock. If the christian preacher were or could be more so, he certainly might do more good in his station. But he can only be so as far as his congregation will allow him. No man can force himself upon any as their friend or their counsellor ; and if a person should attempt it, he would by that very means fail of the purpose he had in view. At the same time, the teacher should be always ready to embrace such opportunities as naturally offer, and use them with fidelity. It need hardly be mentioned, that he is not to interfere in extraneous matters, or misapply the respect which accrues to him either from his office or his personal qualities, to the prosecution of selfish views, or the gratification of disorderly passions. As a teacher, he is only to meddle with moral and religious objects, and with the application of them to particular events and occurrences of life. Since he may reasonably be presumed to have reflected on these matters more, and to be more intimately acquainted with them, and the generality of his hearers ; and, as in his public discourses pronounced to a very mixt assembly, he cannot say every thing it were profitable and necessary for any one in particular to know ; it would certainly be of great utility, if opportunities were afforded him to supply this unavoidable defect of instruction by private conversation. By this channel might he convey direction and assistance to such as should be desirous of making farther progress in the knowledge of re-

ligion : Thus might he deliver the candid and ingenuous doubter from his doubts, or tranquillize him in them : Thus might he remove many a prejudice from the anxious and perturbed mind, and bring the sorrowful heart to a comfortable and joyful reliance on the gospel : Thus might he be enabled to speak courage to the sincere but feeble christian, and probably facilitate to him the conquest of himself and the world : Thus might he inform any individual how he should apply to himself and his particular circumstances the general precepts and encouragements of religion. So would the teacher be at the same time the leader and the counsellor of his flock ; and so might he likewise, in a stricter sense be said to watch over their souls, and labor more effectually at their improvement and felicity.

And this, my pious hearers, is the relation wherein the preacher stands towards his congregation ; he is their teacher, their leader, their friend and adviser. Allow me to conclude this discourse with drawing a few consequences from what has been said, and reminding you of the duties which in this respect you are bound to observe.

You plainly perceive from all that has been advanced, that we preachers, require of you no blind faith, no servile obedience, no unlimited concurrence. We feel our infirmities and frailties much too sensibly to pretend to this ; and the more we are animated by the spirit of christianity, the more zealously shall we in these respects maintain the cause of freedom. No, try all things that we deliver to you as truths, and enjoin on you as duties : Compare them with what reason and scripture tell you of God and his will ; prove all things, and adhere to that which is good. The more carefully you examine our doctrines, the more you reflect upon them ; the more you discourse with each oth-

er about them, in honest intentions : So much the greater are our hopes that you will reap benefit from them. Only by such reflections, only by such examinations and discussions, can what we tell and teach to you assimilate itself with your own system of reflection, and either rectify or enlarge it.

You see, farther, that we require no excessive and superstitious reverence from you. The office we bear is undoubtedly honorable, and they that bear it should be held in a certain degree of estimation, if their bearing of it is to be attended with success. When, therefore, you are candid towards us ; when you conceal as much as possible our failings and imperfections, from the consideration, lest the respect to our office should thereby be lessened and the useful effects of it be hindered ; you then act wisely and consistently with your duty. For the rest, judge of us with the same equity and philanthropy, you are accustomed to use in judging of your neighbors in general ; and let us experience the same justice and lenity that is due all mankind.

You see, thirdly, in what regard we properly stand towards you. Require therefore, no more from us than you may accordingly, and with reason expect. Require neither supernatural gifts and powers, nor a perfection that is above the reach of humanity. Ascribe no greater importance to our words and actions, no greater efficacy than they really possess. Rely not upon us in matters, where no man should or can rely upon another ; where every man must provide for himself and his own concerns. Think not that we either can or ought to do the generality or the principal of the things that relate to the salvation of your souls and your everlasting happiness. No, it is our part to shew you what, in this respect you have to do, and it is your parts actually to do them ; and the latter is in-

contestably far more important and difficult than the former. Seek not therefore to throw any responsibility upon us, which will be required not of us, but of you; and constantly bear in mind the declaration of the apostle: "Every man shall bear his own burden; every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."

Lastly, you see how weighty and arduous our ordination is. Alleviate then to us as much as you can, the concerns and duties of it. Alleviate them to us by the attention you afford to our discourses; by the zeal and devotion with which you frequent all the rites of the public worship; by the strict vigilance you keep over your children whom we instruct; by the encouragements you give them; by conversations you hold with them on what they are learning, and what they have already been taught; by the application you make of it to the cultivation of their heart, and the forming of their conduct. In a more especial manner, lighten to us the burden of our office, and reward us for our pains by the faithful use you make of our doctrine; by the willing obedience you pay to our well founded admonitions and exhortations; by the good deeds which you perform; by the shining virtues by which you distinguish yourselves beyond others; by your continual improvement in wisdom and piety. This will prove to us that our labors in your behalf have not been in vain; and this assurance will render all the efforts and toils we exert and undergo easy and pleasant. It will never allow us to become faint or weary; and even in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment it will be our comfort and joy.

END.

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