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S E R M O N S



PREACHED CHIEFLY AT THE

CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S.

BY THE

HON. & REV. A. P. PERCEVAL, B.C.L.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO THE QUEEN,

RECTOR OF EAST HORSLEY,

AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES GEORGE LORD ARDEN,

WHOSE LIFE AND CONVERSATION

BEAR WITNESS TO THE BLESSEDNESS OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND HOPE,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

WITH

FILIAL LOVE AND REVERENCE,

BY THE AUTHOR.



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[*Preached before Her Majesty, at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, July 22, 1838.*]

# SERMON I.

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## ON HUMILITY.

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PROVERBS xv. 33.

“ Before honour is humility.”

THAT is, before men can attain honour, they must first learn and practise humility. The honour of which Solomon here speaks, is not worldly honour; but that which alone deserves the name, that which our Lord Himself bids us seek after, *viz.* “the honour which cometh from God only<sup>1</sup>.”

Before we can obtain this, we are taught, not by our text only, but by the whole Bible, that we must be humbled. Thus Solomon speaks in another place, “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and (he repeats) before honour is humility<sup>2</sup>.” To the same purpose our Lord Himself speaks, “Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted<sup>3</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> John v. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xviii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 14. Ibid. xiv. 11. Matt. xxiii. 12.

which He repeats on three several occasions. The value of humility is taught us by Micah, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God<sup>1</sup>?" Likewise by Isaiah, "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word<sup>2</sup>;" likewise in the Psalms, "Whoso hath a proud look and high stomach I will not suffer him<sup>3</sup>." The same in St. James, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble<sup>4</sup>." In short, throughout the whole Bible, there is scarcely anything more constantly kept in view, or more earnestly urged upon us, than the necessity of the practice of humility; which God has made indispensable towards the attainment of His grace and favour, requiring that all who would enter His palace of everlasting joy, should approach it through the strait, and narrow, and hard-to-be-found gate of humility.

The virtue thus highly prized by God, and which He esteemed so necessary, consists chiefly in a lowly opinion of ourselves and our merits, and a full conviction of our many sins, and frequent faults, and numberless imperfections; not in thinking them greater than they are, or accusing ourselves of them when they do not exist, which is an excess into which men sometimes fall on this head; but in truth merely in this, namely, in coming to a

<sup>1</sup> Mic. vi. 8.   <sup>2</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.   <sup>3</sup> Ps. ci. 7.   <sup>4</sup> James iv. 6.

just and correct view of things. In forbearing to see them, and judge of ourselves, according to the false colouring which our vain and deceitful imaginations would cast over them; which would lead us to forget the treasures of Heaven, while they falsely heighten the gilded toys of this world, and while we think of ourselves, to forget the God in whom "we live and move and have our being<sup>1</sup>;" but in looking at them, and considering ourselves as the case really is; in thinking of ourselves as sinful and helpless creatures, having no good of ourselves, and dependent upon another for our life, and for every thing we have, value, and hope for, and without whose favour we must be lost and undone for ever; and in thinking of the things around us as of no *real* value, but so far as they are, or may be made, either directly or indirectly, the means of obtaining this awful Being's favour: in feeling that after we have done our best to serve Him, still this service is so imperfect, and so unworthy His acceptance, on its own account, that, strictly speaking, we cannot be said to deserve anything at His hands, and therefore must be willing to receive any and every of His blessings not as of right, or as due unto us, but merely as matter of His bounty and free grace.

This is humility: and the existence of this virtue in the human mind is to be shown and proved by

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

such conduct, as this state of mind, and these feelings, if sincere, must necessarily produce. Namely, 1st, As concerns God, in living in a state of dependence and firm trust in Him; in looking up to Him in our minds, and being guided by what we know and believe to be His will, in everything; in *doing* nothing which we dare not beg Him to prosper; in *hoping* for nothing but according to His will, and in *using* everything as far as may be to His honour; in praying to Him for every thing we want, and not expecting to prosper in any undertaking, nor to be preserved from evil, or to be enabled to do what is right, except by His blessing: and therefore, which is the consequence of this, in being very careful when we do prosper in any of our plans, or overcome evil, or act like Christians, not to take the credit of any of these to ourselves, “as though by our own power and holiness<sup>1</sup> they had been accomplished, but to ascribe and return it all to God, to whom alone it is due, as it is written, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise<sup>2</sup> ;” and in another place, “Say not thou in thine heart my power, and the might of mine arm hath gotten me this: but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power<sup>3</sup> :” lastly, considering everything upon which a man would be inclined to pride himself, his riches, his honour, his power, his

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 12.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. cxv. 1.    <sup>3</sup> Deut. viii. 17, 18.

influence, all but as so many talents intrusted to him by his Master, to whom for the employment of all he must hereafter give account.

2ndly, The existence of humility is proved, as concerns a man's self, in moderation of his desires, as judging it unreasonable that himself, of whom he knows so much that is bad, should expect to become great and exalted ; in contentment with his station, whatever it may be, as feeling that it is more than he deserves, inasmuch as he had no right to any ; in frequent self-examination, and self-condemnation for the sins and failings of which he is so frequently guilty ; in keeping a strict watch and ward over himself, knowing to how many temptations he is exposed, and how liable he is to fall under them. 3dly, It is shown as concerns others, which is but the effect of this opinion of himself, in kindness, gentleness, and charity. If ever he compares himself with them, it is not for the self-complacent purpose of thinking of his own superiority over them, but, on the contrary, of finding out some points in them in which they are superior to himself, and in which, therefore, he may take a lesson from them ; as it is written, " In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself<sup>1</sup>." This he does by remembering that all the evil he knows of them, is for the most part merely by report and uncertain, while of what he knows of himself he

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 3.



can have no doubt. And this sense of his own infirmities leads him to bear meekly with those who offend him, because though sometimes he may be provoked to deal harshly with them, he checks himself by considering how melancholy a prospect his own would be, if such severe notice were taken of all his own offences against his neighbour or against God: as it is written, "If thou, Lord, shalt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?" In short, "the good tree bringeth forth good fruit," and real humility of the heart, if a man hath it, is shown by humility of thought, word, and deed, as concerns God, his neighbour, and himself.

The arguments in favour of this virtue of humility, and against every species of pride, whether we derive them from the consideration of man's natural state, which heathens and all can understand, or from his spiritual condition, which is known only to the worshippers of the true God, are so many and so forcible, that we must on all hands be convinced of and confess the reasonableness of Almighty God in requiring it at our hands, as indispensable to the attainment of His favour and everlasting salvation.

For if we consider, 1st, the natural state of man, where shall we find a single argument in support of pride, or do they not all concur in forcing humi-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxx. 3.

lity upon us? Will the thought of his life encourage pride? Alas! the very heathens have commented upon the vanity of this, “οἱη μὲν φυλλῶν γενεὴ τοιηδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν:” ’tis as frail and uncertain as that of the leaves. Will he pride himself upon his gay and expensive clothing? Let him consider that after all, be it as fine as it may, it is but second hand. Either the plants used it till they had no longer need for it; or the sheep wore it and it was cut off their backs because it would no longer hold together; or the worms have voided it: and there can be little matter for pride, in the consideration that our wants are so many, and our shame so great, that we are forced to have recourse to the leavings of worms and brutes to cover this, and supply those. Shall he be proud of his strength? Let him mortify his pride by recollecting, that in this likewise the very brutes for the most part surpass him. Or of beauty? A fever or small pox may destroy it at once, and a few years will certainly, at the latest, even before the worms begin to feed upon it. But it may be he has riches; shall he be proud of them? Consider, can he command them? will they stay by him? Alas! slippery and uncertain, there needs but a fire, or the breaking of a bank, or the loss of a ship, or an improvident speculation, and all his wealth is gone. It has either vanished altogether, or it is become the property of another, who will flaunt himself in it for a little time, till another toss of

fortune bestows it on some one else. But suppose it continues with him, what avails it? Will it cure a fit of melancholy, or wipe away the gall of envy, or soften the pains of sickness, or blunt the arrow of misfortune, or heal a wounded conscience? If not, then not only cannot he secure the possession of it, but he cannot even secure the enjoyment of it, while he does possess it. Again, it is very true, and that the heathens knew, that riches are of no avail at death; they cannot keep it away, neither can they accompany their owner in it. "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dies<sup>1</sup>." But every thing of the sort must be left behind at the threshold of the grave, where the poor and the rich lie down together; and it is true of each of them, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither<sup>2</sup>." But besides all this, which the heathens knew almost as well as ourselves, a Christian has another reason against being proud of them; for he knows that be they as great as they may, they are not his own, but his Master's, who with a view to His own honour, has committed to him the distribution and employment of them, and will demand an account at the great audit of the way in which they have been applied. And this it is which, if there were no other consideration, should serve to force a rich man to be humbled at the recollection of his

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Job i. 21.

wealth ; for though it is true, the greater the trust, if faithfully discharged, the greater the honour and the reward ; yet the difficulty of discharging it is so great, and the hindrance which wealth occasions such as to force even our Lord Himself to exclaim, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>1</sup>!” and the thought of this must be enough to make a rich man anxious and fearful for himself, and to occasion any feeling in him but that of proud and careless confidence.

Shall he be proud of his parts and knowledge ? If his knowledge and understanding avail anything, they will humble him by convincing him how little he really knows, and how imperfectly he knows that little. Or shall his power and greatness and honour be reckoned as causes for pride ? As if to convince men at once of the extreme folly of pride, these, which are the chief sources and supposed to be the most allowable grounds for it, are in truth the holiest and most unreasonable. In all the other cases he seemed to be dependent upon God only, but in these last on man also. Thus all the arguments on this point, which can be drawn from the consideration of man’s natural condition, unite in this, namely, in agreeing to drive men to such a sense of their own weakness and imperfection as one would think would almost force them to be

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 24.

humble, and to exclaim with David, "Lord, what is man that thou hast such respect unto him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him <sup>1</sup>!"

It is worthy of observation, and the consideration of the fact may help to disabuse men as to the value they sometimes set upon the powers of mere human reason, and may lead them to receive, with the thankfulness they deserve, God's gracious revelations to His people, that the utter insufficiency of human reason to show men how to fit and dress the soul and prepare it to meet its Creator, and the absolute need there was of instruction from Heaven to teach us the things pertaining to our everlasting salvation, has been shown in few things more strongly than in the estimation in which this virtue of humility, esteemed by God of such a price, and so indispensable to salvation, was held among the heathen. Among them what quality of the mind was more slighted and scorned? while all what are vulgarly called the heroic qualities of the mind, by which man sets so much and God so little store, were praised and extolled, this the most honourable of all was passed unnoticed; and while courage, hardihood, and revenge, qualities which for the most part the beasts possess in common with ourselves, were held up to admiration, humility, the most heavenly which has remained to man since the fall, and the exercise of which goes farther than perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Ps. viii. 4.

any other to restore him to the lost image of his Maker, has not only been treated with silence by them, but the very idea of it seems to have been beyond them, at least the words in their language which would seem to express it are almost always used in a bad sense, as expressive of a base and mean and contemptible spirit. This miserable error was not owing to want of arguments to lead them to value the virtue of humility aright. For these they had in plenty; there being scarcely anything around them which, if viewed with that correctness which even nature itself *could* teach, and it is plain from their writings *did* teach them, would not have furnished them with an argument in favour of humility and against pride. And to nothing but the judicial blindness, to which God gave them over, when "they did not like to retain him in their knowledge<sup>1</sup>," can we attribute it, that that clear-sightedness which, in their investigation of indifferent subjects is oftentimes most remarkable, should have so completely failed them in things relating to their truest and deepest interest.

But if we are surprized that the heathens, living under the light of nature, should have failed to apply the arguments which even that in abundance afforded them for checking pride and prizing humility, what shall we say when we look around us in the Christian world, and see men, who besides

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 28.

the light of nature have the blaze of revelation to guide them, still acting as though obscured under the same mist that darkened the heathens; fostering and encouraging pride, and haughtiness, and high opinion of themselves, and contempt of others, sins hated of God and man, and setting light by and despising the really heavenly Christian virtues of meekness, and lowliness, and humility? The only account we can give for this appears to be the melancholy one, that they have fallen back again to that state from which their Christian baptism had released them; and, to use St. Peter's expression, that "it has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog has returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire<sup>1</sup>." A fearful and perilous state if it be so! For if the arguments from nature, strong as we have seen them to be, had failed to convince them, those from revelation are so many and so forcible, that it must require no small degree of wilful blindness to avoid the conviction at which they attain. For, to come at once to the point, who could endure that a criminal condemned to death, but respited for a few days during his prince's pleasure, should behave himself proudly and haughtily to the prince on whom his life depended, or to his fellow-convicts? Would not his conduct be pronounced, on all hands, monstrous, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter ii. 22.

himself a madman? But if any one who is inclined to pride will but consider his own state as God has made it known to him, he will find that this is precisely his own case. For it is the case of every man; we all are guilty and convicted of sin before God, and one sentence of death, that of our bodies, has already passed against us; and the respite is but according to our heavenly Prince's will: but the sentence is certain, only the time of its execution we know not. But there is another sentence of a much more tremendous death, viz. that of our souls, hanging over our heads, and whether this shall be passed, or whether our Prince's Son's mediation shall procure its remittance, depends upon the meekness and humility of our carriage during the short and uncertain time of our respite and season of trial. If, therefore, under these circumstances, we carry ourselves haughtily towards the God in whose power are both the first and second death, or towards any of our fellow convicts, must we not own ourselves and conduct as worthy of the epithets mad and monstrous, as any on which we should ourselves bestow them!

It was the knowledge how monstrous pride is, and how unbecoming to the sinful race of fallen Adam; and of the beauty and comeliness of the heavenly clothing of humility, and that without it His heavenly Father, who hath power to destroy

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 19.



both soul and body, is not to be approached, that made our blessed Lord so anxious on all occasions to enforce the necessity of this virtue: to which intent, in His Sermon on the Mount, He assigns it the first place in the beatitudes, beginning, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>;" for it became Him, who was Himself the brightest pattern of humility, and of whose kingdom this mark had been foretold, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low<sup>2</sup>," i. e. the humble shall be raised and the proud shall be abased; it became Him, I say, to give to this virtue a leading place in His exhortations. He came to set us an example of holy living, and Himself and His Apostles have called upon us to imitate Him. But one of the chief points in which He and they both press this imitation, is the virtue of humility, as St. Paul writes, "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, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself<sup>3</sup>." And He Himself speaks to the same purpose, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart<sup>4</sup>"; and this partly, because true humility necessarily brings along with it in its train

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Is. xl. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

all other virtues requisite for a Christian life; and partly because of all virtues this is the most pure and heavenly.

It remains to enquire how this virtue, so pure, so lovely, and so heavenly, but to which the false views of ourselves and human affairs, which our perverted nature leads us to take, are so strongly opposed, is to be obtained. I know but of one, and the Bible teaches us but one way of seeking it, and if we seek it in that way it is promised to us. That way is by prayer to God through Jesus Christ. For humility is the gift of God, and, like all other of His gifts, must be sought for in that manner or we shall never attain it. But, then, as all His other graces are bestowed upon us to the end that we, by His help, may improve and profit by them; as it is written, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly<sup>1</sup>." So with regard to this of humility there are ways by which, through His blessing, we may increase the gift, and turn the pound into ten pounds<sup>2</sup>. Let him who would advance in humility and secure the honour before which, as Solomon tells us, it is placed, think frequently with himself, of what are called the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. He will find enough in the consideration of these; of the certainty of the two first, and the certainty of one, but the doubt and fear as to which one, of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 16.

the two last shall be his, and his own inability, without God's help, to secure the one and avoid the other: he will find enough in this to destroy every inclination to pride, and to humble him in convincing him of the vanity of every thing around him, and his own utter helplessness, and so to lead him to seek for some arm on which to lean for guidance and support; that arm, which is ever to be found of them that seek it humbly, the arm of Him who alone is "mighty to save".<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion let it be observed, that each station of life has its particular sins, against which the members of that station must more especially be upon their guard; and particular virtues which are in an especial manner the tests of true religion to each class. Thus, as fraud and cheating are the vices to which the poor, from their poverty, are most tempted, and honesty the virtue which particularly points out in that class one who fears God; so for them whom God has blessed with affluence and exalted among their brethren, humility is the touchstone of their piety, and pride the sin to which they are most exposed. So the wise Agur has taught us when he prays, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."<sup>2</sup> There are no thanks to a rich

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

man, and it is no proof that he fears God, that having every want supplied, he does not steal, and avoids dishonesty. Neither is it any proof of true religion in a *poor* man that he is not proud, when not even the opinion of the world can point out any thing in which to boast himself. But when the poor man, though pinched with want, and tempted to dishonesty, struggles through his distress, and in the fear of God maintains his integrity; and when the rich man, actuated by the same fear, still remembers with gratitude his dependance upon God, and preserves himself in the exercise of humility both towards God and towards man, though surrounded with every temptation to pride and forgetfulness; then are they both in their several stations, not with their lips but with their lives, setting forth the glory and praise of God; and are giving proofs of that common faith which knits together in one all the members of that body of which Jesus Christ is the head. To Him, in the unity of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, let us ascribe all praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, now and for ever and ever.

## SERMON II.

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### ON PROPORTIONATE RESPONSIBILITY.

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LUKE xii. 48.

“To whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

If arguments were wanted to influence men in the fear and service of God, besides those which the consideration of His and our respective conditions so amply affords, viz. that He is the great and terrible God<sup>1</sup>, which executeth judgment and justice<sup>2</sup>, the first and the last<sup>3</sup>, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent; and that we are the creatures of His hand, whom He has formed out of the clay as a potter formeth earthen vessels; creatures, whose age is but a span long, and that span uncertain; weak and shortsighted. That every thing we have, value, or hope for, comes from Him; our present life in His hands; our life eternal de-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. x. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xxiii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xli. 4.

pending upon His sentence at that day when He shall come to judge mankind. If, I say, besides all these, and a thousand other arguments of the same overwhelming, and one would fain hope, irresistibly convincing character, others were wanted of a different kind to influence us in our service of this Great Being; and, in our obedience to His commands, we should find them to our hearts' content, in the consideration of the nature of what He requires, and of the rules by which He is pleased to guide Himself in His conduct towards us. As concerns His commands, in the consideration that there is not one of these but what is really for our own good, nothing required of us but what is necessary in order to our attainment of that true and perfect happiness which He has designed for us, for which He created us, and to which He longs to bring us; that, in short, as David speaks, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant<sup>1</sup>." And, as concerns the rules by which He is pleased to guide Himself in His conduct toward us, in the consideration that these are not the capricious rules of a tyrant, nor has He chosen them without reference to our condition, but, to stop the tongues of all men from complaining, and to convict us out of our own mouths if we should be dissatisfied, He has in His mercy toward us chosen as rules for His conduct to our-

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xxv. 10.

selves, the rules which we employ in our conduct to others, and has applied those principles to us which we deem to be the fairest and most equitable to apply toward one another; thus, in effect, making us the arbiters of our own fate. To this end He has urged us to be merciful to others, as we hope for mercy ourselves; to be bountiful, as we hope for God's bounty; and to be charitable in our sentences and opinions of others as we hope for a charitable construction of our own conduct; because, "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again<sup>1</sup>." And here, in the passage before us, having told men that He expects a return of duty and fulfilment of His will in proportion as they know and understand it, He appeals to themselves for the reasonableness of this proportionate demand, by showing, that it is in strict accordance with the principle of conduct which they put into daily use in common life, toward one another. "To whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Not indeed that He limits Himself to man's ways, nor applies these rules and principles in the same strict and niggardly manner in which men are wont to employ them. Far from it. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 2.

ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts<sup>1</sup>." And there runs through all God's gracious ways and methods of dealing, a vein of mercy and forbearance, of bounty and of charity to all who are willing, and whose hearts and endeavours are sincere, which will be looked for in vain in men's conduct toward each other. Still the principles are the same, and among them this mentioned in the text, "to whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required."

The immediate application of this principle, in the passage from which the text is taken, is to the gifts of the knowledge of God and of His will; where it is said, that "the servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to that will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes<sup>2</sup>." But, inasmuch as every other blessing, which men enjoy, is a gift of God, as St. James says, "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights<sup>3</sup>"; or, as St. Paul, "What hast thou which thou didst not receive<sup>4</sup>?" to every other blessing also will this principle be applied: and not only the gifts of the light of the knowledge of God,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lv. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 47, 48.

<sup>3</sup> James i. 17.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 7.



and how to please Him, will be tried by this rule, as to the purpose for which they have been used, and the return which has been made for them, viz. to the honour of God by a proportionately full obedience; but also the gifts of riches, of rank, of power and influence will be put to the same test.

For all these come from God, and are entrusted by Him to those who are possessed of them, as to stewards, that they should be employed, not as in forgetfulness and ingratitude, men are sometimes wont to employ them, to the gratification of their own wishes, but to the honour of God. For they are means whereby, if rightly employed, God may be glorified, the present and future welfare of mankind be promoted, and the salvation of the possessors be advanced through Jesus Christ. Of all, therefore, to whom these means and opportunities of doing good are afforded, a proportionate return, according to the principle in our text, will be demanded; and, if it be not found, greater woe will await them than others who have not been so favoured. They will "be beaten with many stripes."

If it should here seem to any, that to speak of riches and power and rank as helps to salvation, is at variance with our Saviour, who, by His sentence, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>," would seem, at first sight, to describe them as hindrances to it;

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 23.

let it be observed, that the hindrance does not arise from the things themselves, but from men's perversion of them. Every gift that God has bestowed upon mankind, is like "every thing which he made" at the creation, "very good<sup>1</sup>;" and may every one be employed, as these of which we are now speaking, to the salvation of their possessors, the good of mankind, and the glory of the God from whom they come: and yet, which of all God's gifts has not man's perversion abused? In nothing more plainly than in this has he shewn his fall from the image of his Maker. For whereas God, in His mercy, would teach men out of every evil to draw some good, man seldom fails out of every good to suck some evil, and to infuse the bitterness of a curse into God's sweetest blessings.

Does not Ezekiel say, that one of the causes of the destruction of Sodom was "fulness of bread<sup>2</sup>?" and yet who will not acknowledge that this, if thankfully received, and rightly used, is one of God's greatest earthly blessings? In the instance of riches, what Solomon has said to express their uncertainty, viz. that "they make themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle" doth "toward heaven<sup>3</sup>;" is true also in another sense. For they not only may resemble the eagle in this, that they fly away, but, like him also, their flight may be toward heaven. If rightly used they will ascend up thither, and from earthly be

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 31.<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel xvi. 49.<sup>3</sup> Prov. xxiii. 5.

changed into heavenly treasures: and not only fly themselves up thither, but carry also their owner or steward, through faith in Christ, to heaven with them. So we learn from St. Paul's directions to men, that by the right employment of their wealth, they should "lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life<sup>1</sup>." And such also our Lord Himself said was the instruction He intended to be derived from His parable of the unjust steward. "Make to yourselves friends of [by means of] the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations<sup>2</sup>;" i. e. Secure to yourselves such favour in the sight of God, by the right employment of your wealth, that when ye die, Heaven's gates, by His mercy in Christ Jesus, may be open to receive you; and this also was the reward which He offered to the young man in that passage, where He charged him, if he would be perfect, to sell all that he had, and give to the poor; and then, saith He, "thou shalt have treasure in heaven<sup>3</sup>." Concerning which injunction (that it may not seem to be passed without remark) it will be sufficient to observe, that the spirit of it, if not the letter, is fulfilled by them, who are careful and willing to moderate their own expenses, that they may make the poor also partakers in their good things; and who, in the fear of God, remember the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 17.<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 9.<sup>3</sup> Mark x. 21.

passages which prove the entire agreement between the Old and New Covenants on this point, viz. that of the Old in Solomon, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry, but shall not be heard<sup>1</sup>;" and that of the New, in St. John; "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him<sup>2</sup>?"

To show by what means the other high earthly gifts of God, of which we have spoken, viz. power, and rank, and influence, may be employed to the glory of God, the welfare of mankind, and the salvation of their possessors, and so the return be made, according to the principle mentioned in our text, one instance will be sufficient, viz. that of example. This, in a poor man, scarcely extends beyond his own family, and his few immediate neighbours; in men of rank and power, it extends to hundreds, in kings and princes, to millions. The responsibility for all this is seldom enough considered; but yet, as there are few men but must, in some degree or another, be sensible of the force of example upon themselves; the generality of mankind at least, will acknowledge it to be a tremendous power and opportunity of good or evil. Of them, therefore, to whom this power has been entrusted, a return, according to

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 17.

the principle before us, will be demanded; "to whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required;" and as there is no more fruitful source of offences than the abuse of this power, against those who abuse it will that woe lie, which our Lord denounced, saying, "Woe unto the world, because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh<sup>1</sup>." While, on the other hand, as there is no more effectual way of teaching the commandments of God than by example, where it is well set, so to them who set it aright the blessing awaits which the same Saviour pronounced, when He said that "whosoever shall do and teach" His commandments "shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven<sup>2</sup>."

But now, that we may consider this principle, "to whom much is given, of him will much be required," in reference to the spiritual gifts of the knowledge of God, and of His will, to which it was originally applied, in the passage from which the text is taken, the most effectual way will be to imagine it as addressed particularly to our own individual nation, which we proudly flatter ourselves is rich beyond all others in these treasures. For highly as both Jews and Christians are advanced beyond the poor heathens in this respect, and still more highly as all the Christian Churches

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 19.

are blessed beyond the Jews in the knowledge of God, we are firmly convinced we excel even these; and be the other with which we are compared what it may, Coptic, or Abyssinian, or Armenian, or Syrian, or Greek, or Roman, we believe that the candle of God shines brighter in our church than in any other, that its rays come more purely as from Himself, with less of human evil to intercept their splendour. High and glorious as are these mighty blessings, and this favoured elevation, they should never be imagined to be, for they are not, matters of mere boasting. They rather claim our most serious and solemn consideration; for, in proportion as our elevation is great, in the same proportion is the responsibility which rests on us increased, a tremendous responsibility,—that a return be made answerable to it; and therefore, whether this high degree of knowledge which is shed upon us prove eventually a blessing or a curse, depends upon the use we make of it. If in proportion as we have been made more truly acquainted with His will, we have lived more truly as we understand will please Him, well; but if not, the principle in our text will be applied, “to whom much is given, of him will much be required,” and the defaulters will “be beaten with many stripes.” While those, over whom we have boasted ourselves, if they have lived according to their knowledge, will go into Heaven before us.

If such be the case, it will be our wisdom to

apply this principle to ourselves beforehand, that so by judging ourselves, and receiving a stimulus to fresh exertion and watchfulness, from this consideration, we may escape the judgment and condemnation of our Lord. For which purpose, it will not be unprofitable to select some one out of the many points in which we perceive ourselves to be superior to Heathen, Jew, and Romanist Christian respectively; that by considering what is required from us on these heads, we may, if we are in earnest about our duty, receive that assistance which the conviction of our own individual consciences will afford to us, as to whether or not our endeavour to perform what is thus required of us be sincere and earnest.

First, as concerns the Heathen; the chief advantage which we possess over them, (and one equally belonging to Jews and Christians,) is that which St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Colossians, that we have been brought, from the darkness of idolatry, to the knowledge of the service of the living and true God. Here it is to be observed, that not merely figures of wood, or stone, or metal, are idols, but every thing for the sake of which we diminish aught of our duty to God, is likewise such. Pride, lust, and covetousness, are therefore all of them idols. Now if the knowledge of the true and living God produces this fruit in us that we with *all* our hearts do serve Him, it is well; for then is the return made in proportion, (as far

as is in man,) to the gift; but if all the fruit be this, that we have changed the idols of matter for idols of thought, and have shared our obedience to the commands of God, with our obedience to the dictates of pride, or lust, or covetousness, or any other; shall we not be under the condemnation of the principle of our text? And as it was not necessary to the fulfilment of God's wrath upon the Jews, that they should utterly have forsaken Him, but it was enough that they had mixed the worship of Him with the worship of idols, so neither will Christians, who offend in this spiritual idolatry, be availed by the fact of their having also paid an outward and partial obedience to the true God. But forasmuch as they have known Him, and yet have not paid Him the single-hearted worship which that knowledge requires, their stripes will be more in number by far than those, by which the Heathen will be punished, who have been without this knowledge.

Again, in comparing ourselves with the Jews, the chief point of the superiority of all Christians over them consists in their belief in Jesus Christ; but to select one result which should attend this belief, let us take from St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, his account of one of the objects of Christ's coming. The Apostle's words are these; speaking of Jesus Christ, he says, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto



himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" and then it will be plain, according to the principle in our text, that if we have not surpassed the Jews in zeal for good works, if our strife and endeavour has not been to free ourselves, through Christ, from all wickedness of thought, word, and deed; in short, if faith has not produced in us its fruits of holiness and charity, then that faith, which we esteem our greatest blessing, will be perverted to a curse, and only increase our condemnation; according to what the Holy Spirit has spoken, by St. Peter, that "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Lastly, in comparing ourselves with the Romanist Christians; among many of our advantages over them, this is a chief one, that while they, by their ill-judged and mistaken endeavours to honour the service of God, have clogged that service with human devices and superstitious forms, and debased, in a great degree, the spiritual worship to a ceremonial, we, on the contrary, by God's blessing bestowed upon us at the Reformation, are free from those hindrances,—our approach to the throne of grace, without let or interruption, and nothing to intercept the ascent of our worship, of spirit and truth, to Him to whom alone it is due.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 21.

If then the fruit of this blessing has been, that in proportion as these hindrances have been removed, our worship of God has increased in purity, and our devotion to Him in sincerity and fervour, the end has been obtained ; but if not, if with our freer and more direct approach to Him, we have not surpassed them in purity, and sincerity, and fervour, of true worship ; why then the return will not have been made, nor shall we have complied with the demand of increase, in proportion to the increase of the gift, and therefore, according to our text, our stripes will be more than theirs.

It is therefore certain, that in all matters, spiritual as well as temporal, and temporal as well as spiritual, every increase of gift, of which men are always so desirous, brings with it an increase of responsibility and an increase of demand ; and therefore, that it is essentially necessary to men's safety, that all, in every station of life, but especially in the great and exalted ones ; and all also, in every degree of religious knowledge, but especially we English Catholicks, should have always in our memory this principle, and let it influence our conduct, "that to whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required." Remembering always, that He who is the Author of these gifts, can alone enable us to discharge the debt, which they occasion, even by the further gift of His Holy Spirit ;

which He has promised to all who pray for Him, in sincerity through Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the same Spirit, the one Holy and Everlasting God; let us ascribe praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, for ever and ever, Amen.

# SERMON III.

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ON THE FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

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JONAH iii. 10.

“ God saw their works that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.”

THERE are few passages in the Bible more full of interest and instruction, or which furnish more profitable food for meditation, than the account of God's dealings with the city of Nineveh, as contained in the book of the Prophet Jonah, from which my text is taken.

The inhabitants of this city, one of the vastest of which history furnishes an account, being sixty miles in circumference, and with an enormous population, had grievously offended God with their sins ; as He speaks to Jonah, “ their wickedness is come up before me ;” and this, to such an extent, that even the forbearance of that gracious Creator, whose mercy

is His dearest attribute, and Who always rejoices when men will allow Him to exercise that, rather than judgment, was outraged; and the decree of punishment and destruction had gone forth from His lips, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But, as in all God's dealings with men, He not only always does what is just and right, but is careful so to do it that men themselves may see it, and be forced to acknowledge it, as David speaks, and the Apostle after him, "that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged;" so He would not destroy even this guilty city until He had given it the fairest and most ample warning; and, therefore, as He had done to the old world in the person of Noah, and to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the person of Lot, in like manner He does to Nineveh; sending a preacher of righteousness unto it, to warn the inhabitants of the impending ruin, even Jonah, who was instructed to proclaim the sentence of God's anger; "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The effect which this preaching had upon the people of Nineveh was most remarkable, and of which few similar instances have been handed down. From the king to the peasant, all, with one accord, acknowledged the justice of God's sentence, and that their sins and wickedness had deservedly drawn down this doom upon them; and, therefore, with one accord, they humbled themselves before God, and sought, while yet there was time,

to appease His wrath, and excite His pity and compassion. In the words of the Prophet, "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest even unto the least of them." For the king's commandment was, that they should fast and be covered with sackcloth, "and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." Thus, which very rarely happens, the full fruit of the warning which God had sent was, for the time at least, produced; and His gracious purpose answered; and He Himself left at liberty to fulfil the dictates of mercy, without trenching upon the strictness of His truth; it was made possible, in short, as the Psalmist expresses it, for "mercy and truth to meet together<sup>1</sup>." And here it will not be unprofitable to point out the useful lesson which the case of the people of Nineveh, as compared with that of the people of Sodom, both in the attention which they paid to God's warning, and in the fruit which they reaped from such attention, affords. The attention which the Ninevites paid to the preaching of Jonah we have already considered; but what sort of attention did the men of Sodom pay when, by the mouth of Lot, God warned them to forsake their wickedness? "This fellow came in to sojourn, and he must needs be a judge<sup>2</sup>;" and even on his own relations, his

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxxv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xix. 9.

sons-in-law, whom he warned and advised to escape from the impending ruin, he made no impression; "he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law<sup>1</sup>." As the ways were different which these several people chose, so the ends to which those ways led them were different likewise. The end of the ways of disbelief and disobedience, which the Sodomites chose, was that "the Lord rained upon Sodom brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;" and such, though it be not seen in this life, is the end of all who choose the same ways: the lake of brimstone, and the fire that never shall be quenched, await them. But the happy end to which the obedience and belief of the men of Nineveh led them is told in our text: "God saw their works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not;" and thus it will always be; for, although neither in this case is the end of these ways always seen in this life, yet we know that the mercy and love of God will be the portion of all who choose them.

Nor let it be considered as an act derogatory of God's honour that He should revoke the sentence of destruction which had proceeded from His lips, and had been solemnly announced by the mouth of His prophet; as though He were like men, wavering

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xix. 14.

and irresolute in His determinations, and changing His purpose without sufficient cause, in contradiction to what is asserted concerning Him by Balaam, when he says, "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good<sup>1</sup>?" But His conduct in recalling the sentence against the Ninevites is not only an instance of the greatness of His mercy, and how truly, to use St. James's expression, His "mercy rejoiceth against [His] judgment<sup>2</sup>:" but, it is also a proof, one of a great many, which men would do well to bear in mind, that all His most positive threats, and all His most certain promises, are to be understood conditionally; i. e. with conditions annexed to them; His promises on the condition of obedience, His threats on that of impenitence. When man's impenitence ceaseth, God's threat is likewise withdrawn; and when man's obedience fails, God's promise comes likewise to an end; which rule holds good as regards God's conduct both towards nations and towards individuals. Instances of these are numerous; but that of the angels—who, being in the possession of heaven itself, yet when they sinned were not spared by God, but cast down to hell; that of our first parents,—who being in the enjoyment of paradise, yet, upon the failure of their obedience, were cast

<sup>1</sup> Num. xxiii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> James ii. 13.



out; and that of the Jews,—who having received the most certain and repeated promises of God, were yet, when they ceased to obey, deprived of them, and made the wretched outcasts, which they are at this day; these instances, without naming others, are sufficient to show, on the one hand, that neither the most gracious promises, nor the enjoyment of blessings, nor the possession of paradise, nor the happiness of heaven itself are otherwise than conditional, resting on the condition of obedience: and that when this fails, they all come to an end. To use God's words to Eli, "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed<sup>1</sup>." While on the other, the instance of these same Jewish people, so repeatedly in the land of Canaan, when God had brought upon them His threatened punishment for their disobedience, being saved from their affliction on their return to good and dutiful conduct, as David speaks, "So when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivered them out of their distress<sup>2</sup>;" and that of Ahab, at whose expression of his sorrow and contrition God delayed the execution of His wrath, may serve to convince us, that both the threats and punishment itself of God rest on the condition of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. cvii. 6.

impentence; and that when that is removed, the object of the threat is accomplished; and God's anger is withdrawn, and His mercy supplies the place. Indeed generally to all nations, and therefore to our own as well as to others, we have it affirmed in the words of promise, by the mouth of Jeremiah, that thus saith the Lord, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it: if it do evil in my sight that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them <sup>1</sup>."

It is a proof of faith and wisdom, which none but fools and infidels will fail to give, to acknowledge that the rise and fall of kingdoms, the several states of adversity or prosperity of nations as well as of individuals, are under the control and guidance of the Almighty, and happen according to His will and appointment: as the great king Nebuchadnezzar was forced to acknowledge: "The most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will <sup>2</sup>."

The manner in which He rules; His interference

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xviii. 7—10.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. iv. 25.

by which He orders the affairs of the world, is generally indirect and invisible ; and therefore those foolish people who reverse the Christian rule, and walk by sight and not by faith, oftentimes fail to acknowledge it. But it is not the less certain, because wicked persons and sceptics refuse to own it. How bitterly contemptible indeed do such persons appear, when it is considered that in the very midst of their disownings and denials of God's providential government, and direction of the affairs of the world, they are themselves at that very time His unconscious agents, fulfilling His purposes of punishing a sinful nation by their bad and wicked counsels, or in any other way, but to be cast aside and condemned according to their conduct, when the use to which they have been unconsciously put is served !

It is not by direct means ; it is by second causes, by intermediate agencies, that God generally orders the affairs of the world, causing states and empires to flourish or decay ; not by the open manifestation of His Right Arm, but by means of advices, or counsels, or influences in the ordinary progress of affairs. The Psalmist speaks, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, and maketh the desires of the people to be of none effect, and casteth out the counsels of princes<sup>1</sup>." Of this method of His dealing the Scriptures afford several

instances, of which it will be sufficient to mention two, which are very remarkable. When Absalom, the wicked and parricidal son of David, had, as an instrument in God's hand, been made use of to execute the measure of punishment, which God thought fit to pour upon David's head for his sin, and this being accomplished, and God, having no further use for him, had therefore determined to bring evil upon him, and punish him as his wickedness deserved, it was by second causes in the ordinary progress of affairs that He accomplished it: by causing the foolish and treacherous advice of Hushai the Archite, to be followed which led to Absalom's destruction, while the wise counsel of Ahithophel was disregarded; for thus the Scriptures speak: "for the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that he might bring evil upon Absalom<sup>1</sup>." And so again, when in His wise and unsearchable counsels, it pleased God to visit the sins of Solomon king of Israel upon Rehoboam his son, by dividing his kingdom, and taking away ten of the tribes of Israel, it was by the same method that He fulfilled his purpose: viz. by causing the advice of the old and experienced counsellors of the kingdom, who advised Rehoboam for his good, to be disregarded, so that the king would not hearken unto the people; "for," as the Scripture here again expresses

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xvii. 14.

it, "the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat<sup>1</sup>." If in our own days we have seen the counsel of the aged set at nought, and the warnings of those, whose heads are bent to the earth with the weight of years and experience<sup>2</sup>, despised and disregarded, have we not reason to fear, lest this also may be from the Lord, to the intent that He may bring that punishment upon us, which it may seem to Him that our offences deserve? and if the consequence of this contempt and disregard has been to place this Church and nation in a state, in which, when last they were placed, they were overwhelmed with some of the bitterest misery and ruin, that the wrath of an angry God can send; it cannot be unprofitable to bear the example of the men of Nineveh before our eyes; and to draw instruction from it, how we may best seek to avert that wrath; and comfort also from the knowledge of the success which, as mentioned in our text, attended their endeavours for that purpose.

Nor is the force of this weakened in the slightest degree, by saying that there may be no cause for such alarm; for to foretel future events no one pretends, but if from the knowledge of what *has* been under certain circumstances, there be even the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Speech of Earl Eldon on Test and Corporation Repeal, 1828.

smallest reason for thinking that under the same circumstances it *will* be again; then I am sure that when those circumstances occur, as they have done, there is a fair occasion for advice and warning, and that the ministers of religion cannot be accused of stepping beyond the strict bounds of their duty, if they make use of such an occasion to endeavour to awaken men, to check carelessness, to lead men to think: in short to enforce those duties, the performance of which bids fairest, with God's blessing, to avert evil, should He have it in His mind to bring it; or should it fail in that, will best enable those who practise it to meet such trial in a manner worthy of Christians and the children of God: or even if there should be no ground whatever for the apprehension, will not have been thrown away, but will at all events fit and prepare them for that far more awful trial and judgment, which is daily drawing near to every one of us. But where shall we find duties of such value in the sight of the Almighty, that such great and glorious things may be said of them? We shall do well to remember what, in the beautiful service appointed for the martyrdom of King Charles, is most truly expressed and acknowledged—that they were the crying sins of this nation, which brought down that heavy judgment upon us. If ever it shall please God again, to bring upon this nation any of the calamities of those times, it will be for the same cause, the sins of the nation. Repentance, there-

for, and amendment of life are the duties, on the performance of which we may best hope to avert such calamities, or fitly to meet them, should repentance come too late to avert them as it is written, "Repent and amend your ways, so iniquity shall not be your ruin;" or as we have it in the words of our text, "God saw their works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not." What our sins as a nation may be, it is I think irrelevant to the present purpose to enquire. That there are some which cause our name to be a proverb in the mouths of people of other countries is too true; but I see no result likely to arise from considering the matter in this general way, except the setting men on the look out for the faults of others, and they who should attempt to reform a nation, by speaking generally to a nation, would I fear waste their labour. But there is a homely saying to this purpose, and so apt that it may fitly be used, "Let every man mend one, (i. e. himself) and then all will be mended." Let individuals remember, that it is the multitude of individual sins which make the guilt of a nation in the sight of God, and provoke His wrath against it; and it is the multitude of individual repentances and amendments, that make up the righteousness of a nation, and turn away that wrath. In what the sins of each individual consist, whether in pride, in ambition, in covetousness, in revenge, in love of

the world, in lust, in want of charity, in want of faith, in want of modesty, in carelessness about religion, in a disregard of sacred things, and of the reverence due to every thing that belongs to God, His Word, His Sacraments, His Name, His Day, His House, His Ministers, in forgetfulness of the fear of God, and of His continual presence, in what they consist, God and the man's own conscience can best tell him. But whatever they may be, this is certain, that there is no person living, and therefore no person here present, who cannot, if he will search deeply into his own breast, discover some sins that need repentance, some conduct which affords room for amendment. If anxiety for the welfare of his church and nation, have any influence in exciting him to this examination and its fruits, let this be his encouragement; that for the sake of the humble and faithful endeavours of a very few of a nation, God will sometimes turn away the temporal affliction which the wickedness of the rest would otherwise have provoked: if there had been ten righteous persons in Sodom, God would not have destroyed it. But even if, after all, there should be no ground for the apprehension, (which God grant!) and the very entertaining it, be the result only of a gloomy mind—though I fear, it is one too general among the soundest and soberest, indeed among men of every different temperament, to be accounted for on that score—yet at any rate, as was before observed, it will not



be thrown away. If there be not temporal evils to be averted by repentance, we know there are eternal; if the kingdoms of earth have no need to be secured by it, the kingdom of heaven has. For the trial which is to precede that kingdom, repentance and amendment are, through faith in the blood of Christ, the only preparation. Into the love and favour of God none ever entered, but by the narrow gate of repentance; no, not Enoch himself: for, as the wise writer in Ecclesiasticus tells us he was "an example of repentance to all generations <sup>1</sup>." Nor will any other entrance ever be offered to men. From the time of our first parents' sin, until our Saviour's days, from His days until now, and from now until the end of the world, this has been, is, and ever will be, the burthen of all the declarations and warnings from Almighty God to men, whether by the mouths of Prophets, Apostles, or Ministers, or of the Son Himself; "repent and amend your ways," that ye may be saved through the blood of Christ. To impress and enforce this by all the means in their power, is therefore one of the most imperative duties which the clergy have upon their hands: and for this every motive must be urged. If therefore there be but the slightest ground for apprehension of future evil, and there be but hope that men's anxiety about the peace of this life, may be used as a spur to stimu-

<sup>1</sup> Eccclus. xliv. 16.

late them, to cultivate that conduct, which alone can secure the peace of the next ; we are warranted in thus employing it ; since thereby the welfare of mankind will be in some degree at least promoted, and thereby also God's Name in some degree glorified. To Whom, &c.

# SERMON IV.

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ON SEEKING THE GLORY OF GOD.

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1 COR. x. 31.

“ Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

To know the object of our being sent into the world, and the end of our existence, what we must do to accomplish that object, and what our rule and principle of life must be to enable us to secure that end, has been in all ages considered a subject well worthy the attention of the human mind, and has excited anxious enquiry.

Among the Heathen nations, who, being without the light of Revelation, had to grope their way in the dark by the strength of their own reason, various were the conjectures which the learned formed as to the end and object of man's existence, and the chief or highest good; which was the attaining or answering that end. Some considered

it to consist in the full and unrestricted gratification of man's sensual appetites ; their understanding leading them no higher than the instinct of the brute beasts, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to gratify the passions, without check or care for what is to come hereafter : others considered it to consist in the high cultivation of man's intellectual powers ; their system thus at once excluding nineteen twentieths of the human race from all possibility of fulfilling the purpose of their creation, since the cultivation of the intellectual powers requires leisure, which it is impossible for those to give who must earn their daily food, whether by labour, or trade, or any other way : others again considered the *summum bonum* to consist in arriving at a cold indifference to every thing around them, an indifference to the happiness or miseries of others, an indifference to their own good or evil condition ; as if the highest excellence in man was to quench all his high and noble feelings.

On us Christians Almighty God has conferred far greater favour, having been pleased to give us in this matter full and certain information, which the Heathens sought for but could not obtain. He has not left us to work out the knowledge of this most important truth by the weak efforts of our poor reason, which, when unassisted by His Grace, leads to such miserable and false conclusions as we have just hinted at ; but has Himself instructed us in it. He has taught us that we are sent into

the world for the glory of our Maker; that His glory is advanced by our salvation; and that the way for us to secure our salvation is, for us always to remember the end of our creation, which is His glory, and to let all our care be in thought, word and deed, to conduct ourselves with a view to it; as the Apostle writes in our text, "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And in like manner writing to the Colossians, he repeats more than once this injunction, "whatever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him <sup>1</sup>."

The knowledge of this is the beginning of wisdom; of that wisdom which distinguishes a man from a brute, and further, of that wisdom which distinguishes the worshippers of the true God from Heathens; and to have a thorough conviction of this truth, and a willingness to abide by it; to have it so firmly impressed upon the mind as to affect the practice; to have it, in short, so constantly before us, as that it shall be the guiding and inseparable principle of our lives, is at once the truest and the highest wisdom at which the sons of men can arrive. It is true wisdom, for it is the knowledge of the truth which has come to us from Heaven, and is therefore the highest that can be. It is true wisdom, for it is the knowledge of the secret of attaining the greatest possible degree of happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 17.

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding<sup>1</sup>.”

There needs not deep argument or historical reference to establish the truth of this; like the simplest axioms, in rightly disposed minds nothing more is required than the bare statement of it; our reason and all our highest and best faculties and feelings at once assent to it, that the glory of the Creator should be the end of the creature's existence, and that the remembrance of this, and the living according to it, should be the creature's highest wisdom. Or if any argument be required, let this consideration suffice, that it shews itself to have proceeded from the Universal Parent, by its adaptation to all the sons of men equally. Had the wisdom which He requires been that of scholarship, or proficiency in any art or science, how few of His sons could have fulfilled their Heavenly Father's wishes! His paternal consideration and that love which leads Him to regard all who call upon His name with equal fondness, and without respect of persons, is shewn in His requiring only that wisdom which the poorest and most unlettered can attain to as easily as the most learned, or greatest persons. Or if written proof be required, let the book of Proverbs be held to be sufficient, where wisdom is the term used to express righteousness and the fear of God: and where folly and wickedness are

<sup>1</sup> Job xxviii. 28.

considered synonymous; or the book of Psalms, where the word for a sceptical and wicked person is *fool*, as it is written "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God<sup>1</sup>." The Holy Spirit of God considering, that none but such as was a fool in the truest and almost every signification of the term, would entertain such a thought, or hazard such an expression.

I said that the poorest and most unlettered can attain to the wisdom of knowing that the end of our existence is the glory of God, and of living according to this knowledge, as easily as the noblest and most learned; but if we consult the historical evidence of the Bible, and consider how very frequently Almighty God has taken His choicest servants from those stations of life, which the great and mighty of the world are wont to look upon with contempt, we shall see reason for believing this wisdom to be more easily within their reach, than within that of those by whom they are too often despised. From shepherds and ploughmen, and fishermen, and mechanics, the ranks of the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, of the glorious company of the Apostles, and of the noble army of Martyrs, have in great measure been supplied. Nor is there anything in this, however mortifying it may be to the pride of the world, which need really excite our astonishment, when it is considered that

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xiv. 1.

the natural tendency of wealth and worldly greatness, is to lead men away from God, to make them forget their dependence upon Him, and through the perversion of human nature to make them ungrateful to Him for His bounties, though apparently they have more occasion than any others for the exercise of their thankfulness: and although the grace of God, with Whom (as our Lord speaks with reference to this very subject,) "all things are possible," may enable men to counteract these tendencies, and still to retain their integrity, notwithstanding the temptations and snares, which human grandeur and wealth afford, still the natural tendency remains unchanged, and that is true which the Saviour of mankind Himself was forced to observe, "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>." While the natural tendency of poverty and distressed circumstances is to force men to be humble minded, to live in dependence upon God, and to be thankful for His smallest favours, because they find from sad experience that they often have no friend, save Him, that He is their only support, and refuge, and consolation.

But to return. Let us dwell a little upon the considerations which the knowledge of this will suggest to us. Let us consider what a different light is thrown upon all things around us by the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 23.



knowledge and remembrance that we are created for the glory of God, that that is the object we are to place before ourselves, and that it is as easy for a person in the lowest station of life to promote it, as for any other ; let us consider how this changes the value which the world is wont to set upon the things of the world, lowering that which is exalted, and raising that which is depressed. In the opinion of the world, one station is honourable and another mean, one is admired and another despised, generally according to its riches or power. But this teaches us differently ; it takes away from the false honour of one class of stations ; it takes away from the false disesteem of others. For if the end of our creation be the glory of God, then unquestionably, in truth and reality, that station is the most honourable which best enables us to answer that end ; and that the most despicable, which throws most hindrances in our way. For we cannot too often or too constantly bear in mind this truth, that it is not for the purpose of making a figure in the world that God Almighty has placed us here,—a deceit which the young and giddy are apt to entertain, and which clings to those who carry the folly and giddiness of youth into old age, but a deceit which, like a false light, too often allures men from the true haven ;—but to serve God here, and to do good in our generation, and to work out our salvation through Jesus Christ, by glorifying our Creator. And as every honest station of life puts this in our

power, so every honest station is honourable in the sight of God; and, if we would be like our Maker, will be honourable in our sight also. For our text teaches us, that the end of our creation, that is, the glory of God, may be sought in every thing that we do; not only in our attention to the services of religion, or on particular occasions, but in every thing; in the commonest and every-day occupations of our life, we may glorify Him, by keeping the remembrance of Him before our eyes, and letting His fear check and restrain and guide us on all occasions. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." So that it is no longer the station (provided it be honest) which can disgrace a man; for, if we are all the servants of God in our several stations, how can the service of God bring disgrace with it? but it is the man who disgraces the station, when he forgets the end of his creation, and consults not the glory of his Maker; and, neglecting Him, from Whom all honour comes, takes the applause of men, or worldly success, for the guide of his steps: and the higher the station, the deeper is the disgrace and contempt. The disgrace is deeper, because a greater and nobler opportunity of answering the end of creation has been lost and abused; deeper, because the worthlessness and unprofitableness of the man for the purposes for which he was placed in the station, viz. the glory of God, are more manifest to all men; and the commonest persons, who have the fear of God be-

fore their eyes, are witnesses of the disgrace. If a man, in a lowly station of life, omits to answer the end of his creation, by neglecting to suffer the fear of God to be the guide and motive of his conduct, the disgrace of his failing is known only to the few around him : but “a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid ;” and, if men in high and exalted stations neglect the fear of God, either in their public or their private life, their disgrace is known to all. When our blessed Lord called His Apostles “the light of the world,” He wished them to consider, that the fact of the eyes of all men being directed towards them, should be an additional motive to them to a watchful and upright course, because the disgrace, if they failed, would be so much the greater ; and this rule is still applied to the Clergy, and justly ; their faults more severely commented on than those of others ; their failing to regard the fear of God subjects them to more especial disgrace. But let men recollect that just so is it in proportion to the greatness and exalted nature of any station. For the influence of the example of the great and powerful, either to good or to evil, to the advancement or hindrance of religion and the glory of God, is very great ; and in proportion to the greatness of the influence is the disgrace if they abuse or misapply it, and by shewing a disregard to the fear of God, either publicly or privately, not only do not promote, but thwart and hinder the end of their creation. But the disgrace and contempt is not

from this alone. To those who “walk by faith and not by sight,” and who know from the evidence of Scripture, that, however silently and imperceptibly, still it is God that ruleth in the world, and ordereth the affairs of nations and individuals, making even the wickedness of men available to His purposes, and using them, contrary to their intention, to execute His projects; there is nothing more pitiable or contemptible than to see men in any station of life, but especially in exalted ones, striving to forget this, and to persuade themselves that they can order affairs as they please, to the despite or to the neglect of God and His glory; seeing that at these very times they are His unconscious and unwilling agents, made use of for a time, but to be cast aside and disgraced according to their intention, when the use to which they are unconsciously put has been accomplished; and that He will use them for His glory whether they will or no. For it is in this as in many or most other things, men have the option of doing this willingly or unwillingly, as St. Paul writes about preaching the Gospel, “if I do this thing willingly I have a reward<sup>1</sup>.” They may, if they please, seek the end of their creation, viz. the glory of God, willingly, and be allowed to be fellow-workers together with God, and may draw honour, and glory, and praise, and reward, through Jesus Christ, upon themselves, by so doing; or they may,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 17.

if they please, be *unwilling* to consult the glory of God; but let them not think that they can deprive God of it; He will get it from them, though it be at their ruin and disgrace. The account of Pharaoh is a remarkable instance of this: he might, if he had chosen, have glorified God by obeying Him, and furthering the departure of the children of Israel, in compliance with His commands; and opportunity was afforded him for so doing; but when the answer was, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice, and let Israel go from serving me? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go<sup>1</sup>," it was in vain that he sought to deprive God of His glory; "I will get me honour," said God, "upon Pharaoh and upon all his host<sup>2</sup>;" and so when he and all his "sank like lead in the mighty waters<sup>3</sup>," there was praise to God, for He had triumphed gloriously, but it was by the disgrace and destruction of those who had neglected Him.

Again, let us consider how directly the knowledge, that the end of our creation, and our own honour, consist in seeking the glory of God, tends to promote our real and practical happiness. To any one who will calmly consider the matter it will plainly appear, that the chief source of unhappiness in the world is discontent. And this we find not so much where we should most naturally look for it, in the stations of poverty; there, on the contrary, are fre-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xv. 10.

quently to be seen instances of the most beautiful and perfect contentment, patience, and resignation, under circumstances which should draw the blush into the cheek of those of other classes who fail in it. But discontent is most generally found among those who seem to have least reason for it: they who have every necessary want supplied, and every comfort afforded by the bounty of providence, and luxury also; these often furnish striking examples of the unhappiness of discontent; their whole comfort and enjoyment of the goods, with which they are surrounded, being blighted and marred by a thankless craving after something more.

To this are to be traced almost all the bickerings and jealousies and ill blood which destroy the peace of families and of society, and bring shame upon the Christian profession. So true it is what Solomon has said, that "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver<sup>1</sup>." And he who sets his affection upon the things of this life, will have the bitter drug of discontent to poison his cup as long as he lives upon the earth. And, therefore, the knowledge that our own honour and happiness consist in answering the end of our creation, which is the glory of God, tends directly to our happiness, as it gives us the most powerful and convincing motive for contentment. For if men would consider the matter, as Christians are bound to do, in this light,

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. v. 10.

the only real question of anxiety would be, whether the station or condition in which we may be placed affords us sufficient opportunities for answering this end of our existence; and this we learn from our text all honest stations do, because we there see that it is in our power to consult the glory of God in the every-day actions of our life, by ordering them in His fear, and with the remembrance of Him. And as for every thing else which is useful or necessary, He has promised to supply all that, provided we will attend to this; as He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you<sup>1</sup>," and therefore they are no longer matters of fretfulness or discontent. If, indeed, chance governed the world, as miserable men wishing to escape from God have sometimes endeavoured to persuade themselves, there might be some reason to fret and fume when crosses *happened* and the *luck* fell ill; but, when we know that it is God who orders it, a Father's care that directs it, a Father's love that superintends every thing in it, a wise Father who knows what is best, a kind and affectionate Father who desires our good, and to promote His own glory by our real welfare, then is every ground for complaint removed. Silent submission to His will, cheerful endeavour to imitate Him by turning every circumstance into good, and deriving advantage to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

our souls and to the glory of God from every thing, though to the eye of the world it may seem to have no good nor advantage in it ;—these are the dispositions which befit the servants of God, which bring peace and contentment with them, and conduce directly to our happiness on both sides of the grave.

Nor are these the only advantages arising from the recollection, that the glory of God is the end of our creation ; that our true honour consists in seeking it, and that we can do so in our every-day employments. Consider what a spur to exertion, what a double spring and motive for action is thus afforded ; and what satisfaction, also, when an end is thus set before us which we are sure of attaining, if it be not our own faults. When success in this world is the object of our endeavours, or the applause of men the thing we aim at, every day's experience shews what constant and bitter disappointments must be encountered ; because then we are working for what is uncertain and unstable as water, unsatisfactory and almost worthless when it is attained. But how is it changed, when our desire is the glory of God and His pleasure ! Here all is sure and steadfast and unchangeable, founded upon promises, and the Rock of Truth, and a Father's love ; those allowances which men cannot or will not make, He will make ; want of success is no bar to His love ; for if our endeavour be sincere, He takes that for the deed, and for the sake of



Him, Who at His right hand intercedes for us, accepts and repays us.

If any unthinking persons should be inclined to say, that the constant recollection of God, and the constant endeavours to obey the rule of our text, and whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God, must be detrimental to our happiness; do but consider the folly and almost idiotcy of such an observation: for the only thing from which that rule will restrain us is evil; so far from withholding any good from us, it forces and compels us to seek it; and therefore such an observation amounts to this, that evil is the source of happiness, and good the source of misery: in other words, that Satan rules in the world, instead of God; and so perhaps he does, with those who would speak in such an atheistical manner; but that is no reason why Christians should put on their enemy's galling and degrading yoke, instead of the happy and glorious service of their heavenly Father.

But the truth is, persons who would speak so are not only no fair judges of the matter, but are talking of that, about which they literally know nothing. They have *never made trial of the service of God*; they cannot, therefore, possibly, know whether it is happy or unhappy. Let them make trial of it, and then let them speak: let them endeavour to do whatever they do to the glory of God, by doing it in the fear of Him, and restraining themselves by the recollection of Him; and when they have thus

made trial of it, let them say whether they have not found out happiness, of which till then they had no knowledge; a peace of mind which the world, with all its idols and its follies, cannot give; whether their hearts are not lighter, their brow calmer, their hope surer. They will then acknowledge that the fear of God is wisdom, and to “depart from evil is understanding:” as David speaks, “Oh taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him<sup>1</sup>.”

God give us all grace, in truth, and with a single heart, to make trial of this, if we have not already begun it; to persevere and continue in it, if through the grace of God, we have already entered into that true wisdom, of which Solomon says, that “her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace<sup>2</sup>.” Through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, in the unity of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xxxiv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iii. 17.

# SERMON V.

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ON THE VALUE OF A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

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LUKE xi. 34, 35.

“The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”

By the essential usefulness which the eye is of to the body, and by the utter helplessness and destitution which the body experiences when the power of sight is lost, our Saviour would have us consider the value of a clear and tender conscience ; and the dreadful evil of having it perverted, or hardened, or silenced. “The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.” His intended meaning may be thus expressed, “The light or guide of the soul is the conscience, therefore when thy con-

science is clear and upright, thy soul also is in safety, and under sound guidance; but when thy conscience is hardened or perverted, thy soul also is deprived of her guide, and in danger of error and ruin." By means of the things which we know of ourselves, He would teach us the things which we must receive by learning, and make use of our bodies, to convey instruction to our souls.

For the value of sight nature itself teaches us, and daily experience of the benefits of it shows us how great a treasure it is, and how dreadful the loss of it would be; and therefore we need not to be taught, nor persuaded, to take care of it; instinct itself leads us to do this, and to guard our eyes anxiously from every evil; nay, so remarkable is our concern for this member of the body, that our care of it is proverbial to express the greatest that can be; and when David would declare to God his wish to be under His especial and constant protection, he could find no apter way for doing it, than by referring to men's care for their eye-sight. "Keep me," saith he, "as the apple of the eye<sup>1</sup>."

But of the value of a clear and upright conscience, how few, even among Christians, seem to be aware! And they who would guard the eye of their body with the greatest care, and are impatient, if but a bit of dust or an eye-lash enter it, and obscure its brightness; can yet, too often, suffer the eye of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xvii. 8.

their soul, even conscience, to be stained and polluted, and rendered dim and useless, with no concern about it : as if while the body needs the utmost light, the soul could shift well enough in twilight, or even in total darkness.

Yes, this is the case with too many Christians, who act in this manner, little considering the great, and oftentimes irreparable, injury they do unto themselves ; nor pausing to reflect, that on this point, the very heathens will rise up in judgment with them at the last day, and condemn them. For though they have not, as we have, the written law of God, and the revelation of His will, to instruct and enlighten their conscience, yet, God left them not altogether in darkness ; they had the light of reason to show them, in most instances, good from evil ; as St. Paul says, they were a law unto themselves, their consciences bearing them witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing them<sup>1</sup>. And the writings of many among them, which have come down to us, show how highly they prized and set store by the dictates of their conscience, unenlightened as it was, when compared with ours. Now if the heathens could value and set store by the faint glimmerings of light, with which reason or broken tradition enabled their consciences to guide them, what can be thought of Christians, who when they have not only the light of reason, but the clear

<sup>1</sup> Romans ii. 15.

and certain instruction of God's revealed will and word to guide their consciences, and the motions of God's Holy Spirit, their privilege as God's adopted children, will yet slight and neglect the warnings and direction of this heavenly monitor! despising their birthright, abusing their privileges, and, as far as lies in them, turning day into night, by shutting their eyes to the light of God's teaching, that they may wander in the darkness of their own self-chosen ways! "I will put my laws into their minds," said God, "and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people<sup>1</sup>." And St. Paul, speaking of the privileges to which baptized Christians are entitled, as the adopted sons of God, says, "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts<sup>2</sup>;" and, in another place, "we have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God<sup>3</sup>."

A Christian's conscience, therefore, if he have been instructed in the law of God, and so long as it is clean and tender, may, in fact, be said to be the voice of God within him, teaching him what to do and what to avoid; but it is only so long the voice of God, as it agrees with His revealed word; and it will only so long discharge its warning office

<sup>1</sup> Heb. viii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12.

properly, and with safety, as its dictates are carefully consulted, and constantly attended to.

But let us consider these things separately :

A Christian's conscience, so long as it is tender and unperturbed, is the voice of God within him, teaching him what to do and what to avoid. Is it so, brethren? and shall we not attend to that voice? shall we not listen to the kind and gracious voice of our Father, when He would guide us aright? when we, like wilful wandering sheep, are straying from the paths of peace, from the road that leads to Heaven, and He, our shepherd God, would in the voice of mercy and affection speak to us, and by the motions of conscience warn us of our danger, and lead us back to the ways of safety and happiness, shall we not attend with a glad mind, a thankful and willing heart, to his admonition, and return unto Him that He may return unto us? Or shall we, rather, in pride or self-opinion, obstinately persist in following our own path, in an unthankful and wicked spirit, turn away from our best friend and only Saviour, whose only object in speaking to us is our safety and happiness; and determine at all events to please ourselves? Happy would it be for us, my Christian brethren, if this were not too often our case! Happy would it be for us, if we made it our constant habit to attend with ready willingness to the voice of conscience, and to check and deny ourselves in any gratification, however much we might desire it, against which the voice

of conscience should give its witness. Happy would it be for us, if our lives did not afford too many instances of our having neglected its voice. It is easy to deceive ourselves in this matter, and to persuade ourselves that things are not so bad; but that man's conscience must be obscured through disuse, or blinded by perversion, which does not remind him of many *things* done, and *words* spoken, and *thoughts* harboured and encouraged, against the plainest admonitions and checks of conscience; and many things also left undone, which conscience has as plainly told us ought to have been done.

Alas! My Christian brethren, all this is evil; and evil and wretched, truly, would our case be, if it were not that at the very moment when our consciences are most wounded at the remembrance of these things, the promises and hopes of our Christian covenant pour balm into the wound, and soothe our affrighted breasts by the remembrance of God's willingness to save all such as turn to Him through Jesus Christ; that it is not yet too late; that there is still mercy to be found, if we will seek it eagerly and with a true heart; that though we have neglected God, He still cares for us; though we have disobeyed Him, He is still willing to receive us again into His service, and own us as His children, if we will turn to Him in faith and truth. If thou wilt return to the Almighty, thou shalt find favour and mercy with Him, for His dear Son's sake. Only let us take good heed to our ways,



that we attend to the voice of conscience, and instead of the neglects which she tells us we have often shown to her, let us be doubly and doubly anxious to walk in her guidance, turning not aside to the right hand or to the left. "Take heed," saith our blessed Saviour in the text, "that the light which is in thee be not darkness." For this will be the end of our disregarding the cry of conscience; her voice will at last cease to speak, if we persist in refusing to hear, and we shall be left without a guide; nay worse, our guide will be evil. For we shall not only cease to be reminded of what is evil, but our whole taste and view will be perverted, and what things before we counted good, will seem weak and foolish; what we accounted evil, will be harmless or pleasant; and what we shuddered to think of, will seem but trifling failings. Vice, if it have but present pleasure, will seem good; and virtue evil, if it bring with it any restraint or self-denial. Would you know by what means so fearful a change can be effected, that men can ever "call evil good, and good evil?" take a very familiar instance, which may serve plainly to illustrate it. When a man who has lived in a pure air, enters any offensive manufactory, he, at first, plainly perceives the difference of the atmosphere; the smoke and dust and evil odours affect his breathing, and he longs for the freshness of his native air; but, after a while, his distaste goes off, and he ceases to perceive the difference; but the

air is not purer than it was; the change is in the man himself, who loses the power of distinguishing between the two. And so it is in sin; at our first departing from the ways of truth and holiness, we forcibly perceive the difference; the ways of sin sit uneasily and unpleasantly upon us; conscience is busy in reminding us of the truth; and, if we attend to her voice, we grieve for what we have done, and return in haste to the ways of God and peace. But if the voice of conscience be disregarded, and we persist in the ill course, we begin, by degrees, to lose the uneasiness which sin at first occasioned; numerous excuses suggest themselves for each instance of sin which we commit; excuses, which, in our former mind, we should have cast aside as the lies of Satan, but which, when the mind is willing to sin, too easily pass current; and then the difference is soon lost, and that is reckoned fine and manly, which leaves us without the control of God, and that poor and mean-spirited which is subject to His fear. And then one step in crime brings on another, and that again another, so that if God leaves us unchecked, or if in our madness we despise the checks, which, in the shape of affliction or crosses, or deaths, He sends us, the road to ruin is soon gone over, never to be retraced.

The Heathen nations are a remarkable instance of this, as mentioned by St. Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to Romans; where he ascribes their long ignorance of God, and wicked and accursed

practices, which continue in many of them even to this day, to this very cause. Even “as they *did not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” So was it the case with the Jews, as David testifies; He “gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust, and let them follow their own imagination<sup>1</sup>.” So is it in most of the cases of the unhappy criminals, whose sins bring them to an untimely and disgraceful end. From little sins to great, from great to greater, till the worst crimes are committed; this is the progress of one who has succeeded in stifling the voice of conscience. “When the light which is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness!” Nor let us think that those whose sins are thus notorious and known to the whole world, are the only ones who tread the fearful ladder of guilt. Many are they whose proud and arrogant tempers, whose sceptical and unbelieving spirits, whose foul and wicked imaginations, whose malicious and revengeful thoughts are hidden from the eyes of men, who yet could trace (if they had the grace to do so), step by step, their progress in these secret sins to the point which sealed their ruin, and they went down to the grave with their guilt known only to God, and to the blessed angels; until that day of trial, when the secrets of all hearts shall be re-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 12.

vealed. Let us, my beloved brethren, lay these things to heart; and let us search out the sores and wounds of our own consciences; it will do us more good than prying into those of others.

Thus we see that conscience is then only to be considered as the voice of God, when it is clear, and tender, and awake; if it be obscured, or hardened, or perverted, its motions are not to be depended upon. But I said also that it was only so long the voice of God as it agrees with His revealed word; and my meaning was, because it has often happened, that fanatical persons, having their consciences blinded or perverted with spiritual pride, have urged conscience as a plea for the commission of every crime; not being able to distinguish its true from its false voice, from failing to take the revealed word of God in Scripture as the test by which to try it. Our blessed Saviour, in speaking to His disciples concerning the sufferings they would have to endure, forewarned them that such would be the case, saying, "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service<sup>1</sup>." This prediction was fulfilled to the letter, both in His own person, and in that of His followers; and when the Son of God was crucified, and when the first martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death, the Jews made out that it was for the sake of religion that they committed those atrocities. But it was not in their

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 2.

time only that it was so fulfilled ; but in all times of religious persecution the same plea has been given. The history of our own country affords remarkable proof of it. Thus, in the persecutions which have been reciprocally perpetrated at times by the members of the English Church and the adherents to the Bishop of Rome upon one another, conscience has been the ground alleged.

When, nearly 200 years ago, the great rebellion ravaged our country, conscience was the watch-word ; and when they murdered King Charles the same reason was urged by those who, “for the Lord, the Lord’s anointed slew.” Thus fearfully can Satan, as the Apostle speaks, “transform himself into an angel of light<sup>1</sup> ;” and under the false pretence of the best motive lead his infatuated victims to the commission of the most fearful sins. That plea is still given ; and they who separate from our Church give conscience as their reason for thwarting our Saviour’s wish, and introducing division and dissension, where He prayed that all might be “one<sup>2</sup>.”

Let us observe, then, whether the conduct to which conscience would lead us is agreeable to the true word of God, so shall we know whether the voice that speaks within us is the voice of God, or only a deceit or sleight of the enemy of mankind. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God<sup>3</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 1.

But, lastly, it is probable that some will object to the danger of having our consciences too tender. Let us consider in what cases this is possible. When we find that we condemn ourselves for things which we have not done; when we find ourselves condemning that as in itself sinful, which God has not forbidden; or, when we find ourselves doubting of God's mercy, or despairing of His forgiveness; in all these cases, unquestionably, conscience is too tender, and is deceived, and needs to be restrained and corrected by the remembrance of God's mercy, and faith in Him, by right reason, and the plain reading of His word. But these cases are comparatively rare.

But when we carry the fear of God into the every day actions of our lives, and strive to make a conscience of our ways, not only our greater but our lesser, and to bring our thoughts and words to the test of God's will, and the light of His word; this (which worldly persons are wont to call over-tenderness) is so far from being so, that it proves conscience to be in the most sound and healthy state: which must indeed be confessed by all fair and candid persons, when they recollect that He whom we seek to please by walking conscientiously is "about our path and about our bed, and spieth out *all* our ways<sup>1</sup>;" that we are required to have the remembrance of His laws about us, when we are at home,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 2.

and when we are in the field ; when we lie down, and when we rise up <sup>1</sup> ; that we have promised to love Him with *all* our heart : and that He will bring into judgment not the greater acts of our lives only, but “ every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil <sup>2</sup> .”

God give us grace, my beloved brethren, to profit by what we have now heard ; to carry the remembrance of it home with us in our hearts, and to endeavour to order our lives according to the important and eternal truths which it contains.

Now to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi. 7. xi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. xii. 14.

# SERMON VI.

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ON ZEAL FOR THE FAITH.

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JUDE 3, 4.

“Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men . . . denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

IN citing the last words of my text, I have, as you will have observed, not used our common version, which runs thus: “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ:” preferring rather what seems the more exact translation of the Greek, “our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ,” because it serves, perhaps more plainly than the other, to mark the false doctrine against which St. Jude was contending.

For the test of the true profession of Christianity consisted then, as it does now, chiefly, in the acknowledgment of the divinity of the Saviour of



the world ; that He is God as well as man ; that He was, what the prophet styled Him, Emmanuel <sup>1</sup>, *i. e.* God with us ; what St. Paul styled Him, “ God manifest in the flesh <sup>2</sup> ;” what He described Himself, “ Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last <sup>3</sup> ;” in short, the Eternal One, who in the beginning was with God, and was God <sup>4</sup>, and yet, for our sakes, “ was made flesh and dwelt among us <sup>5</sup> ;” or, as the Athanasian Creed has well expressed it, “ God, of the substance of His Father, begotten before the worlds ; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world.”

In defence of these fundamental truths were arrayed the Apostles of our Lord, the inspired evangelists, and teachers, the “ great company of the preachers,” who first converted the nations, the bishops and martyrs of the primitive ages ; and from their days until now they have been, and from now until the end of the world they will continue to be, the foremost of the leading doctrines of Christianity, the foremost of those essential and fundamental truths ; the profession and maintenance of which must ever distinguish the Catholic Church from all the various heresies which the device of Satan or man may raise up in opposition to her.

To take the last words of the text, according to the more exact translation of the words *τὸν μόνον*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vii. 14. Matt. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xxii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> John i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> John i. 14.

δεσπότην Θεὸν καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, ἀρνούμενοι, “denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ,” rather than in the common version, “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” serves more plainly to point out against what doctrine St. Jude was writing, because none of the heretics then, nor indeed at any time, ever denied the divinity of the Father; the dispute between Catholics and heretics then, and Catholics and heretics now, turning upon one and the same point; viz. the divinity of our Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.

But, indeed, if we compare “spiritual things with spiritual<sup>1</sup>,” the words of one Apostle with the words of another, the sentence of St. Jude with the sentence of St. John, either translation will be sufficient for the purpose, and plainly show that the Epistle was directed against those who denied the incarnation of the Son of God, and the divinity of the Saviour of the world. The sentence of St. John, to which I allude, is that in which, after declaring that the maintainers of this blasphemous denial were the antichrists whose coming had been foretold, he states that such denial is equivalent to Atheism itself; equivalent to the denial of the Godhead altogether, since the unhappy person who is drawn into that heresy is totally and entirely deprived by it of the blessing and protection of a God; he is a “stranger from the covenant of pro-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13.

mise," has "no hope," and is "without God in the world <sup>1</sup>;" for thus he writes: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father <sup>2</sup>;" he hath Him not, as to any right understanding or knowledge of Him; he hath Him not, as to any communion with, or hope in, Him, or as to any blessing to be received from Him; every avenue of access is cut off; according to the words of the Son Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me <sup>3</sup>."

I have not chosen this text for the subject of this day's discourse, as though there were any need to lay again in the minds of those who hear me the foundation of our Holy Religion. No, cradled in the lap of a true and pure branch of the Catholic Church, and having been taught from your earliest infancy in her sound faith, you can (I trust) have no "need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ <sup>4</sup>." Your conviction of the truth as it is in Jesus, and your value of, and devotion to, it has, doubtless, grown with your growth, and ripened with your age; and that faith which, in the first and second centuries, called forth whole armies of martyrs to seal with their blood their attestation to it, will, I doubt not, now in the nineteenth, find numbers ready to lay down their lives in proof of their constancy to it, if it shall

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. v. 12.

please God to put them to the trial. But my reason for choosing this text and subject is, that, since the situation of the Church of Christ in this kingdom has been of late much altered and endangered, I may make use of the opportunity of addressing such a congregation as this before me, to warn them how necessary it is become, that, as members of that Church, a change should likewise take place in them, to enable them to meet the altered circumstances of the Church—a change, I mean, in watchfulness and attention to the things of religion; lest, haply, if they be off their guard, the tempter succeed in the endeavours which he will, doubtless, make to seduce any of you from the true faith. I chose it, in short, because, as St. Jude writes, “it was needful for me to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints;” and this for the self-same reason which he gives for his exhortation, namely, “for there are certain men crept in unawares—ungodly men,—denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

When I speak of the altered position of the Church of Christ in this kingdom, I do not allude to the great measure of last year, by which our brethren of the Church of Rome were restored to the privileges of which they had long been deprived; for, however tied they may be by Papal chains to the false doctrines which distinguish their branch of the Church from ours, still the great, and fundamental, and essential

truths of Christianity they hold equally with ourselves; profess equally with ourselves the Articles of the Catholic faith; although, first, by the corrupt additions which they have made to the faith, in what is called the Creed of Pius IV.<sup>1</sup>, they have obscured and put out of sight the gold of the temple; and, secondly, by insisting upon such corrupt additions, as necessary to salvation, and as terms of communion, have, in a manner, cut themselves off from the ancient Catholic Church<sup>2</sup>; and by setting up schismatical altars within the dioceses of other bishops, and the jurisdiction of other churches, and causing divisions and offences, have openly violated both the principles of Holy Scripture<sup>3</sup>, and the repeated rules of the holy Catholic Church<sup>4</sup>, which it is their duty, as they make it their profession, to obey.

Still, as concerns the primary and most essential foundations of Christianity, our cause and theirs is, or rather should be, one and the same; and some of the ablest defenders of the truth of it have been found among them. Every step, therefore, that may be likely, under God's grace, to lead them to retrace their steps, and to abandon the schismatical and heretical position which they have taken, is

<sup>1</sup> See the Creed of Pius IV. and the other terms of reconciliation with Rome, in Appendix (A.)

<sup>2</sup> The authority for this assertion will be found in appendix (B.)

<sup>3</sup> See the authority for this assertion in appendix (C.)

<sup>4</sup> The authority for this assertion will be found in appendix (D.)

worthy of being tried, in dependence upon the blessing of God. “If the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again <sup>1</sup>.”

Nor do I allude to the admission to the like privileges which the measure of the preceding year gave to the really Christian dissenters; for though, in an evil hour, unhappily for themselves, they have separated from their brethren, and for trifling and unreasonable causes have introduced division where He, Whom they profess to own for their Master, prayed that there might be unity; and although, being destitute of lawful pastors, they have wandered in self-chosen ways, like sheep without shepherds, and have thus, according to the judgment of the primitive ages, ceased to be members of the Catholic Church <sup>2</sup>, still these retain the profession of most of

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 5.—This sentence has been enlarged since it was preached. The proceedings of the Roman party in this kingdom having made it more necessary, than, from their smooth words and fair speeches, it seemed to be then, to develop in the clearest light the monstrous position which they hold.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the passages of Scripture, and the rules of the Catholic Church, cited above in notes, pp. 87, 88, are equally applicable to *all* dissenters from the Catholic Church in England, whether they adhere to the Bishop of Rome, or protest against him in common with ourselves. But the Protestant Dissenters are in this respect in worse case than the Roman, in that they have not even the pretence of Episcopal ordination; which alone has been recognised of authority in any true branch of the Church of Christ, from its foundation even until now;

the chief truths of our religion : in their irregular assemblies still it is the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, that is worshipped ; and their hope of mercy rests in the vicarious sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God, the divine Saviour, Jesus Christ. These, therefore, are also Christians, though, like Korah and his company, they presume to worship God by means which they cannot show that He has sanctioned, and bring themselves into jeopardy and danger by so doing. And possibly, God in His mercy grant it, they may yet by kindness be won back ; and when they see the danger to which their causeless division from the Church of Christ exposes the cause of Christianity, may be persuaded, from right motives, to undo, as far as lies in them, the injury they have done to it, and, by willing acknowledgment of divinely constituted authority, and earnest co-operation with the Church of Christ, to strengthen the cause which is theirs as well as ours.

I do not allude to either of these. But, in the language of our text, “ there are certain men crept in unawares, ungodly men, denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.” I allude to those

and have adopted a system of ministry, on which, for the first 1500 years of Christianity, Christian men did not dare to hazard their salvation. Yet there has been no fresh revelation from Heaven, nor any pretence of one, that should lead reasonable men to think that *safe now*, which was not *so accounted from the beginning*.

unhappy persons who, living in the full blaze of the Gospel dispensation, will shut their eyes, that they may not admit the light; who, being within hearing of the glad tidings of salvation, refuse to receive the sound; who, when "the new and living way" to everlasting life is laid open before them, "which Christ," the Son of God, "has consecrated" through "his flesh<sup>1</sup>," which bore our sins upon the cross, are incredulous and reject the proffered mercy, seeking vainly for some other way of obtaining it. To those, in short, who deny the incarnation of the Son of God, the divinity of the Saviour of the world, His vicarial suffering for the sins of men, and the personality of the Holy Ghost. I mean the Unitarians, or, as they are sometimes called, the Socinians. And when I spoke of the altered and dangerous position of the Church of Christ in this kingdom, I alluded to the increased power and opportunity of injuring the cause of Christianity which has, of late, been afforded to these persons.

When it was judged expedient that the privileges heretofore confined to the members of our Church, should no longer be so confined, but be thrown open to others, it was not much to expect that some security should be taken that, at least, none but Christians should legislate for a Christian nation, and none but Christians be allowed authority over a Christian people. Perhaps indeed it

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 20.



was so intended by those to whom the care of the alteration was entrusted: but alas! if it was so, the device of Satan has proved an overmatch for the wit of men, and the craft of the wicked has brought to nought the counsel of the good. Under the falsely assumed name of Christians,—to which they have no better claim than the Mahometans (for they, too, acknowledge Jesus to have been a *divinely inspired teacher*,)—under this false guise these blasphemers of the Messiah of whom we have been speaking, creep in unawares, like those to whom St. Jude alludes; and are allowed to legislate for a Christian people, and to hold offices of trust and authority in a Christian nation. In short, the open and avowed impugners of the essential truths of the Catholic Christian Faith, have been suffered to attain an eminence, and to become possessed of a power, which, from the days of the conversion of the Saxons up to the present time they never held. But this is not all: few can observe the tone of conversation both in public and in private, on matters of religion, few can read the periodical publications of the day, without being struck with the slight that is put, and the rancour which is evinced not only against the Church of England as an establishment, but against the cause of religion itself; while those who should be its defenders are too often silent, and shrink from avowing the inward conviction of their minds.

The object aimed at is the overthrow of Christi-

anity: the means of accomplishing this object is the destruction of the Church of England. As long as that bulwark is upheld and maintained, the enemies of religion know that their attempts will fail; let her once be removed, and as wild a desolation in matters of religion will overspread the country, as is to be seen at this day on the other side of the Atlantic.

We do not *complain* of these things. It has pleased God to *suffer* this evil to be brought upon this nation; they who brought it must doubtless hereafter account to Him: but, without His *permission*, it could not have been done; and Christians are not wont to complain of having to endure, what He is pleased to permit. He, doubtless, designs from this evil to draw, as He always does, some good. It is for us, His servants, to seek out, if we can, that good, and to please Him by endeavouring to secure it. This is certain, that whatever they may be for this nation, these are no times of peace for the Church of Christ within it. Those days are gone, if they ever existed, when scoffers could reproach the ministers of the Gospel with leading lives of ease and indolence; all who are called to that station now, must, like officers in an enemy's country, pass lives of care, of watchfulness, and of exertion.

Do I speak as if it were a hardship? God forbid! It is an honour, not a hardship. Never does the Church of Christ shine forth in such majesty

and beauty, as when forced to put on her defensive armour, her armour of proof, and to gird herself for the war. Never, as when she puts on her helmet of hope, and her breastplate of love, and her shield of faith, and draws forth her sword which is the word of truth; when her weapons are sharpened and polished for active service, and she rouses to the contest; not in her own strength, but in that of the Lord of Hosts, "Who is mighty to save;" the strength of "the Holy One of Israel Who is in the midst" of her; the strength of Him "Who giveth her the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>." Search well her records, look over her annals, and you will find the times which she marks with white, and looks back to with triumph, to be those in which to the eye of the world her days appear clouded with misfortune, or streaked with the crimson stain of blood. The annals of the Christian church, taken collectively, furnish no æra more glorious than that in which "the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed<sup>3</sup>;" and against all who acknowledged the crucified Jesus to be the anointed Son of God; when the power of the Heathen Emperors, and the devices of Satan, and the madness of the people, were leagued together to hinder the promulgation of the

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Psa. ii. 1.

glad tidings of salvation, and to trample under foot the Son of God, and all His followers. Then those followers shone forth in Christian virtue, and, like Him Whom they followed, “overcame by suffering,” “being reviled they blessed, being persecuted they entreated;” “of whom the world was not worthy;” but their names are recorded in heaven to live for evermore; they are entered in the book of life, “and their souls are in the hand of God.” In like manner the English portion of the Church looks back to no period since her foundation more exultingly, than to that in which puritans, and hypocrites, and atheists, combined to trample on the fairest flower of Christendom; those times which saw her King, and her Prelates, and her sons, brought to the scaffold; and her clergy driven out as witnesses to the truth, to testify by hunger and want, and imprisonment, and suffering of all kinds, that the Spirit which animated Elijah was yet to be found upon earth, and that God had still, as in his time, many thousands in His Israel, who had not bowed to the Baal of the day; those times of which a pious and revered prince was wont to speak with admiration, saying, “There were giants on the earth in those days.” And, doubtless, if it please Almighty God, to suffer His Church once more to be exposed to trials like those, when open enemies without, and hollow friends within, shall between them undermine and overthrow the walls of our Sion, and lay her waste, He will, as heretofore,

again raise up His chosen witnesses to bear witness to the truth, and to triumph in the midst of persecution, ruin, or the withering blast of cold and infidel neglect. We do not therefore complain, when we allude to the prospect that such times as those are opening upon us, that for our punishment, or for our trial, that we "may be sifted like wheat," our Lord should suffer this evil to come upon us. The children of the true faith can look with a firm heart and fixed eye upon such approaching perils, and can prepare for the Church's war of constancy and endurance. Only let them know that it is a time of war, and not of peace; that they may not sit still with their hands folded, dreaming sweet dreams of ease and enjoyment, but may be watchful and on the alert; for it is a time of danger, a time when all true Christians "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints; for there are certain men crept in unawares—ungodly men, denying our only Master, God, and Lord Jesus Christ."

Nor think that this is spoken faint-heartedly, as if the issue of the struggle, whenever it may come, were doubtful. God forbid! If our confidence were placed in those things which to the eye of the world seem sources of strength, if our trust were in human wit, or earthly power, or the voice of the multitude, our hope might then indeed be vain, and dark would be our prospect. For we may live to see all these supports withdrawn and arrayed against us; and

the powers of this world once more leagued with the powers of darkness, to injure mankind and destroy the hope of salvation. But, praised be God! the Christian Church stays not upon such helps as these; thankful for worldly prosperity, she can profit by it while it is continued, but if it please God that it be withdrawn, she can throw herself upon her mighty Protector, and submit to adversity without a murmur. The cause for which we contend is not ours, but God's. It is the cause of the Church of Christ; a cause, the success of which is certain, however terrible the intervening contest may be; a cause for the confessors of which celestial palaces are prepared; and concerning which the voice of the Eternal Truth has declared, that the powers of darkness shall not prevail against it.

But, perhaps, some scoffing objector may ask, "If the cause of the Church is in such hands, if it has the Almighty for its protector, and if its triumph be certain, why make you all this ado and clamour about the danger to which it is exposed?"

First, because however glorious war may be, there is no man, however confident of victory, who is a lover of his country, but would fain preserve her in peace; and however honourable to the Church the times of persecution and trouble may be, by the confessors and witnesses of the faith which they furnish, no person would wish to see the faith of the multitude exposed to such severe trials. For, although it be possible, by the help of God,

and it be our duty and honour, when evil is brought upon us, to glorify our God and Saviour, by suffering like Him with patience and constancy, yet both nature and religion teach us that it is our duty, also, to avoid and ward off such evil, if by God's grace it may be, and not to tempt Him by unnecessarily running ourselves into it.

Secondly and chiefly, because although it be most true that the Church is under the protection of God, and that His promise, which cannot be broken, is recorded, "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her;" and that therefore she will always be found upon earth, till He Himself shall return hither; yet this promise relates to the Church in general, and not to any particular branch of it, which may be established in this or that kingdom or country; and there is not only no promise concerning such that it shall be preserved, but, on the contrary, much reason from history, both profane and sacred, to fear, that any nation or kingdom which, by general profligacy, or encouragement of infidelity, or supine and stupid neglect, shall show itself unworthy of such a deposit, will lose the treasure which it could not value aright, which will be transferred to another more worthy of it; that the handwriting upon the wall will, in that case, come out against it, Mene, mene, Tekel, "God hath numbered thy days and finished them; thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting; the kingdom," I mean the Church of Christ within it, "shall be taken from thee." For

such has ever been the method of God's Providence; it was so in old times, as is recorded by the wise son of Sirach, "Because of unrighteous dealings, injuries, and riches got by deceit, the kingdom is translated from one people to another<sup>1</sup>." It was so in our Saviour's time as Himself declared to the Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof<sup>2</sup>." And since His ascension into heaven, God has observed His wonted method of dealing with the people of the world, and from many a city and many a nation the glory of the knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, and the free use of the means thereof (which the Church only can afford) has passed away, and been transferred to others.

Cast your eye over the map of Christendom, as it was and as it is, and observe the changes which have taken place. You will see whole districts, where formerly the Christian religion flourished and bore fruit, now thrown out of cultivation, if I may use the expression; while in countries where then it was not known, it is now fostered and prospering.

Where is the famous Church of Carthage, which heard the blessed Cyprian defend the cause of God, and saw him perish for His sake? What is become

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. x. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 43.



of Jerusalem, the mother of all Churches, which was founded by the Saviour Himself, and witnessed the college of the Apostles, and owned the guidance of St. James the Just? Where are the noble sees of Sardis, and Ephesus, and Smyrna? Ephesus, which heard St. Paul, and furnished an Ignatius for the lions—Smyrna, which saw the venerable Polycarp offer himself as a whole living burnt sacrifice for the cause of Christ—Where are these, and many more equally illustrious Churches? They are sunk low in the dust, and the blast of ruin has swept over them. The crescent of infidelity has been allowed to triumph over the Cross of Christ; the Moslem lies prostrate where the Christian knelt, and the fanes which once heard the worship of the anointed Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, are either laid in ruins, or polluted with the praises of the false prophet; while the few Christians who are yet to be found there, drag out a miserable existence, creeping about like men in fear of death, contemned and oppressed by their infidel persecutors.

The question which naturally occurs to one, when these things are considered, is the same which formerly the nations asked concerning Jerusalem, while it lay waste in the time of the Babylonish captivity, “Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city?” and the answer which Jeremiah made in that case may serve also in these, viz. “Because

they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God<sup>1</sup>.”

For concerning the three last sees, whose overthrow has been alluded to, Sardis, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, their ruin was foretold; and the prophecies which foretold it stand recorded in the word of God, and the cause why it was brought, and the condition by which it might have been averted. “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick<sup>2</sup>,” i. e. the light of the Church of Christ; and, in the address to the Church of Sardis, the advice is almost the same as that contained in our text, “Remember how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief<sup>3</sup>.” Let the warning, with which these prophecies were summed up, be attended to; and, “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches<sup>4</sup>.” For what has been may be again, and not only may be, but assuredly will be under the like circumstances, unless the economy of God in ordering the affairs of His Churches, or the method of His Providence be changed. What has befallen others, may and will befall ourselves if we imitate their conduct. Great and noble as the Churches of

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxii. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. iii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. iii. 22.

Canterbury, and York, and London, and others may be, they are not more illustrious than Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Carthage ; or if we view them collectively, and speak of the famous Church of England, concerning which we are wont with reason to rejoice as the purest branch of the Catholic Church, in which Christian truths are taught in their soundest form, and the polity of apostolical and primitive veneration preserved, she stands not higher than did the Church of Jerusalem. And if the excellency of these older Churches, did not prevent God from suffering them to decay, when they fell from that excellency, what reason have we to hope that He will deal otherwise with us, and that He will not withdraw His protecting arm which has hitherto encircled us, if we err like them ?

If we will not earnestly contend, as St. Jude bids us, for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints ; if we are not careful to hold fast, as St. Paul directs, the form of sound words which we have heard, or, if, when we have unhappily at all swerved, we will not give ear to what the Spirit saith to the Churches, and repent and do the first works ; surely, surely, we must expect that sooner or later it will happen to us, (God grant the time be far distant !) as it has to them ; that the candlestick of God, the light of the Church of Christ, shall be removed, and given to those who will make better use of it : that our noble sees will be ex-

tinguished, and these holy temples, where the incense of the prayers and praises of the servants of God has ascended to heaven, shall either be thrown down or shut up as they have been once before, or else polluted with the presumptuous blasphemies of sceptical heretics or avowed unbelievers.

But what steps, then, are to be taken, to avert so dreadful a calamity? Let us attend to the advice of St. Jude, and let all who love the name of Christ, all who hold dear the hope of salvation by means of His sacrifice upon the Cross, which the God of mercy holds out to our sinful race, let all such resolve to comply with the command, that they should “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” If ever there was a time when every Christian father, and every Christian master, and, in short, every true member of the Christian family was called upon to let his faith in the Son of God and in the blessed Trinity be known and avowed and proved—if ever there was a time when he was called upon to show by his attendance on the outward duties, and by his observance of the inward influential principles and precepts of our Holy Faith, that he is indeed and in truth a Christian; when he was called upon, both by precept and example, to make it manifest that he *knows* (as the Apostle writes) *in Whom he has believed*<sup>1</sup>, now is that time. A successful stand may

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.

yet be made against the flood of irreligion, scepticism, and infidelity, which the enemy of mankind is pouring upon us; not only from within, but bringing the wickedness of other nations to help to subvert our hope. I allude to the impious speculations of the German school (now, alas! too much read and attended to), which, carrying with them a specious pretence and show of piety, are calculated to effect far more deadly mischief than the more open and therefore more disgusting declarations of professed unbelievers.

As concerns our conduct toward those who deny the divinity of our Lord, and His atoning sacrifice, it is not from human counsel but from the declarations of the Spirit of God that we should look for directions. That Holy Spirit, by St. Paul, has taught us to “mark those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine we have been taught, and to avoid them:” and the same Spirit, speaking by St. John, has told us, “that if there come any unto us and bring not this doctrine,” we are not to “receive him into our house, nor bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds<sup>1</sup>.” And whether or no it be deemed necessary to comply with the letter of the Apostle’s direction, at least the spirit of it should be attended to; and our own and our children’s safety, and the safety of all who, in any way look up to us, require

<sup>1</sup> 2 John 10.

it. I mean that there should be a marked difference between our intercourse with those who are true members of the Christian family, who are inheritors of the same kingdom as ourselves, and hope for the common salvation; and our intercourse with those who are strangers to these hopes, who have renounced their inheritance, and are not members of the family; and have, therefore, let go the nearest and dearest links which bind men to men.

Our own safety, and that of these unhappy persons themselves, require us to make this difference; lest, if we make, as if there were none, we encourage them in their fatal errors, and be in some sort conducive to their destruction; and the safety of our children, and of all who look up to us, requires it, lest, if we make none, they think that there is none, and be led to receive and imbibe, without suspicion or caution, their fearful views and speculations. Let none say that the making a difference in our conduct towards those who are, and those who are not Christians, would be uncharitable. On the contrary, every rule and precept of true Christian charity would be attended to by it. For the first rule of charity is the will of God, and He, as we have seen, requires it at our hands: and the next rule is the safety and welfare of ourselves and others, and this too, I have shown, equally demands it of us. If to this marked difference in our conduct toward such persons, we are careful to add, in our own persons, as was before mentioned, an uni-

form example, both of the outward profession and inward and daily faith and practice of our Christian religion, we may have some hope that we have, with God's blessing, according to our human infirmity, done our utmost to "contend," as our text bids us, "earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all praise, glory, and adoration, henceforth and for ever. Amen.

## APPENDIX TO SERMON VI.

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(A.)

“ The following is the Roman Creed or Belief to be professed by every person whom the Roman missionaries shall succeed in persuading to join the Church of Rome, taken from one of their books printed expressly for the use of *the English mission*.

“ ¶ *Let the convert make profession of faith in this manner :—*

“ I, N. N., with a firm faith believe and profess all and every one of those things which the holy *Roman* Church [*not* the holy *Catholic* Church, observe, but the holy *Roman* Church] maketh use of. To wit :—I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, [and so on to the end of the Creed which we use in the Communion service, ending] the life of the world to come. Amen. [Now comes the *new* or *Roman* part.] I most stedfastly admit and embrace Apostolical and Ecclesiastical traditions, and all other observances and constitutions of the same [i. e. the *Roman*] Church. I also admit the holy Scriptures according to that sense which our holy mother the Church has held and does hold ; to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures ; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. I also profess that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord,



and necessary for the salvation of mankind, though not all for every one; to wit,—baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order, and matrimony; and that they confer grace; and that of these, baptism, confirmation, and order cannot be reiterated without sacrilege. I also receive and admit the received and approved ceremonies of the Catholic Church, used in the solemn administration of the aforesaid sacraments. I embrace and receive all and every one of the things which have been defined and declared in the holy council of Trent concerning original sin and justification. I profess, likewise, that in the mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood; which conversion the Catholic Church calls *transubstantiation*. I also confess that under either kind alone Christ is received whole and entire and a true sacrament. I constantly hold that there is a *purgatory*, and that the souls therein detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful. Likewise that the *saints* reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and *invocated*, and that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be had in veneration. I most firmly assert that the *images* of Christ, of the mother of God, ever virgin, and also of other saints, *ought* to be had and retained, and that due honour and veneration is to be given them. I also affirm that the power of indulgences was left by Christ to the Church, and that the use of them is most wholesome to Christian people. I acknowledge the holy Catholic Apostolic *Roman* Church to be the mother and *mistress of all Churches*: and I promise *true obedience to the bishop of Rome*, successor to St. Peter, *prince of the Apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ*. I likewise undoubtedly receive and profess all other things delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons and

general councils, and particularly by the *holy council of Trent* [which declared the Apocrypha to be part of the Bible, and the old corrupt Latin Vulgate to be authentic Scripture]; and I condemn, reject, and anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all heresies which the Church has condemned, rejected, and anathematized. I, N. N., do at this present freely profess and sincerely hold this true Catholic faith, *without which no man can be saved*; and I promise most constantly to retain and profess the same entire and inviolated, with God's assistance to the end of my life."—*Printed by Keating and Brown, London, 1831, by authority of the vicars apostolic.*

Sometimes they do not require the convert to repeat this word for word, but to declare his consent to it in a shorter method, which is as follows :—

*Another form.*

" I consent to the holy *Roman Church* and the *Apostolic see* [i. e. the bishopric of *Rome*]; with mouth and heart *I confess myself to hold the same faith which the holy ROMAN Church by Evangelical and Apostolic authority delivers to be held.* I swear this by the holy Trinity and by the holy Gospels of Christ; and declare those to be worthy of an eternal curse who, by their teaching or followers, oppose this [Roman] faith."—*From the Roman Pontifical.*

(B.)

The General Council of Ephesus, which is received by the Church of Rome equally as by ourselves, as speaking the voice of the Church, made this decree, which was confirmed by the General Council of Chalcedon, which is likewise professedly received by both Churches.

" The holy synod determined that it should not be lawful for any one to set forth, write, or compose, any other creed than

that which was determined by the Holy Fathers who assembled in the Holy Ghost at Nice : and that, if any shall dare to compose any other creed, or adduce or present it to those who are willing to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, whether from heathenism, Judaism, or any heresy whatsoever, such persons, if bishops, shall be deprived of the episcopal office, if clergy, of the clerical."

By this every child may judge which Church best adheres to the Catholic rules, and deserves that honourable title : whether the Church of England, which abides by the Catholic Creed, as professed at Ephesus and Chalcedon, or the Church of Rome, which, in direct violation of the Catholic rules, put forth, in 1564, another and wholly different creed. Every child may see by this, that according to the judgment of the Catholic Church, as expressed at Ephesus and Chalcedon, *sentence of deposition* has been awarded against the Bishop of Rome, and every bishop and clergyman under his obedience, who shall dare to present the Creed of Pius IV. as a term of communion.

The Roman adherents, when pressed with the decree of Ephesus, are wont to attempt to shelter themselves by the plea that the doctrines contained in the Creed of Pius IV. were equally necessary of belief from the beginning, as they have been held to be at Rome since 1564. But that the brand of innovation upon Catholic doctrine might be indelibly printed upon the corruptions of the Roman Church, it has pleased Almighty God to cause the bishops of the Council of Trent to be indisputable witnesses to it. In 1546 we find them testifying that "the symbol of the faith which the holy Roman Church" *then* used, the "shield against all heresies," "the firm and *only* foundation against which the gates of hell shall not prevail," was that which, to this day, is used in the Church of England, without alteration or addition, the same (with the exception of the interpolation of "and the Son") which the holy Church, throughout all the world, has received and professed since 381 ;

the self-same creed which the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon received. It was not till twenty years after this that the new Roman Creed, the middle wall of partition schismatically built up to divide the Church of Christ, was put forth from the Vatican.

The following is the decree of the Council of Trent, to which reference has been here made. Session III. 1546.

“ In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity, this holy, and œcumenical and general Synod of Trent . . . . before all things, decrees and determines to set forth, in the first place, the Confession of Faith, following, in this matter, the examples of the Fathers, who, in the more sacred councils, were wont, in the beginning of their actions, to adduce this, *a shield against all heresies* . . . Wherefore it has thought fit to express the symbol of the faith which the holy Roman Church uses, as that first principle in which all, who profess the faith of Christ necessarily believe, and *the firm and only foundation, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail*, in the very words in which it is read in all Churches; which is as follows: ‘ I believe in One God,’ down to ‘ the life of the world to come : ’ ” word for word, as we use it in the English Churches.

But, besides this consideration, we are able to adduce, on almost every point in dispute between the English and Roman Christians, chains of witnesses down to the middle of the sixteenth century—popes, cardinals, bishops, presbyters, doctors, who maintained openly in their published writings, opinions directly contrary to those which, since that time, have been deemed necessary to salvation, and have been made terms of communion at Rome; and who yet lived and died in free and uninterrupted communion with the Western Churches and the Papal authorities. Thus overwhelming are the evidences of the *novelty*, and *unwarrantableness*, and *uncharitableness*, of the course which the Roman authorities and their adherents have since that time adopted.

I have stated that on almost every point in dispute between Rome and England, the English Church is able to adduce a chain of witnesses, who maintained, in their published writings, opinions contrary to those which have been since deemed necessary to salvation, and been made terms of communion at Rome; who yet lived and died in free and uninterrupted communion with the Catholic Church in all its branches. One instance will suffice, by way of example. I choose the canon of the Old Testament. The Council of Trent decreed, under anathema, that the books which we call Apocryphal,—Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Tobit, Baruch, and two of Maccabees, as well as the History of Susanna, Judith, Bel and the Dragon,—should be received as sacred and canonical. The learned Dr. Cosin (formerly Bishop of Durham), in his “History of the Canon of Scripture,” has collected the following witnesses, who, in treating of the subject, have either enumerated the same books of the Old Testament that we receive, omitting all mention of the rest; or have distinctly spoken of these other books as of a totally inferior character to the rest,—destitute of authority and inspiration, although, for edification’s sake, allowed to be read in the Churches.

A. D.

*The Jewish Church.*

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.— See  
Luke xxiv. 27. 44, 45.

60 *St. Paul.* Rom. iii. 2.

160 Melito.

204 Tertullian.

220 Origen.

222 Julius Africanus.

250 The Canons called Apostolical.

320 Eusebius, the Historian.

325 The Nicene Council.

340 Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria.

350 Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers.

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- 360 Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem.
- 364 The Council of Laodicea.
- 374 Epiphanius.
- 375 Basil, Archbishop of Cæsarea.
- 375 The Constitutions called Apostolical.
- 376 Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzum.
- 378 Amphilochius, Archbishop of Iconium.
- 380 Philastrius, Bishop of Bresse.
- 392 Jerome.
- 398 Ruffinus.
- 400 Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.
- 451 The Council of Chalcedon.
- 543 Junilius Africanus.
- 553 Primasius, Bishop of Adrumetum.
- 560 Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch.
- 580 Leontius of Byzantium.
- 600 Gregory, Patriarch of Rome.
- 630 Antiochus.
- 636 Isidore, Bishop of Seville.
- 691 The Quinextine or Trullan Council.
- 720 John of Damascus.
- 730 Bede of England.
- 800 Alcuin of England.
- 820 Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople.
- 835 Strabus.
- 835 Agobard, Bishop of Lyons.
- 850 Anastasius.
- 879 Odo, Archbishop of Vienna.
- 910 Radulfus Faviacensis.
- 1050 Hermannus Contractus.
- 1090 Gilbert of Westminster.
- 1118 Zonaras.
- 1120 Rupert.
- 1125 Honorius Solitarius.
- 1130 Petrus Mauritius.

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- 1140 Hugh de St. Victor.
- 1145 Richard de St. Victor.
- 1145 Philip the Solitary.
- 1170 Petrus Comestor.
- 1174 John Beleth.
- 1180 John of Salisbury.
- 1190 Peter de la Celle.
- 1192 Theodore Balsamon.
- 1200 The Authors of the Gloss on the Bible.
- 1244 Hugh the Cardinal.
- 1270 Thomas Aquinas.
- 1275 The Author of the Gloss on the Canon Law.
- 1290 John Balbus.
- 1300 Nicephorus Callixtus.
- 1310 John de Columna.
- 1312 Brito.
- 1320 Nicholas Lira.
- 1330 William of Ockham.
- 1340 Hervetus Natalis.
- 1400 Thomas Anglicus.
- 1420 Thomas of Walden.
- 1430 Paul, Bishop of Burgos.
- 1445 Antoninus.
- 1450 Alphonsus Tostatus, Bishop of Avila.
- 1470 Denys, the Carthusian.
- 1502 Cardinal Ximenius.
- 1510 Johannes Picus.
- 1515 Jacobus Faber Stapulensis.
- 1520 Jodochus Clichtovius.
- 1525 Ludovicus Vives.
- 1526 Georgius.
- 1530 Erasmus.
- 1534 Cardinal Cajetan.
- 1535 John Driedo.
- 1540 Johannes Ferus.

From this list I have omitted several whose testimony is less explicit.

Now all these—for they, being dead, yet speak—are anathematized and declared accursed by the Council of Trent; and an assent to this fearful decree as an article of that faith, without which no man can be saved, is required in the Creed of Pius IV., which is propounded as a term of communion to every one who would enter the Roman pale! But such is the miserable state of Roman bondage, that although this cloud of witnesses against the decree, and therefore the impiety of the decree itself, by plain and undeniable; and although, in the sixteenth century, only fifty-four bishops were present at the Council of Trent to pass the decree; yet, because the Bishops of Rome have thought fit to declare that wretched handful of ignorant men to be a general council, all in the Roman obedience think themselves bound to receive the decree; and had rather assent to an anathema which condemns almost every Christian Father, which embraces the Ancient Church, includes the holy Apostle, and reaches even to the LORD OF GLORY, than dare to resist the impious fiat of them who have taken in hand to bring upon the people of God a worse than Egyptian bondage! Surely a more awful, melancholy, and pitiable subject can hardly be exhibited to the eye of Christian contemplation!

(C.)

It is clear that the Bishop of Rome by sending, and his agents by coming, into the dioceses of other bishops, and the parishes of other clergymen, and seeking to interfere with the members of the Church of England, are “*busy bodies in other men’s matters.*” This is a character which St. Peter severely reproveth, and classes with “thieves,” and “murderers,” and other “evil doers.” 1 Pet. iv. 15.

It is remarkable that the term which we translate “busy body in other men’s matters,” is ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος, literally, “*Bishop of another man’s charge.*”



2. In trying to make the members of the Church of England desert and disobey their own bishops and clergy, these men have broken that rule of the Apostle, Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account."

3. In trying to *make divisions* and *separations* among us, they are directly thwarting the prayer of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who prayed thus for His people: "That they all may be *one*, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one* in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John xvii. 21.

4. It is well to consider how St. Paul bids us treat those who would lead men to dissent from the Church, and to make divisions in it. "I beseech you, brethren, *mark* them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine you have learned, and *avoid them*. For they that are such *serve not the Lord Jesus Christ*, but their own belly; and with *good words and fair speeches*, deceive the hearts of the simple." Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Thus it appears how directly contrary to the Bible the Bishop of Rome, and his agents in the British dioceses, are acting.

(D.)

The following rules, a few out of many, will show how absolutely and repeatedly such conduct as is now practised among us by the schismatical Papal Prelates, has been condemned by the Catholic Church.

1. "Let not bishops go out of their dioceses to churches beyond their bounds, nor cause a confusion of churches.

2. "We count those persons to be *heretics*, who, though they pretend to profess a sound faith, have separated themselves, and *made congregations contrary to our canonical bishops*."

These rules were agreed upon in a great assembly of bishops at Constantinople in the year 381, and were adopted by the

whole Church of Christ. Hence the assembly is called a *general* council, because its rules were generally and universally received by the Church.

3. "That no bishop take another province which has not formerly and from the beginning been subject to him. But if any one has taken another, and by force has placed it under his control, he shall restore it; that the rules of the Fathers be not broken, nor the pride of worldly power be introduced under the cloak of the priesthood, nor we by degrees come to lose that liberty which the Lord Jesus Christ has given us."

This rule was agreed upon in a great assembly of bishops at Ephesus, in the year 438, another of those general councils, the rules of which were adopted by the whole Church of Christ.

4. "Let not a bishop ordain or appoint any clergyman to places subject to another bishop, unless with the consent of the proper bishop of the district. If any do otherwise, let the ordination be invalid, and himself punished."

This rule, which had been made by some bishops at Antioch, in the year 341, was confirmed by a great assembly at Chalcedon, in the year 451, which is also one of the general councils the rules of which have been received by the whole Catholic Church.

Thus it appears that the bishop of Rome and his agents here are acting directly contrary to the rules of the Catholic Church, and are expressly condemned by no less than three general councils; according to which all his clerical agents here are declared to be "*heretics*," and their schismatical "*ordination*" to be "*invalid*." Concerning this last term, which has given rise to some discussion, I will observe that ἀκυρος and ἀβέβαιος are the words used to express it in the Greek canon, and the notes of the Greek Commentators, which are rendered in the Latin translation by the words *invalidus* and *infirmus*.

I am not prepared to contend that it means more than, that the Church refuses to recognise such ordination, until, on the return of the parties to her fold, she shall ratify and confirm the

same : as in the case of heretical baptisms, provided for by the council of Constantinople, Canon VI., where, except in certain specified cases, on the parties' return to the Church, they were *received*, without repetition of Baptism. Indeed the case seems provided for by the eighth Canon of the First Nicene council, where it is decreed that when the Novatians, who were living in a state of schism similar to that of the Roman party among us, should come over to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, they who were ordained among them, should continue in the clergy. It is observable that the *refusal to recognise the validity* of orders conferred by those who set up altar against altar, invading the dioceses of other bishops, was a tightening the bonds of discipline. The ante-Nicene Code, Canon XXXVI., had only provided for the *deposition* of the ordainer and ordained in such circumstances. It should seem that by the first discipline, episcopal ordination, conferred in schism, was held good, until sentence of deposition had passed ; but that by the second, such ordination was not held good, until received and allowed by the Church.

# SERMON VII.<sup>1</sup>

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## ON NATIONAL GUILT.

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DANIEL ix. 13, 14.

“ All this evil is come upon us : yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us.”

THESE words form part of the prophet Daniel's affecting supplication to Almighty God, at Babylon, in behalf of his nation ; which, in the just displeasure of the Almighty, had, for their sins, been taken captive, and brought to desolation. He here, as in other passages of it, acknowledges the righteousness of God's judgment ; and that his nation had richly deserved their miserable calamity, by reason of the hard and impenitent neglect which they had shown to God's former warnings, and gentler visitations, with which he had sought to

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was printed for private distribution the year in which it was preached.

awaken them from their careless and wicked ways. "All this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us."

I have chosen this passage for my text, that I may take occasion to call to mind an important truth on which it rests: a truth which, as a matter of course, we instil into our children's minds with their earliest instruction, but which, if we may judge from men's conduct and conversation, they are wont to think only fit for children; and that it is a mark of manly independence to cast it behind their backs. This truth is, that the affairs of this world are governed by God, no less than the affairs of the next: according to the words of our children's Catechism,—“nothing can happen in the world but God knows, directs, or suffers it.” I say that the conduct of men would lead one to suppose, that they regard this truth as only fit for children, and consider it manly to forget it: and a very little consideration will show the correctness of the observation. Whether the affairs be those of individuals, or of nations, whether they be in a state of prosperity or adversity, it is too certain that we are apt to bestow far too much attention on the secondary and inferior causes, to the partial, and too often total neglect, of the great First Cause, by Whose providence all these things

are ordered. Take the case of one who prospers in his calling or profession, and thrives while others around him fail; both he and his friends will boast of his skill, and prudence, and good management; but, how seldom, if at all, will either his or their minds be raised in humble and thankful dependence upon God, acknowledging that it is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God That sheweth mercy!" Or let it be that he fails in his attempts, and while others thrive around him, sinks, step by step, to ruin and wretchedness. He and his friends will blame his chance, his rash ventures, and unskilful methods, but which of them will point out the hand above Which brought the ruin? or how often will such a man acknowledge that it has been ordered by the providence of his heavenly Father; in mercy to him, if he will so apply it, and search out the cause of its being sent; but as an aggravation of his sin and danger, if he fails to profit by the chastening hand? And yet, if either he or they would reflect a little, their own experience could generally furnish them with instances where those of much inferior skill had prospered, and those of far higher skill and prudence failed; and, if they had grace to do so, they would consider each instance as an additional proof of God's interference in the affairs of this world.

Or, again, take the case of a nation prosperously flourishing, stretching out her arms to the utmost bounds of the earth, gathering riches from all

people, and increasing in wealth and greatness, the admiration and envy of others. If the cause of her prosperity is sought after, you will hear the wisdom of her statesmen praised, and the industry and intelligence of her people extolled ; but it is too certain, and every day's experience shows, that He, by Whose only blessing either the wisdom of the one, or the industry of the other could avail any thing, will be passed by unnoticed ; His name unmentioned ; His praise unrecorded. . And if, perchance, an individual shall speak to that purpose, he will be looked upon with a mingled gaze of pity and surprise, as though it were an extraordinary thing for a Christian to give utterance to such a thought, or to carry the influence of it into his view of public affairs.

If the scene is changed, and clouds of adversity gather and break over the nation, its commerce be crippled, its spirit broken, its peace interrupted, its union disturbed, and both within and without it gives symptoms of crumbling to pieces ; still here you will find the same forgetfulness of God as the Governor of the world. The evils will be ascribed to the timidity of one set of statesmen, to the ignorance of another, to the rashness of a third, to the dishonesty of a fourth. It is only the eye of faith which can discern, through the gloom and confusion, the hand of Him by Whom kings reign and princes decree justice ; at Whose will nations flourish or decay ; and Who makes use of the different

failings of different statesmen as instruments for accomplishing His purpose, when He prepares to pour out the vials of His wrath upon a careless and guilty nation<sup>1</sup>.

This habit of forgetfulness, or neglect of God, in not referring to His Providence our different states of adversity or prosperity, whether the question is concerning nations or individuals, is not only evil in itself, and contrary to the first principles of our Christian profession; but, as might naturally be expected, it draws with it other serious evils. For take it that we are in prosperity, this neglect deprives God of the due return of praise and adoration for His goodness, which is thus interpreted, and diverted to other and inferior objects; it deprives us of the benefit arising to our own souls by those emotions of love and thankful dependence upon Him, which the ascribing our welfare to the true cause would necessarily excite; it prevents Him from continuing to us that happy state, which He would otherwise, in His mercy gladly do, if He saw it rightly received; and forces Him to change His countenance toward us, and

<sup>1</sup> As when He caused the cunning and treacherous advice of Hushai the Archite, to prevail over the wise counsel of Ahithophel. Upon which occasion the sacred historian explains the strange success which Hushai met with, by saying, "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom."—2 Sam. xvii. 14.



to alter His dispensations, and to endeavour, by a Father's frown and chastisement, to compel us, through fear, to render Him that honour which His gentler methods of mercy had failed to call forth.

In a state of adversity, again, a perseverance in such conduct will but increase the evil. It defeats God's gracious intention towards us in sending the adversity, which was to recall us by kindly severity to His paternal love and blessing; it deprives us of all the numberless consolations which our religion would otherwise afford, when we acknowledge our Father's chastening hand, and seek to fulfil the purpose for which it has been laid upon us; we prevent Him from withdrawing His hand, and oblige Him to lay it still more heavily upon us; until at last, if we persist, He determines to glorify His Name by the destruction of those, whom neither mercies nor correction could induce to glorify Him willingly: as He did in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; for when that unhappy prince and his people, first in prosperity, and then in adversity, refused to "give the Lord the honour due unto His Name," "I will get me honour," said God, "upon Pharaoh and upon all his host<sup>1</sup>," which He did, when He overthrew them in the Red Sea.

These thoughts have been suggested by a consi-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xiv. 17.

deration of the state in which this nation now is placed ; which, I suppose, not even those who are most sanguine of seeing all things come right, will deny to be a state of adversity, of difficulty, and of danger. My object is, that we may be induced, by these contemplations, to regard the matter in the only light which Christianity will permit us to view it in, namely, as a dispensation from Almighty God ; and to search out and inquire the probable causes and reasons for His sending it ; and then to endeavour, each in our respective stations, and according to our means, to accomplish the purpose which shall seem the most probable for God to have in view : for until this be done, either willingly or unwillingly, there can be little or no hope that the evil will be removed, except to make way for worse, till the increasing evils terminate in our destruction.

Happily, it has not been left to individual suggestion to point out the causes why God sends evil upon His servants ; our holy Church, in her beautiful Office for the Visitation of the Sick, has plainly stated them. “ Whatever your sickness is,” she directs her ministers to say to the sick man, “ know you certainly that it is God’s visitation :” and then names the causes for which it has been sent, either to try your patience, for the example of others (as in the case of Job), and that your faith may be found in the day of the Lord, laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of glory and endless felicity ; or else to correct and amend in you what-

soever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father.

I suppose that few or none will contest the point, if I assume that the first of these cannot be the cause for which God has sent evil upon us; that we cannot, even in our own sight, flatter ourselves that, as a nation, we are upright and perfect, walking in the fear of God like holy Job, and therefore such to whom God should suffer evil to come for no other purpose but as an opportunity of proving our faith and constancy; and so, by imitating our blessed Saviour's patience in adversity, securing a higher prize and richer reward.

We must, therefore, refer our calamities to the other cause, which the Church has pointed out; and consider them to be sent for the purpose of correcting and amending in us whatsoever doth offend the eyes of our heavenly Father, sent as means of grace and amendment, if we will use them as our Father intends, and suffer them to bring us back to the ways of holiness and happiness, from which we may have strayed; but tokens of our Creator's awakening displeasure, and precursors of far greater miseries, if we harden our hearts against them, and refuse to consider them in that light, in which, as Christians, we are bound to regard them.

If this be so, it is manifestly our duty,—and our only hope of restoration to the blessing and protection of our Almighty Governor rests in it—to think well and deeply with ourselves, what part of

our conduct doth offend the eyes of our heavenly Father; and in what respects our nation has called for this visitation.

Let us here remember that a nation is holy or wicked before God,—is pleasing or displeasing in His sight, in two ways: first, in respect of its public acts as a nation; as when, by the national act of humiliation, the king and people of Nineveh turned away the wrath of God<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, in respect of the proportion of good or wicked individuals which the nation may contain; as when God told Abraham, that if there were ten righteous persons in Sodom, He would not destroy it<sup>2</sup>.

Let us look to our conduct in both these respects. And first, let us enquire whether, in our national character or conduct, any sins of omission or commission can be pointed out, which to a calm, sober, and impartial observer, would seem calculated to offend the Majesty on High.

It is very probable that many of those who are so engrossed with the cares, the business, and pleasures of this life, as to have little or no opportunity for serious reflection, will be apt to consider the instances which will here be adduced, as trifles unworthy of notice; and to regard with astonishment one who, at this time of day, is so weak and superstitious as to suppose that the calamities of the country can have any thing to do with these things.

<sup>1</sup> Jonah iii. 5—10.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xviii. 32.

But whatever *they* may think of them, they have fallen with heavy weight upon those, who in quiet and retirement observe the course of events; and who, with the fear of God, and the love of their country before them, have felt their hearts sink within them, as they were brought to the knowledge of things, which, if there be truth in Scripture, and God be the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever, must needs awaken His wrath, and draw down His punishment upon the nation with whom they are found.

The chief thing to be remarked is the increased and increasing habit of forgetfulness and neglect of God as the Governor of the world. As if men had come to the determination, that, although in the affairs of the next world His will must be consulted, for few have yet gone the length of denying that, yet that in the affairs of this all care for His honour, all zeal for His service, all reference to our dependence upon Him, were to be laid aside and openly disregarded, as ill-timed and exploded superstitions. Will it be said that there is no ground for the observation on this score: that all is right and as it should be. Look back upon our latter years of prosperity, when increasing wealth, and increasing greatness, lifted us up above surrounding nations: and consider, for one moment, how often, if at all, by the speeches of those who guide the affairs of the nation, in any public document, by any national act, that prosperity has been

ascribed to Him from Whom alone it came? If we look back to earlier times, we shall find it constantly done; the praise given openly to Him to Whom it was due; our dependence upon His blessing publicly and thankfully declared. But we have grown wiser than our ancestors. Alas! it is with a different wisdom from that which Solomon praised, when he said, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," for the proof of our wisdom that we give is, that we neglect the God of heaven and earth. To whom has the praise been ascribed? To the wisdom of our earthly statesmen; to our national resources; to the elasticity of our constitution; to the intelligence of our people: while He by Whose only blessing any one or all of these could profit us, has been unnoticed and unhonoured. Thus in similar words to those which Daniel used the night that Babylon was taken, may it be said of us, "Ye have praised the gods" of flesh and blood, "and the God in Whose hand your breath is, and Whose are all your ways, have ye not glorified<sup>1</sup>." And prosperity has had that effect upon us, for which God punished the Jews, but against which He had forewarned them when He bade them "beware, lest thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God<sup>2</sup>."

Now take another instance of this neglect of

<sup>1</sup> Dan. v. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. viii. 17, 18.

God as the governor of the world. Look back three years, and remember what took place then: when, as a nation, we determined to honour those who, by profession, do dishonour God; and proclaimed to Him and to the world that we considered those who deny the divinity of our God and Saviour (I mean the Socinians and Unitarians), who blaspheme the Majesty of the Triune Jehovah, the God Whom we Christians profess to serve, to be as worthy of the confidence of a Christian nation, to be as fit to be entrusted with the guidance of our affairs, as any of our Christian brethren<sup>1</sup>. This could not have taken place did not the majority among us believe, that human wisdom and earthly expediency are of more value to a nation than the blessing of Almighty God; which blessing no Christian can believe will accompany those who deny the Father and the Son. For as St. John speaks, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father<sup>2</sup>."

If any shall think these two instances matters too trifling and insignificant to need serious notice, let him consider the next which I will name. Let every Christian ponder well, whether it can,

<sup>1</sup> I allude to the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; which was so managed that those who professedly make a mock of the Christian religion, and blaspheme and deny the God of the Christians, were admitted, without check or hindrance, to legislate for a Christian Church and nation.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 23.

possibly, be a matter harmless and indifferent in the sight of God, that, day after day, and week after week, the most fearful and soul-rending blasphemies should be uttered and spread among the people; not in by-places and secret corners, but that in broad day, in the face of the sun, by open notice, blasphemies which make a Christian shudder, and his blood run cold, should be proclaimed; while they to whom God has entrusted the prevention of such evils, shut their eyes, turn away, and take no notice, and leave to private and irresponsible individuals the discharge of that duty which God will surely require at their authorized and responsible hands; as if no account were hereafter to be given, and as if the souls which perish by their neglect, and which but for it might have been saved, will not be required at their hands; as if God had not recorded in Scripture the reason why He told Eli that He would judge his house for ever for the iniquity that he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not<sup>1</sup>; and as if the Scriptures made no mention of the blessing and protection which God shed over the Jewish nation, when their governors put out of the land those who insulted Him<sup>2</sup>. If this had happened in godless France, where they have struck "the grace of God" out of the king's style, and have left it to be

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Kings xv. 12. and 2 Chron. xxiv. 5.



inferred by the world that the power and authority of their government is derived, not from above, as the Scriptures teach us, but from below, *non de cœlo sed ab inferis*, we could not be surprised that they should be afraid to offend the agents of that power to whom they, by inference, ascribed the kingdom. But that in a professedly Christian country, and under a professedly Christian government, these things should be,—surely there is enough in this to make us hide our heads in shame, and smite upon our breasts, and acknowledge the justice of God in turning away His protecting arm, and suffering evil to come upon us; enough to make us tremble for the evils that are in store, if such conduct be persisted in. For “surely He will visit for these things;” surely His “soul will be avenged on such a nation as this.”

One more instance of our national neglect of God as the governor of the world, and I have done. He has tried us in prosperity, and we have failed to render Him the honour due. He is now trying us in adversity. All those earthly sources of strength, of which we have vainly boasted to His neglect, seem failing. The springs of our constitution are snapping under us; our statesmen’s wisdom is turned to folly; our people’s intelligence, to infatuation; our national resources, one after another, drying up and deserting us, to teach us our dependence upon Him, Whom we have neglected. Yet what acknowledgment has it drawn from us? One would

have thought that surely now, at last, we should "turn from our iniquities, and understand" His "truth;" that we should have wisdom to humble ourselves before Him, and, by national humiliation, endeavour to wipe out the stain of our national sins, and prevail with the Almighty again to turn His face towards us. But what of all this has been done! Has a single day been set apart for this purpose? No, not a single hour. Not for one single hour has public amusement and public dissipation been shortened on account of it. But we have gone on feasting and making merry, amid gaieties and festivities, as if there were no sin upon our national brow to mar our rejoicing, as if all were right, and the brightest beams of God's favour shining upon us. But pause for one moment, and consider how, in this matter, those nations, whom in our pride we are wont to despise, will rise up in judgment with us, and condemn us. Let but the Italian peasant perceive the rumbling of an earthquake, and he has knowledge and grace both to know and to seek for mercy and protection where only it can be found; and the churches will be crowded, night and day, with supplicants at the throne of grace, with weeping, and fasting, and mourning. We are perceiving the rumblings of an earthquake of a far more awful kind, and yet we act as if we did not know how to seek for God's protection, or had not grace to do so.

Is it the smile of the sceptic, or the scoff of the

infidel, that prevents us? It was exercised freely when king Hezekiah sent messengers throughout Israel for the observance of the passover<sup>1</sup>; but had it prevailed to prevent that observance, God would not have delivered Jerusalem from the power of Sennacherib. And, doubtless, in heathenish Nineveh scoffing was not wanting when the proclamation came forth for all to fast and put on sackcloth; but if that humiliation had been left alone, God's word would have been fulfilled which He spake by the mouth of Jonah, "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown<sup>2</sup>."

In considering the other way in which a nation may be accounted guilty before God, I mean by the multitude of individual transgressions, I shall not dwell long. Public sins are, alas! public property; open to every one's observance; incapable of being concealed; only the self-deceiver may attempt to gloss them over. But with the sins of individuals it is a different matter; these, for the most part, are concealed from human sight. No eye but that of God can pierce the many folds with which a sinner succeeds in hiding his iniquity from his fellow-men. Yet from those individual sins which are known, some estimate may be formed of those which are not known; and the black catalogue of offences, in every class of society, which has of late years appeared before us, may serve at least to con-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxx. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Jonah iii.

vince us, that in this light also, as a collection of individuals, we have deserved the anger and punishment of the Almighty. Here, happily, our task is somewhat easier. Each man's own humiliation, repentance, and amendment, is in his own power, under God's blessing, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. To that, then, at any rate, let us apply ourselves; and let those among us who fear God, and love our country, be induced, by the danger of our country, yet more earnestly to set about the work; more humbly to confess our sins, more heartily to seek to avoid them: that so, if it yet may be, God's anger may be appeased, and His hand withheld from smiting us. Thus, at all events, shall we fit ourselves to meet the evils as Christians should do, and secure, through Christ, our heavenly kingdom, if we fail of preserving the earthly one. If it seem to any vain and presumptuous to think that individual repentance can have so great weight with the Most High, as to turn away His wrath from a guilty nation; let us be encouraged by the remembrance, that if in Sodom there had been but ten men whose repentance would have rendered them righteous in the sight of God, that wicked city would not have been destroyed.

Let us each endeavour, my Christian brethren, to add one to the number of such in this nation, So yet again God may become gracious unto our land, and yet again speak to us the sweet words of

blessing, "Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces<sup>1</sup>."

Oh blessed Lord God, "what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man or by all Thy people, . . . which shall know every man the plague of his own heart; . . . then hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways<sup>2</sup>;" through Jesus Christ our Lord; to Whom, in the unity of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, henceforth and for ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings viii. 38.

# SERMON VIII.<sup>1</sup>

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ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

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ISAIAH xxvi. 9.

“When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

By the term “judgments” are meant the afflictions and calamities which Almighty God sends upon nations and individuals, either for the purpose of proving their faith and dependence upon Him, as in the case of Job; or, more frequently, for the sake of recalling them to a sense of their duty, of awakening in them religious feeling, and serious thoughts, and good resolutions, and the fear of God, and sorrow for sin, and amendment of life. He sends these judgments and visitations upon nations and individuals when He sees them erring, and going astray from

<sup>1</sup> This Sermon was published soon after it was written, and went through three editions.

the right way ; when He sees them making ill returns for His mercy, and abusing His fatherly Providence ; when He sees them caring more for the things of this world than for those of the next, pleasing themselves and neglecting Him, running in their own ways, and forsaking the ways of God. When Almighty God sees nations and individuals pursuing this line, living to the world and not to Him, He sends afflictions, visitations, and judgments upon them, not so much in anger to punish them, as in sorrow and mercy to recall them from the paths of carelessness and sin, to a remembrance of God, and to walk in His fear; that being the true wisdom, whose “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace<sup>1</sup>.” He desires to recall them from the ways of carelessness and sin, because, not only are they a dishonour and offence to Himself, but productive of the most certain and fatal misery to those who walk in them : “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked<sup>2</sup>.” That by fear and alarm and temporal suffering, He may awaken to religion, and bring to heaven those who will not be moved by the gentler methods of mercy and kindness, is the object of Almighty God in sending the “judgments,” of which the prophet speaks in the text ; saying, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” And what he means by this sentence is, that in many cases these judgments will

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lvii. 21.

produce the desired effect ; and that many persons who, but for them, would have continued in their careless and wicked courses, will, by means of them, be awakened from their stupor, and learn righteousness. And surely then, if ever, they will be awakened ; when the proofs of God's existence, when the signs of His power, when the effects of His anger, are brought home to their senses ; and their eyes see, and their ears hear, His tremendous doings ; when distress and anguish come upon all people, "distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth<sup>1</sup> ;"—when they see, and feel, and are convinced of the vanity of human wisdom, the insufficiency of human protection, the weakness of human strength, when separated from God ; then, surely, at last, if ever, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness ; then, surely, if at all, they will be awakened to the belief that there is a God. I do not mean to that cold assent of the understanding by which the wickedest men on earth, those who are most sunk in the ways of sin, those who daily outrage their Maker by preferring their earthly interest to their heavenly, those who live in the general or constant neglect of the ordinances of religion, and the means of grace, will tell you that they "believe in God ;" but to that warm, active, and heartfelt belief in

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 25, 26.



God, which obliges those who entertain it to be at some cost to serve Him, and to be at some pains, not only to prove the reality of their belief, but to secure, through Christ, the love and favour of Him in whom they believe. Surely nothing will so effectually produce this true belief as the presence of God's "judgments in the earth," and the conviction which they will force upon those who think at all, of how utterly unavailing human means are to avert them. Surely, then, at last, they will learn, not only that there is a God, but that none but He can protect them ; that they are entirely dependent upon Him ; that therefore the highest, the only, wisdom, must be to fear and serve Him above all things, and the greatest and most stupid folly to neglect Him.

It is a sad consideration, and a melancholy proof of the corruption of our nature, that such steps should ever be necessary on the part of God to bring men to a right mind, and right understanding in matters of religion ; sad that He, who would willingly lead men to safety by the tender voice of mercy and lovingkindness, should be forced to make bare His right arm, and to execute wrath and severity upon them, that fear may do what gratitude was unable to do ; sad that men's hearts should be so perverted and estranged from all good feelings, as to force their heavenly Father to change His conduct, and alter His countenance towards them, and to use the tone of anger, instead of the

accents of affection; and the rod of punishment, instead of the hand of blessing.

But, at the same time, such judgments should be to us, if rightly considered, a cause of joy and thankfulness, as proofs that our heavenly King and Father is One Who will chasten His children, rather than suffer them to perish through want of chastisement; that He is One Who cares for us sufficiently to be at the pains to correct us, when He sees that such correction is necessary for our safety and happiness. As the Son of Sirach says, "He that loveth his son causeth him oft to feel the rod, that he may have joy of him in the end <sup>1</sup>." And such is the purpose aimed at by Almighty God in sending His judgments in the earth, as Solomon writes, "whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth <sup>2</sup>." And surely, blessed is that religion which can thus, in the midst of our troubles, afford us ground of consolation, by leading us to consider those judgments as proofs that God still cares for us; and can enable us to turn the greatest evil into good; and to draw a blessing from our misery, by making use of it as God has intended; namely, as a means of improvement, as a spur to our diligence in matters of religion, as an awakener to our real and eternal interests.

I said that these judgments are sent in mercy,

<sup>1</sup> Eccclus. xxx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iii. 12.

rather than in anger, and that it is for men to draw good out of the evil, by applying them in the way God has appointed; and such, speaking generally, is the case. But do not misunderstand me. When God sends His judgments upon the earth, whether by pestilence, or famine, or civil war, numbers are cut off suddenly and fearfully. I do not say, that to all those who are thus cut off the judgments are sent in mercy. We know full well from Holy Scripture, that to those who die in their sins unrepented of, God has held out no hopes of mercy beyond the grave; when, therefore, men have hardened their hearts against God, and despised His gracious calls to repentance and amended life, till they provoke God to cut them off in the midst of their wickedness, none can suppose, that with reference to them, the judgment is sent in mercy. No: it is one of those dreadful proofs of God's anger and vengeance upon impenitent sinners, which strike the heart with fear and awe, and which should awaken every one of us to the serious and earnest thought of "What must I do to be saved<sup>1</sup>?"

But to those who are not cut off the judgments are sent in mercy; that, by seeing the execution of God's wrath upon others, they may learn to fear for themselves, and be led in haste to endeavour to make their peace with God, lest the next instance of His anger be executed upon themselves,—may

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 30.

be led really to fear Him, who can thus “consume them, as in a moment<sup>1</sup> ;” as it is written in Deuteronomy, “All Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you<sup>2</sup>.” They are sent in mercy, that, by the affliction, and fear, and alarm, which, in a time of judgment, all must undergo (all, I mean, who are not dead to every good feeling), men may be led to wean their affections from this world, which will then be proved to be uncertain and perishable, and to fix them upon those high and heavenly things which will endure for ever.

To view the judgments of God in this light, is our only wisdom ; to make use of them for these purposes, our only safety. Doubtless, there are many whom nothing will awaken ; many worldly-minded will be worldly-minded still ; many who are sunk in sin and carelessness will remain so, in spite of God, and to the ruin of their souls ; and, because they are unwilling to be awakened they will make light of God's judgments,—will ascribe to second causes what should be ascribed to the great First Cause ;—will jest in the midst of pestilence, and cling to their sins, even in the gripe of death.

But, beloved, if the word of God may have any weight with you, I beseech you, do not be found in the number of these ; for their portion is ruin, eternal, unutterable misery. Make use of the short time

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xvi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xiii. 11.

you yet may call your own, to lay these things to heart; to turn to the Lord your God, not with your lips, but with your hearts; to search out your sins, your failings, and neglects of duty; to repent and acknowledge your transgressions against God, and your offences one toward another; to seek for pardon and forgiveness, and amended life by the grace of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ; that when God visits us with judgments, and lays His hands upon us, you may be in some sort prepared to meet Him, and not be amazed and confounded at His presence. "The day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand<sup>1</sup>," let all the inhabitants of the earth make haste.

For consider, brethren, I beseech you, if the power of God's right arm, if the knowledge of His judgments, and the sight and hearing of the execution of His wrath cannot avail to awaken men, what can do it? What hope remains? It is evil that men's nature should be so corrupt as to require the rod of God's anger to move it to do, what love and thankfulness for His mercies should have done; but it will be worse than evil if we harden ourselves against the rod, and it should be said of us, as it was of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 1.

harder than a rock ; they have refused to return <sup>1</sup>.” For what will the consequence be ? God will cease to smite us, and will leave us to ourselves till the measure of our guilt is full, that He may sweep us from the face of the earth ; as He says in Isaiah, to the Jews, “ Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will revolt more and more <sup>2</sup> ;” and again, because “ the people turneth not to Him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord, therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush in one day <sup>3</sup>.” For this, as the sacred historians inform us, has ever been the method of God’s dealings with men. Look at Nineveh, that great city, to which the prophet Jonah was sent to preach repentance, a city containing half a million of inhabitants, and being sixty miles in circumference. When the prophet preached repentance, for a time the people gave heed to his words ; they turned from their evil way ; and when “ God saw that they turned from their evil way,” “ God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not <sup>4</sup>.” But within a while they forgot His works, and would not abide His counsel ; they sinned yet more against Him ; till the wrath of God arose, till there was no remedy. And what has been the issue ? Of that vast city not a vestige remains, and even its very site is disputed. Or think of Babylon, and observe how, when the inha-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. v. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah ix. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Jonah iii. 10.

bitants of that great city had filled up the measure of their iniquity, praising the gods of wood and stone, and neglecting the Lord Almighty, and insulting Him by employing in the feasts of their idols the vessels dedicated to Jehovah, "in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain<sup>1</sup>;" and what is since become of Babylon? That thickly inhabited country is now uninhabited; its fertile gardens are become a desolate wilderness, the abode of wild beasts; and only a shapeless mass of sun-burnt brick remains to mark where once the proud city stood. What reason can the inhabitants of England give why God should deal otherwise by them, than He has done by Nineveh and Babylon, if they sin as those cities did, by pride, by murmuring, by carelessness, and ingratitude; sinning against purer light, and clearer knowledge, and greater mercies? Painful though it be to think that ever our great cities should be laid in the dust, our extensive manufactures pass away, our crowded population give place to silence and desolation, our highly cultivated land become unprofitable wastes; still all must confess that it is as easy for Almighty God to restore the land to its original state, as it was for Him to cause it to be peopled and cultivated as it is at present.

Now let me state the reason why I have chosen this subject, and dwelt thus earnestly upon it. Our

<sup>1</sup> Dan. v. 30.

lot is fallen upon evil days. "Iniquity abounds," and sin is fearfully increasing, while the love of heaven waxes cold and the fear of God becomes fainter, and of little avail; and it seems as if for our sins God had withdrawn His protecting arm, and given us over to the power of Satan, to deal with our nation as he thinks fit. Crimes, till of late unheard of, are committed. In our cities men are found who will murder their fellow-creatures for the sake of selling the carcasses of their victims. In the country not twenty-four hours elapse in which the darkness of night is not lit up with the glare of fire; the fruits of the earth which God has given for our support, being burned by the hands of the incendiaries; who, with an infatuation which can only proceed from Satan, while complaining with their mouths of want of bread, with their hands destroy the means of sustenance, and ruin those to whom they must look for support. Nor is it only in such monstrous things as these that the evil of our days is to be seen; we may apply to our nation the words of the prophet Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it<sup>1</sup>." The ties which unite man to man, and form the chain of society, are broken, or out of joint. Instead of mutual confidence, and the interchange of kind offices, men distrust one another, and stand aloof. It is the consequence of the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 6.



neglect of God, and the casting aside of His fear. The poor, too generally, are given up to murmuring, and covetousness, and discontent, forgetful that God is the Governor of the world; that men do not come to their several stations by their own choice, or by chance, but by the appointment of God, who disposeth of these things according to the good pleasure of His will; that one station of life is as much under His protection as another; and that, be their station what it may, so long as they fear God, they have His sure promise, that "all things" shall "work together for their good<sup>1</sup>." On the other hand, the rich and upper classes are, in too many instances, given up to pride, and to the forgetfulness of God, and of their daily, and hourly dependence upon Him. In the meanwhile the newspapers and daily press are, for the most part, the active instruments of Satan, in disseminating evil throughout the country; every corrupt and evil passion in men's hearts is by them worked upon and excited: every hateful suggestion which the enemy of mankind can dictate, is placed before and spread among the people: men are at cost and pains to do evil; and blasphemous publications and the most infamous and unfounded falsehoods, are printed at a cheap rate, and circulated about for the sake of producing confusion and every evil. Men who should and do know better, foster

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 28.

and encourage these things, and they find aiders and abettors in those, whose station and duty should make them the foremost to counteract and prevent them.

Again may we apply the striking language of Isaiah, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backwards<sup>1</sup>." When things are come to such a pass in a nation, (and I have far understated the evil) we must from the tenor of God's dealings, as we read of them in the Bible, expect that His judgments will begin to show themselves; and those who have grace to lay these things to heart, have accordingly been for some time looking for those judgments. These melancholy expectations have begun to be verified. Two of the severest of God's judgments are war (and the worst of all wars, civil war) and pestilence; already have we begun to suffer under both these inflictions. In the western parts, the second city of the kingdom was lately for a day and night in the hands of men of the most desperate character, who fear not God, neither regard man: maddened with drink, they set the city on fire (many of themselves perishing in the flames they had lighted,) and property to a vast extent was destroyed. Then the sword was

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 4.

necessarily drawn to repress outrage, and, by wounds and death, peace has been for the present restored : but before the flames of fire and civil war had for a time subsided in the west, on our eastern coast the plague has begun among the people. God has permitted that fearful disorder, the Cholera Morbus, which has smitten other nations, to find an entrance here. Of the ravages of that fatal disorder you may form some conception when I tell you, that in Hungary alone, out of a population of about 7,000,000, upwards of 151,000 persons have fallen victims to it. Death follows usually within six or seven hours after the person is attacked, and death of the most fearful kind, of torture and agony.

Under these circumstances, what remains to be done? If these awful visitations are sent on account of our sins, (and what Christian will deny that such is the case?) only by the removal of the provoking cause, that is, by the removal of sin, can we hope that the evil will be abated : only by that means, at any rate, can we be prepared to meet it, if it be God's pleasure that it shall come among ourselves. As our text hath it, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." That is the effect the judgments are intended to have ; I beseech you, brethren, let them have that effect upon you. Consider that, in such a case as this, some little towards the salvation of our common

country is in each man's power, by the amendment of his own life; at least, the safety of his own soul must be sought by such means, through the blood of Christ, even if it fail to help his country. Remember that the measure of a nation's guilt is judged to be full, not only by the gross and heinous sins to which allusion has been made, but by that small addition which each individual makes to the general stock; and that, bad as these enormities may be, they, perhaps, would not yet have provoked God's judgments, but for the increase of guilt which we, individually, have made by our respective faults and failings. Instead, therefore, of diverting our thoughts, by the contemplation of the wickedness of others, let us wisely turn our thoughts inwardly to the consideration of the state of our own hearts, and of our own conduct; and let us not content ourselves with the general confession, that we, as all men, are sinners; but, if we would profit by the task, let us search out and examine ourselves strictly, as to what our own individual failings are; and when we find them, let us pray for grace, and use our utmost exertions, to correct and amend the evil.

Is a general neglect of God and disregard of religion our fault? Let us, by all means, amend it; for who but He can help us in the time of trouble? Are any engrossed too much in the cares and business of this world? Oh! learn in time to "set your affections on things above, not on things on

the earth<sup>1</sup>:" for the earthly treasures will come to nothing, but the heavenly will endure for ever. Do any seek to please men rather than God, and care more for the frown of their masters or friends than for the anger of their Heavenly Father? "Oh, put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them<sup>2</sup>," "but blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God<sup>3</sup>." Are any given to pilfering or dishonest courses? Remember the Apostle's advice, "Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth<sup>4</sup>." To covetousness or discontent? again the Scriptures speak, "Be content with such things as ye have, for God hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you<sup>5</sup>." To swearing and filthy language? "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers<sup>6</sup>." Do any dishonour God and their own bodies by lewd and unchaste courses? Think how grievous must those sins be which shut the perpetrators of them from heaven. "Without," saith St. John, "are whoremongers<sup>7</sup>," "and there shall in no wise enter

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxlvi. 2.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 4.<sup>4</sup> Ephes. iv. 28.<sup>5</sup> Heb. xiii. 5.<sup>6</sup> Ephes. iv. 29.<sup>7</sup> Rev. xxii. 15.

into it any thing that defileth <sup>1</sup>." Do any harbour hatred and revenge? Remember the Scripture, "Whosoever that hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him <sup>2</sup>." Are there bickerings, and little jealousies, and envyings? Is this a time to indulge them, when God's judgments are in the land, and we know not how soon they may be on ourselves? Rather "love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous <sup>3</sup>;" "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye <sup>4</sup>." Is the outward worship of Almighty God neglected? Let men think if He will hear their cry who heed not His. Will they receive who do not ask? or will Heaven be open to those who do not knock? If men count the meeting in God's house on earth, to worship and serve Him, irksome and tedious, what enjoyment can they hope for from the assembly of the saints in heaven, where His worship and presence will be the source of joy? Or do men turn their backs upon the altar, and refuse to remember their Saviour's death by communicating in His body and blood? If they will not remember His dying love for them, will He remember them with love when they are dying? In short, whatever failing or neglect our hearts may remind us

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 13.

of, to that let us turn our attention. First, seek with all our hearts forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and then amendment of life by the aid of the Holy Ghost, for Christ's sake. And in the midst of all this trouble and dread and anxiety and watchfulness, what shall be the Christian's hope, and stay, and ground of confidence? The cross of Christ. The hope which that inspires "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast<sup>1</sup>." Only let us seek, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance<sup>2</sup>," and then we need "not fear, though the earth tremble<sup>3</sup>." He, our merciful Guardian, is One Who never slumbers, never sleeps. His watchful eye is ever upon us and our ways; in love and mercy, if they are in His fear, to guide and to protect us; in sorrow and anger, if they are otherwise, to correct and punish us. Let the world go as it will, of this all true Christians may rest assured, that as long as their stay on earth will be to their heavenly Master's glory, or to the good of their fellow-men, so long He will preserve them here, and give them all that is needful; and when that ceases to be the case, who would wish to stay? Our home, our country is not here; we do, or should "desire a better, that is, an heavenly<sup>4</sup>:"—"Here have we no continuing city, but

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xli. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xi. 16.

we seek one to come<sup>1</sup>." Of heaven, we boast, that we are, by baptism, made inheritors;—who would wish to delay his entrance into the kingdom prepared for him? Let then our lives and conduct be heavenly, as the Apostle writes, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>."

Brethren, let not the words which have been spoken unto you in the name of the Lord, pass by you as an idle tale, but lay them up in your hearts, and seek to profit by them, that when our Lord shall appear, "ye may be glad also with exceeding joy<sup>3</sup>;" "and not be ashamed before Him at His coming<sup>4</sup>." "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man<sup>5</sup>."

Now to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 14.      <sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 20.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John ii. 28

<sup>5</sup> Luke xxi. 36.



## SERMON IX.

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A NATION'S DEPENDANCE UPON GOD.

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ROMANS xiii. 1. 5.

“ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God ; the powers that be are ordained of God. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.”

By the expression, “higher powers,” is meant the constituted authorities in any state or nation. By the last sentence, “ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake,” is meant, that a Christian is to be obedient to the laws and to the rulers of the kingdom in which he dwells ; not only through fear of temporal punishment, but by the higher and heavenly motive of honouring and serving Almighty God, by Whose permission and sanction these laws are enacted, and by Whose appointment kings and rulers, judges,

magistrates, and all who are in authority are called to their several stations.

There seems nothing else requiring explanation in the words made use of by the Apostle. As to the general purpose of the passage, his object is to set forth, in the plainest and most positive manner—in a manner so plain and positive, that none who respect the Scriptures can evade the force of his declaration—a truth which commends itself to the mind of every man, whose heart has not been perverted by wickedness, nor his power of judging aright been destroyed by false and evil suggestions; a truth of the most essential and fundamental importance to the prosperity of nations and the well-being of society. The truth I mean respects the superintendance, care, direction, and control which Almighty God exercises in the affairs of this world. “There is no power but of God; the powers which be are ordained of God.”

To the truth of this principle, namely, of God's providential care over the affairs of the world, both natural and revealed religion bear, as we shall presently see, the strongest testimony. But, because the method by which He exercises His care is not visible to our human eyes, those unhappy persons who have reversed the Apostle's rule, and walk by sight and not by faith<sup>1</sup>, are forward to deny it; and not only to deny it themselves, but to induce the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 7.

disbelief of it in others, as far as their influence over them will extend; and for evil purposes, alas! that influence is oftentimes very great.

There is a time mentioned in the Revelation of St. John, in which it is prophesied, that "woe" shall be denounced "to the inhabitants of the earth," because "the devil is come down" unto them, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time<sup>1</sup>." I do not presume to say that the times in which we live are the very ones which the Spirit contemplated when He gave utterance to that prophecy; but this I am bold to avow, and I doubt not that every one, to whom God has given grace to discern between good and evil, and right and wrong, will assent to the declaration, that in respect to the great exertions of the enemy of mankind to bring evil upon us, they very much resemble those times.

Surely never was there a time since Christianity was established in the earth, and "the kingdoms of this world" professed to "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ<sup>2</sup>," in which the prince of evil has, by his unhappy agents, been so active as he is at present. I will not detain you by alluding to the thousand minor instances in which his agency is to be traced, in the jealousies and discontents, the jars and divisions, and the disobediences and outrages, and the foul and horrid wickednesses

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 15.

which mark our time, which are destroying the happiness of millions, and unsettling the face of the world. I will not dwell upon that monstrous and tremendous evil wherewith men have perverted one of God's gracious gifts, which He designed for good, to the injury of themselves and others: I mean the art of printing, and allude to the weekly and daily obscene, sceptical, infidel, and blasphemous publications, which teem from the press; on which men spend time and money, and are at cost and pains to do Satan's work, to overturn the morals of some, and the faith of others, and to bring destruction upon the bodies and souls of themselves and those who attend to them. Great as the evil is which these anonymous blasphemers do, there is worse than this, and objects still more demanding to be pointed out and testified against. I allude to the case of some of those whom God has vested with authority, and caused, in His anger at sinful nations, to ride for a time on the high places of the earth, who have abused the power God has given them, to His dishonour; and have made use of their station to utter, as if with the voice of authority, blasphemies and insults against the Most High; and by their high example to countenance and encourage others in infidelity, and the neglect of all religion. We have lived to see the day when, in a neighbouring nation, the "grace of God" has been struck out of the King's style; and, by inference, the kingdom and authority ascribed to the powers

below. We have lived to see the day, alas! that we should say it, when the daily papers should report, that in one of the legislative assemblies of this professedly Christian land, it has actually been put to the vote, whether or no allusion to the Providence of God should be permitted, in a matter where His awful vengeance had been shown by one of His four sore judgments: aye, and to hear all such allusion denounced as cant and hypocrisy.

If events such as these had taken place in secret corners, remote from the gaze and knowledge of the generality of men, the ministers of religion might have some excuse for forbearing to call the attention of their hearers to them. But when they are done openly and before the whole world, by those whose perverted authority may have tremendous weight for evil, and when the knowledge of them is disseminated through the most distant parts of this kingdom, who shall say that the Christian pastors should any longer keep silence? Is there in all this assembly a single individual who can think we are stepping beyond the strictest line of our duty, when we lift up our voices, and bear testimony against such monstrous things? Or, if there should be one so unhappy as to condemn us for such conduct, would not that man be the first to cry out against us, if we failed to do so, as base and cowardly betrayers of that solemn trust and ministry, which God has committed to our hands? In that case truly his reproaches would be just, and

the sneers of the haters of God's servants would be deserved, wherewith they speak against us, and apply to us the reproaches which Isaiah uttered against the careless pastors of his day, namely, that they are all "dumb dogs that cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber<sup>1</sup>." But, in truth, we must say with St. Paul, "With us it is a very small thing that we should be judged of you, or of man's judgment<sup>2</sup>." Our account is not with man but with God, and His instructions plainly enough inform us, that for the safety of our own souls, even if there were no hope of doing good to others, we must endeavour, by the ministry of God's holy word, which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness<sup>3</sup>," to stem the torrent of infidelity; and not suffer "the overflowings of ungodliness to make us afraid;" as it is written in Ezekiel, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, thou shalt speak My words unto them<sup>4</sup>."

But God forbid that I should suppose for an instant, that there was no hope of doing good to others by the ministry of His word, in stemming the current of infidelity! God forbid that the teachers of religion should engage in their work with such a faint and despairing heart! No, praised be God, far different are our hopes, far brighter are our prospects. Though there is much of evil

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. ii. 5.

abroad, there is much of good likewise: though the spirit of infidelity is active in the agents of that power, "who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour<sup>1</sup>," the spirit of religion is awakening, "like a giant refreshed with wine," strongly nerved for the combat in which she is to engage, and confident of success. Though there are, alas! thousands who, by the evil arts of Satan, have made shipwreck of their salvation, and swerved from the truth, both in faith and practice; there are still many thousands in Israel whose hearts are true and right, who are zealous for the honour of God and the religion of Jesus Christ: they need but to have their hands and hearts strengthened by the encouragements of religion, they need but to have their minds awakened to a true sense of the danger to which their faith, and all that they hold dear, is exposed, and they will rally round the Standard of Truth and of the Gospel, prepared indeed to suffer for a time, if such be the will of God; but confident of being in the end "more than conquerors through Him That loved us<sup>2</sup>." For the success of the cause in which they are engaged rests not on human contingencies, but is guaranteed by the voice of the Son of God, when He declared that against His church "the gates of hell shall not prevail<sup>3</sup>." If on any occasion it is right that the ministers of religion should set themselves to counteract

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. v. 8.      <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 37.      <sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

those impious tenets which set aside or deny God's Providence and superintendance of this world, then let any man but consider, how directly such false and blasphemous doctrine aims at the root of every right and true principle upon which we can depend for the obedience of laws, and how intimately the well-being and very existence of society is connected with the maintenance of the opposite truth; and he must acknowledge, that the present occasion, when the judges of the land, the representatives of the King to whose care God has entrusted the governance of this country, are here to administer those laws, and to maintain the interests of society by "the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well," is a fitting occasion for endeavouring to remind, and impress upon, the people, that reverence is to be paid to their decisions, and judgments, and awards, not only because they have earthly power with them sufficient to enable them to enforce their decrees, and punish those who resist; but from that higher and more worthy motive, which should influence the conduct of Christians, namely that such is the will of God; that they must "be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God."

The defence and maintenance of this important truth, namely, of God's superintendance of the affairs of this world, shall occupy the remainder of this discourse, in which I will endeavour, under



His blessing, to show the strong testimony which both natural and revealed religion afford to it, and then to point out the very deep and practical interest which every individual has in the maintenance and prevalence of it.

In this I shall not detain you long; for in truth I do not expect that in the congregation which I am addressing there are many, if any, who will gainsay or deny the truth for which we are contending; that mind must be far gone in error and perversion, must have wandered far from the simplicity of nature, which can resolve to do so. For, not at present to speak of the witness which the records of revelation furnish, the page of nature alone is able to establish it. There is not a lowly mechanic, there is not an unlettered peasant, but what, if his heart have in sincerity attended to nature's book, even in its simplest and commonest form, could put such gainsayers to shame and silence, by pointing to the witness which every field affords, that there is a Maker and a Governor of the world. We need not seek for the great and extraordinary works of nature to attain such proof. As the truly Christian Poet observes :

“ Needs no show of mountain hoary,  
     Winding shore or deepening glen ;  
 Where the mountain in its glory  
     Teaches truth to wandering men.  
 Give true hearts but earth and sky,  
 And some flow'rs to bloom and die <sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Christian Year, Poem on first Sunday after Epiphany.

For every tree and every flower, every stream and every cloud, will, to the sincere searcher, show beyond a doubt that there must be One, Who made and governs all things. So that the truth, which the Apostle's declarations teach, is brought home to the breasts of those who never heard them. "The invisible things of God from the beginning of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead<sup>1</sup>;" and "He left not Himself without witness" to the heathens, "in that He did them good, and sent us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness<sup>2</sup>." Not only do the works of nature testify to the being and existence of a God, but they proclaim also His wisdom and His goodness. For let any man but consider how every want of natural man and all creation is provided for, the constant and invariable supplies which nature affords, the returns of day and night, of seedtime and harvest, of summer and winter, not only the necessaries, but the comforts, the enjoyments, which are afforded; the varied beauties of water and earth and sky; and he must needs confess, that, if there be a God at all, He is One Who cares for the pleasure and happiness of His creatures. But now if any one who by the voice of nature, which every honest peasant may interpret aright, is brought to confess that there

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 17.

must be a God, and that He must be good, but still should be inclined to deny His superintendance or control over the affairs of the world ; let me suppose that this man is himself a father, and let me ask him, whether he would deal by his own children, as he supposes God to deal by His? Whether, having brought children into the world, capable of good or evil, he would cast them on the wide world without care or superintendance of his? To avoid evil if they could, but with no protection or defence from him ; to seek for happiness if they could, but with no help or assistance on his part? And if he should answer, as answer he must, that the natural dictates of affection would forbid his acting so unnatural a part ; then let him consider ; “ if he, being evil, knows how to give good gifts unto his children, how much more shall his Father which is in heaven ” provide for the safety and happiness of His? But if it be admitted that God is anxious for the happiness of His creatures while here below, then it must be admitted also, that He does not leave to chance the arrangements and organization of their societies, the appointments of their rulers and superiors, or the enactments of their laws ; in all which the temporal happiness of mankind is so intimately concerned : but does, Himself, superintend, direct, and control them. Nor is any real objection offered to this, by the existence at times of evil laws, and evil constitutions, and evil governors ; on the contrary, as a means of punishing

guilty nations, as a means of testifying His displeasure against them, when they neglect Him, we should naturally expect, that God would bring these, as well as other, evils upon nations; which must be met with patience and resignation on the part of those who suffer, and prayer to God, and amendment of life, until it pleases Him to remove the evil.

Again, from the order and arrangement which is observable in the natural world, where all things are placed in due subordination; we might, by analogy, infer, that, in the moral world also, God would not have left things to confusion and chance, but by His Providence have arranged, that man to man, according to the station in which He had placed him, should show the deference of respect on the one hand, or the kindness of protection on the other.

But to show beyond all question, how clearly God's Providence and control of the affairs of the world might be learned from natural religion, it will be sufficient to refer to the writings of the heathen; who, though ignorant of the true God, and with no revelation from on high to guide them, appear in all ages to have seen and confessed, that human events were, and must be, ordered by the Providence of a superior Being. How would the conduct, to which I have alluded, have astonished the wise Plato, who, in his tenth book concerning laws, describes the acknowledgment of the exist-

ence, and goodness, and excellent justice of the gods, to be the best possible preamble to all laws! And how would the unhappy blasphemer of God's Providence have writhed under the lash of the indignant Cicero; who, being himself a heathen, and speaking to a heathen senate, hesitates not to exclaim, "What man is so dull and insensate, who, if he admit the existence of the gods, can fail to perceive, that it is to their protection that this great empire owes its rise and greatness and preservation!" And avows his belief, that "it was not by their own skill or power that the Romans overcame the rest of the world, but by their piety and religion, and by this wisdom above all, in that they perceived that all things were ruled and governed by the power of the immortal gods!"

It was reserved to the age in which we live, when the full blaze of Gospel revelation is shining in the world, to see infatuated men, nay, I may say, whole nations, attempt to set aside this simple truth, and endeavour to turn our day into worse than heathen night, by substituting the lurid glare of Satan's deceitful fires, "light without love," which throw a false colouring upon every object, for the pure light and bright beams of the Sun of Truth and heavenly teaching.

That the records of revelation confirm the truth, to which natural religion alone would be sufficient to guide us, I need not tell you. From the beginning to the end of the sacred volume this prin-

ciple is implied or expressed in every page. For there, every event, from the raising or destroying of empires and kingdoms, down to the simplest occurrences of every day, even a shower of rain in summer—where the rainbow, which is set in the clouds, is a token and memorial of God's protection and fatherly care of the world—every thing is ascribed to, or connected with, the Providence of our great and merciful Creator.

With regard to the point more immediately before us, and to which the present occasion calls our attention, namely, that which respects God's appointment and sanction of human laws and institutions, of earthly kings and governors, and our consequent duty to respect and obey these, through fear of Him, how plain and irrefragable is the testimony of Scripture! See the great king Nebuchadnezzar forced to confess, that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will<sup>1</sup>." Observe the reverential care of David towards the governor whom God had placed over him, and how, when oppressed by him, and having the power to deliver himself by the destruction of his persecutor, the fear of God restrained him; "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed; for who can lay his hand upon the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless<sup>2</sup>?" Hear the advice of

<sup>1</sup> Dan. iv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. 11.

his son, the wise Solomon, to all who live in troublous times, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change<sup>1</sup>." Listen to the Apostle Peter enforcing the same instruction, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God<sup>2</sup>." Or, remember the words of exhortation contained in our text, where the Apostle Paul writes, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers which be are ordained of God. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." So that the declarations of Scripture are neither to be denied nor evaded.

And, brethren, when evil men are for a time exalted to stations of authority, who by their lips or by their lives shall attempt to set aside the great truth of God's control of the affairs of the world, consider, I pray you, what a plain corroboration they themselves afford, of the truth which they affect to deny: being the instruments, in God's hand, for punishing guilty nations by their evil advice and pernicious counsels, but to be cast aside and punished according to their deserts, when they shall

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13—15.

have served the purpose for which God has for a time exalted them. For you may remember how when the cunning and treacherous advice of Hushai the Archite prevailed over the wise counsel of Ahithophel, and led to the destruction of Absalom; the sacred historian explains the strange success which Hushai met with, by saying, "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom<sup>1</sup>." And, in like manner, when the rash counsel of the young men prevailed against the sound advice which the aged and experienced counsellors gave to Rehoboam, the same account is given, "For the cause was from the Lord<sup>2</sup>."

Lastly, let none say that, after all, the question of God's superintendance and control over the affairs of the world is a merely speculative point; and that it is immaterial, as far as men's temporal happiness is concerned, whether they believe it or no. There is not a point which more nearly, deeply, and practically affects the happiness of every man, woman, and child; as every man, woman, and child may testify by their own experience.

Who can tell the support and encouragement with which, in seasons of doubt, of difficulty, and danger, our fainting hearts are strengthened by the knowledge that we are under the protection of our heavenly Father, who loves us and desires our hap-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam xvii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xiii. 15.



piness? Who can describe the sweet balm of consolation which in sickness, in distress, in anguish, and bereavement, is poured into the wounded breast by the remembrance of God's Providence, and the meek spirit of resignation to His will? It is of these that the blasphemer would deprive us; and so, though we must still pass on in our earthly pilgrimage, through the vale of tears, we must do it like the beasts which suffer and perish, neither knowing the chastening hand, nor the purpose for which it is employed, nor the heavenly stores of comfort to which it points.

Is there a parent who desires the love and duty of his children? On what sure ground can he hope for it, if the principle of obedience through the fear of God, because He has caused the child to be born of such a parent, is done away? Is there a child who looks for the fond and protecting kindness of his parents? With what certainty can he expect it, if they cease to believe that the children whom they bring into the world are God's gift, that they are His children as well as theirs, and that they are accountable to Him for them? Is there a husband who rejoices in the chaste affection of his wife, or a wife, whose thankful spirit is made glad by the faithful love of her husband? On what ground would these rest if the hand of God, in appointing to each their several partners through life, were disowned? No link would then exist but that which caprice, or whim, or distaste might at any time set

aside, to the increase of misery and unutterable confusion. And observe, I pray you, how the truth of all this has lately been illustrated in France. In that unhappy country, where they first rebelled against their king, and next, as a nation, disowned the Providence of God, the first thing, to which their lawless minds, when unshackled by that restraint, turned themselves, was to slacken the bonds by which the human laws of that formerly Christian land held firm the sacred tie of marriage; that they might do the devil's work, by increasing the sin and misery of the human race.

With regard more especially to the obedience and maintenance of laws, which my lords, the King's justices, are come here to administer; and to the existence of good order of society, with a view to which those laws are enacted; what security can the people have that they who frame the laws shall regard justice and equity and the good of the people, if once God's governance is disowned, and rulers and lawgivers cease to remember Who has placed them in their responsible stations, and to Whom they must give account for their conduct in them? Or how can rulers and governors expect cheerful obedience on the part of the people, especially in seasons of want and privation, if that principle be obliterated from men's minds, by which, and which only, they can learn, with St. Paul, "in whatsoever station they may be, therewith to be content," inasmuch as it is God who has placed them there, and

it is He who ordereth the course of events; Who both can and will relieve them, and give them more, if they pray to and patiently trust in Him; but Who can and will also increase their sufferings, and make them worse, if in defiance of His ordinances they seek, by unlawful ways, to help themselves? But admitting for a moment, what cannot be allowed in truth, that society could be maintained at all in orderly state, if the blasphemous denials of God's Providence were to prevail, still even in this case let it be remembered, that in whatever degree you remove from men's minds the fear of God, in that same degree do you necessarily increase the infliction of human punishment. And the sword of the executioner must needs reek, and the gallows of the hangman groan, with an increased number of unhappy persons, the victims of the teachers of infidelity, who, by their blasphemous doctrines, have deprived their miserable followers of the only motive which could effectually restrain them from the commission of crimes; which, when committed, the interests of society make it necessary to punish with the civil sword.

Thus nearly and intimately do the interests of every individual in every station require that the truth of our text, respecting God's superintendance and governance of the world, should be received, and embraced, and practically applied. The consideration of this, which is at all times desirable, is surely more especially requisite in the times in

which we live ; when God is making bare His right arm, and beginning to show His vengeance on the nations who disregard His Providence, by pestilence, by distresses, by discontents, and civil dissensions. For how can we hope that He will withdraw His hand, unless we return to that belief and practice, our departure from which has, probably, provoked His anger? or how, even humanly speaking, can we expect our disturbed state to be amended, until we return to those principles of obedience and duty, under which, in former times, we were wont, through God's blessing, to live in peace and safety?

To all these weighty and important considerations add this, above all, that the denial of the principle of God's governance of the world, the practical rejection of the truths contained in the text, will not only embitter men's days upon earth, but will and must necessarily exclude them from the happiness of heaven. For we are sure that in that blessed kingdom no discontents and murmurings, no disobedience and rebellions will be endured. Satan and his angels made trial of these things ; and God, in consequence, thrust them out of heaven. Let men, then, well consider, whether, "if God spared not the angels that sinned" in these matters, "but cast them down to hell," it is likely that He will receive into heaven sinful men who have lived and died with these dispositions, and in the commission of acts to which they lead? The

thing is impossible. As the Apostle speaks, "I tell you that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Wherefore, my Christian hearers, let me entreat you, for Christ's sake, out of regard to your own happiness, both in the life that now is, and in that which is to come, and out of regard to our unhappy country, now distracted and harassed with the evil counsels of reckless and godless men, that you receive into your own hearts, and show forth in your practice, and inculcate upon all over whom God or nature has given you influence, the practical adoption of that principle of God's governance of the affairs of this world, which is set forth in the Apostle's declaration, that "there is no power but of God, the powers which be are ordained of God."

Now to Him, our Creator and supreme Governor, and to Christ our Saviour, and to the Holy and Sanctifying Spirit, the Three Persons in the eternal and undivided Trinity, let us ascribe, from generation to generation, all praise, honour, majesty, might, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

# SERMON X.

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## MAN'S PERVERSION OF THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

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ECCLES. viii. 11.

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

As Christians, we profess to walk by faith and not by sight; by what the Holy Scriptures tell us will please God, not by what our senses tell us will please ourselves; looking, as St. Paul says, “not at the things which are seen,” i. e. the things of this world; “but at the things which are not seen<sup>1</sup>,” i. e. those of the next: “setting our affection on things above, not on things on the earth<sup>2</sup>.” For in Baptism and Confirmation we profess our willingness and determination, as concerns the world and the flesh, to lay aside and forsake every

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 2.

gratification of the body, and every worldly pursuit, which may be contrary to God's will, and lead us away from Him: that so, to use another expression of St. Paul's, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we may "press to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>." So earnestly to strive after our inheritance, that, like those who run in a race, we may take little heed to those things which are behind and around us, and like runners too, may willingly lay aside every earthly consideration, and every sinful affection, which may impede our progress; the desire of future glory inducing us cheerfully to deny ourselves present pleasure and gratification, while we look "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>."

Now all this which we have solemnly engaged to do, is very contrary to the natural affections and dispositions of our minds, which would lead us directly the other way; our natural inclinations would lead us to seek the pleasure of the moment rather than future happiness, however greater, beyond all comparison, the last is than the first; and unless that natural inclination be subdued, unless by the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Tit. ii. 13.

walk worthy of that Christian calling which we received in Baptism ; unless we strive to live the life of faith, which we entered when we were made children of God, by the laver of regeneration ; unless we watch and pray against temptation, we shall never perform what we have undertaken. “ If any man be in Christ,” saith St. Paul, be his to a saving purpose, “ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new<sup>1</sup>.” Instead of the old disposition to sin, he has the new disposition to holiness ; instead of the old love of the world, he has the new love of Heaven ; instead of the old endeavour to please himself, he has the new endeavour to please God. “ Because,” as he says above, “ we thus judge, that if one (even Christ) died for all, then were all dead (had incurred the sentence of death and punishment) ; and that he died for all, that they which live (which have received the gift of life in Baptism) should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him That died for them and rose again<sup>2</sup>.”

The consequence of our natural inclinations leading us directly away from what we have undertaken, is that in all cases where men either do not know, or do not consider the contest, which is before them ; where they either are not at pains to subdue the evil motions of their natures, or go the wrong way to work, and do not seek for the assist-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 14, 15.



ance of the Holy Spirit in struggling against them, in all these cases they live directly at variance with their profession, they live by sight and not by faith; they seek present pleasure or profit, more than future and eternal happiness and glory; they desire to please themselves, more than the God Who made them, and redeemed them, and desires to sanctify and save them.

The effect of this is seen in their conduct and conversation; and the truth of it is illustrated by the verse which I have chosen for my text; "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." If men do not shun sin from hating it, in consequence of the change having taken place in their inclinations of which we have just been speaking, (which change the Holy Ghost, to Whose help we become entitled at Baptism, and Whose assistance we seek more fully at Confirmation, will effect in our hearts, if we pray to Him,) that gradual change of which St. Paul speaks when he says, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ<sup>1</sup>;" unless, I repeat, men are kept from sin through their changed disposition, which makes them hate, what naturally they love; the only other check upon them is the fear of punishment. In proportion as this fear presses upon them, in that proportion will they be

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.

kept from sin ; but according as it is lessened or removed, will they hold themselves at liberty to run greedily after those sins to which their unsubdued nature inclines them.

Hence, Satan is always suggesting to them, and they are ever devising to themselves, some thoughts which may lessen or remove the fear of punishment, that they may sin at their ease. For you may remember, that when Satan tempted our first parents to break God's command, it was not enough that he enticed Eve by setting forth the excellence and virtues of the fruit of the tree, so as to give her the wish to eat of the fruit of it ; as long as the fear of the threatened consequences was present to her, it withheld her from the act of sin. It was not until, by a lie, he had removed this fear, by saying there were no grounds for it, that she obeyed the desires of her heart. And so it is always ; the fear of the punishment must be removed, or the sin will not be committed. But, alas ! as is clear from Eve's case, it does not take long to remove it. When the heart wishes it removed, Satan does not find much difficulty in doing it ; and will lead men so far to pervert truth and right, as to make the goodness and mercy of God an encouragement to sin against Him. " Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Monstrous, and fearfully wicked, as such a perversion of God's goodness is, it is one that in all ages has been too successfully

employed, in increasing the number and guilt of Satan's followers. Our Lord supposes the wicked servant in His time as saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming<sup>1</sup>;" and as taking encouragement from that to injure others, and indulge in sensual sin. And the wise writer of Ecclesiasticus found it necessary to caution those of his time thus: "Say not, I have sinned, and what evil hath happened unto me? for the Lord is long suffering, He will in no wise let thee go<sup>2</sup>."

Such a perversion is monstrous; for it surely savours of Satan himself to turn good into evil, a blessing into a curse. And it is fearfully wicked; for what hope can there be of doing good to one whose heart changes God's medicines into poison, and draws death from that which God designed to support his life? Such a perversion can only arise from an entire ignorance or desperate carelessness as to God's purpose and motive for delaying the punishment of the wicked, and in not suffering the sentence against an evil work to be executed speedily.

It is not, as the wicked say, "Tush, the Lord shall not see" our sin, "neither shall the God of Jacob regard it<sup>3</sup>." For His eye searcheth every corner, and understandeth every secret imagination of man's heart; "they are not hid from my face," saith the Lord, "neither is their iniquity hid from

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. v. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xciv. 7.

mine eyes<sup>1</sup>." Surely there is "no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from God<sup>2</sup>." For "He That planted the ear, shall He not hear?" or "He That made the eye, shall He not see<sup>3</sup>?"

It is not that though He knows the wickednesses, He is indifferent about them. For surely, to use the words of Scripture, they "provoke the Lord to jealousy;" surely, such rebellion "vexes His Holy Spirit;" surely, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men<sup>4</sup>;" surely, the thoughts of the wicked and his ways are, alike, an abomination unto the Lord.

It is not that punishment is not intended against the workers of iniquity. For surely, "He will render vengeance to His adversaries;" He will execute judgments upon them in anger and fury. Surely, He will "be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>5</sup>."

It is not that He cannot punish them; for who "can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou<sup>6</sup>?" He That made the round world, and every living creature within it, what shall hinder Him from utterly destroying what He has made, or

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xvi. 17.<sup>2</sup> Job xxxiv. 22.<sup>3</sup> Ps. xciv. 9.<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 18.<sup>5</sup> 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.<sup>6</sup> Dan. iv. 35.

from punishing them in whatever way He pleases? Why, then, is judgment delayed? Why does He put off the punishment of those who sin? Why does He withhold His hand, and not sweep them from the earth at once, to the misery prepared for them?

There are many reasons why He should not. In the first place, though He might possibly, it is true, secure by this means obedience to His commands, it would be the unwilling obedience of slaves, and not the free and loving service of sons. If instant punishment followed sin, and instant reward followed holiness, what trial or what proof would be afforded of the devotion of men's hearts to God? No room would be left for the exercise of their faith; for they would walk, in that case, by sight and not by faith. But more; it is in mercy that God delays His vengeance, and does not execute speedily His sentence against an evil work. In mercy to those who have not committed it; for, in this world of trial, the good and the bad are mixed together,—he that feareth God, and he that feareth Him not; they are oftentimes closely and intimately connected. Many a good parent has an evil and wicked child, whom yet he could not lose without much suffering; and many a good child has an evil and wicked parent, and yet the loss of that parent would, in some respects, be a grievous and bitter affliction. If, then, sentence against an evil work were always to be executed speedily, what

bitter affliction would be poured at the same time upon the true servants of God! Do you not remember the answer which, in the parable, the man is represented as saying to his servants, who recommended him to pull up the tares which an enemy had sown in the wheat? "Nay," said he, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them<sup>1</sup>." So God, oftentimes, will not, in this world, execute His wrath against an evil-doer, lest the innocent suffer with him. He reserves the full amount of punishment till the day of judgment; when, the separation between the evil and the good having taken place, there will be nothing to prevent each from receiving according to his works; when "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality," He will give "eternal life; but to them who are contentious, and will not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," there will be "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil<sup>2</sup>."

But it is not out of mercy to the innocent only, that God delays to punish the evil-doers; it is out of mercy to the evil-doers also; that if they will make use of the delay, of the longer time granted them, if they will make use of it to turn from their evil way, to pray and seek His face, and implore His mercy, for His Son's sake; He may be able to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9.

forbear to execute His wrath ; may be enabled, consistently with His truth, to forgive their iniquity and their sins, to receive them again as His children, and show towards them that depth of love and mercy which led Him to send His Son to suffer for them, that He might open the way to reconciliation, and pay the ransom of their souls, and save all such as come unto God through Him. "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live<sup>1</sup>." "The Lord," saith St. Peter, "is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance<sup>2</sup>." As in the parable of the fig-tree, when the owner of the garden, on finding no fruit, orders it to be cut down ; "Lo ! these three years do I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none, cut it down ;" the gardener is represented as asking for a little more time, saying, "Sir, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it ; and if it bear fruit, well ; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down<sup>3</sup> ;" so our blessed Lord in heaven intercedes with God for sinners, and obtains for them a little longer time ; in the hope that the mercy and forbearance thus shown may, like manure to a tree, cause him who was barren of goodness,

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xiii. 7—9.

to draw near to God in true and faithful service, and to endeavour, by a new and better life, to prove himself indeed a child of God; and to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” This is God’s purpose toward sinners in delaying His vengeance; as Isaiah says, “Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you <sup>1</sup>.”

Think for yourselves, brethren, how bitter must be that ingratitude, how revolting and impious that wickedness, which can turn the goodness and forbearance of God into an encouragement to sin, and say, Because in His mercy He delays to punish me, therefore I will sin more against Him; and the longer time which He gives me to repent in, I will employ in increasing my offences against Him.

Such horrid wickedness (alas! how common is it!) must in reality proceed from an evil heart of unbelief, some kind of disbelief of the truth of the Almighty’s word. I do not say that most or many of the persons so acting would acknowledge this disbelief, but it is very plain that they are influenced by it. Because God delays the execution of His threatened punishment, they entertain some vague hope, that perhaps it will not take place at all; perhaps God does not mean all the terrible things He threatens, and the like. Oh, vain and miserable deceit! how truly is it said in Scripture, “that the hope of unjust men perisheth <sup>2</sup>.” What!

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxx. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xi. 7.



hath God said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? In what other instance has it ever happened that His own right hand, and His holy arm, have failed to perform to the letter all that His mouth had uttered? Did they fail to bring the waters of the deluge? Open the pages of prophecy, and read the contents; see there the destruction of the mightiest empires, the greatest people, the wealthiest states, foretold as a punishment for their wickedness, many hundred years before it took place; foretold at a time, when to the eyes of men it seemed the most improbable thing in the world, nay almost impossible, that the events foretold should take place; countries ten times more thickly inhabited than our own; fruitful beyond our conception; highly cultivated; abounding in trade and arts; not situated like our own in a remote corner of the world, but in the centre of all that was great;—who, at the time the prophecies were uttered, would have supposed it possible that such countries would ever be laid desolate without inhabitants, no cultivation throughout their wide extent, their great cities the abode of vultures and wild beasts? I am speaking of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Moab, and Ammon, and Edom. You will find prophecies concerning them all in Ezekiel. Centuries in some cases passed on without the completion of the prophecy, and the inhabitants doubtless thought it never would take place; surely as long as there

is wealth in the world it must be here, as long as there are inhabitants, they will be found in this country; as long as summer and harvest return, our land will bring forth its abundant produce. But what now is the state of those countries? Take which you please, and then read the accounts of those who have visited them in latter times. You will find every prophecy exactly fulfilled; not only has the general sentence of ruin been executed, but even the very distinctions as to the manner or degree of ruin, which was to attach to any particular city, has been distinctly preserved; so that if the prophet were to visit those places in our time, he could not more truly describe their state, than he did so many hundred years before their overthrow took place. "All are come to pass, and not one thing has failed thereof<sup>1</sup>." No eye but that of God could have foreseen these events, no hand but His have accomplished them.

Why do I mention this? That from what has been, we may learn to believe what will be; that from the exact fulfilment of the prophecies which have been accomplished, we may look for the exact fulfilment of those that remain; may have our Saviour's sentence proved, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled<sup>2</sup>."

If the sentences of ruin which were uttered

<sup>1</sup> Joshua xxiii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 18.

against these cities and countries, are proved by the event not to have been vague and unmeaning expressions, but every word to have been fulfilled, so we may rest assured that all God's fearful threats against impenitent sinners, will in like manner be fulfilled to the very letter; "the lake of brimstone," "the fire that never shall be quenched," all these will be brought to pass, as truly as the ruin which has fallen upon Edom, and Moab, and Ammon. As the lapse of years which, for wise purposes, God suffered to pass between the uttering and the completion of His sentence, did not prevent its fulfilment in their case;—for we may if we please visit those countries, and see with our eyes, those things which the prophets foretold—so neither in the case of individual sinners will God's forbearance make the punishment less sure. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men<sup>1</sup>;" knowing the truth of the Lord, we remind them, that He is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. And we beseech you, brethren, do not give way, even in thought, to the hateful practice mentioned in the text, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But take heed to the warning of the wise Son of Sirach, "Bind not one sin upon another, for in one," that is unrepented of, "thou

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 11.

shalt not be unpunished <sup>1</sup>." Remember that the goodness of God should lead you to repentance. "Despise not the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering;" lest you treasure up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath. But seek mercy while yet it may be found; set to repentance, while there is time to bring forth the fruits of it; that so, for our Saviour's sake, you may find favour and acceptance with Him, Who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Now to Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. vii. 8.

# SERMON XI.

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ON THE THANKSGIVING FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE  
CHOLERA.

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JOHN v. 14.

“Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.”

WE are called upon this day, my beloved brethren, to thank and praise God for His great mercies vouchsafed to us, in delivering our land from a scourge and a pestilence, which, for the sins and wickedness of our nation, it had seemed good to Him to send. The scourge of which I speak is the fearful disorder styled Cholera Morbus, which visited this kingdom last year, and destroyed many thousands of our countrymen. It was an awful scourge; and though it pleased Almighty God, in His goodness to us, that it should afflict our country more slightly than it did almost any other, yet even here its effects were dreadful. Those who live in

the parts of the kingdom which, like our own, were almost wholly exempt from it, can form little idea of the tremendous nature of such a visitation; and may be inclined to think lightly of it. But had they witnessed the scenes which took place at Bristol, in Staffordshire, in Devonshire, they would have acknowledged that it was indeed a fearful work. They would have seen the weakness and utter insufficiency of human strength, or human skill, to stop the progress of the disorder, or to find a remedy. They must have acknowledged, as the magicians of Pharaoh did, when Moses wrought the plagues in Egypt, "this is the finger of God." When men were dying, faster than coffins could be made to receive them; when they lay unburied, because the undertakers were worn out with incessant labour; and were thrown at last by tens and fifties, without coffins, into large holes, because time could not be allowed to dig for each the last narrow bed, of which the poorest would think it hard to see their friends deprived; when the passing bell was silenced, because, otherwise, it would have tolled from sunrise to sunset, and by its incessant knell for the dead, have worn out the spirits of the living; when scenes such as these were taking place, and in many houses every soul was cut off;—they who witnessed them must, indeed, have acknowledged the tremendous power of the Almighty, of Him who made this world and all that is in it, and can destroy it as easily as He made it. They

must have felt their hearts sink within them, when they thought upon how much they themselves deserved to suffer under His hand, though encouraged and supported by the knowledge of His love to man, through Jesus Christ, and of the pardon for all sins, which may be obtained for the sake of Him who died for us, by all who, in repentance and sorrow of heart, draw near unto God in His Son's Name; and who strive, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to live in the fear of God, and to do His will, as His sons and servants should do.

But fearful as were the scenes which took place in some parts of our own country, in consequence of this disease, for the removal of which we have this day offered to God our solemn thanks, they were nothing when compared with what happened elsewhere. There were some towns in Persia where the numbers that died were so great, that it was found utterly impossible to bury them. The unburied corpses quickly became corrupted, and produced so insufferable an effect in the atmosphere, as to compel the few surviving inhabitants to retire from the cities, till the wind and sun should have dried up the bodies of their former companions, so as to permit of their being collected together and burned.

Brethren, there are many unhappy persons in the world, and many of them are to be found even in our professedly Christian country, who despise and mock at the power and wrath of God; who live without

regard to Him, neither checking themselves in the ways of sin, nor following in the narrow path of holiness, living, in short, just as if they would live, if there were no God to call them to account; or as if He were one whom they were not called upon either to fear or to love. If one of these unhappy persons had passed through one of those cities at the time of which I have been speaking, and seen nothing but desolation all around; the houses untenanted; the streets filled with dead bodies; no living creature but the vultures, and wolves, and jackals feeding upon them; and the still silence of death only interrupted by the snarls and growls of the brutes as they fought over their horrid feast. What, do you think, would have been his feeling? Would he still have scoffed at God? Would he still think scorn both of His threats and of His promises, and still dare to bid Him defiance, by living in the wilful neglect of His laws? Or would not his heart shrink within him, and he say, Is it indeed such a Being as This Whom I have dared to slight? Is it One Who holds the life of man in His hands, and gives or takes it away at His pleasure, that I have despised? Is it One Who can destroy whole cities in His vengeance, and bring silence and desolation where before there was mirth, and sin, and folly? Let me take warning from what I have seen! let me learn to fear Him Who is thus tremendous in His anger! let me praise Him for His goodness, in not cutting me off also in my carelessness and wickedness; and for awakening



me to a sense of my danger, and bringing me to a right understanding, by causing me to witness such things as these! Some such thoughts would, almost of necessity, be present to the mind of one who was an eye-witness of the horrors of which we have been speaking.

It will be our wisdom, brethren, to let the *knowledge* of these sad things have the same effect upon us, who *hear* of them, that *seeing* them would have upon an *eye-witness*; according as our Saviour said to St. Thomas, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." For we have reason to fear lest, if the knowing and hearing of these things have no effect upon us, God shall find it necessary to make us eye-witnesses also, by bringing the same or similar calamities even upon us.

For never let us fatally deceive ourselves, by supposing that we have not a lesson to learn as well as others; that we do not stand in need of improvement. Never let us flatter ourselves by imagining that, because God did not pour out His anger upon us at that time, we may be free from care, and have no sins to forsake. It is not so. As St. Paul "became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some;" so God is pleased to make use of different methods for the reclaiming of mankind, being not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. At some times He deals only by the methods of mercy, willing to in-

vite and encourage them to draw near, and trying whether His loving-kindness will melt the natural hardness of their hearts, and bring them to love and trust in Him their heavenly Father ; at others, He speaks in the accents of terror, that where kindness cannot prevail upon men to serve Him through love, the dread and expectation of His tremendous vengeance may alarm and make them check themselves from sin through fear of Him. Happy they, who, even by severity and out of fear, are by any means awakened to an awe of God, and to the endeavour to become acceptable in His sight, that they may escape the wrath to come, through Jesus Christ ; and whose fear will then quickly ripen into love. But happier they who are influenced by the milder methods of mercy, and upon whom it is not necessary to pour out the vials of wrath, in order to bring them unto repentance !

The method by which it has pleased God to deal with us partakes of both these kinds. There is enough of severity in what we know to have fallen upon others, to incline us to fear Him who can bring the same or greater evils upon ourselves ; while there is abundance of mercy in the freedom which we have ourselves experienced, to draw our hearts towards Him in love and tender thankfulness.

To this point, namely, that of thankfulness, let us turn our attention. If we had lived among the scenes which I have described, let us think whether our hearts would not have overflowed with thank-

fulness to God, when it pleased Him to stop the hand of the destroying angel, and to say, "It is enough." As we must have felt, while the plague was raging, that our whole dependance was upon Him, so must we have felt also when it was removed, that to Him alone was our deliverance owing. But if, now, the common dictates of our hearts can teach us, that they who suffered from that calamity must have felt hearty gratitude when the disorder was abated, and removed by the mercy of God; thus let us consider, and judge well, whether we do not owe a still deeper debt of thankfulness; we who, by the undeserved mercy of God, have been preserved free from so terrible an affliction? And yet it is very probable, such is the perversity of the human heart, that they who have suffered will be more thankful for the removal of the disease, than we are for our total freedom from it. For we seldom value blessings aright, until we have lost them; and this is true as regards the blessings of the soul, as well as of the body. They whom God blesses with abundance, who have all their wishes satisfied, and who know not what it is to be in want, are apt, like children, to regard these blessings as a matter of course; to forget the hand from whom they come; not to consider the debt of love and thankfulness which they, in consequence, owe to the Author of them. And it very often happens that nothing but a change of circumstances, and the experience of distress, can teach them to value

aright their former comforts ; and make them know and lay to heart the sinfulness of their unthankfulness, and strive, for the future, both to think and to live differently. It is the same in matters of religion. They who live in a Christian country, and are taught the principles of true religion from their earliest childhood, are apt to think these also to be matters of course ; to consider the knowledge of God and of His goodness, of Jesus Christ and His death, and of the pardon which there is for sins, through Him, on our repentance ; of the Holy Ghost, and of the guidance and assistance by which He will enable them to serve God who pray for His help—they, I say, who have been taught these things all their lives are often apt to set little store by them ; not to value the treasures of knowledge which are thus vouchsafed to them ; nor to consider how much they owe to God who has chosen them out of the rest of the world, to have these truths committed to them. But if they were deprived of them ; if they were removed to some heathenish land, with nothing but the brutal rites of idolatry ; or if God were to extinguish the light of the Christian religion in their own country ; they would then be aware of what they had lost, and would sigh and reproach themselves for the little use they made of these things while they had them.

Just so in the case of these awful visitations. There can be little doubt but that many, by what took place last year, have learned to look at our

former and present freedom from these things in a different light from what they formerly did. They no longer look upon the idea of God's judgments as a superstitious or mistaken notion ; they have, by experience, made trial of them : and they acknowledge that our former freedom from them was by His mercy ; that when the sickness came last year, it was sent by Him ; and that we are at this moment dependant upon His good pleasure to send or withhold the same or greater plagues.

And let not any harden themselves in their careless way, by the horridly wicked thought, that now God has done His worst, and they need fear no more ; but let them rather consider, that when David had offended God, and was offered three kinds of punishment to choose out of, he chose pestilence or sickness as the *least* of the three ; that, therefore, bad as disease and sickness is, famine and civil war are still more to be dreaded : and who can tell but that either or both of these may be in store for the inhabitants of those countries who have set light by the visitation of sickness, for the removal of which we have this day given thanks ; or who fail to draw that profit from it which was designed ; or to make that return for God's mercy in sparing them, and abating and removing the disease, which is demanded at their hands.

What, then, is the return which we ought to make ? and what is the best method of showing our thankfulness to our God and Saviour ? The best return

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which we can make, and the best method of offering our thankfulness, will be by endeavouring, each in our several stations, to accomplish the purpose which reason and Scripture teach us God must have in view when He sends these severe visitations. For if we believe that these things come from God, then what is His character, and in what relationship does He stand to us? Is He our Father? A kind, and good, and gracious Father, who loves us His children? Will a father send or suffer afflictions to come upon his children, whom he loves, without any cause? Surely not. What man would deal so with his own children? And is God less merciful to us than we are to them? What does our Saviour say? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him <sup>1</sup>?" Thus reason and Scripture alike will teach us that God must have some good design towards us, in sending these things upon us. "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men <sup>1</sup>." The purpose which God has in view towards us is the same which a kind father has towards his children when he is forced to correct them,—not to make them unhappy, but to make them good, that they may be happy; to make them, perhaps, if needs be, sorrowful for a time, that they may afterwards have joy and peace; as St. Paul

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 11.

<sup>1</sup> Lament. iii. 33.

writes to the Corinthians, " Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance : for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation <sup>1</sup>." This is the design of God towards us, even our repentance and amendment of life, that we may be saved and happy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This, then, must be the object at which we must aim, even our repentance and amendment of life ; to walk more strictly in the fear of God ; to seek more heartily to do His will ; to practise more love and kindness toward one another ; to watch and pray more earnestly against the numerous temptations to sin with which we are surrounded : and to this exertion must we be led, both by thankfulness and by fear ; by thankfulness for our narrow escape, that while so many were cut off around us, God's mercy shielded us ; and by fear, lest, if we neglect this warning, some still more dreadful affliction be sent upon us ; according to our Saviour's words in the text, to the man whom He had healed, " Behold, thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

Would to God that this kind and solemn caution could be remembered throughout our nation ! That it might sink into the hearts of every man and woman, and produce an effect upon their lives ; that the combined motives of love and fear might, by God's blessing, operate to check the glaring proflig-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 9. 12.

gacies and wickedness which are to be found among us ; to put a stop to the murmurings and discontents, the envies, the ill-wills, and jealousies, which are preying upon the vitals of our country, sapping and undermining the fabric of society, and preparing the way for confusion and every evil work !

Alas ! brethren, the wish is good ; but wishes alone will not mend the matter. To our wishes we must add our prayers, and to our prayers we must add our exertions. We must all and each put our shoulders to the wheel, and endeavour, in our several stations, and according to our respective influence, to produce some improvement ; and, though the effort of each individual, taken by itself, be not of much power, the combined exertions of *many* will produce great effect, and be attended, under God's blessing, with great success. Let this, then, be the effect which God's mercy, for which we have this day given thanks, shall have upon us ; and let this be our method of proving our thankfulness to Him : that each one of us look narrowly into his own conduct, and search out the plague of his own heart, and find some point in which, from henceforth, he will endeavour to live more carefully, and to lessen in his own person, the aggregate amount of the sins of the nation ; so will the fear and the love of God have produced, in some degree, the effect which He desires ; so shall we have more reason to hope



that we may escape a repetition of such scenes ; or be best prepared to go through them, should it still please God to send them.

Now to Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

## SERMON XII<sup>1</sup>.

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HIGH CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE THE ONLY SAFEGUARD.

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MATTHEW vi. 33.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

THESE words were spoken by our blessed Lord with a view to encourage all men to cast their care upon God, Who careth for them<sup>2</sup>: and as an assurance that they may safely follow the advice which He had given them just before. For in the verses immediately preceding the text, He had cautioned men not to seek too eagerly any of the things of this world; not to make them the chief object of their lives; nor to be careful and anxious, even about the necessaries of this life, as though they

<sup>1</sup> Written and preached when the bill for abolishing ten Christian Bishoprics in Ireland was under discussion in the House of Lords; and published at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. v. 7.

distrusted God's providence: but, in the fullest confidence and reliance upon His succour, Who has chosen them to be His servants, to set their eyes stedfastly upon the goal placed before them; and then, through evil report or good report, in peace or war, amidst plenty or scarcity, to march on their heavenward way; conscious of the presence of Him Who is invisible; of the support of Him without Whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground; and of the supply of Him "Who stills the wailing sea-bird on the hungry shore<sup>1</sup>."

This is that practical faith without which it is impossible to please God, and by which a man believes not only that there is a God,—for the devils do that and tremble,—but that "He is a rewarder and protector of them who diligently seek Him<sup>2</sup>." Such faith as Abraham had, when, at God's bidding, he left his house and country to do God better service in a foreign land: such faith as Daniel had, when he cheerfully consented to be thrown into the den of lions, sooner than dishonour Him whom he owned for his God; such faith as dwelt with the Apostles, when, for the service of Jesus Christ, they forsook all and followed Him.

Such faith as this must be the secret spring, the support and stay of a Christian's life, let him be placed in what circumstances he may: but then, especially, does it shine forth to the glory of God,

<sup>1</sup> Christian Year.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

in times of difficulty and danger. He who takes any other rule than this, will ever be wavering and uncertain in his course, trimming his boat, to suit, first, this breeze, and then, that, and putting human wisdom in competition with, or above the Divine commands, to the shame and grief of his friends, and to the scorn and ridicule of his enemies, and of them that hate him. It is utterly impossible that any man in times of distress and persecution, can preserve the straightforward line of duty, in whose breast this high and sustaining principle is not implanted.

It is probable that most men will see the propriety of placing this matter before our eyes in times like the present. For there seems little likelihood that that security and peace, which have been so long vouchsafed to us, will be continued to us much longer. Every thing combines to make it probable that times of confusion and trouble are coming upon us, such as we have not had for centuries: times when all men will be put to the proof, when it will be seen of what they are made: and when the servants of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ will have an opportunity of earning the martyr's or confessor's crown, by their patient and constant adherence to His cause, regardless of every thing which might allure or frighten them from the path of duty. If such times are at hand, it will be our wisdom, as Christian warriors, to count the cost; to make use of the short breathing

time allowed us to look over the weapons of our heavenly armoury, and to furbish and brighten “the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked <sup>1</sup>.”

Let us take, then, our Master’s cross for our badge, His crown of thorns for the wreath of our crest of hope, which is the crown of immortality ; and let our motto be chosen from the words of our text, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” In other words, “Do your duty, and leave the rest to God.” Let not a Christian stand upon lower ground than a heathen, nor the principle in which the worshipper of idols gloried, “*Fiat justitia, ruat cælum,*” be deemed too exalted for the servants of the King of Heaven <sup>2</sup>. Surely woe is to be feared for that country, in which they who are in authority teach the people that it is lawful “to do evil that good may come.” For if this be not to bow the knee to Baal ; if this be not to honour the Prince of Darkness ; if this be not to worship the author of evil, rather than the Giver of all good ; if this be not to compel the servants of God to wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. vi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to a speech in the House of Lords, July 17, 1833, on the second reading of the Irish Church Bill, when one, whose age and office might have given pledge of better things, was reported to have laughed to scorn this maxim of heathen justice.

places, there is no meaning in words. It is not for sinful man, of his own mind, to say what fate is in store for those who do and say thus ; but, at least, the words of Scripture concerning them may be repeated, "whose damnation is just."

Let no thought of base, time-serving expediency, let no whisper of cowardly human wisdom, induce you to compromise one iota of your duty, in the childish hope of averting the storm or keeping your own neck out of danger. You will only deserve the ruin which you dread ; you will only secure your defeat by putting honourable resistance out of your power ; you will only deprive yourself of that eternal recompence and reward, to which, by God's mercy, through Christ, you might otherwise have attained. Let our great Captain's oft-repeated words ring in the ears of all who are faint and irresolute, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it,"—"he shall keep it unto life eternal<sup>1</sup>."

But though most or all men must admit that these considerations are applicable to the times in which we live, few, comparatively, will be willing to apply them to themselves, "for they are not all Israel that are of Israel<sup>2</sup>;" and there is as much difference between those who, in common, bear the honoured name of Christians, as there was between

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 33. ix. 24. John xii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 6.

Ahab and Elijah, and between Herod and John the Baptist. It will be well for us therefore to inquire briefly, how far, in the ordinary course of our duty, the high Christian principle of which we have been speaking is the guide of our conduct. If we are not wont in times of peace to walk according to this rule, there can be little reason to think that it will stand us in much stead in time of war. "He who is faithful in that which is least, will, indeed, be faithful in that which is much : but he that is unjust in the least will be unjust also in much<sup>1</sup>."

The things which will be tried by this rule in the day of judgment are our thoughts, our words, and our actions. These then let us examine beforehand, while yet there is time, and the means of grace still within our reach, by which we may be enabled to amend whatever we find amiss. And first let us speak of our actions or general conduct. We must remember that this rule is to guide us in all things, and at all times. It is not only in the direct employments of religion, that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, but in the every-day employments of the world : nor is this rule to be applied only at particular times, as if it were reserved like a state dress for fête and collar-days ; but in every day of our lives, and in all the employments of every day, we are to strive to hallow all, directly or indirectly, to our Master's ser-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 10.

vice, by "seeking first His kingdom," and "doing all to the glory of God." Any thing which falls short of this, falls short of Christianity. And it is not only the rule for all times, and all employments, but also for all men in all stations. For it is not the Clergy only who are bound to honour God in the *whole* course of their lives, but the laity also; and when it is said, as it is sometimes, that a layman may do what a clergyman may not, the thing is spoken without due regard either to reason or revelation. For the reason why any thing is so wrong in a clergyman is because it is contrary to what he teaches; and the reason why it is so wrong in a layman is because it is contrary to what he is taught: and where is the difference between the two? For in either case it is done against knowledge, and both are under the same obligations (the vows of baptism and confirmation) to renounce the same things.

Remember, therefore, in whatever station God may have placed you, the principle which is to influence your whole life is this, to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Now, how far, up to the present time, has your conduct been thus influenced? Are you willing to inquire? It is probable that in this congregation there are none of the lowest stations in life: but there are middling, and high, and the highest of earthly ranks: and of various employments and pursuits.



Let us make the inquiry in one or two cases which may serve for the rest.

Are there any engaged in trade and commerce? Do they conduct their trade and commerce according to this rule of seeking first the kingdom of God? If the answer is, who ever thought of seeking the kingdom of God in trade? Such an answer would only show how very far the conduct and opinions of whole masses of people in a Christian country may be removed from the very first principles of Christianity. Each individual, undoubtedly, may so conduct his trade (and I do not wish to be understood as speaking only of those whom we call tradesmen, but of all who have any regular employment), as in it either to seek, or to neglect the kingdom of God. 1. In the means which he makes use of to promote his trade or employment, which may be in strict accordance with his duty to God and to his neighbour, or, contrary to it. 2. In the eagerness with which he pursues it, which may be consistent, or inconsistent with the care of his soul. 3. In the spirit which he carries with him, being envious of another's success, or rejoicing at it; puffed up with his own prosperity, or moderate with it; fretful under disappointments, or patient under them. 4. In the reference which he makes to God at all times: if things go well, being careful to render praise to God, both by the expression of the lips, and by letting others share in God's

bounty to himself; or if things go ill, still owning his Father's hand, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." This is what distinguishes a Christian from a heathen merchant, have *you* these marks of distinction? This is how the kingdom of God may be sought in trade and commerce, have *you* thus sought it?

Let us turn to higher stations. There are those whom God has made legislators, and given them opportunity to seek His kingdom in this character: and the welfare and happiness of millions of their fellow-creatures depend upon their doing so. These may have a regard to the honour of God in all the laws which they pass, and then that which they do the Lord will make it to prosper, "for the throne is established by righteousness<sup>1</sup>:" or, they may put all such thoughts out of the account, and their own and the nation's ruin will speedily attest the truth of what Solomon has said, "there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord<sup>2</sup>." If Christianity be any thing better than a name, there should be some difference between Christian and heathen legislators. Let the legislators of this country be on their guard lest the difference be *against* them; lest the heathen legislators of Rome and Athens rise up in the judgment with them and condemn them. For they

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xvi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xxi. 30.

gave protection and showed favour and honour to the ministers and temples of *their* gods, which were but wood and stone. Surely *our* God is greater than theirs, and His ministers at least as worthy of support as the magicians and soothsayers of paganism. Shall I apply this rule to a higher station yet? "God is no respecter of persons," nor does He permit His ministers to be. Therefore let it be said, that they who occupy the highest places of the earth, have, of all others, most need to place this rule before them, and in all their thoughts, words, and works, to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness:" most need as concerns both themselves and others: as concerns themselves, because "to whom much is given, of him will much be required<sup>1</sup>;" as concerns others, by the force of example, for "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid<sup>2</sup>."

Thus much may suffice for actions, or general conduct.

Let us consider our words. In these also we may seek, or we may neglect, the kingdom of God and His righteousness; "for by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned<sup>3</sup>." The Master whom we serve has given us this order, "Swear not at all<sup>4</sup>?" Is this order obeyed? The Holy Spirit has left this

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 34.

direction, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying<sup>1</sup>." Is this direction attended to? Have you been careful, and prayed God to set a watch before your mouth, and keep the door of your lips<sup>2</sup>, that no expression might escape them offensive to the God of purity? or, have you employed the gift of speech to dishonour Him Who gave it? and let a foul mouth utter the pollutions of a filthy heart? Have you given vent to oaths, such as make the listening angels shudder? to those evil whispers which crimson the cheek of modesty? or to those hateful words which make good men stand aghast?

Perhaps there is the less need to press this point in the matter of swearing, because, by common consent, it seems banished to the outskirts of society; so that it is not likely to be found except with those who, either think themselves above, or are certainly sunk below, the opinion of mankind. For many men will turn away from a habit which the world denounces as ungentlemanly, who would have been at little pains to forsake it because God called it sinful. From which we may observe, by the way, that forsaking such sins as the world decries, is no proof that a man is a Christian: for if he only forsakes them to please the world, he may be free from them all his life, and yet be as

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. cxli. 3.

far from God as if he had committed them. The inquiry at the great day will not be sin by sin, but by men's love to God: has that been with *all* the heart? Did they seek *first* the kingdom of God? Was it the *chief* aim and desire of their souls, so to live that they might please Him?

Consider, now, how the case stands with regard to the thoughts. When, while surrounded by friends and acquaintance, in the hours of ease and relaxation, in the midst of pleasure and enjoyment, the thoughts of Him from Whom must come every thing you have, value, or hope for; when the thoughts of God and of His goodness, of Christ and His salvation, have crossed your minds, has the remembrance been welcome or unwelcome? Have you repelled the thought with the chilling answer, "Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will" attend to thee? Has the thought of Him, Who died upon the cross for your salvation, been irksome, and checked your pleasure and enjoyment? Then one of these things *must* be true.— Either you have formed mistaken notions concerning God, or else there was sin in that pleasure, there was guilt in that enjoyment; or, if not in the enjoyment itself, yet, at all events, in the immoderate degree in which you would indulge it. It is a false and foul calumny to say that true religion will ever damp the happiness of any human

being. Say, will the remembrance of a Father's love check a son's enjoyment of any delight which a safe conscience may permit him? Will the recollection of the protection of our first-born Brother (so the Son of God deigns to permit us to call Him) make our hearts sad? Surely not. Whose brow is so calm as his whose mind is at peace with God? Whose hearts so light as theirs who have the "love of God shed abroad in them by His Spirit, Which He has given us?" The happiness of others is dependent upon circumstances: the happiness of these independent, and above all circumstances, resting in Him who knows no change, but "is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It is only when a man will not, or dare not, serve Him faithfully, whom he has sworn to serve, that the thought of Him is unwelcome. Then, indeed, the eye which is ever upon him day and night, the ear which is ever open to note each idle word, may,—nay, they needs must,—fill his mind with apprehension, from which he vainly hopes to escape, by driving the remembrance from him. But will a man be more within the reach of peace, who has once more turned away from Him Who alone can speak peace? Will he be nearer heaven, because he has drawn his foot one step back from the road that leads there? Surely, reason itself may teach us, that such a man's wisdom, and safety, and peace, and happiness, consist in obeying the Christian rule, in "seeking first the kingdom of

God :” and letting his very recreations be hallowed by the thoughts of Him, Who does not wish to see His children with grave faces and sad hearts, but merely to restrain their pleasures and enjoyments within such reasonable limits as may best conduce to His honour, and the welfare of their souls and bodies.

Lastly, Consider how far, in the employment of those worldly goods wherewith God has enriched you, you have sought first the kingdom of God. I am speaking in the presence of many great, and rich, and noble, according to this world, and, I trust, according to the next also. But have they considered this, that the riches which they have from God are *not their own*, but His? That they are but entrusted unto you, as unto stewards, who must render an account hereafter to Him from whom they come, for the manner in which you have employed them? Will any deny that this is so? I will not stop to argue with him. He who can think that the child who came into the world, with no thought of his own as to his station, and as naked as that of the poorest peasant, is not indebted to God for all he has, is beyond the reach of argument. But if it came from God, then to God must an account be given of it: He who gave all, will demand how all has been spent? Have you thought upon that question? and considered the answer that must be given? Consider, that if God had called upon you to spend all that

He has given you in His immediate service, *all must have been forthcoming*. He did demand it of one man<sup>1</sup>, and because his heart clung to his earthly riches, and he could not bring himself to part with all, for the sake, and in the faith, of Christ, you know the words which fell from our Master's lips, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" I am not concerned to state that He makes the same demand of all, though all will do well to have that passage in remembrance: I suppose that if St. Paul's direction is attended to, and a conscience made of the disposal of the rest, such a fulfilment of the trust may find acceptance at our Father's hands, through Him Who died for us. What then are St. Paul's words, in which he directs Christian Ministers to fulfil their duty, by giving advice on this behalf? He addresses the Bishop or Apostle of Ephesus in these words: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, glad to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life<sup>2</sup>." This is the rule which the Scriptures give for the rich,—has this

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.



been *your* rule? Perhaps it will be well not to receive, as matter of course, the flattering answer which our deceitful hearts would naturally return to this question: but to examine on what grounds it rests. Think whether, when the day of account comes, there will be any or none to say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not<sup>1</sup>." If the money which might have been used in supplying our Saviour's wants (for the wants of His people He considers *His own*), has not been so employed, how has it been spent? Has it been squandered upon the vanities of this world? lavished upon things which the moth<sup>2</sup> and worms are eating, while they look most proudly, on things which rust and canker are corroding, even while they shine the brightest? "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish<sup>3</sup>." Or is it worse than this? Have the sums which might have relieved the afflicted, and made the widow's heart sing with joy, and led the fainting children to bless the Giver of all Good, been employed in oppressing the poor? in turning away the needy<sup>4</sup> from his right? in showing how earthly power may for a time triumph against truth and justice, and make his heart sad, who has none but God to help him? Nay, God forbid, that any here

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> James iii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Job xxiv. 4.

should plead guilty to such a charge; for their Redeemer is mighty, the Lord of Hosts is His name. But once more, have the riches which might have honoured God, and done good to men, to the giver and receiver, been spent in sinful pleasures and pursuits? in corrupting others? in paying the price for which the guilty sell their souls and bodies? in bringing sin, and so a curse, upon the nation? And will such men still dare to call God their Master? Faithless, faithless servants must they be, who spend their Master's money to the ruin of His people, and in the service of His enemy! I will not pursue these observations. There is, however, one point, so intimately connected with the direct employment of this world's goods in seeking the kingdom of God, and one which, under existing circumstances, so loudly calls for remark, that I may not pass it unnoticed.

Cast your eyes over the surface of the globe, and remember Jehovah's words, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea<sup>1</sup>." Think when the kingdom of God will come, when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ<sup>2</sup>," when the leaven which was put into the meal shall have leavened the whole lump<sup>3</sup>. But how little of this has yet been accomplished! Can

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xi. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 33.

human aid avail to promote it? Yes, surely; for "how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher<sup>1</sup>?" But why then do not preachers go? are there none ready to labour in their Master's service? Tens and hundreds are desirous to engage in this, which they count the most honourable of all employments. But why then do they not go? Can a man find bread in the wilderness? can he find shelter in the desert? Surely "the labourer is worthy of his reward<sup>2</sup>," and "so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel<sup>3</sup>." Why, then, it will again be asked, do not those support them to whom they go? The thing is impossible. Take the case of our North American colonies. The men for whom spiritual aid is there wanted, have left their fathers' land because they could not support themselves; and are earning a bare subsistence, at remote distances, among the wilds of the forest. It is impossible that such as these can afford means of even the very poorest support for their Teachers. But shall then these children of Christ be left to perish in the wilderness? without hearing the Gospel of Peace? without admission to the covenant of grace? without the rites of Christianity? Great and rich in this world, the answer must come from you. Ye who, at God's high altar, have dedicated to Him your-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. v. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 14.

selves, your souls, and bodies, it is for you to say. If you, out of the abundance which God has given you, will give freely back to Him again for the increase of His kingdom, the Sun of Righteousness shall yet arise in those places, and make the wilderness to blossom as a garden, and our God will repay it back sevenfold into your bosoms. But if you will not, I say not that the work will be stopped; for it is God's work, "and who shall let it<sup>1</sup>?" but you will be deprived of your share of the rich reward, and will have refused to seek first the kingdom of God.

Bear with me while I state some ground for this appeal. With a view to make some provision for the spiritual wants of our fellow-subjects in those waste places, king William III. encouraged by Royal Charter the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which is in immediate connexion with our Church, being under the Presidentship of all our venerable Prelates. For one hundred and thirty years has this Society fulfilled the purpose for which that gracious King instituted it. All the instruction in true and sound religion which the United States received before their separation from us, and all that our present North American colonies have received, has been through the agency and instrumentality of this Society. The Government of this country has formerly assisted the work

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xliii. 13.

with a grant of 16,000*l.* It was not much to be sure: less than a three hundredth part of one-tenth of the national revenue was not much to render back to God, for the sake of extending His kingdom upon earth. The portion of maintenance which could be allowed out of it to each missionary, was so small, that few among you would have offered it to a menial servant. Still the men who had fallen back upon old Jacob's covenant, "if God will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God<sup>1</sup>," were content and cheerful to serve; and, *on the strength of this support*, have embarked themselves and families in the undertaking. But now this small pittance is to be withdrawn; and they who were content to feed on bread and water in the wilderness, if so they might do good service to our Lord, and save the souls of our fellow-subjects, are to have this *bread and water taken from them!* and to be left to utter destitution<sup>2</sup>."

It is very true that necessity knows no law; but surely it must be a mistaken view of God's government of the affairs of this world, to think that any gain will accrue to a nation, or to individuals, by

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Since this was written, the Civil Government have consented to continue during the life of the then existing missionaries their allowance. But for the maintenance of those who are to succeed them, and for an increase of their numbers, which is so loudly demanded, no public provision is made.

withdrawing the small pittance set apart for the maintenance of His ministers.

I will say no more, but when my fellow-servants in the Gospel of Christ are in danger of starving, and the cause of Christianity exposed to rebuke, I trust it will be allowed that I, as their fellow-minister, am not stepping beyond the line of my duty, in bringing the case under the knowledge of those who, if they will, can do much to avert such a calamity.

It is true, indeed, that it has been declared by one of our legislators, that all reference to Almighty God, in acts of legislation, is "cant and hypocrisy;" but I am sure that horrid blasphemy found no echo in any Christian bosom; and it does not much signify to us, my Christian brethren, what the sons of Belial say concerning us, or concerning our God. And when in the course of this sermon, I had occasion to warn the professedly Christian legislators of our land, that they do not fall behind the ancient heathens, in the respect and attention which they pay to the worship, and ministers, of Him Whom they acknowledge for their God; think not I said this because I fear that any power or combination of men can stay the progress, or check the triumph of the Church of Christ. No, God forbid! All His promises must fail before that can be. The Church may use the language of the Psalmist, "When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xxvii. 10.

Oppression cannot injure the Church of God. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by the advice of the wily Magi, tried that in the case of the children of Israel, and it is written, "the more he afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." But let not that be forgotten which is added; "the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage<sup>1</sup>;" and "their cry came up unto God." And was it heard in vain? Oh, no! It may please God for a time to suffer us to be oppressed, and praised be His Name, for thinking us worthy of it! But when the dark strife is over, will not our pæans be again heard? will not the glorious shout again rend the sky?

" Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,  
Jehovah has triumph'd, his people are free."

Do not think that God will desert the Church, which His own Son has founded. What is His language to her? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee<sup>2</sup>." No, no; when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh<sup>3</sup>. The Church of Christ cannot suffer; her ministers may be permitted to suffer, and to glorify God by suffering patiently; but the Church cannot be injured. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her<sup>4</sup>; her Master's strength is made perfect in her weakness<sup>5</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> Exod. ii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlix. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxi. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

and when she is weak, then is she strong: when none but God befriend her, then the Lord Himself takes up her cause, a mighty God and terrible. It is not for her sake that I speak, but to warn them who are joined for her destruction, that, if they will not honour God by honouring her, God will be honoured in them by their discomfiture and overthrow.

Is the tone of the discourse unusual? When the house is on fire, the watchman will raise his voice above the dull monotony with which, in times of safety, he sings the passing hour. And if the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God<sup>1</sup>, should not the spiritual watchman blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm<sup>2</sup> upon the holy mountain, and bid the inhabitants of the land tremble, for that the day of the Lord cometh, and is nigh at hand? I know not what the wishes of men may be, but I know well the commands of Him Who has set the watchmen in their stations; for thus hath He spoken to each. "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand<sup>3</sup>."

No earthly considerations shall prevent me from

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Joel ii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.



delivering the message which tends to the honour of that Master "whose I am, and whom I" try to "serve<sup>1</sup>." The smiles or frowns of the inhabitants of a world, which is even now crumbling under our feet, can have little effect upon those whose hearts are set on the next.

"Brighter scenes we seek above,  
In the realms of peace and love."

"As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, Which trieth our hearts<sup>2</sup>." To Him let us commit our cause, that cause most dear to Him, the cause of the kingdom of our God, and of Jesus Christ His Son.

To whom, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 4.

## SERMON XIII.

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ADVERSITY THE TRIAL OF CONSTANCY.

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MATTHEW xxiv. 12, 13.

“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.”

IN the chapter from which my text is taken, our Saviour sets forth, in forcible language, the troubles, afflictions, and distresses, which should come upon the earth. His account was, in part, fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the curse was poured out upon the Jews, which they had imprecated on themselves, when they shouted at our Lord's crucifixion, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” But the description which He has given was uttered in answer to a question of His disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” and therefore, although, by the expression, “end of the world,” nothing more

was sometimes meant than the end of that Jewish dispensation ; and by our Lord's " coming " His coming to destroy Jerusalem, yet as there is another more awful coming still looked for, when He shall return in clouds of glory to judge the living and the dead, and another more fearful meaning of " end of the world," namely, that which St. Peter speaks of, when he says " that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burned up ;" there can be little doubt but that all that our Lord here says will receive its more complete fulfilment in the times preceding the coming of the day of judgment. The chapter contains many things worthy our serious consideration ; for awful is the thought of those " beginnings of sorrows," which our Lord says shall then overspread the world ; nation rising against nation ; famines, pestilences, and earthquakes ; every thing in the natural world in confusion ; and in the political also ; great tribulations, such as was not since the beginning of the world ; when the chain of society shall be broken, and the links which bind man to man no longer have force to restrain them.

Among other things which He states, that which I have chosen for my text, well deserves our attention. " Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Where He says the love of many shall wax cold, His words have a two-fold meaning.

For He speaks both of their love towards one another, and, more especially, of their love or regard to religion. The effect or consequence of all the tumults, and troubles, and confusion of which He has been telling us, will be that “the love of many will wax cold.” Such an effect is not peculiar to the troubles preceding the end of the world, but in all times of distress the same result follows,—“the love of many waxes cold;” it is the natural effect. Indeed afflictions, of whatever sort, we know are sent to try men, and they succeed in their purpose: they do try men, and prove them; prove what they are made of, and what manner of men they be, both in their relations to God and towards men; to use the expression of St. Paul, “the fire (of persecution or affliction) trieth every man’s work, of what sort it is.” And the consequence is, that many fail under the trial; “the love of many shall wax cold:” nay more, according to the words in the Greek, it is not only the love of *many*, but the love of *the many*, of most, of the greater part of mankind, that fails and waxes cold in the hour of trial. And the reason is, because nothing at such times can preserve any man from falling, but firm-rooted, high, and fixed principle; and there are only few, comparatively, who are guided by this. And this is true, as was just observed, in regard to men’s conduct, both to God and towards one another. For no link to be depended upon can bind man to man; but either individual attachment, as

as we read that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul ; or else, the higher principle of Christian charity, which teaches us to love all men as ourselves, for Christ's sake, because they are the children of God. When these two principles are wanting, what a change is frequently to be observed in men's conduct towards one another, according to outward circumstances ! Many a man, who, in times of prosperity, has fancied himself possessed of numerous friends, finds himself, in time of adversity, deserted by all or most. Hence the saying, which is proverbial among us, that " a friend in need is a friend indeed ;" and so the wise son of Sirach observes, " a friend cannot be known in prosperity, and an enemy cannot be hidden in adversity. In the prosperity of a man, enemies will be grieved, but in adversity even a friend will depart. For a while he will abide with thee ; but if thou begin to fall, he will not tarry. The same man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble. If thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and will hide himself from thy face." But where there is true principle and true affection, adversity produces no change, or rather it shows still more strongly the depths of the affection ; and many a man in such seasons has learned to value and think highly of those, who before were little esteemed. For men's affection, either towards God, or towards man, may be compared to a stream of water ; the deep river makes less noise than the

shallow brook ; and they, frequently, make most pretension of affection, who have, in reality, least to boast of. And when men are not united to each other by the principle of generous affection, or Christian feeling of brotherly kindness, but merely by self-interest, the natural consequence of time of trouble is, that such links are burst asunder, and envy, and jealousy, and hatred, and evil passions succeed in their room ; as our Saviour says, in the verse before the text, “ many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

Let us now consider our Saviour’s words in the text, “ the love of many shall wax cold,” with reference to men’s love and zeal for religion ; to which, especially, they relate. I say especially, because much of the chapter shows that, in the time of which He is speaking, there will be a persecution of good men, a persecution of those who not only profess to be the followers of Jesus Christ, but endeavour, in truth and sincerity, to walk according to their profession, ordering their lives according to the rules which Christ has given ; and thus, drawing upon themselves the hatred of those who are unwilling to do the same, and who feel themselves condemned by the other’s better conduct. For it is of the sufferings of true Christians that our Lord is speaking, when He says, “ they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you ; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake ;”

and it is as a consequence of these persecutions that He adds, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

This is the general, nay, the constant effect of a time of trouble and persecution upon the professors of religion. It puts the sincerity of their religion to the test; and those who are not sincere, of course fail in the day of trial. And so our Lord, at another time, in mentioning the different classes of persons who derive no benefit from religious instruction, speaks of some "who for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away." Nothing but a firm and well-grounded faith and conviction in matters of religion will enable a man to stand in the evil day: when this is wanting, his religious sentiments are not to be depended upon. For as we have seen that, in the relations between man and man, there are, in the world, numbers of what may be called fair-weather friends, who, like the insects, buzz and glow in the sunshine, but disappear when storms are abroad: so, in the relations between man and God, there are numbers who may be called fair-weather Christians; whose zeal for religion only lasts till it is put to the proof, and then vanishes away. And this our text tells us is true, not of many, but of most; the love of the many, i. e. of the generality of men shall wax cold.

Consider by what a variety of different motives those are led who, in a Christian country, profess the Christian religion. Some do so because their

fathers did so before them, and they know no other reason,—these are Christians by inheritance. Some because they see others around them professing it, and they like to be in the fashion, and to do as others do,—these are Christians by custom. Some because their superiors, and they from whom they look to receive some benefit, do so, and they are afraid of losing their favour if they do not,—these are Christians through fear of men. Some because they have enquired into, or been instructed in, the matter, and are convinced of the truth and certainty of God's declarations,—who, believing all God's goodness towards them, love Him as their Father and their Friend, their Saviour and Protector, and, believing all His power, fear to offend Him Who can destroy both body and soul in hell,—these are Christians in spirit and in truth. Now it is only such a firm and heartfelt conviction of God's truth, such a deep and real fear and love of Him, that will enable any man to live according to His religion. It is only this which can enable a man to resist those daily temptations to sin, of one kind or another, to which we are always exposed; only this which shall enable him to stand upright and true, in the still more grievous trials of persecution and affliction with which, from time to time, God's servants must expect to be proved. For it is only those who, by conviction, have really learned to know the value of their precious souls, and how far the next world, which will last for ever, exceeds this which is about soon to be



destroyed ; it is only these who are willing to be at cost and pains in their Master's service here, in hopes to be blessed by Him hereafter ; and can choose rather to suffer, if it be the will of God, for a time, in company of the faithful few ; than to avoid suffering, by denying or betraying their Saviour ; it is only these who can abide the test, and not fail when put to the proof. So the noble martyr, St. Paul, asks, " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? " Surely not. No earthly considerations can avail to separate from Christ, the man whose hopes are fixed in heaven, and whose heart is filled with the love of his Saviour, God, and Friend. But it is only such that can remain unmoved in the day of trial ; and because most men are Christians, not by heartfelt conviction, but, as we have seen, by inheritance, from custom, or out of fear of men, therefore it is, that when iniquity abounds, the love of the many waxes cold.

Now hence you may understand the wisdom and charity of our Church, in so frequently imploring God to remove from us, and preserve us from persecutions and afflictions ; as in the Collect for Evening Service we are taught to pray, " that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness ; " and again in the Litany, " that we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Thee in Thy holy Church ; " in which the Church imi-

tates our Blessed Saviour's example, Who has taught us daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." For although faithful men come out of adversity, like gold out of the fire, of greater worth than before; yet in the stormy sea of persecution, many a frail person makes shipwreck of his faith, who, under more favourable circumstances, and in quiet times, might have arrived safely at the desired haven. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Let us now consider the profit which we are to derive from these considerations. As we learn from our text that the effect of troublous times and days of persecution is to overthrow the faith of those whose hearts are not firmly established by inward conviction in the love of God; and that no principle but the heartfelt love and fear of Him can enable a man to stand in the evil day, let us, in common prudence, make use of the time of peace while it lasts, and, by prayer to God, by the study of His holy Word, by the practice of holiness, and obedience to His laws, and by attendance on His ordinances, let us strive to have our hearts grounded and settled in our Christian faith, "rooted and built up and stablished in the faith, as we have been taught." That so, when the time of trouble and persecution shall arise, we may not have then to seek and ask, why we should continue stedfast in the faith? but may be able, like our blessed Lord, to witness a good confession.

It is for this reason that we endeavour to press upon all committed to our charge, but especially upon the tender minds of the young, by catechetical instruction, the reason and grounds of our faith; that when scoffing infidels shall tell them that the book of God's word is a cunningly-devised fable, they may be able to answer them that they "know in Whom" they have believed, and feel in their hearts that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, indeed, the power of God unto salvation.

You will observe that I have spoken of times of trouble as if they were certainly coming. When things are plainly written, he may run that readeth; and in truth a man must needs shut his eyes who does not, in the signs of the times, see much reason to fear that troubles are at hand. Are not all men's minds unsettled, and ill at ease? men betraying one another and hating one another. All the signs and tokens of evil which marked the days when good King Charles was put to death, are gathering around, and showing themselves again. God keep our nation from a repetition of such sin and misery! But, brethren, it behoves us to prepare for it. Already, indeed, as far as words go, the persecution is begun; and, as in all times of trouble, the first mark at which evil men aim has always been the ministers of religion, so it is now. The ministers of religion are openly reviled and abused, for no other reason but because they are ministers of religion, and endea-

vour, in the discharge of their duty, by the ministry of God's word, to stem the torrent of infidelity and confusion which is bringing misery upon all around them. The property which the piety of former days gave to support the clergy, and by means of which the poor have the Gospel preached to them, without charge, is the object of their covetousness. Nor let it be supposed that this hatred of order will long be confined to words. Too soon, I fear, many of us may be called upon to put in practice those lessons which the Scriptures teach us, of how to suffer persecution. God's will be done in all things! and if it be His will that we suffer affliction and evil treatment, for our stedfast adherence to His cause, may He give us grace to bear it as His servants should do; "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing:" forgiving, and praying for, those who injure us. Then, though iniquity may abound, though the love of many may wax cold, may we be enabled, by God's grace, to hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.

And in the midst of all this, what shall be our consolation? Why, brethren, what higher consolation and encouragement can we look for, than that which our text affords, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved?" Let this encourage all whom it shall please God shall suffer, to suffer in meekness, patience, and constancy. "He that shall endure unto the end." Yes, brethren, re-

member these words, and whether it be God's will that we should serve Him, as heretofore, in peace and quietness, or whether it seem good to Him to try us in the fiery trial of suffering and of evil, let us remember that, in neither case, will it be enough to have *begun* our course well; we must, by His help, be enabled to continue it to the end, that we may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I stand where the martyr, Rowland Taylor, stood. May God in His mercy give grace to the clergy of this day to follow his example, and, if need be, to testify for the truth, even unto death<sup>1</sup>!

And how shall we continue aright? Why only by His help who suffers the evil, or the temptation to come upon us. That help will not fail us, if we seek for it aright; and, with it, we may become "more than conquerors through Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us." For so are the words of promise. "God is faithful, who will not suffer any man to be tempted above what he is able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way for him to escape, that he may be able to bear it."

And I believe God's promise, that it shall be

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Rowland Taylor, one of the martyrs of the Church of England, under the Marian Persecution, was Rector of Hadleigh, where this sermon was preached; and the same pulpit remains to this day.

even as He hath said, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, three Persons in one God, let us ascribe all honour, glory, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever. Amen.

# SERMON XIV.

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ON EMBER WEEK.

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1 CORINTHIANS iv. 1.

“Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

THE words of the text require no explanation, except it be necessary to say that by the expression “mysteries of God,” are meant His word and sacraments, the administration of which He has committed to the clergy as His stewards. The subject to which the passage directly leads us, is the attention and obedience to the warnings and advice of the ministers of religion, which is due to them by virtue of their office, “as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

In approaching this subject, the first thing connected with it that demands our attention is, the proof which it affords of the lovingkindness of God towards men, and of His anxiety for their salvation.

For, this being His only wish with regard to them, He has not only condescended oftentimes to reveal His will to them, by the prophets, and inspired writers, and by His Son; and caused these His revelations to be preserved, and handed down for the benefit of all men to the end of time; but to guard against all possible cases whereby that measure might be rendered of no avail, He has also set apart, ordained, and sent in all ages, His ministers and messengers to enforce, by word of exhortation, advice, and reproof, the commands and instructions contained in His Holy Word. He seems to have been at especial pains, if I may so speak, to place within the reach of men, every help and assistance which might further their progress to eternal life. For whereas His word, as set forth in Scripture, might be laid aside and forgotten; or men might be unable to read it, or, when read, might be at a loss to understand it, and so it become of none effect; He has appointed a class of His servants to be a kind of living witnesses to His truth, whose office and duty it is to "meditate upon these things<sup>1</sup>," and give themselves wholly to the study of them, that, by the aid and guidance of His Holy Spirit, they may be enabled to offer warning and advice, or comfort and encouragement, to all who stand in need of it. So that, if any man be inclined to plead ignorance as an excuse for his

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 15.



sinful or careless way of living, let him know that the plea of ignorance will not avail him, because, after all that God has done, his ignorance is not of necessity but of choice. For if men cannot read God's Word, yet they can hear it read, as it is at least every Lord's day, by those who are appointed for that purpose. And if they cannot understand it when it is read, they know that there are those, the clergymen in every parish, whose duty and whose happiness it is, to give them every assistance and every explanation which is in their power. For the goodness of God, the King of that heavenly country to which we are travelling, is shown in this: that He not only has provided all the travellers (if I may use the expression) with a road-book, or book of directions as to the course they are to pursue, but has stationed guides for them, to whose care they are consigned, and who are willing and anxious, if men will but suffer them, to accompany them on their way; and to whose counsel and advice they may have recourse on every occasion of doubt and difficulty.

Admiring, therefore, as we are bound to do, the goodness of God in thus providing for the spiritual wants of His people, and affording us all the necessary means of instruction by sending His messengers, we come in the next place to consider the attention which is due to them. Here, first, it should be observed, that this attention to them, as ministers of religion, is due only in matters of reli-

gion. In every thing whereby the interests of the soul are, or may be, affected, it is theirs to offer advice; and it is the duty of those to whom the advice is offered, to receive and "obey<sup>1</sup> it." Provided, secondly, that it be agreeable to the word of God. For out of this they are to instruct the people, according to what is said in Ezekiel, "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me<sup>2</sup>." And therefore at their ordination they are required to promise, that they "will teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which they shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture;" and to this purpose St. Paul so earnestly exhorts Timothy, whom he had made minister, to "take heed to the doctrine," and "continue in" it, because that by so doing, he would "both save himself, and them that heard him<sup>3</sup>;" and in the same manner also he warns Titus, that he should "speak the things which become sound doctrine<sup>4</sup>." Now if it be asked how the people are to know whether the things which their ministers teach are such as "become sound doctrine," such as "may be proved by the Scripture," such as they are bound to obey; to those who can read, the answer is plain, if they are in doubt, let them imitate the conduct of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.

1 Tim. iv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Tit. ii. 1.

the Bereans, which is praised in the Acts of the Apostles, and “search the Scriptures daily, whether these things be so<sup>1</sup>.” For we do not, like the ministers of corrupt Rome, shut up the book of God’s word from the people, and bid them receive their instruction solely on our authority; but we lay open to all men the treasures of heavenly knowledge, which we have ourselves received, and are willing and anxious that all which we teach should be tried by that sure standard—“To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them<sup>2</sup>.” But if the people cannot read, let them have confidence in their pastors and in their responsibility, who are bound to teach none other but true and saving doctrine, not only by the solemn promise which they make at ordination, but by the repeated curse denounced in Scripture against those who corrupt the word of God. Thus St. Paul speaks, “though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed<sup>3</sup>.” It is the office and authority by which the ministers speak, that, if the people know them to be lawfully sent, is at once their warrant and obligation to attend to them; and not the personal

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. viii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

character of the ministers themselves. This we learn from our Saviour Himself; for though He found the greatest possible fault with the Scribes and Pharisees, and denounced repeated woe against them, as hypocrites, and for corrupting the word of God with their traditions, yet when He spoke to the people concerning their duty to them, He commanded attention and obedience to be paid to their instructions. "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, all therefore whatsoever they bid you to observe, that observe and do<sup>1</sup>."

The next point on which men may naturally seek to be satisfied, is as to the grounds on which these ministers claim and demand the attention and obedience of the people committed to their care in matters relating to religion and the welfare of their souls. The first answer to this is, that, inasmuch as the ministers are set apart for the study of the Scriptures, and are bound by promises to apply themselves to it, and are obliged to do so, reason itself would teach us that attention on these subjects is to be paid to them. For if, in the commonest affairs of life, even the cultivation of their land, men use to guide themselves by the advice of those who are conversant with the matter, and in proportion as the subject is of higher importance, are wont to be more and more anxious for the opinion and instruction of those who have applied

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 3.

themselves to the study of it;—thus, in matters of law, they are unwilling to stir a step without the advice of their lawyer, and when sickness attacks them, do not deem it safe to neglect consulting their physician;—reason itself would teach us, to use at least as much caution in the affairs of our souls as in the care of our bodies, and that the advice of them who study the word of God should be as much attended to in managing the first, as that of those who are skilled in medicine in taking care of the last.

But not merely on the score of reason, is attention to be paid to the ministers of the Gospel, because they have given themselves to the study of the sacred volume. Their claim to be heard when speaking, on the subject of religion, and our accounts with God, and preparation for the day of judgment, rests on very different, and much higher grounds. It is “as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” that they call upon men; it is as men to whom “God has committed the ministry of reconciliation<sup>1</sup>,” that they exhort and advise men, on the necessity of securing that reconciliation with God, and teach them how to do it. It is in the name of Christ, and by virtue of the commission which they have received from Him, that “we are bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God<sup>2</sup>,” and claim to be

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 2.

heard, when, in pursuance of His wishes, we discharge our duty ; and not for any learning or weight of our own.

This is too much forgotten by men of all stations; and their forgetting it is one cause of the little effect, which is produced by all the care and labour of the ministers. For the wise and learned will attend to the minister as long as his discourse is wise and learned, but if it fails of that, they are too apt to forget the character in which he addresses them, and to think him beneath their notice. The great and rich also, as long as it is a dignified person who exhorts them, will be willing to listen, but if he lacks this advantage, too frequently a deaf ear is turned ; and the poor, in like manner, are apt to think that respect is to be paid to their clergyman principally because he is of a higher station than themselves, and so will observe him only so long as this is the case.

But, though in the affairs of their souls, men show themselves so difficult to please, in matters of less real moment they are not wont to be so nice. If a herald or messenger were sent to men condemned to death, to declare the conditions on which their prince offered them his pardon, and how they might find means easily to perform these conditions, men would not hesitate to grasp at the pardon, and endeavour to fulfil the conditions, because the messenger might chance to be poor, or of a slow speech, or lowly appearance. All that they would in-

quire would be, whether he were really authorized to declare so gracious a message, and if satisfied of that, they would, out of gratitude to their prince's mercy, show respect to his messenger. Now, except that the sentence, from which the ministers of religion declare the terms of release, is not of temporal death, but of everlasting destruction, and that the prince, whose pardon they proclaim, is not an earthly king, but the God of heaven, where is the difference between the one case and the other? For as St. Paul speaks, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God<sup>1</sup>." But if the only difference between the two cases, is, that the pardon which the ministers of the Gospel proclaim is incalculably the most valuable, and the mercy which offers it infinitely the most gracious, is it not melancholy to think, that so great a difference should exist as to the manner, in which the announcement of the respective pardons is received? That when the offer is for a pardon from temporal death, men welcome the messenger with joy, thankfully receive his message, and eagerly obey his directions; but when the pardon is from everlasting destruction, too frequently regard the messenger as an officious and unwelcome intruder, and turn away from his message, and disregard his directions, or which is still worse, pretend to receive them, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

mock him with falsehood and deceit? It is indeed both melancholy and fearful to think of: because, as the damsel at Philippi rightly observed, these messengers "are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto men the way of salvation<sup>1</sup>." And therefore, to use St. Paul's words, "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God<sup>2</sup>." For it is God's word that they preach, God's pardon through Christ that they offer, and the conditions for obtaining that pardon which they press upon men's observance, have been appointed by God Himself.

Lastly, if it be asked, whence they derive their authority to speak and to preach in the name of God, the answer in our Church is easily made. All those who preach in our Church have been sent and commissioned by those bishops, who through successive generations have received that authority for ordaining ministers in the Church of Christ, which our Lord gave to His apostles, and the apostles to their immediate successors; and which is mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to Titus, Bishop of Crete, in these words, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou mightest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city<sup>3</sup>;" and in his Epistle to Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, thus, "the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Tit. i. 5.



also<sup>1</sup>." That this authority for ordaining clergy still exists in the hands of the chief pastors, the bishops or apostles of the churches, and will continue to do so till the consummation of all things, we learn from the words which our Lord spake, when He gave his commission to the apostles: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" that is, with you, and your successors in this office, until the end of time.

Here I should wish to call your attention to the prayer which I offered just before the General Thanksgiving; and which perhaps may have excited your notice, as not being generally used. You will find it among the Occasional Prayers between the Litany and the Thanksgiving; and described as "In the Ember weeks, to be said every day for those that are to be admitted to holy orders." If you turn to the Table of the Festivals and Fasts, which is placed immediately after the Calendar in the Prayer Book, you will find among the days of fasting or abstinence, which the Church has appointed to be observed, "The Ember days at the four seasons, being the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, after the First Sunday in Lent, the Feast of Pentecost, September 14, December 13." By which you will perceive, that this week into which we have just entered, is one of the Ember weeks, i. e. one of the seasons, in which all the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 2.

members of the Church are invited to seek, by prayer and fasting, for the blessing of Almighty God upon those who are called to any holy office in the ministry. In case any should wish to know from what time this has been appointed, it may be as well to mention, that in the writings of men who lived more than 1400 years ago (Leo I. and Gelasius) the same four seasons are mentioned as having been set apart for the same purpose, time out of mind; and the arrangement is ascribed to the apostles, and to the guidance of the Holy Ghost; so that there is much reason to suppose, that if not appointed by the apostles themselves, it at least was by their immediate successors. Days of fasting or abstinence have been at all times set apart at these seasons, not only because of the additional efficacy which, generally speaking, is hence given to prayers, (as we learn from our Lord's expression in the case of the obstinate demoniac, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,") but because we find in the Scriptures that such was the method by which the apostles themselves were wont to seek the blessing of Almighty God upon those whom they ordained; of which you will find instances in the xiiiith and xivth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

How reasonable it is that all the members of the Church should unite in seeking, by every method of earnest entreaty, for a blessing upon the ministers or clergy of the Church, and for a right guidance in

those who are to ordain them, will appear from this consideration, viz. that there is, perhaps, no one thing which more intimately concerns the honour of Almighty God, and the salvation of mankind, than that the pastors of His flock should be able and faithful men. How great dishonour is done to Almighty God by appointing improper persons, may be seen from the expressions which are used in Scripture concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat; for it is recorded of this prince, (who is known by the phrase of the man "who made Israel to sin,") as an additional act of wickedness, that, even in the corrupt idolatrous worship of God, which at Dan and at Bethel he substituted for His true worship at Jerusalem, he was not careful in the ministers appointed. "Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places." And so great was this offence in the sight of God, that it is added, "This thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth<sup>1</sup>." How hurtful such a course is to the salvation of mankind, may be gathered from our Saviour's words; for, after comparing His ministers to "salt," as being sent forth to preserve the world from corruption, to keep men, both by precept and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xiii. 33, 34.

example, from being tainted with sin and wickedness, He aptly asks, "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted <sup>1</sup>?" And again, when speaking of them as guides who were set to direct and lead men in the way of everlasting life, He shows the consequence of their being unfitted for their station, by saying, "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch <sup>2</sup>?" But if the honour of God and the salvation of man, thus intimately require that able and faithful ministers should be appointed to their several stations, how great and tremendous does the responsibility seem of those who are to ordain and consecrate them, I mean the Bishops of the Church, who, as we have before shown, have received the Apostolic authority to govern the Churches, and to ordain the pastors! In proportion as the office to which they ordain is of higher importance, so does the responsibility increase; and as the ordaining a presbyter is of more importance than ordaining a deacon, because to the presbyter is committed the administration of the Eucharist, and the declaration of Absolution, how much more responsible is the ordaining a Bishop, to whom is committed the charge of all the churches of the diocese, the appointment of clergy, and the superintendence of the people! If it seem to any that I overrate the responsibility, let me cite the words of St. Paul to the Bishop of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 14.

Ephesus on this very point: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure<sup>1</sup>." The words are few, but, if weighed, will appear of awful moment. For from them we learn that it is the bounden duty of a Christian Bishop, to inquire into the character of those brought to him for ordination; and that if, through want of inquiry, he ignorantly ordains one, and surely much more if he wilfully lays hands on one, unworthy of the office, he becomes partaker in that man's sin, and in all the guilt which may arise from his neglect or unworthy discharge of duty. Such is the tremendous responsibility under which the Bishops are called upon to exercise their office of conferring orders upon bishops, priests, and deacons; the responsibility being greatest when called upon to consecrate another bishop. Surely, then, there is reason to desire that every obstacle<sup>2</sup> should be removed which interferes with the conscientious discharge of their responsible office; because every such obstacle is both contrary to the will of God, and hurtful and injurious to men. It is hurtful to the bishops, who are thus tempted to swerve from their duty, and to incur the guilt against which the Holy Ghost has warned them; hurtful to the people, who must needs suffer,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.

<sup>2</sup> On this subject see "A Claim for Relief at the hands of His Majesty's Ministers, in behalf of the Church of England, in the appointment of Bishops."—Rivingtons, 1836.

if the bishop fall into the temptation, and consecrate improper persons; but far more hurtful to those who cause the obstacle, and put a stumbling-block and occasion to fall in a brother's way; for though, alas! "it must needs be (as our Saviour said) that," in some way or another, "offences will come," yet "woe" is denounced against him "by whom the offence cometh." I will say no more upon this point, except that, as long as such obstacles remain, there is the greater need that all should offer up their prayers to God so to strengthen the hearts of the bishops, that, if driven to the alternative, they may have grace to fear God rather than man, and to be more anxious "earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," than to secure, by unworthy compliance, the continuance of that earthly rank and wealth which have been given to them by the kings of the earth, fulfilling their appointed office of being "nursing-fathers" of the Church.

But to return. If the considerations set forth in this discourse have placed beyond all reasonable exception our obligation to attend to the warning and advice on matters of religion which are offered by the ministers of Christ, the stewards of the mysteries of God; and if men would but consider with what force of affection these warnings are made, namely, by those who, according to St. Paul, "watch for their souls, as they that must give account, that

they may do it with joy<sup>1</sup>;" by those who, as St. John speaks, "have no greater joy" than to hear that "their people walk in truth<sup>2</sup>;" nor any greater grief than to see those, for whom they must give account, erring from the right path, and hazarding their salvation. If, I say, men would consider the affectionate force and claim which these have upon them, they would have another, and a most pure and powerful motive, to attend to the message of God which they receive from them. They are the men of whom God speaks in Jeremiah, "I set watchmen over them, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet;" but too often it is now as it was then, "they said, We will not hearken<sup>3</sup>." But why? If the watchmen were to cry the alarm of fire in the night, by which their lives might be endangered, they would rise up quickly and escape from it. And when the spiritual watchman gives the alarm of that "fire which never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched<sup>4</sup>," will they not rouse themselves to escape from this?

Oh, then, my beloved brethren, if you are at all convinced of the danger of neglect, be it yours to pay attention to the warnings and advices, which, drawn from God's Holy Word, are in His Name made to you by His ministers, whether in public or private. And when either the danger of sin is

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.    <sup>2</sup> John iii. 4.    <sup>3</sup> Jer. vi. 17.    <sup>4</sup> Mark ix. 43.

pointed out, or you are reminded of the means of escape from it, by faith in God's mercy through the blood of Christ, by prayer, by repentance, by amendment of life, through the aid of the Holy Ghost, or by the devout receiving the holy Eucharist, be careful not to disregard these, but be willing to use them with joy, thankful to God, who, for such small things on your part, vouchsafes to offer, through Christ, so great salvation on His. For remember, my beloved brethren, all must give account to God in this matter; both they who preach, and they who hear His word. If they who preach it, "shun," through fear of men, "to declare the whole counsel of God," woe is unto them. And if they who hear the advice drawn from the word of God, do fail to profit by it, it will rise up in the judgment against them. And then how can they hope that they may be found acceptable in the sight of Christ, at His second coming to judge the world?

May God give us all grace so to discharge our respective duties that we may rejoice in that day, and rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.



# SERMON XV.

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## THE CASE OF BALAAM.

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2 PETER ii. 15.

“Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

THE chief instruction which we may derive from the account of this remarkable man is the warning which it affords to us to take heed to our ways, that we do not, by a continuance in any sin or careless way of living, provoke God to leave us to ourselves. Because if ever we should be so unhappy as to do that, there is nothing that can prevent our ruin. Neither the clearest knowledge of our duty, nor the fullest conviction of God's power and omniscience, nor the certainty of His future severe judgments, neither one, nor all of them together, will be able to deter us from running greedily after our own desires, and perishing in consequence. For this Balaam the son of

Bosor, whose history we are considering, was one whom God had distinguished in a remarkable manner. He was one who, when almost the whole world besides were given to idolatry, had, through God's grace, the knowledge of the true God vouchsafed to him. He was one whom God was pleased to employ as a servant and a prophet, to foreshow things to come; and he uttered some most remarkable prophecies. He foresaw and foretold, at a great distance, the coming of the future Messiah and Saviour of the world, as he speaks, "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel<sup>1</sup>." In short, the degree of supernatural knowledge with which he was endowed is best expressed in the account which he gives of himself, as of one "whose eyes were open, who had heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which had seen the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open<sup>2</sup>." He was gifted in this remarkable manner, and foresaw the rise and fall of kingdoms, God's awful judgments upon the children of men; and yet, all this notwithstanding, still his miserable soul clung to the love of this world, to the love of wealth, and he sold himself to work wickedness against God, by tempting His chosen people to idolatry and lasciviousness. Nay, not only had the wretched

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxiv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. xxiv. 15, 16.

man all this knowledge, but he seems also to have had the sort of faint and empty wish of obtaining God's blessing, which Christians too often think will be sufficient to take them to heaven. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his<sup>1</sup>." He was willing enough to reap the reward of holiness, but he was unwilling to undertake the labour of it: he would fain have shared in the blessings promised to them who deny their own wishes to please God; but he could not deny his own, for God had given him up to his own heart's lust, and had let him follow his own imagination<sup>2</sup>: and though it pleased him to make use of the man as an instrument of his glory, by foretelling future events, yet He appears already to have cast him off; because he had loved gold better than God, and chosen the applause of a man rather than the favour of the Almighty; as our text speaks, "He loved the wages of unrighteousness." The account, also, of this unhappy prophet's being given up by God is worthy of attention, because it shows the method of God's dealing with men on a point to which they would do well to give heed. Balak, the king of Moab, whose territories the children of Israel had entered, in their passage to Canaan, and who was in great fear of them, was desirous of doing them an injury; and having heard of Balaam and his inspiration, seems to have consi-

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxiii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxi. 12.

dered him as a wizard or a magician, who could, of his own power, injure or do good to whom he chose. He, therefore, sent to him to offer him money, on condition that he would come and curse this people of Israel. Balaam consulted God; Who told him not to go. "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse this people for they are blessed<sup>1</sup>." Balak, who knew nothing of God, imagined that Balaam merely gave this as an excuse in order to get more money; so he sent again greater men, and offered greater rewards. The avarice of the wretched Balaam was enticed by this; and therefore, though he knew God's resolution and determination, instead of at once sending the men away, he *hesitated*, and said he would ask God again; as if God was One Who could change His mind, or speak what He did not mean. God's anger seems to have begun upon this; for instead of the plain order of His intention, by which He had before forbidden him, He gave him a qualified leave: "*If* the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them<sup>2</sup>." It does not appear that Balaam waited for their summons, which was the condition of his going; but rose up, and went of his own accord, anxious, it should seem, to obtain the money which had been offered, though he knew he could only do so by acting contrary to God's will; and the history tells us, that "God's anger was kindled because he went<sup>3</sup>." But He had not, as yet, given him up; for we find Him

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxii. 12.<sup>2</sup> Ib. 20.<sup>3</sup> Ib. 22.

giving the wretched man warning, which would have deterred one who had the fear of God before his eyes, from wishing to proceed. The animal on which he rode three times refused to go on. Then, with miraculous power, God opened the mouth of the ass : “ the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbade the madness of the prophet.” Still this was not enough to deter the money-loving prophet from his wicked purpose. At the last, God sent His angel to appear before the man ; but even this failed to change the desire of his heart, which was still set upon the wished-for rewards which Balak had offered for his iniquity. All that it drew from him was a reluctant consent to return, *if* it displeased God ; as if, after God’s declaration and interference, that could be any longer a matter of doubt. It was then that God, seeing that His positive commands, and all His merciful checks and awful warnings were wasted upon a man whose soul was set upon covetousness, ceased to interrupt his progress, and gave him up to his own heart’s lust,—still, however, making use of the man as an instrument of His glory, even against his will, by making him prophesy. “ Go with the men ; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak <sup>1</sup>.” “ Go with the men.” He had therefore sufferance to go unchecked upon his errand ; and, perhaps, fancied himself happy in the

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxii. 35.

sufferance, and that he had no cause for fear, as the checks were removed. But, I pray you, was it in mercy that God suffered him to go? Oh, no. Better, far better, would it have been for the man had he fallen down dead on the instant, before he had put his wicked intentions into execution, than that he should have been suffered, unchecked, to follow his own imagination. It was the most certain proof of God's anger; and happy would it be for men if they would consider what this teaches us, viz. that there cannot be a greater mistake than that which too many indulge in, namely, of imagining that, because their consciences cease to sting and to accuse them, they have, therefore, no longer cause to be uneasy; although they are still continuing in those ways which first called forth the reproaches of their conscience. There cannot be a greater mistake. It is so far from being a proof that they need not be alarmed, that it is, if rightly considered, the most awful cause of alarm that can be. There is something more terrible in this silent and dull state of the conscience, and in the cessation of God's judgments, than there is in its bitterest reproaches, and in the severest afflictions. For as the most violent and tremendous storms are oftentimes preceded by an unnatural stillness in the air, as if nature were pausing for an instant, that she might afterwards burst forth with the more overwhelming force; so this dull and silent state of a man's conscience, who persists in his careless ways, gives too much reason

to fear that his day of grace is past; that God has ceased to care for him; and is permitting him to fill up the measure of his iniquity; that His tremendous judgment is resolved upon, and soon to take effect. For God still dealeth with us, by conscience and by judgments, as He dealt with Balaam. When first a man is enticed to sin, the voice of conscience, if he will consult it, is loud and positive against it. Like as God said to Balaam, when he first enquired, positively, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." If we are so unhappy as to disregard the first plain and forcible checks of conscience, it does not at once desert us; but its voice and opposition become more faint and feeble; like God's answer to Balaam at his second enquiry, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them." Should we persist in drowning the voice of conscience altogether, God's anger rises, as it is said that it was kindled because he went. But then, in the remembrance of His mercy, when conscience has failed to check us, He tries other ways; and by visitations and judgments, endeavours to frighten us from conduct, from which the still small voice of conscience had been unable to dissuade us. Like the miracle of the ass speaking, and the terrifying appearance of the angel, with his sword drawn. But if these also fail, if conscience and judgments are unavailing, to deter a man from his evil ways, there is then no hope: the wrath of God arises,—there is no remedy;

and it is shown by the man's being left to himself, forsaken of God. To himself, did I say? No; rather to those evil spirits which have persuaded and tempted him to forsake the Lord. For it is now, still, as it was in the case of Saul, that "when the Spirit of the Lord departs" from a man, "an evil spirit troubles him;" which may be easily seen in the fearful and devilish crimes of which men will then be guilty; crimes so horrible that mere human nature, were it left to itself, bad as it is, would never dream of committing; were it not urged on by that evil spirit, the enemy of God and man, who governs with a rod of iron those miserable persons, who, by persisting in disobeying God, have put themselves out of His governance and protection. Like the unhappy Balaam, whose history we have been considering, and whose name has become a by-word, a proverb, and a reproach among men, and whose fall and ruin afford an awful warning to all men in all ages, that they provoke not God to forsake them: and let people also recollect, and learn from his history, the only way of escaping such a terrible end. For it is not, as people sometimes imagine, the belief in the true God that will prevent it, unless they live according to that belief, and in obedience to the commands of the God in whom they believe. "The devils believe and tremble;" and none could have more certain belief of a God than the wretched Balaam.—Neither is it the knowledge of God's will, that will prevent



it, nor the reading or studying His Holy Word, unless we are careful to fulfil His will, and keep and do His Holy Word. For none had a clearer knowledge of it than Balaam, who knew the knowledge of the Most High, and heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty.—Neither yet will the desire of attaining to heaven prevent it, and the mere choice, with which men content themselves, of the blessing of a holy life. For it is certain Balaam had this; and every wicked man also has the same, and can join with him: “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.” This they can wish for, but they will not give up any thing for the sake of it. They are willing enough to receive the happiness of holiness, but they must also first have the pleasures of sin: they can wish for the treasures of heaven, but they must also have the riches of this world, even though they sin to procure them. But this cannot be. For as men cannot serve two masters, cannot together serve God and Mammon, so neither can they receive the rewards of both. But a choice, an active choice, must be made between them. If like Balaam, the son of Bosor, they love the wages of unrighteousness, any of the profits or pleasures of sin, and will, at all costs, secure them, they may spare themselves the trouble of wishing for the death of the righteous; it will be as empty as his.

With this I conclude: and may God give us grace to lay seriously to heart the instruction which this

history affords us, that if we would really obtain, what Balaam vainly wished for, the death of the righteous, and have our latter end like his, our conduct must be the reverse of Balaam's. We must resist the pleasures, the profits, the gains of sin, however tempting and pleasing they may appear: we must listen to, and be guided by, the still small voice of conscience, before by neglect we drown it; or at least must attend to, and be awakened by the judgments and visitations which a merciful and longsuffering God deigns to send us for our salvations.

Thus only can we hope to prosper, thus only to secure our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

# SERMON XVI.

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## ON CHRISTIAN LOVE.

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EPHES. v. 1, 2.

“Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.”

ONE of the chief advantages which the Christian religion offers to us, consists in the example of a good and holy life, which our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ has set us, in order that we may learn from it, and follow Him by imitating His conduct. “I have given you an example,” He said on one occasion, “that ye should do as I have done to you<sup>1</sup>.” It is an example, at once pure, and perfect, as well as easy to be understood, and applicable to every case. It is pure and perfect, and must needs be so, for it was set us by Emmanuel, God dwelling with us, the “Lamb without blemish, and without spot,” in whom was no sin. It is also easy to be under-

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 15.

stood, and applicable to every case, because it was set us by One Who was man as well as God, Who lived in circumstances in which we all may be placed, and Who suffered the same wants, the same trials, the same temptations to which we are exposed. "We have not," St. Paul tells us, "an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin<sup>1</sup>." His example, also, consisted very much in putting in practice principles of conduct which are always applicable, and may be brought into use in every station, be it high or low; and in all circumstances, whether of adversity or of prosperity. It is my present intention to select for consideration, one of those principles of holiness which shone conspicuously in our Lord's life, and to the imitation of which both Himself and His Apostles have particularly called our attention: and I fix upon that which St. Paul has mentioned in our text, as one by which we may best become "followers of God, as dear children," namely, that "we walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Of all the virtues which the Redeemer's life displayed, none shed so beautiful and endearing a tinge upon it, as this love, or charity, which we are here taught to practise. Every action of His partook of it. Before His birth, it was this which led Him to enter the world in the human form; after His birth,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

this led Him to bear with all the unkind treatment which He experienced, and to submit with meekness to the cruel death with which they, whom He came to save, afflicted Him. After His death, it was this that prompted Him to rise again, and reappear upon earth, for the comfort and encouragement of His disciples; and still now, when seated at the right hand of God, in Eternal Majesty and Glory, it is this love which makes Him listen to all the prayers, which His servants, throughout the world, offer up in His name; and induces Him to present them to the Father, and plead for the acceptance of them.

To so remarkable and unprecedented an extent did He both practise and teach this duty, that He calls it "a new commandment;" saying, "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another <sup>1</sup>;" and says that it will be a sufficient badge or mark, to distinguish Christians from others; "by this shall all men know that ye are *my* disciples, if ye have love one to another <sup>2</sup>."

To this it behoves us all to give heed, as to a matter which most intimately concerns every individual among us; namely, that our Christian profession is at stake, as concerns the discharge of this duty; our Christian hopes depend upon our performance of it. For from these words we are led to

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 35.

conclude that we shall not be owned as Christ's disciples, not be acknowledged as His, to any saving purpose, if we do not practise charity; and St. John has plainly taught us, that God will not accept our services, but will count us for liars and hypocrites, if, while we make a show of loving Him, our hearts be at variance with our fellow-men: "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar<sup>1</sup>;" and St. Paul, to the same purpose, has informed us, that the most illustrious actions of Religion, even martyrdom itself, are nothing worth, unless Christian Charity rule in our hearts; and he sums up his praises of it, by placing it before all other Christian virtues, even above faith itself; "Now," saith he, "abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity<sup>2</sup>."

Let us, then, be led by these considerations to give our earnest care and diligence to the fulfilment of this duty. That we may do this the better, it will be desirable to call to mind, distinctly, what it is, which is required of us under the head of *charity*.

We are apt, in common conversation, to confine the word to the giving of alms to the poor. If a man relieves the wants of his poorer neighbours, he is said to be charitable; and many, it is to be feared, have been misled and deceived by this inadequate

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

application of the word. The giving of alms to the poor, though of course it is the bounden duty, according to their means, of all the followers of the Son of God, is not only not the whole of Christian charity, but does not necessarily spring from or form any part of it. So St. Paul long ago observed, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing<sup>1</sup>." For though it be true, that every one who has real Christian charity will always be willing to relieve the wants of those who are in distress, it by no means follows, that every one who does relieve those wants has real Christian charity; because pride, ostentation, envy, a pharisaical spirit, may lead a man to do this; and none of these have any relation to Christian charity. In what then does Christian love and charity consist? In feelings of kindness and affection toward all men, regarding them all as brethren, and, as such, as having an undoubted claim and right to our love. St. Paul writes, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love<sup>2</sup>." And St. Peter, in the Epistle for to-day, "Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous<sup>3</sup>;" and again, "See that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently<sup>4</sup>."

By charity therefore is meant the highest possible degree of brotherly love and kindness. And

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i. 22.

then the motive is to be considered : why are we to do this? It is for Christ's sake ; out of gratitude, and love, and duty to God. St. John writes, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment<sup>1</sup>." Again, he writes, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another<sup>2</sup>." It is out of love to God. He writes again, "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also<sup>3</sup>." The knowledge of this motive, namely, that we are to bear charity to, and to love one another for *Christ's* sake, will serve to show us also to *whom* this love and charity is to be shown ; even to all the sons of God, all the members of Christ ; and, lastly, to all mankind. It is not to be confined to our friends, and those who are kind to us ; the doing good to them who do good to us, the returning good for good, and kindness for kindness, is not peculiar to *Christian* charity : the heathens and the worst sinners do as much as this ; they do good to those, that do good to them : and he who will not return good for good, is not only not a Christian, but is worse than an heathen. But he who would prove by his charity, that he is a real follower of Jesus Christ, must do a great deal more than this ; he must show this kindness and charity, not only to

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 21.



those who have shown kindness to himself, not only to those who have not injured him; but to them who have injured him. He must repay evil with good; not only do good, where he hopes it will be thankfully received, or a return be made, but where he can expect none. As our Saviour says, "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest<sup>1</sup>." But more than this, we must show kindness and charity to our very enemies; "Love your enemies," are our Saviour's words, "Bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you<sup>2</sup>."

These words of our Saviour will help likewise to show us, not only *to whom* we are to show charity, namely, to all mankind, even our bitterest enemies; but also *how* we are to exercise it.

For a part of this duty, we see, consists in *doing* good to all men, in offices and works of kindness. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink<sup>3</sup>;" and, as St. John writes, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth<sup>4</sup>;" bearing the affection at the heart, and giving proofs of it in outward conduct.

Thus, part of the exercise of Christian charity or love consists in *doing* good and showing kind-

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John iii. 18.

ness towards all men ; another, and a more difficult part, as being more offensive to our natural feeling and dispositions, consists in the bearing with and forgiving injuries. The “not rendering railing for railing, or evil for evil,” as the heathens do, “but, contrariwise, blessing<sup>1</sup> ;” “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye<sup>2</sup> ;” and therefore, remember also, that neither is this to be done in word or outward appearance only, but it must be real, and from the heart. For our Saviour has told us, that God will exact from us the very utmost vengeance which our sins and faults deserve, if we “from our hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses<sup>3</sup>.” There is still another part of the exercise of charity, one which is called into more every-day action, and which (strange as it may seem), is more difficult even than that of forgiving enemies, and is, indeed, the perfection of this virtue ; and this is the disposition to wish and think well of all men,—the destroying that evil propensity which our corrupt nature has to impute evil motives to men’s conduct ; to listen greedily to every evil story of another ; to feel a sort of fiendish satisfaction (for it deserves no better name) at hearing of another’s failings. This part of charity consists in the opposite of all this : in rejoicing at another’s good fortune or success ; in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 9.<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 13.<sup>3</sup> Matt. xviii. 35.

thinking well of every man until forced to think otherwise ; in being unwilling to believe any story reflecting upon another's character ; in putting a favourable construction upon every man's conduct, as long as it is possible. Thus St. Paul describes charity : " Charity suffereth long and is kind ; charity envieth not, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things ; believeth all things ; hopeth all things ; endureth all things <sup>1</sup>."

Such, then, is Christian charity ; and this is what our God requires of us under this head. To do good, and to show kindness, for His sake, to all men ; to them from whom we can hope for nothing in return ; to the unthankful, and to our enemies : to forgive from our hearts, and bless and pray for all who have injured us, or who hate us, and to think favourably of every one, unless forced to think otherwise ; and even then, especially if the offence be against ourselves, rather to seek for excuses for it, than to aggravate it, and make it appear at the worst. This is the account which the Scriptures give us of Christian charity ; thus our Saviour practised it ; and thus we are required to use our utmost endeavours to practise it likewise, and to " walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," if we wish to become " followers of God, as dear children." This is a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.

plain exposition of a well-known doctrine of our holy religion,—so plain and well-known, that some, perhaps, will be inclined to think it superfluous to make this repetition of it. And yet it is to be feared that the practice here set forth is so different from, and so much above, what is usually adopted even in the professedly Christian world, that many will not be persuaded but what a much less degree of Christian charity will serve their turn, and be sufficient; that they *may* return evil for evil, and the like. To this all that can be answered is, that God, Who is to be their judge at the last day, has told them otherwise; and has set forth, in His Holy Word, the foregoing standard of charity to be their pattern; and as that word will be the rule of their judgment *then*, so they will do well to let it be the rule of their lives now.

Others will be inclined to think it hard and unreasonable that so much should be required of them; that when another has injured them, they should be required to forgive them. But there is one consideration which may do something to check such murmuring. Let any who are inclined to entertain such a thought, pause and consider if they *can count* the number of sins, of thought, word, and deed, which they have committed against God. The most hardy of them will be forced to confess that they cannot; as David says, “Who can tell how oft he offendeth?” Well then; they have committed against God more offences than they can

number ; yet He is willing, aye, has promised, to forgive them all on their repentance, for the sake of Jesus Christ ; only He requires of them (and that also for Christ's sake) to forgive their neighbour some one, or, it may be, two or three offences, which he has committed against them. Is this unreasonable ?

Or, let them take it in another point of view. Who is he who has endeavoured to injure you ? Your brother ; that is, one of those whom Christ came to save. He, by obeying the dictates of his own corrupt nature, and neglecting the Holy Spirit of God, in trying to injure you, has broken the second great commandment, and thereby hazarded his own salvation. In other words, one of those whom your Saviour died to bring to heaven, is, by his own foolish and sinful conduct, farther from heaven than he was. If you love your Saviour, what must be your wish ? Surely to bring His servant back to Him again. But how is this to be done ? By returning evil for evil ? No. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." You must "overcome evil with good." Do kindness to him, and he will be ashamed of his former conduct, and return to his duty ; and thus will you be, in another sense, a follower of Christ ; for "he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> James v. 20.

Lastly, there are some who, allowing the demand to be reasonable, and being desirous of fulfilling it, will exclaim at the extreme difficulty of it. Unquestionably, to practise Christian charity to the extent required is *most* difficult to flesh and blood; and the heathens cannot do it; nor any man, when left to his own strength. But any Christian, who should, on that account, shrink from endeavouring to fulfil his duty, must surely *forget that he is a Christian*; and that one of the chief benefits of being admitted to the Christian covenant, by baptism, is, that God is engaged to give to those who are so admitted the help necessary to the acceptable performance of their duty, if they will pray to Him. Therefore, although the fact that men cannot, of themselves, practise Christian charity aright, be a sufficient reason why the heathens neither attempt it, nor perform it, because they know nothing of God's help, nor how to procure it; this will be no reason, and no excuse, for a Christian, who both knows where that help is to be obtained, and how to obtain it; even by prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, when, if he ask in faith, it shall be given him.

There is an additional consideration connected with this duty which it seems desirable at the present time to call to mind, and this is, that these principles of Christian charity, which the Collect and Epistle for the day<sup>1</sup> have set before us, are to be

<sup>1</sup> Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

the rule of our conduct in public, as well as in private life. I say that it is desirable, at the present time, to call this to mind. My reason is, because we live in troubled times ; and one of the chief evils arising from political excitement is this, that it exposes the contending parties to all the sins of bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and malice, against which the Holy Scriptures have cautioned us ; and men are tempted to think, or to act, as if in matters of public interest, with public persons, it were lawful to carry into the contest feelings, and words, and acts of enmity, which all would acknowledge to be sinful in private life. But this is a great mistake. We cannot thus deal with our Christian character, and put it off and on, as convenience may dictate ; we must bear the badge of our Christian calling, abroad as well as at home, if we would be acknowledged to be followers of our Lord. And what that badge is we have already heard ; namely, “ by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Let me not be misunderstood, as though under the false pretext of a spurious charity, it were sought to recommend that heartless indifference to truth or falsehood which, according to the perverted phraseology of the day, oftentimes passes for *liberality*. No, God forbid ! It is not Christian charity to compromise Christian verities ; it is not Christian charity to adulterate that Word which God has

committed to our care ; it is not Christian charity to lower the standard by which men are to be guided in their worship of the Majesty on High, nor to remove the safeguards which the wisdom of the Church has set as defences against error. Let us be liberal of our time, and our labour, and our money ; let us spend and be spent in defending the eternal truths which concern the honour of God, and the salvation of mankind. This is Christian charity, as it regards both God and man ; this is Christian liberality ; this, Christian earnestness, according as we are called, that we “should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints<sup>1</sup>.” But let us not be liberal in sacrificing God’s truth, for the sake of securing our own ease, or earthly comfort. “This wisdom descendeth not from above ; but is earthly, sensual, devilish<sup>2</sup>.”

But that which it behoves all men (whatever their views of public matters may be) to bear in mind is this, that the more fully they are persuaded that the cause they have embraced affects the glory of God, the more strictly does it behove them to be careful as to the means which they employ in its defence. For all means are not equally fitting, when God is concerned ; nor may the heavenly cause be defended by weapons drawn from Satan’s armoury. Oftentimes it has happened, as the his-

<sup>1</sup> Jude 3.

<sup>2</sup> James iii. 15.



tory of other nations, and of our own, may serve to tell us, that the cause of truth has been deserted by God, and overthrown for the wickedness of those who have espoused it.

Therefore, let us watch and be on our guard, and amid all the provocations and trials to which we may be exposed, let us endeavour "to have always a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man." Let us, on the one hand, consider how bitter would be our regret, if, by any sinful intemperance or uncharitable conduct, we should injure the cause we most desire to promote. On the other, let us remember that our Christian character is of more value to us, as individuals, than any political success; and that this would be dearly purchased with injury to that. "Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth." He will maintain His own cause, without our swerving aside, to the right hand, or to the left. If, on the pretence of the justice of our cause, we go astray from the line of duty, what do we but imitate Uzzah in his unsanctioned attempt to uphold the tottering ark? The ark was preserved from falling; but, for his presumptuous conduct, he was struck dead. "The Lord saveth not with spear and shield;" not with sinful earthly means, and corrupt devices of men; "for the battle is the Lord's:" and therefore St. Paul observes, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." They will, indeed, be mighty, if we

be careful that they be such only upon which we may safely ask and look to receive, through Christ, the blessing of God. Let us lift up clean hands, and pure hearts, and chastened affections; and then, with faithful dependence upon God, and Christian charity, even towards our bitterest enemies, we may, in an honest and good heart, not only earnestly and firmly, and, under God's blessing, successfully, "contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints;" but, at the same time, show to all the world, that we are Christ's disciples, when we thus become "followers of God, as dear children," and endeavour to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us;" and thus may we reasonably look for the fulfilment of the petition which our Church throughout the world has this day offered to the throne of grace: "Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee, in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

# SERMON XVII.

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## THE CASE OF NAAMAN.

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2 KINGS v. 11—14.

“ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest not thou have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

WE should do well to remember that the accounts of the lives and conduct of individuals, whether of those who are alive at the present day, or of those who, in ages gone by, have trod the journey of life before us, should never be regarded as

matter of mere curiosity; but as a means of our instruction and improvement. In the history of others we may see, as it were in a looking-glass, either what we are, or what we might have been. If it is a history of one worse than ourselves, we may see what we might have been, and what our natural disposition would have made us, if the grace of God had not preserved us, and enabled us to overcome our natural tendency to evil. If the history be of one better than ourselves, we may see what we might have been, had we made the same use of the means of grace, and applied ourselves as earnestly to amendment. The mere knowledge of another's conduct, whether it be good or bad, will avail us nothing, unless in the fear of God, we apply that knowledge to ourselves, and draw from it instruction and profit. It will be very clear from this consideration, that if the account we happen to be reading be of one eminently good, the way in which a Christian should receive it is not with an idle exclamation of wonder, that any one should have lived so well; still less, with that malevolent disposition, which leads some unhappy persons to watch for some failing or defect in the character, by which they may bring it down, in their own estimation, to their own level; and form an excuse to themselves for not being equal to it in other respects: but the feelings with which a Christian should receive the account will be partly of humiliation and self-abasement, to think that another, who is but flesh and

blood like himself, and who has no other means of doing well than what he himself likewise has within his reach, namely, the grace of God, the assistance of His Holy Spirit, should so far have exceeded him in glorifying and serving his Maker, and thus fulfilling the end of his creation. But it will not be a feeling of humiliation only, it will carry the cheerfulness of encouragement with it; for bearing in mind the old saying, "What one man has done, another may do," he will reason thus with himself: "If this person, who is but a man, can yet, with the help of God, lead such a godly and a Christian life; I too, who am a man like him, may, with the same help of God, which my Bible tells me I may have if I will pray for it, live as well." Thus will a twofold profit be derived from the account of one remarkably good: 1st, the humiliation of self-abasement, than which no disposition is more becoming a man in this life of trial, and none more acceptable to God, as it is written, "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word<sup>1</sup>:" 2dly, the excitement of encouragement to exertion, so much needed by those who are travelling through this world's pilgrimage; and who meet with so much to discourage them, both in their own feelings, and in the temptations by which they are surrounded. On the other hand, it will be equally clear from the foregoing consideration, that if the account we read

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.

be of one remarkably wicked, the Christian way of receiving it will not be with eager condemnation of the individual, our foolish hearts vainly puffing up ourselves, in the mean while, with the self-complacent reflection, of our being so much better than he: but a Christian will receive the account with fear for himself; he will apply the consideration, inwardly, to his own breast, and search and examine his own conscience, to see whether the conduct, which he is willing to condemn in another, finds anything answerable to it in himself.

It will rarely happen, be the fault under consideration what it may, that we shall not, by strict examination, find something somewhat similar to it in ourselves; or if not the fault itself, at any rate, in most cases, a tendency and disposition which would have led us to it, if some power stronger than our own, even God's, had not protected us: and the man will be led to reason with himself in some such way as this, "If this person, through neglect of God's grace, has fallen into such sins, I, who am of the same nature, if I neglect God's grace in the same manner, shall fall into the same or the like, and become as pitiable an object, and as much in need of forgiveness." Thus from the Christian way of regarding the failings of others three sources of profit may be derived: 1st, it will excite charity and pity for the offender (however much we may condemn the offence) when we consider that we are all of the same flesh and blood, and naturally inclined to the same

or as great wickedness: 2dly, it will excite humility and fear for ourselves, when we think that such is the case, and our nature so corrupt, that whatever there is of good about us does not come from ourselves: 3dly, it will increase our thankfulness to God, our dependence on Him, and our endeavour to serve Him; for if by Him alone we have been hitherto preserved from the fault which we see in another, by Him alone can we be preserved from it for the time to come. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise, for Thy loving mercy and for Thy truth's sake."

That such, as has been suggested, should be the use to be made of the account of the lives and conduct of others, is so in accordance with reason, that, as I suppose, none will contest the correctness of it, I will not dwell upon it longer than to say, that if such be the case with regard to the history of individuals which we may meet with in any manner, much more must it be so with regard to those histories which are contained in the volume of inspiration: and the Bible itself teaches us, that they are recorded for our instruction and improvement. "These things," saith St. Paul, "are written for our admonition:" and again, when he had been speaking of the sins and failings of the Israelites, he adds, "Now these things are our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they lusted:" and so on.

Now let us turn to the passage which I have

chosen for my text, in order that, applying to it the rule which we have been considering, we may not receive it as a matter of curiosity, of which no use is to be made, but may be led to search our own hearts, to see whether any conduct is to be found in them, like that described in the text.—“But Naaman was wroth, and went away and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.” As this passage is familiar to you all, I need only remind you of the chief points of the story. Elisha was a prophet of the true God, living in Israel, celebrated for the miracles which God enabled him to do; many of which are mentioned in the preceding chapters. The fame of his miracles spread into different countries; among others into Syria, of which Benhadad (a heathen) was king; who had a servant, this Naaman, to whom he was much attached, sick of the leprosy. On the report of the wonders which Elisha had performed, Benhadad sent Naaman into Israel, to Jehoram the king of Israel, in the hopes that he might be healed. Jehoram, who was a wicked prince, and had neglected and forsaken God, was at a loss what to do; but Elisha sent to desire that Naaman



might come to him, and he would give a proof of the power by which he acted. Accordingly he came to Elisha, who, without seeing him, sent him a message as to what steps he should take, in order to be cleansed of his disorder: saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Upon this follows the passage in the text, "Naaman was wroth, and went away; and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." Two points of Naaman's character appear to have been offended. His pride was hurt, because he was not treated with the consideration which he thought due to himself. Elisha did not even come out, but merely sent a message by another: and his faith or rather want of faith was affronted, for he could not imagine how so great effect as the removal of leprosy could follow the simple act of washing: or, if mere water could effect it, he could not see why one water should not be as good as another; and why he should bathe in Jordan, rather than in the rivers of his own country: he seems, therefore, to have concluded that Elisha was making game of him. The fact was that, through want of a right faith, and understanding of God,

he looked to the prophet, who was the instrument, and not to Him, Whose instrument he was: and in so doing, failed to see that the cure was to be effected, not by virtue of the water, or the means which he was to use; but, by virtue of the power which God was pleased to give to that particular means. One water is as good as another, one river as good as another, one mean of cure as good as another, till God chooses to draw the line, and to say, that by this means, and not by that, the cure shall be effected; and then the equality ceases; and that is alone available, which God has declared to be so; for it is for Him Who confers the blessing, and not for him who receives it, to say by what method it shall be conveyed.

The folly of Naaman's conduct, and if I may so speak, the absurdity of it, are plain to every one who reads the passage. That a man, covered with the loathsome disease of leprosy, should be proud would seem strange; that he should vent his pride against one at whose hands he was seeking relief from his noisome disorder, would seem stranger still; but that he should carry his pride so far, as to injure himself, and refuse the ease and relief which he desired, because it was offered to him in a different way from what he expected or chose, would indeed seem almost incredible, had we not too many instances, in daily life, both in our own conduct, and in that of others, of folly far greater, because it is in a matter of infinitely higher

moment. Let us make use of the rule which we considered in the former part of this discourse, and apply the account of Naaman's conduct to ourselves, looking inwardly to see whether any conduct of ours resemble it.

Have we not all a leprosy, only one beyond comparison more loathsome than that which afflicted Naaman? I mean the leprosy of sin, which cleaveth to our souls. And is it not the part of the ministers of God now, as it was of His prophet Elisha then, to declare to those who are afflicted with this leprosy, the steps which they must take to be healed? And is there not a resemblance in the very means of cure? "Wash and be clean," said the prophet to Naaman. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." And so say the ministers of God now to him who is labouring under the leprosy of sin. "Wash and be clean." Oh thou afflicted soul, the fountain of Baptism is open for thee; wash, and the leprous spots shall disappear, and thy soul shall be clean: thou shalt cease to be the child of wrath, and shalt become the child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. "Wash and be clean;" the fountain of repentance is open to thee. If, after being admitted by baptism to the title of their inheritance, thou hast done ought by sin to weaken thy title, "wash and be clean;" let the salt tears of sorrow fall upon those spots; God will have

mercy upon thee, thou shalt be forgiven. "Wash and be clean;" the fountain of thy Saviour's blood, through which alone either repentance or baptism can avail, is open to thee: in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the blood of the covenant is verily and indeed offered to thee, to repair the injuries and breaches which sin may have made. Whatever sins you have committed, however foul the leprosy of thy soul, there is a virtue in that blood, through the mercy of God, sufficient to make all clean: as the Apostle says, "The blood of Jesus Christ the Righteous cleanseth us from all sin." Wash then by faith, and with repentance, your soul in that precious blood, and let an amended life afford proof of the truth of your faith, and of the sincerity of your repentance, and all shall be well: As God said to the Jews by Isaiah, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well<sup>1</sup>." And what should be the consequence? "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool<sup>2</sup>." Thus the burden of the message which the ministers of God deliver to those whose souls are leprous, is to the same purpose as the burden of the message which Elisha sent to Naaman, "Wash and be clean." And too frequently it happens also, that the manner in which their message is received,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 18.

is like that in which Naaman received the message of Elisha. Sometimes, like him, men take offence at the minister, because the means of salvation which God authorizes him to declare, are not such as they would themselves have expected. "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Such foolishness might be somewhat excusable in Naaman, who did not know God, and imagined that it rested with Elisha to choose the means of recovery; but it is inexcusable in Christian persons, who know, or ought to know, that the Ministers of Religion have no power to speak either good or bad of their own mind, but plainly to teach the way of salvation, according to the rules and methods contained in the written Word of God.

Others again, like Naaman, find fault with the means of remedy, think scorn of, and despise the appointed methods of salvation, as being too insignificant. "How can the water of Baptism," one will say, "alter a man's condition, and make him a child of God, if he was not before?" "How can eating bread and drinking wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," another will say, "be of service to a man's soul, and make him verily and indeed partaker in the body and blood of Christ?" "How can a man's sorrow and tears undo what is already done?" another will say: "and how," some impious tongues have been bold enough to say, "how can the death

of an individual upon the cross avail to take away the sins of the world?"

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" When such mad, wicked, and desperate thoughts as these are entertained, and men are inclined, like Naaman, to turn away, and lose their salvation, by refusing to comply with God's appointed means of obtaining it, how sweet to hear the voice of kind exhortation, like that of Naaman's servants, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" And sweeter still, to see, when, by God's grace, such kind exhortation has its right effect; and the sinner is led, in humility and faith, to seek to avail himself of that way of restoration, which the mercy of God so kindly offers to him; that merciful and gracious way, "Wash and be clean." "Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." So let the Christian, in humility and faith, make use of the appointed means of restoring the soul to health: of the waters of baptism, which admit to covenant with God; of the waters of repentance, which lead to amendment of life; of the blood of the covenant, received at the Baptismal Font; of the blood of the covenant received in the

holy Eucharist ; by faith in God's mercy through Christ ; and it will happen to him, in regard to the leprosy of his soul, like as it happened to Naaman, in regard to the leprosy of his body ; his soul will be kept tender and awake, like the soul of a little child, and he shall be saved ; for, as our Saviour Himself tells us, " of such is the kingdom of heaven."

# SERMON XVIII.

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ON THE GIFTS OF GRACE.

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JAMES i. 17—21.

“ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath : for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.”

“ EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” This great and important truth is one of which we have need, through the corruption of our nature, constantly to be put in mind. For one of the most convincing proofs of our fallen state is to be found in this, that continuance of blessing, if it be uninterrupted, instead of eliciting from us, as in



right reason it should do, a continuance and increase of thankfulness towards God, is apt to have the very contrary effect, and to make us unthankful, by filling us with pride, and thoughts of our self-sufficiency, and that our well-being is the result of our own skill, or power, or industry. You may remember what especial need God found to caution the Israelites, again and again, on this point, when they were about to enter the land of Canaan. "Lest thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth," "but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth<sup>1</sup>." You may remember, likewise, to what cause chiefly, if not wholly, the horrid sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were ascribed, even to "pride" and "fulness of bread<sup>2</sup>:" that is to say, to that proud self-sufficiency, and forgetfulness, and neglect of God, which uninterrupted prosperity is too apt to induce in the corrupt heart of men: and you know how our blessed Lord has endeavoured to guard us against this danger, by teaching us to ask from day to day, the daily supply of which we stand in need: Give us this day our daily bread.

Since the danger then is so great, it must ever be deemed an act of faithful kindness to endeavour to keep the truth of the case before the eyes of men: and thus haply, by God's grace, prevent the evil:

<sup>1</sup> Deut. viii. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xvi. 49.

for if otherwise, then God Himself is forced to take the matter in hand, and by afflictions, visitations, and sicknesses, and withholding His good things, to oblige men to feel and acknowledge through adversity, what they fail to learn from prosperity ; namely, that “ every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” He calls God the Father of Lights, to show that nothing but good can come from Him ; earthly, and intellectual, and spiritual good. St. John in his epistle uses a similar figure, “ God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all <sup>1</sup> :” by light comprehending truth, and holiness, and goodness ; by darkness, error, and sin, and evil. St. James adds, “ with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” by way of consolation and assurance to those who would trust in God, for as he had spoken of Him as “ the Father of lights,” he goes on to say that He is not like the great lights which are seen in the heavens, the sun which now shines and now is hidden, for some time above the horizon, at others hidden by it : nor like the moon, ever varying her appearance towards us ; but, to use the language of St. Paul when speaking of Jesus Christ, “ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever <sup>2</sup> :” ever able and ever willing to bestow upon all who seek Him aright, His rays of warmth, and light, and

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xiii. 8.

blessing. This is indeed a strong ground and source of consolation and confidence, the value of which they only, or they chiefly, can tell, who have at any time been tempted to seek for happiness by setting their affections upon any things or persons here below, which are ever varying in themselves, and ever varying therefore the happiness and peace of those who are weak enough to put their trust in them. But he who has set his affections on God above, and sought in Him his happiness, is lifted above the changing scenes of this world ; and can walk on calmly in his course, amid all the alterations to which earthly things are liable. He has got that peace which as the world cannot give, so neither can it take away. Though it be true that “ every good gift,” whether it relate to our bodies or to our souls, to this life or to the next, to earthly prosperity or heavenly happiness, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights,” yet it is clear from the next verse that the good gifts of which St. James is particularly speaking, are spiritual. The spiritual gifts, graces, privileges, blessings, which the children of the kingdom, the adopted sons of God, the redeemed of the Lord, have received ; in a word, those which form the common store of spiritual good of which all have been, and are, or may be still partakers, who have been made Christians by the waters of Baptism, and the spiritual unction of sanctification and adoption therein conveyed. And concerning these it is no less necessary,

than it is in the case of earthly good things, to remind those who have them, that they all come from God. It seems at first superfluous to remind people of such a thing, for when we calmly consider it, it is difficult to conceive how men can ever do otherwise than feel, and perceive, and remember that their spiritual blessings are from God; and that to Him alone is the honour due, to Him the return to be made. But so it is, men are too often as much, and as vainly puffed up by their spiritual state as about their earthly one; commend themselves on account of it, and think scorn of others; and forget to render God the thanks and honour, and the humble and daily dependence upon Him for them which is His due. Well might St. Paul ask in such a case, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it" (and therefore art indebted to another, even to God, for it), "why dost thou glory" (in thine own pride) "as if thou hadst not received it<sup>1</sup>?"

I said that the second verse of the passage under consideration, shows that the good gifts which St. James had in view were the spiritual blessings bestowed upon Christians; you will see that it is so by the words, "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

The begetting, of which the Apostle here speaks,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 7.

has reference to the new or second birth which takes place in Baptism, when, to use St. Peter's language, we are "born again, not of corruptible seed" (like that from which we have our natural birth), "but of incorruptible" (the spiritual seed of the Holy Spirit of God) "by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever <sup>1</sup>." You will observe that both these Apostles, St. James and St. Peter, concur in ascribing this new birth to the power of the Word, and that we may have a third witness to the same effect, we find St. Paul, when treating of the same subject, saying that "Christ sanctified and cleansed the Church" (that is, the Christians who compose the Church) "with the washing of water *by the Word*<sup>2</sup>." The *Word* in all these places meaning the same, namely, that thrice Holy Name in which our Lord instituted the Sacrament of regeneration; the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in which we have all been baptized.

St. James says, that this new birth, received by water and the Word, or name of the Holy Trinity, is bestowed upon men by God's own will. His object is, in this particular instance, to enforce upon them the truth of the general principle he had laid down in the verse before, namely, that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above;" and so to put those men to shame, who give way to proud and self-flattering thoughts, on account of their spiritual

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. v. 26.

blessings. Our Saviour uttered the same truth, when, addressing His first disciples, He said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you<sup>1</sup>." And so you will find St. Peter and St. Paul both frequently applying the term "elect," or "chosen," to the whole bodies of Christians whom they were addressing in their epistles<sup>2</sup>. For as God at the first made choice of one single nation, that of the Israelites, to be the depository of His truth, and His witness to the world, so has He, in these last times, made choice of a people "taken out" of all nations, to form "a spiritual kingdom," or Church, to be "the pillar and ground of the truth<sup>3</sup>," and to act as "salt" to "the earth," and a "light" to "the world<sup>4</sup>," for the preservation and extension of true knowledge and holiness among men. And the Christians of Europe, of Asia, of Africa, and of America, how widely separated they may be in manners, in appearance, in language, and in country, are linked together in a holy brotherhood, a communion of spiritual blessings, forming one nation or spiritual kingdom, of which Christ is the Head or King. "From the East and from the West, and from the North, and from the South," they are gathered to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God<sup>5</sup>:" His "witnesses unto all men" of the truth of the Gospel;

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 2. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15. <sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 13, 14. <sup>5</sup> Luke xiii. 29.

and of the salvation which is through Jesus Christ. The very word which is used in the Greek to express what we call the Church, or the congregation, means something "called out," *ἐκκλησία*, which is the description of the Church given in the Acts of the Apostles. "Simeon hath declared how God, at the first, did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name<sup>1</sup>." St. James, in our text, says, that it is of God's "own will" that we are made, or rather born, by Baptism members of this Sacred Family: that is to say, that the choice is His; the work His; to Him the praise: to us merely thankful and humble acceptance of His great and undeserved mercies. We, among whom all are baptized in infancy, see very clearly how this is the case, that it is no choice of the children, and therefore can be no merit or praise to them, that they are entered into God's family; but it is the consequence of His grace moving the hearts of their parents and god-parents, and the result of His arrangements, Who has so ordered His spiritual kingdom. But it is no less true of those who are baptized when grown up; and it is to these chiefly that St. James is addressing himself, of these chiefly that the other passages which I have cited speak. For at that time the bulk of the Christian Church was composed of those who had been converted from heathenism to Christianity when grown up.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 14.

In all these cases it is equally true that their calling is the result of God's choice and grace, rather than of their own will; as our Lord distinctly said, "No man can come to me, except the Father, Which hath sent Me, draw him<sup>1</sup>." The Spirit of God must first move the heart of a heathen to desire the grace of adoption into the family of God, and to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. That motion in the heart is God's calling, and the grace of adoption and sanctification to one thus called and moved, is "the good and perfect gift" bestowed on us of God's free mercy, for the sake of His beloved Son. The Apostle has set forth these truths, and reminded those to whom he writes of these things, that he might take occasion from thence to exhort them to the careful exercise and practice of the three chief duties of the Gospel, meekness, charity, and purity: humility towards God, charity and brotherly kindness towards their fellow creatures, and purity and holiness of life and conversation in themselves.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." So St. Peter speaks of "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price<sup>2</sup>." St. James uses the word "wherefore;" he means, if you are convinced upon reflection

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 44.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 4.



that all the spiritual blessings which have been bestowed upon you, and which have raised you in the scale of beings above the heathen by whom you are surrounded ; if you are convinced that these do not come from yourselves, and therefore can afford no cause of pride in you, but are the merciful gifts of God's free grace ; then, let this consideration have its proper effect upon you, to lead you to humble yourselves before God, and to listen, meekly and attentively, to the instructions which he has annexed to this gift : " Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak ;" attentively weighing the advices given to him, and not presumptuously cavilling at them, nor seeking to set them aside. For when our Lord commissioned his Apostles, and in them all the Bishops and Clergy, who should receive the Apostolic commission, to " make disciples of all nations," by " baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;" he added, likewise, at the same time, the supplemental commission, " teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you <sup>1</sup>." When St. James adds " slow to wrath," he seems most probably to allude to contentions and disputes, on points of religion, among Christians themselves : which has been always a fruitful source of forgetfulness of charity among those who are really brethren : and requires much caution, prayer, and watch-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

fulness, in them who engage in such disputes, to avoid. Because our dearest interests, and all that we have, and value most, on both sides of the grave, being concerned, men are apt, through the very score of praiseworthy zeal, to engage too eagerly. But meekness and charity, if duly cultivated, will do much to abate this evil ; will, for the most part, prevent the necessity of such discussions at all, and will in all cases rob them of that virulence, which has often made that which has been said or written in defence of truth, to be injurious to charity. For most disputes, among honest and good men, arise, either from mistake as to the meaning of words and expressions, or from mistakes as to the facts which the words treat of. And when a clear understanding of the force of the words, and of the accuracy of the facts is attained, dispute is at an end. But if, instead of investigating these with meekness and charity, men give way to hasty suspicion, and imputations of evil motives, there is no end to brawling and quarrelling.

But if, in matters of such deep interest and importance, as differences of religious opinion, we are found, as St. James teaches us, to bring meekness and charity into the field ; how much more, in all the inferior subjects, of comparatively small importance, regarding our mere worldly interest !

The last exhortation of the Apostle in the text, relates to men's own individual and personal purity and holiness of life and conversation ; this is grounded

upon the same consideration : “ Wherefore lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” But though the Apostle has used expressions which are applicable to all sinful defilements whether of the body or of the spirit, it is probable that what he had in this verse chiefly in view was the defilement of the soul occasioned by anger, and intemperate debate. He had, just before, said, “ The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,” *i.e.* anger and intemperate feeling incapacitates men from receiving, practising, or being able to teach others, the pure and holy precepts of the Gospel : “ Wherefore,” says he, “ lay aside all these hateful feelings, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” St. Peter has an exhortation so exactly similar to this, that I will repeat it : “ Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and all evil speakings, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby<sup>1</sup>.”

The distinction is to be observed between the “ word ” here spoken of, and that which was mentioned before : by the former (namely, the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost), they *had been already* begotten and born into the Church of Christ ; by the latter, they were to be

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 1.

fed, and nourished, and supported, unto eternal salvation, after they were become members of the Church. By the latter, then, must be understood those precepts of holy living, which our blessed Lord gave for the instruction of those who should believe on Him. Such as these: "Love one another, as I have loved you."—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."—"Love your enemies."—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."—"Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven, is perfect;"—and the like: precepts so pure, so holy, so excellent, that all, both Christians and heathen, have admired them; and yet, so contrary to flesh and blood, so contrary to the natural corruption of our hearts, so foreign to all angry and contentious spirits, that too many who have admired them in theory, have shrunk from them in practice, and have refused to bow their necks and hearts to this yoke. When we consider the nature of these and the like precepts, we see the reason of the Apostle in combating the pride and conceits of those to whom he wrote; and how utterly such dispositions must prevent men from understanding, embracing, and practising, such exalted and godlike principles. St. James calls the word of instruction, conveying these precepts, "the engrafted word," meaning that, in order to its being of use or profit to any man, it must be engrafted in his heart; there received, and meditated upon, that it may be

practised. If this word of instruction be engrafted into the heart of a man, so as to bring forth fruits of holiness and righteousness, and the new life, St. James says, "it is able to save your souls;" that is, the faithful endeavour to fulfil the will of God will preserve and continue men in that state of salvation, into which they were admitted by the ministration of Baptism. For we were admitted into God's family by Baptism, not to do our own will, but the will of Him who thus called and adopted us to be His children. We were cleansed by His Holy Spirit in that Fountain, that we might be "a peculiar people" unto Him, "zealous of good works<sup>1</sup>:" and so long as we walk as His children and chosen people should do, so long we continue in that state of justification and acceptableness with Him, through Jesus Christ, unto which we were then, by His free mercy, admitted.

Let us, brethren, give heed to the Apostle's advice; in meekness let us receive the words of instruction which our blessed Lord has caused to be written; and which He sends His servants to teach. That they may ever be had in remembrance, let us do our diligence that by God's grace these instructions may be engrafted in our hearts, and bring forth fruit of righteousness unto God. Let us, remembering that our calling and adoption was of God's free grace and mercy, walk in meek and

<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

humble dependence upon Him, like children walking by the aid of a parent's hand, and fearful to lose our hold lest our tottering steps should fail beneath us. And let the sense of our entire dependence upon Him, first for His adoption, and, ever since, for that sustaining grace whereby alone we can be preserved from sin; let, I say, the sense of this teach us meekness and charity towards all men; a compassion for their infirmities; and a bearing with them, as knowing how constantly we ourselves are exposed to sin; and how frequently, whether intentionally or unintentionally, we stand in need of the forbearance and compassion of others. In this meek and humble spirit towards God and towards man, let us strive to practise the duties and virtues of our Christian calling, earnestly desiring that the righteousness of God may be fulfilled in us, while we walk not after the flesh, that is, not according to the corrupt desires of our own hearts, but after the Spirit, that is, according to the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

To whom, in the Unity of the Father and of the Son, be ascribed all praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, now and for evermore.

# SERMON XIX.

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## THE PRACTICE OF HOLINESS.

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JAMES i. 22—27.

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

THE evil against which St. James, in these words, designed to caution those to whom he wrote, and against which, to this day, he cautions us who hear his words, is that mixture of hypocrisy and self-deceit, wherewith many persons injure themselves,

and impose upon others; by mistaking the outward expressions and indications of religion, for religion itself; mistaking, that is, a shadow for a substance, and rashly assuming that where there are leaves, there must necessarily be fruit.

In the verses before the text St. James had been endeavouring to debase the pride of self-righteousness and of empty conceit, arising from the possession of the high spiritual privileges, which are the birthright of Christians; I mean the right to which they gain the earnest, and the title, at their baptismal or Christian birth; by reminding men that the good and perfect spiritual gift which they enjoyed was not of their own, but had been received from the Father of Lights: and he had urged upon them, as the consequence of this consideration, that they should walk in humility towards God, and in meekness and charity towards others; avoiding those defilements of their own spirit which arise from angry, envious, contentious, and spiteful imaginations towards others: and that they should, on the other hand, give diligence to nourish the gift of grace bestowed upon them in baptism, by meekly receiving the word of instruction which Christ had commissioned His ministers to preach to those who embraced His religion; and which, if duly engrafted in the heart, is able to save the soul, that is, to continue it in that state of grace and acceptableness before God, through Christ, into which it was admitted by the laver of regeneration in Baptism.



To follow up this exhortation, and to show, still more forcibly, the necessity of engrafting the word in *the heart*, and to prevent men from thinking that the mere reading with their eyes, or hearing with their ears, the instructions of the book of life, would be a fulfilment of his direction, he goes on, in the text, to show more clearly his meaning. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves:" deceiving your own selves, by imagining that you will be more acceptable unto God, and nearer unto salvation, by reading or hearing the word of God, while you do not lay it to heart, nor practise it in your lives. To suppose that the worship of the ear in hearing, or of the eye in reading, or of the mouth in speaking, about God and His religion, will stand as a substitute for true devotion and service, is to show a strange ignorance or disregard of the truth of God, as "a discerner of the thoughts," and as having all knowledge; and yet we find it to have been a fault often incurred by God's people in all ages: as He said of the Jews by Isaiah, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me<sup>1</sup>:" which reproof our Lord again urged against them in His days, saying, that that was still true of them which Isaiah had said of them so many hundred years before<sup>2</sup>. Men are of the same nature now, that

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxix. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 8, 9.

they were then; have the same temptations, the same inclination to evil; and therefore need the same cautions, and the same guard, if they would avoid the evil. But, perhaps, the saying in Ezekiel (xxxiii. 31) comes still more nearly to the meaning of St. James, where it is said, "They come unto thee (the teacher of God's word) as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." How exact an account is this of many, who pretend to be, and fancy that they are religious, but who seem to think that the chief part of religion consists in hearing sermons, and have not attained to the conviction, that religion is not a name, but a substance; not an idea, but a reality! Religion is the power of the Holy Spirit of God, operating in the hearts of men, and enabling them to overpower sin, and the inclination to sin, which will ever be trying to get the dominion in their hearts; and enabling them to walk in the service of God, and in the way of everlasting life. So far as the hearing or reading the word of God stirs up within us the desire and resolution to exert ourselves earnestly in the struggle that awaits us as His servants, so far as it helps us onward on our course, so far the

reading and hearing it, is profitable to us, being indeed one of the sources of the nourishment of our spiritual life : but if it fail in this, in the first place, it ministers to self-deceit; and in the next increases our condemnation; as our Lord said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not My word, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken unto him, the same shall judge him at the last day<sup>1</sup>," that is to say, will witness against him, for his condemnation, as showing that it was not through want of knowledge, that he failed to serve God, but through wilful disregard of the message, which God had caused to be delivered unto him. For while to those who are willing, and in earnest to do the will of God, the word which they hear is "the savour of life unto life," assisting the gift of life bestowed upon them, and nourishing it unto life eternal; to the others, it is "the savour of death unto death<sup>2</sup>," increasing and heightening their condemnation.

St. James, in the second verse of the text, uses a forcible illustration, to show the weakness and folly of those, who fancy that the listening to the word of God will benefit them without practising it. "If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 16.

was." By which we learn the great use, and design, of the instructions in the word of God; they set forth a pattern to men, by comparing themselves with which they may know in what state they are; what points they have need to amend, what to leave off; where they need to be on their guard; in short, may have complete direction for the whole course of their lives; instruction and profit being to be derived, by those who are desirous of it, from every page and chapter which is read to them. And therefore, the question which should be continually on the minds of men, when hearing God's word, is this; "How does this affect *me*? What am *I* to learn from this? What part of *my* conduct deserves this reproof?" "This is God's word; and addressed to me, what is the most use that I can make of it?" These, and such like, should be the thoughts and reflections, ever accompanied with the necessary self-examination, which shall keep the conscience tender and awake, quick and alive to the motions of the Holy Spirit, and to the service of God. Hence that caution of our blessed Lord, repeated again and again, to "take heed how they hear;" for that it is no light matter to receive a message from the Lord our Maker, and then turn away in carelessness, as though we had never heard it: and we know to what He has likened those who hear, and do not practise what they hear; even to the hard road, on which corn is sometimes scattered, and the birds eat it, and it comes to nothing: even

so, He says, "Satan taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved."

St. James, having stated the evil case of those who hear the word of God, and do it not, proceeds to point out the happy effects of a contrary course. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein; he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." How different is a Christian's estimation of the things of God, from those of a worldly man! How different the light in which the Holy Spirit enables the children of God to judge of spiritual things, to that in which the followers of Satan regard them! To worldly-minded, carnal, and sensual men the law of God is a yoke and burthen, which they will not endure; restraining them in that liberty, in which they foolishly glory, the liberty of injuring and destroying themselves. The wide and the broad way of sin is the road for them, even though it leads to ruin; the other they regard as poor, mean, and narrow-minded. Yes, truly, the way of God is straitened and narrow in respect to earthly liberty and indulgence; hedged in by the commandments of God, on the right hand, and on the left; which, like a hedge of thorns, wound and cause to smart the flesh of him who would break through them: and he who would walk at ease in it, had need keep his eyes straight before him on the point of duty; and not attempt to gaze about

or wander, on the right hand, or on the left. But then, that very law, which is a hedge of restraint from evil wandering, is the cause of security and freedom from evil; the hedge of God's law preserves a man free from the pits, and pools, and quagmires, in which the feet of those foolish persons are sure to be taken, when, in proud pursuit of their own liberty, they desert the firm hard road that God has provided for them to walk in. And then, while he whom they thought narrow-minded is walking freely and cheerily on his even Christian course, they are held fast in some of the traps and pits which Satan sets to catch those who throw aside the protection of God's laws, which they are foolish enough to count irksome and unnecessary restraints. The sea which drowned the Egyptians was wide and broad, and the path which the Israelites trode was a narrow one, with the waters a wall on their right hand, and on their left; but their narrow way was the only way of safety, and deliverance, and freedom from the yoke of Pharaoh and the house of Egypt. In like manner, the way marked out by the laws of God for His servants to walk in, narrow though it may seem to human eyes, is the only way of safety, deliverance, and freedom from the galling and degrading yoke of Satan and his angels. For the service of God is freedom from Satan; and the neglect of God is slavery to Satan. They who will not abide the restraints, which the love of God for men's safety and happiness, induces Him to impose upon them,

do not become, as they unthankfully fancy, their own masters, but enter a bondservice and slavery of a tyrant, who, for very malice and hatred towards them, will entice them to do that which will injure themselves, that he may triumph in their misery and wretchedness: and they who have at any time made trial of the ways of sin, much more they who have accustomed themselves to them, if ever they have been awakened to a true sense of their condition, know well the hateful and oppressive nature of that bondage. They find that though they may, at their will, enter it, they cannot, at their will, renounce it; that to renounce it, is a work of time, of labour, of pains, and watchfulness, and fearfulness, and trembling, as well as constant prayer; while all the while, sorrow and remorse are their companions; until by a return, (if by God's grace and favour they can accomplish it,) to what they first deemed the narrow ways of God's service, they are lightened of their load, and freed from their bondage, and have comfort, and peace, and holy hope again restored to them.

Happy, thrice happy, are they, who, believing the truth of God's word, that His law is indeed liberty, and joy, and peace, to those who practise it, do not make trial in their own persons of the misery of the other way, which Satan would bedeck with the false flowers of sinful pleasures and pursuits. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful

hearer, but a doer of the work," (of the work of holiness, which the word teaches him,) "this man shall be blessed in his deed." The very practice of holiness will be a comfort, blessing, and means of happiness to him: as we say among ourselves, "virtue is its own reward;" the inward satisfaction of mind, arising from the practice of holiness, and the endeavour to serve God, conveys at once the purest happiness, a pledge and foretaste of that which is reserved hereafter for them that love God.

St. James, having set forth the blessedness of observing the laws of God, goes on to caution men on a point very deserving of notice, and on which they are apt to be off their guard, and to deceive themselves. I mean the paying little or no regard to the regulation of the lips, and yet fancying that they may be very good Christians, and very religious persons without it. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; that man's religion is vain." Religion being, as I said before, the power of the Holy Spirit operating in the hearts of men; it necessarily follows that, if it be present in any man of a truth, it will operate consistently, and influence one branch of his conduct, as well as another; that his course will be uniform. He can no more allow himself in drunkenness, than he can in blasphemy; no more in breaches of the seventh commandment, than he can in breaking the eighth;



no more in evil speeches against others, than he can in evil and malicious actions against them. And so long as a man allows himself in any one evil course, however strict and particular he may be in all the rest, he has reason to believe that he is deceiving himself, if he fancies he is in the way of holiness, or acceptableness with God. It is, in point of fact, neither more nor less than a compromise, and an attempt to compound with God. He is still under the yoke of Satan, that arch deceiver, who, so long as he can retain his hold of a victim, by any one evil course wilfully allowed, has his object answered, and can well afford to let him put on an appearance of religion, by being particular in other things. I have been careful to use, again and again, the expression "allows himself in," because it is only they who allow themselves in an evil course, who can be said truly to be under Satan's yoke. As long as we continue to struggle and strive against any sin to which we know ourselves to be inclined, so long are we God's soldiers and servants; nor do we cease to be His soldiers, by being overcome and vanquished; provided we take hearty shame to ourselves, and are duly sensible and sorry for our disgrace, and sin, and danger. As our Lord said of His disciples, when sleeping in the garden, "the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." We can at no time keep free from sin but by watchfulness and prayer; and it is not every slumber at our post,

nor every forgetfulness to obtain aid from God in the hour of need, that causes us to be rejected from the number of His servants; though every such failure is necessarily a dishonour to Him, and a triumph to the powers of darkness, and a disgrace to those who are guilty of it. If our hearts be true and faithful, we shall seek pardon and fresh assistance from God, and by His grace be lifted up again, and enabled again to fight against sin, as Solomon says, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again <sup>1</sup>." But the whole case is changed, and the whole light in which we appear altered, when, instead of being sensible of our sin and shame, and repenting, and seeking pardon and restoration, and renewal of grace, we justify ourselves in our wickedness, set aside God's laws, treat them as things of no moment, and harden our hearts against the word of advice, and against the motion of the Holy Spirit warning us to return. All men must see that he who is self-satisfied in his sin is in a far more dangerous and fearful state than he who is ashamed and sorry for it; he who wilfully adopts and glories in it, than he who struggles against it, and, if at any time entangled in it, earnestly desires to withdraw his foot from the snare in which it has been taken. The last is an object of compassion and pity with that merciful Lord, who knows, for He has felt, the weakness of human

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiv. 16.

nature, and has learned, by His own suffering, to compassionate ours ; and if such a man's faith does not waver, nor his endeavours after holiness fail, he will, at length, obtain the victory he so earnestly desires ; and become stablished, strengthened, and settled in the service of the Lord. But compassion and pity are rejected with scorn by the wilful hardened sinner, who is proud in his own eyes, and thinks that he knows better than the Scriptures, and gives no heed to the instructions contained in them. Such a man, "in an hardened and impenitent heart, treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Hence we see the great danger of justifying or allowing ourselves in any evil course ; and may be convinced of the truth of what St. James has here declared, namely, that he who seemeth to be religious, and yet allows himself in an evil use of his tongue, is truly deceiving his own heart ; and that his religion must needs be vain.

St. James concludes his exhortation by setting forth the marks by which the presence of true religion may be known to a man himself, namely, in the practice of kindness and charity towards others, and of holiness and purity towards himself. Both instances require exertion ; and the Apostle, therefore, is careful to name them, that men may not mistake mere sickly feeling, or pious sentiments,

for the sterling reality of religion. The presence of true religion must be developed in acts and deeds, and exhibit a practical effect upon the conduct; and is not fulfilled by mere good thoughts and good words. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." As St. John says, "Love not the world; neither the things that are in the world;—for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." If a man can subdue all these, he has wrought a great work, and has shown of a truth that the Spirit of God is with him; without Whose aid his own exertions would have utterly failed and come short. Nay, he could not have had the desire to subdue and overcome them at all, unless that gracious Spirit had given it to him. And if, in addition to this self-mastery over the evil of his own heart, and over the temptations with which the things here below would fan and provoke the natural corruption of his heart, he walks in active kindness towards others, and is willing to be at trouble to himself to be of service and consolation to those who stand in need of kind offices; then is he treading in his blessed Master's footsteps, who set us, in His own life, a pattern for us to follow, and has pronounced the most gracious blessings upon those who endeavour to practise His virtues; and has said that all who

would come after Him, must take up the cross (of self-denial, without which neither purity of life, nor charity towards others, can be practised), and must follow Him, that where He is, there also may His servants be.

Brethren, let us strive to profit by the things which we have heard, and suffer the grace of God to move us to begin, or to continue, if haply we have begun it, the great work of our salvation; which must be set about in earnest, if we would not have our work and labour in vain. In zeal and watchfulness, in patience and perseverance, in humility and charity, let us, humbly depending upon our heavenly Father's hand, walk on our Christian course, hastening with our hearts, and preparing in our lives, for the coming of the day of God, when we shall stand before the throne of the Lamb, to render an account of the deeds done in the body. Our course must be taken in fear and trembling, as regards our own weakness and liability to fall; but in meek confidence, and humble hope, as regards the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and as regards our mighty Saviour, Friend, and Intercessor, Who is now at the right hand of God, able to save all them to the uttermost, who come unto God through Him: To Whom, in the unity of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all praise, glory, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XX.

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THE WELFARE OF THE NATION INVOLVED IN THE  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

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MATTHEW vi. 33.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

THESE gracious and comfortable words were spoken by the Redeemer of mankind, the Head and Founder of the Christian Church<sup>1</sup>, for the sake of dispelling from the minds of His faithful followers, the members of His Church, those clouds of earth-born care, anxiety, and apprehension, which never fail to harass carnal and worldly persons; who, being destitute of the grace of God, are unable to lift their eyes, or raise their thoughts, beyond the consideration of second causes; to the dishonour and neglect of the great First Cause, who overrules the affairs

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. v. 23.

of earth<sup>1</sup>, as well as of heaven; and causes all things to work together for good<sup>2</sup>, to those who love Him; to those who, having been called by Him to the adoption of sons<sup>3</sup>, by the sacrament of holy Baptism, strive to walk worthy<sup>4</sup> of their glorious calling, as heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ<sup>5</sup>; strengthening themselves by participation in the holy Eucharist, with that spiritual food<sup>6</sup> which nourishes unto eternal life.

They are, indeed, words of grace and comfort. To speak to their general meaning, they amount to this: that, as long as we make God the chief object of our lives, and strive to order our conduct with a view to His glory, we shall never want a friend, able and willing to supply all our wants; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee<sup>7</sup>;" we shall place ourselves under the immediate and special protection of Him, Who has "all power in heaven and in earth<sup>8</sup>;" and, in that confidence, may go on our way calmly and cheerfully, under any and all circumstances. How great a comfort this gracious promise is, they only can say who have made trial of it<sup>9</sup>! but there is no station which does not need it: none too high, none too low, to derive advantage from it. Take the case of the poor peasant, who lives from hand to mouth, and whose whole maintenance, and that of his family, depends upon

<sup>1</sup> Dan. iv. 17.<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 28.<sup>3</sup> Gal. iv. 5.<sup>4</sup> Ephes. iv. 1.<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 17.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.<sup>7</sup> Heb. xiii. 5.<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxviii. 18.<sup>9</sup> Ps. xxxiv. 8.

his labour ; who knows not, from day to day, that he will continue in health to pursue his labour, nor that he will continue to have labour to do ; who sees his family increasing upon him with no more certain prospects of supply than the fowls of the air. What, but confidence in the care of his heavenly Father, can enable a man, in such circumstances, to go on his way with peace and hope ? to bear his lot with resignation, and contentment, and thankfulness ; and to resist the temptations which might naturally arise in his mind to evil thoughts and evil deeds of various kinds ? With the promises of God in view, those gracious promises which true religion, as taught by the Christian Church, sets forth before the servants of God, he is able to do this ; and to feel sure that as long as he seeks God, and puts his trust in Him, all that is necessary shall be supplied to him. But he who is destitute of these sacred principles of true religion, is destitute also of the comfort which they afford. Such a man, under such circumstances, is a prey to every evil passion, to envy and discontent, to murmuring and complaining, to covetousness and dishonesty ; and is a ready and willing instrument, fitted for those evil men and evil spirits, who are ever on the watch to take advantage of men's weakness and distress, to goad them into acts of sin. Who does not see from this how deeply the interest, not of individuals only, but of the whole nation, is concerned, in implanting in the hearts of



the people, those principles of true religion which at once afford comfort to them, and security to all around them? and that those men, must, therefore, be the greatest enemies to their country, as well as to their God, who would seek to undermine or weaken the hold which true religion has upon the hearts of the people?

Let us see in another instance the beneficial effect of implanting in the mind the gracious principle contained in our text. Consider the case of a merchant embarking the fortunes of his family in ships, and committing all he has to the mercy of the winds and waves, out of his sight, beyond his control or protection. The man whose chief care is placed on this world's goods, and who, consequently, knows little of the power, grace, and goodness of God within him, will be anxious and fretful, distrustful and apprehensive at every storm; impatient, murmuring, and discontented at every loss. But he who has learned to seek, first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, is relieved from such harassing fears; for he knows and feels that he is under the protection of Him Who commands the winds and waves, and without Whose permission not a sail can be torn, nor a sheet stranded. And though he does not expect to be free from the common share of trouble to which man is born, yet he knows that the providence of God, Whom he has chosen as his chief Friend, can and will overrule all for good, will make even

crosses and losses instruments of blessing, and sends them for no other end than to correct those whom He loves<sup>1</sup>; and to prove and increase the faith of His servants. In this confidence he calmly awaits the result, being sure that the promise in the text can never fail; and that though it may not be fulfilled in the way he looks for, yet fulfilled it will be, in the way most calculated to advance his best and truest interests. But it is not only in the way of comfort that this confidence and belief of God's special providence to those who trust in Him acts; it acts also in the way of restraint, and obliges the man who entertains it to use all reasonable prudence, and circumspection, and industry, as knowing that he cannot otherwise reasonably expect a blessing. It restrains him, therefore, from all rash ventures and speculations,—above all, from all crooked and questionable courses: and thus the same principle of religion which is a comfort and security to himself, is a security also to all around him, and a pledge to his country, that, as far as he is concerned, her credit shall sustain no shock. Thus plainly does it appear, in this instance also, how much the interest of a nation is concerned in the implanting the fear of God, and those true principles of religion, which the Church is ordained to teach, in the breasts of the middling as well as the lower classes of its members; and in the teaching all, even those

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iii. 12.

most engaged in this world's traffic, still to seek, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; in the confidence that so long as they do this, all of this world's goods, which will benefit them, will be added thereto.

But they are not only the middling and the lower classes of society who may draw comfort from the principles in the text, and receive profit by it. Those in the higher, and in the highest, have equal, yea, far greater, need to drink at that gracious spring, and to refresh themselves by it for the duties of their stations. When I say this, I have respect not only to the general difficulty which earthly riches and earthly honours place in the way of men's salvation, so that our Lord Himself should say, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" and again, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>." But I am led to make the observation from considering that in the higher stations of life, among those who are called public men, principles of action have sometimes been broached and defended, which I believe have not been received among the other classes of society,—such as, if not set aside and guarded against, must enhance, beyond all calculation, the difficulty of their salvation. And as the congregation which I am addressing is in great measure composed of

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 24, 25.

persons in that station of society from which public men are generally taken, the time will not be misapplied in calling attention to the subject. That which I have in view is the distinction which statesmen and legislators have at times avowedly drawn and acted upon, between their conduct as public men, and their conduct as private men; so that while they have confessed that they were bound to govern the last according to conscience and the fear of God, they have allowed themselves to act and speak as if in the former they need be under no such restraint, but might lay conscience aside, and do as the world bids them; and consult what is called human expediency, to the utter disregard of Christian principle. Surely the arch-enemy of mankind, when, in the garden of Eden, he said "Ye shall not surely die," did not palm upon the first mother of our race a more utter and fatal delusion, than when he suggests to the heart, or by evil agents whispers into the ears of public men, this juggling distinction between a private and a public conscience. The world must be come to second childhood, when grown up, educated, and professedly Christian men, can advocate or act upon it, and "have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God<sup>1</sup>."

The error of the Pharisees was near of kin to this, though it took an opposite direction. They

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 12.

fancied, that if they made a conscience of the outward part, they might be careless of the inward. We know the reproof which the Lord of Glory gave them, "Ye fools, did not He Who made that which is without make that which is within also<sup>1</sup>?" And if our Lord were now on earth, have we not reason to think that, in like manner, He would address any who should draw the distinction we are considering between their conduct as public men and as private men, and ask them, "Ye fools, does not He Who regardeth that which you do as private men, regard that which you do as public men also?" It would be well for any public men, who can thus persuade themselves that they have two consciences, with one of which they can afford to trifle, if they had also two souls, one of which they could afford to lose. I have said that the other classes of society have not received this principle: the ground for which assertion is, that, though I have often heard of unfair tradesmen, I never yet heard of one justifying his misconduct in the public market, by alleging a distinction between his private conscience to his family and his public one to his customers; nor am I aware that our peasants have ever maintained such a plea in justification of their misdeeds. How, then, can men in high stations allow themselves to suppose that God will deal with them by a different measure from that which they make no

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 40.

doubt He will apply to their brethren? But to show, in the strongest light, the absurdity and monstrous nature of such a distinction, let us suppose that the judges of the land, who are sent to administer justice in our Sovereign's name, were to put forth this principle of a double conscience, and so long as they were decent men in private society, think themselves at liberty to pervert judgment and justice in public; all men, I think, would regard such conduct as impious and execrable. But is, then, that which would be hated of God and man in one who administers laws, to be justified and defended in those who frame them? Is there, indeed, in the sight of God and man, so vast a difference between the legislative and executive functions, that while the latter must be discharged according to justice and the fear of God, the former may be ordered by self-interest, party spirit, faction, and the fear of men? If we regard the glory of God, none can deny that His servants are bound to consult His glory at all times; nor if we regard the welfare of men, can any deny that they are more injured by bad laws than by an ill administration of good ones. An evil judge only affects the few whose cases come under his cognizance, and offers, in his own person, dishonour to the Lord; but evil lawgivers affect all who are under the control of the laws which they frame, and involve a whole nation in sin against God and man. But it is not merely for the glory of God, though that

consideration alone ought to be all-sufficient; it is not only for the good of others; it is not only for both these considerations together, that men who are concerned in the making laws are bound to cast aside from them with detestation the false and fatal distinction between a private and a public conscience. It is for their own welfare, their own peace of mind, their own safety, that this is necessary. The history of our own country records so sad an instance of the miserable effects following the adoption of this subtle and dangerous distinction, that it may well lead all who read it to shun and avoid the same; and to profit by the experience of others, instead of enduring the purchase of that experience, by the anguish of their own breasts. I allude to the well-known case of one who, when urged to assist in making a law, which in a moment of party spleen and excitement had been brought before him, and which he knew to be contrary to justice and the fear of God, was beguiled into acting contrary to his conscience, by the plea which a treacherous adviser suggested to him, "that there was a public and a private conscience, and that his public conscience, as a [lawgiver] might not only dispense with, but oblige him to do that, which was against his conscience as a man<sup>1</sup>."

The unhappy individual in an evil hour suffered himself to be overcome by this argument, and for

<sup>1</sup> Clarend. Hist. vol. i. p. 202.

the sake of pleasing those who preferred political expediency to Christian principle, did a deed, as a legislator, which was against his conscience as a Christian; but vainly strove to cover it by the subtle distinction between a public and a private conscience. In consenting to that deed, he would have sacrificed his own salvation, but that His heavenly Father, who had compassion on his weakness, gave him the gift of true repentance, a pledge of eternal pardon; but yet He would not let him go altogether unpunished. It was with him, as in the first lesson of to-day we read it was with David; as he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme<sup>1</sup>, by dishonouring Him in the high places of the earth, so was he punished likewise in the same. His worldly affairs never afterwards prospered; and the remorse which he endured on account of that deed, embittered all the sufferings which God permitted him to undergo at the hands of those misguided men, whom he had vainly sought to conciliate, by violating the dictates of his conscience. We may well believe that it was not the hard usage he endured from his enemies, but the disquiet of his own heart, that prematurely changed the colour of his hair; certainly, we know that his conduct on that occasion weighed on his mind to the last period of his existence; so that, when his own death was contrived by those very

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xii. 14.



men, who had beguiled and constrained him to do evil, and who, like Satan himself, triumphed in the misery of one whom they had first persuaded to sin, he acknowledged the justice of the retribution against himself: while twenty years of bloodshed, strife, and confusion, recorded, in characters which he may run that readeth, the wrath of God against a nation, which for their sins he had delivered up to the counsels of those who could openly avow, and defend, and could force upon others to adopt, the false and impious distinction of which we are speaking.

“These things were our examples, to the intent we should not <sup>1</sup>” do the evil which they did; and if such as we have been considering have been the miserable effects which they who have adopted this false principle have thereby brought upon themselves and upon their country, I see not how a Christian minister can more faithfully discharge his duty towards those who are or may be called to legislative functions, and consequently to the temptation of the same deceit, than by warning them plainly against it; that whether such a false principle suggest itself to their own minds, they may know that it is of Satan, coming up from the chambers of death; or whether it be suggested to them by others, they may account such men as no safe guides, but be ever on their guard against them:

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 6.

being sure that they can be no true friends, who for any temporary interest, or for their own selfish purposes, would encourage a human being to trifle with his conscience, and hazard his eternal salvation; and, ever remembering those startling words of our Lord, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" let them in their public, as well as in their private, capacity, adopt the only principle worthy of Christian men; that, namely, which our text has commended to our notice: let them in every public act take care first that the honour of Almighty God, and truth and justice, be upheld; and then let them find room, if they please, for the exercise of those different views of worldly policy, which, being the result of mere human wisdom, must needs commend themselves differently to different men. So only can they be quite sure that they will have secured the welfare of their country, when, by the adoption of this principle, they shall have placed it and all its concerns under the immediate and special protection of Him, by whom nations rise and fall. Thus deeply is a nation interested in having the principles of true religion, which the Christian Church is ordained to teach, implanted in the minds of the higher and highest classes of society, as we have before seen that it is in respect of the middling and the lowest.

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 36.

Of this no Christian man should need to be informed, that, as surely as the God whom he worships is but *one*, so is his own body and soul and spirit but *one* also, which must account to God hereafter for all that he has done here below. The covenant of service, wherewith we became bound, when we entered into the family of God by holy baptism, was full and entire, leaving no room for distinction between public and private transactions: and the vows wherewith, again and again, we have renewed that covenant, when in the service of the holy Eucharist, "We offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee," equally preclude that subtle and dangerous deceit.

But leaving this especial ground why those who occupy what are called public stations, should lay to heart the principle of our text, let us consider their general need of so doing. Take the case of those who are called to posts of trust and importance in the sight of God and man, upon whose counsels or upon whose will the happiness of millions depends. What human being, in such a situation, conscious of his own weakness, and at the same time conscious of the extent of good or of evil dependent upon the course which he might choose, would not be naturally overwhelmed with a sense of the responsibility, and inclined to be cast down, and to exclaim, as every conscientious Christian minister is at times compelled to exclaim with

St. Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things<sup>1</sup>?" And, unless he were fortified by the gracious assurance contained in our text, and enabled to apply to himself the words of consolation addressed to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee<sup>2</sup>," would he not be tempted to weak irresolution, or to desperate carelessness?

But he who has learned the gracious truth contained in our text, has found therein a stay and rest for his soul, which under every circumstance of difficulty will afford him support. Strong in that confidence, he has no need to be dismayed. If he seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he knows that every thing he has, and every thing he does will receive a blessing from the Lord. He need not sigh for greater years, or more experience, or a larger share of human wisdom: the blessing of his heavenly Father, Whose he is, and Whom he strives to serve<sup>3</sup>, will furnish all this; in the sweet words of the Apostle, "My God shall supply all your need<sup>4</sup>." For as the wisdom of Solomon saith, "Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years; but wisdom [the fear of God] is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age<sup>5</sup>." "For the fear of God that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding<sup>6</sup>;"

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 16.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xii. 9.<sup>3</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 19.<sup>5</sup> Wisd. iv. 8, 9.<sup>6</sup> Job xxviii. 28.

and therefore David speaks, "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study; I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments <sup>1</sup>;" "for Thy testimonies are my delight, and my counsellors <sup>2</sup>."

Yea, seek first the kingdom of God, and then you may lie down safely, and your sleep shall be sweet; in the words of one of our gracious sovereigns, we may say to such an one:

"Close thine eyes and sleep secure,  
Thy soul is safe, thy body sure,  
He now guards thee, He thee keeps,  
Who never slumbers, never sleeps.  
A quiet conscience in a quiet breast  
Has only peace, has only rest:  
The music and the mirth of kings  
Are out of tune unless she sings <sup>3</sup>."

Or we may apply to such a man, a living member of the true Church of God, those words which, in Spirit, the Evangelical Prophet addressed to the Church. "Fear not, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God; the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour <sup>4</sup>." It is

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxix. 99, 100.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Verses ascribed to King Charles I.

<sup>4</sup> Is. xliiii. 1—3.

not said that the service of God, however true and faithful, will keep trouble, trials, and difficulties away; but that it will support him under them, and carry him safely through them, how great soever they may be. It will not keep us from trials: why should it? Trials are sent to improve us, to bring us nearer to God. Nay, in the deep mystery of God, the very Captain of our salvation, the Virgin born, the Holy One, was made "perfect by suffering<sup>1</sup>." "He went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain: He entered not into His Glory before He was crucified<sup>2</sup>." If the Head, then, of the Church was constrained to suffer trial and hardship, why should the members of the Church, which is His Body, expect to escape them? If He, the only begotten Son of God, born before all creation<sup>3</sup>, must needs suffer, we, who are by adoption His younger brethren<sup>4</sup>, in the flesh and in the spirit, have no right to look for less; and therefore, protection from trial is not promised, neither to the Church, nor to any of its members; but to every member of the Church, whatever his worldly station may be, who seeks for the blessing promised in the text, assurance has been given that he shall be more than conqueror, through Him Who loved<sup>5</sup> him

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 15. *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.*

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 37.

and gave Himself for him. Yes, all who would prosper in any station, or in any course, must be content to forsake that wisdom, which will be independent of God, which the apostle calls "the wisdom of this world," and says that it "is foolishness with God<sup>1</sup>," and must seek to, and abide by that high Christian principle, which is sometimes called "the fear of God," sometimes "the wisdom which is from above<sup>2</sup>." But which oftentimes, as is natural, is evil spoken of by the world.

In whatever station of life then you may be placed, if you wish to be honoured while you live, and regretted when you die; if you wish to have peace in your own breast, and to be a means of blessing to them who are dependent on you; if you would have calm enjoyment of prosperity, and cheerful contentment in adversity,—and remember this, that however bright the prospect may now be, adversity *will* come, and therefore, if man would have but the wisdom of the ant, he should prepare for that winter during the summer of prosperity, as Solomon speaks, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not<sup>3</sup>:"—If you would have hope in your death, and rest in your grave, and joy in your resurrection, let the principle of our text be the pole star of your mind, the mainspring of your actions, the centre round which your whole course revolves, "Seek ye first

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> James iii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles. xii. 1.

the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

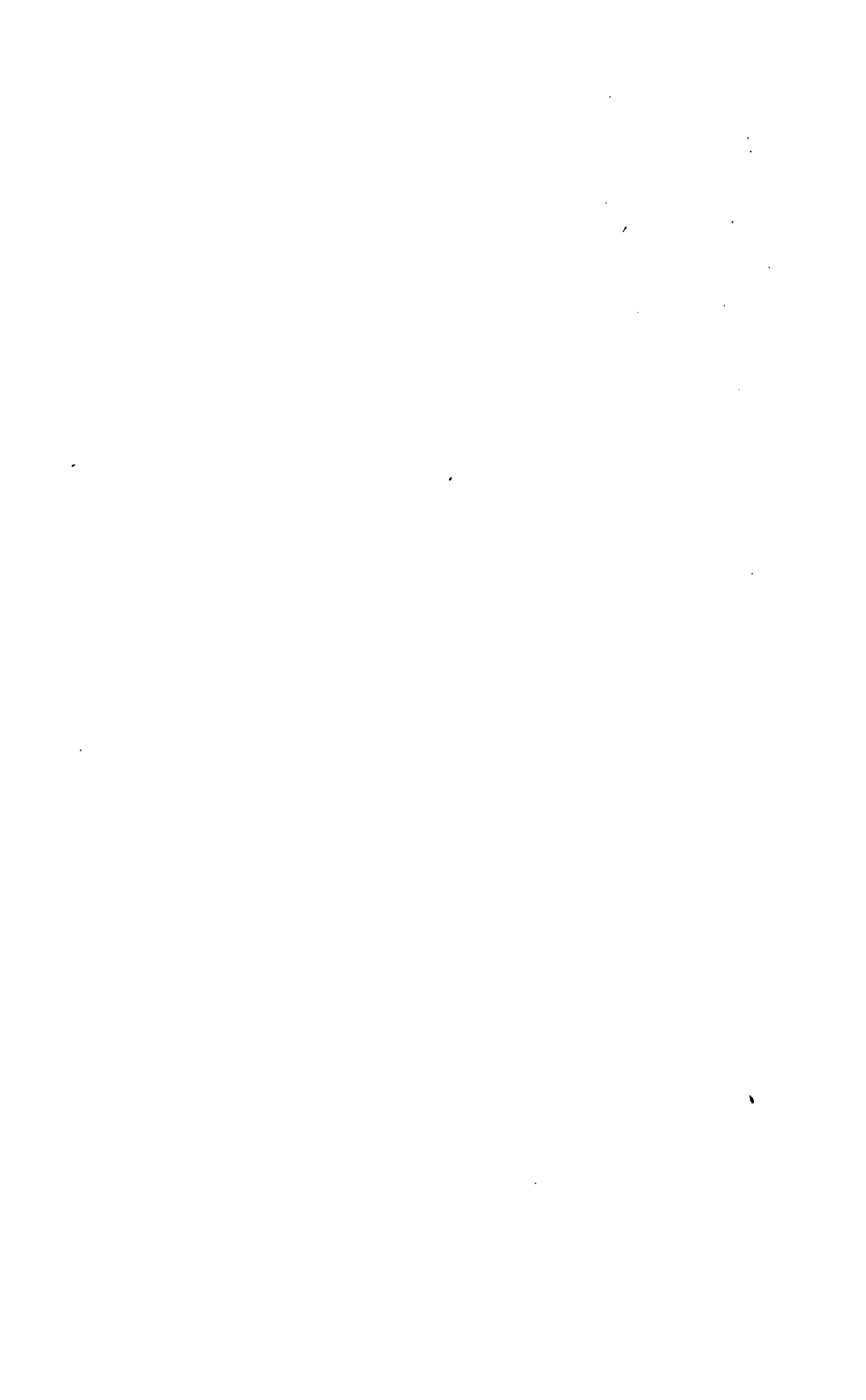
Now to God only wise, the King of kings and Lord of lords, let us with humility and thankfulness ascribe all glory, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore !

THE END.



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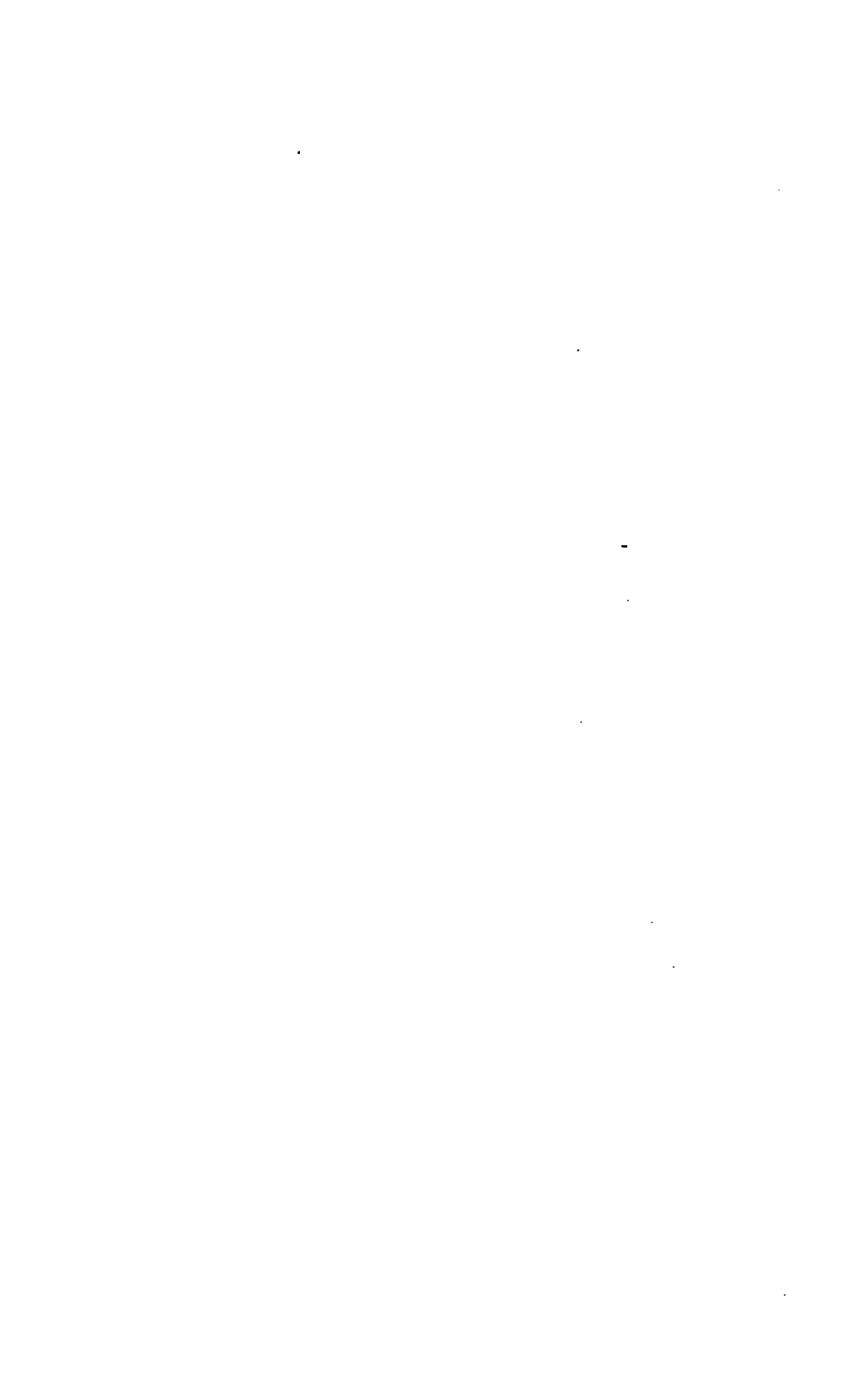
























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