



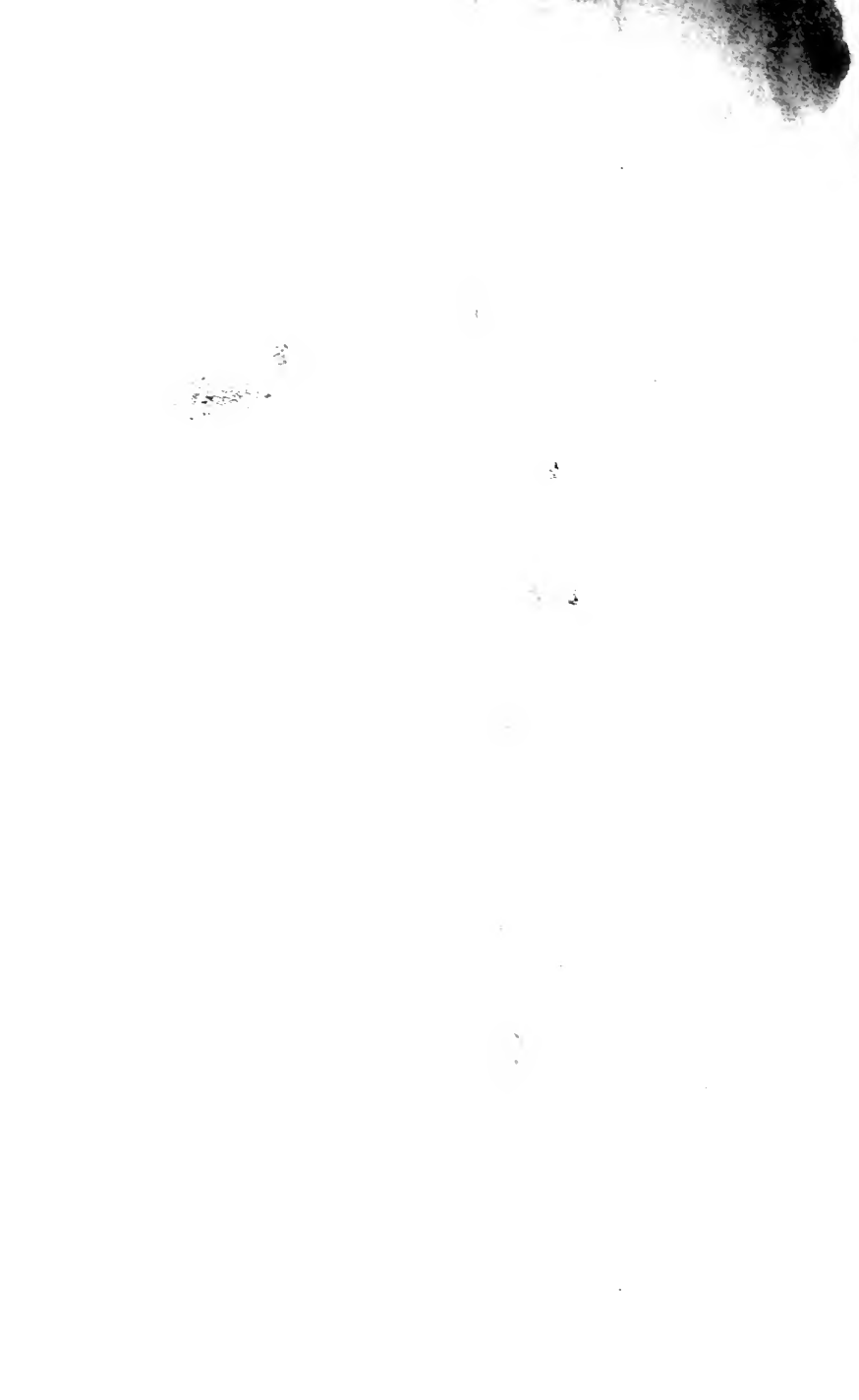
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SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN.

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VOL. IV.

*BY ROBERT ROBINSON*



# SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

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BY ROBERT ROBINSON,

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VOLUME IV.

*ON CHRISTIAN MORALITY.*

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SECOND AMERICAN  
FROM THE FIFTH LONDON EDITION.

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*SCHENECTADY :*  
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM J. McCARTEE,  
*E. & E. Hosford—Printers—Albany.*

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1813.



## PREFACE.

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THIS volume is a sketch of christian morality, such as the sermons of Mr. Saurin afford. Had the author drawn them up with a particular design of exhibiting a full view of the subject, he would have assorted and arranged ideas, which now lie dispersed and intermixed. However, we trust the arrangement will appear neither improper nor unedifying.

There are two general opinions among divines concerning the origin of morality and religion. Some suppose, that all the knowledge which the world ever had of these subjects, was at first *revealed*, and hath been continued to this day by tradition. Others, on the contrary, think, that without revelation men may, and actually do, by the mere exercise of their natural powers, *discover* the being of a God, and the consequent obligations of men. Both classes, however, affirm, that revelation gives force to moral duties, and so is essential to the practice of real virtue.

This is not the place to enter into disputes; we will content ourselves with a few plain remarks on the nature and obligations of men, and on the moral influence of the gospel; and, for this purpose, we will divide the subject into three parts, and consider first nature; secondly obligation; and lastly motive.

1. NATURE. There is hardly a word in the English language of more vague and indeterminate meaning than the word *nature*. In this place I mean by it the native state, properties, and peculiarities of men. If man be a creature consisting of soul and body ; if each hath properties, powers, or faculties, peculiar to itself, obligation to employ these to the ends for which they were intended by the Creator, must necessarily follow. Ancient philosophy, therefore, connected together the natural with the moral state of man, and reasoned from the one to the other. Without superior information by revelation from God, there is no other way of determining what men are, or are not expected to perform.

It would be easy to lose ourselves in metaphysical speculations concerning the nature, the operations, and the duration of the soul ; and it would be as easy to lose ourselves, in attempting precisely to determine, among an infinite number of feelings, ideas, perceptions, aversions, sensations, and passions, where the last power of body ends, and where the first operation of spirit begins. Perhaps we are to expect only a general knowledge of such subjects. That the happiness of both depends on a certain harmony between thought and action is beyond a doubt ; and that in a life made up of a course of thinking and acting, thinking ought to precede action, is equally clear. To act is to do something ; and every intelligent creature ought to do whatever he does for a reason. In the nature of man, then, avoiding all perplexing refinements, and confining our views to plain and useful observation, there are three things



considerable : *happiness*, the end of men's actions ; *actions*, the means of obtaining the end ; and *reason*, which discovers, selects, and enforces rules of uniting the means with the end.

2. OBLIGATION. We divide this article into two parts, *obligation*, and *sense of obligation*. We begin with the first. By exercising our reason to find out proper means of obtaining happiness, we collect a set of ideas concerning the duties of life, and putting these together, we call the collection morality. As this collection consists of a great variety of duties, or actions proper to obtain happiness, we find it convenient to divide them into several classes, and as each class contributes its share towards the production of the general end, happiness, we consider the whole in the light of *obligation* ; for every creature is obliged to seek its own happiness, and it is natural to man to do so.

The condition of man in regard to the Supreme Being, his Creator, is that of absolute dependence ; and hence comes the first distribution of the duties of life into a class called *natural theology* ; *theology*, because God is the object of our contemplation, and *natural* theology, because the duties to be done in regard to God are such, and such only as are discoverable by our observing and exercising our reason on the works of nature. By considering ourselves, we find a second class of ideas, which make up what is called *moral philosophy*, or more properly *moral theology* ; and in this we place the rules by which man conducts himself to become virtuous, in order to become happy. Extending our views a little further,

and taking in proper notions of the various situations in life, to which men are subject, and the various connections which we necessarily have in the world, we perceive a set of general principles just and useful, and all necessary to the happiness of these situations and relations ; and hence comes a third branch of morality, called *general policy*, or common prudence. The next exertion of thinking and reasoning regards nations, and to this belongs a large class of ideas, all tending to public prosperity and felicity ; *national policy* is, therefore, a fourth branch of morality, and it includes all the actions necessary to govern a state, so as to produce civil order and social happiness. To these, by extending our thoughts yet further, we proceed to add the *law of nature*, and the *law of nations* ; both which go to make up the general doctrine of *manners*, which we call morality.

If a man aim at happiness, if he consult reason by what means to acquire it, if he be naturally impelled to perform such actions as are most likely to obtain that end, he will perceive that the reason of each duty is the obligation of it. As far, then, as man is governed by reason, so far doth he approve of the bond or obligation of performing the duties of life.

Let us attend to *sense of obligation*. Should it appear on examination, and that it will appear on the slightest examination is too evident, that the senses of the body irritate the passions of the heart, and that both, conspiring together against the dominion of reason, become so powerful as to take the lead, reason will be perverted, the nature and fitness of things disordered, improprieties and calamities in-

troduced, and consequently, the great end, happiness, annihilated. In this case, the nature of things would remain what it was, obligation to duties would continue just the same, and there would be no change, except in the *order* of actions, and in the loss of that end, happiness, which order would have produced.

This speculation, if we advert to the real state of things, will become a fact fully established in our judgments: True, the first branch of morality is natural theology; but have mankind in general, in all ages and countries, sought rational happiness in worshipping the One great Supreme? Whence, then, is idolatry, and whence that neglect of the Father of universal nature, or what is worse, that direct opposition to him? Morality, we grant, hath always been, as it yet continues to be, beautifully depicted in academical theses; professors of each branch of literature have successively contributed to colour and adorn the subject; and yet, in real life, neither the law of nature nor that of nations, nor that of private virtue, or public policy, hath been generally obeyed; but, on the contrary, by crimes of all descriptions, *the whole earth hath been filled with violence*, Gen. vi. 11, 13. Alas! what is the life of each individual but a succession of mistakes and sins? What the histories of families, nations, and great monarchies, but narrations of injustice and woe? Morality, lovely goddess, was a painting of exquisite art placed in proper light in a public gallery for the inspection and entertainment of connoisseurs; but she was cold, and her admirers unanimated: the objects that fired their passions had

not her beauty, but they were alive. In one word, *obligation* to virtue is eternal and immutable ; but *sense of* obligation is lost by sin.

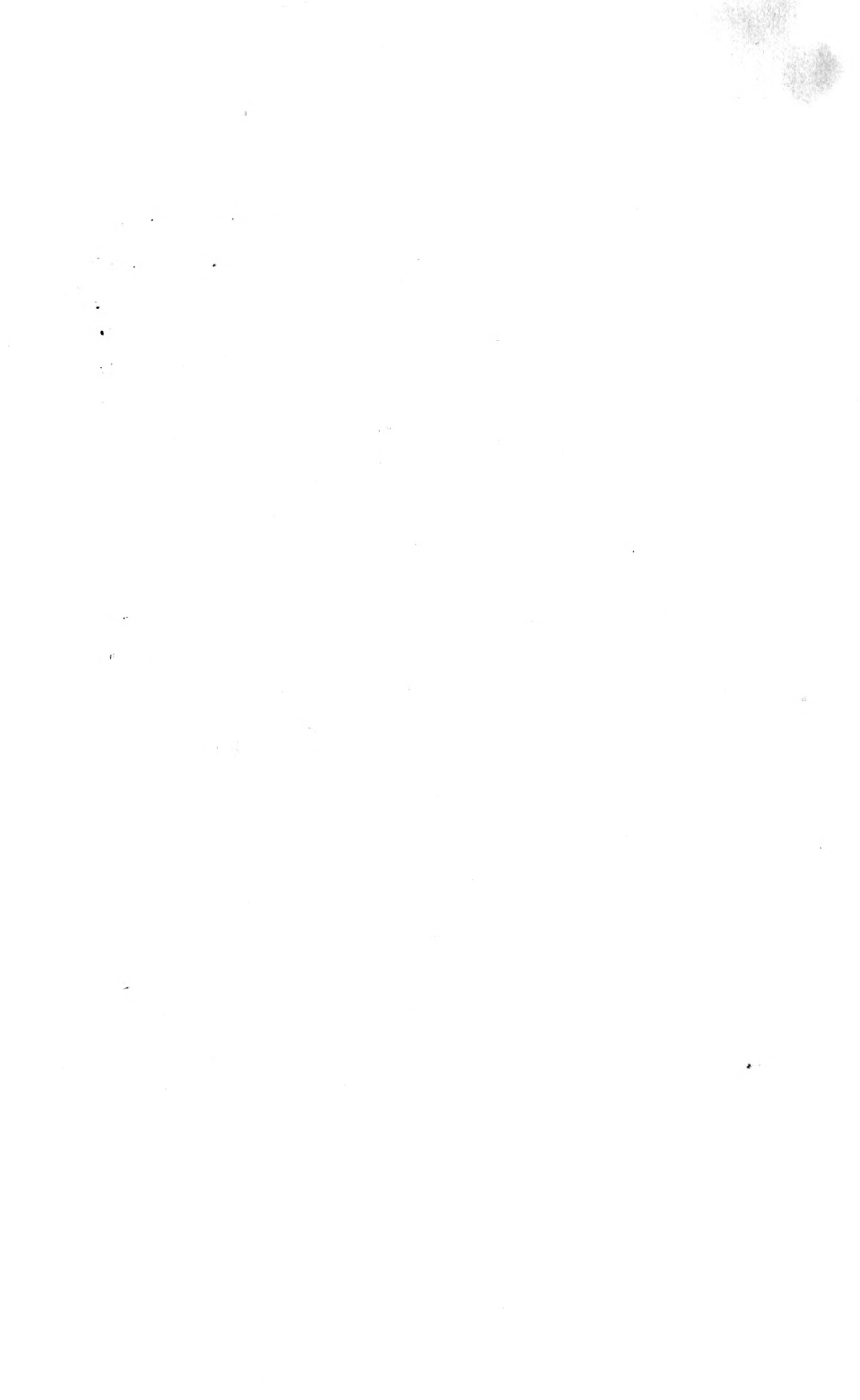
3 MOTIVE. We will not enter here on that difficult question, the origin of evil. We will not attempt to wade across that boundless ocean of difficulties, so full of shipwrecks. Evil is in the world, and the permission of it is certainly consistent with the attributes of God. Our inability to account for it is another thing, and the fact is not affected by it. Experiment hath convinced us, that Revelation, along with a thousand other proofs of its divinity, brings the irrefragable evidence of *motive* to obedience ; a heavenly present, and every way suited to the condition of man !

It would be endless to enumerate the motives to obedience, which deck the scriptures as the stars adorn the sky : each hath been an object of considerable magnitude to persons in some ages and situations : but there is one of infinite magnificence, which eclipses all the rest, called *the sun of righteousness*, I mean, Jesus Christ. In him the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, the rectitude of the ten commandments, and the generosity of the gospel, are all united ; and him we will now consider a moment in the light of motive to obedience.

By considering the *prophecies* which preceded his advent, and by comparing his advent with those prophecies, we are impelled to allow the divinity of his mission. This is one motive, or one class of motives to moral obedience. By observing the *miracles* which he wrought, we are obliged to exclaim

with Nicodemus, *No man can do what thou doest, except God be with him.* This is a second class of motives. By attending to his *doctrines* we obtain a third set of powerful and irresistible motives to obedience. His *example* affords a fourth, for his life is made up of a set of actions, all manifestly just and proper, each by its beauty commending itself to every serious spectator.

This moral excellence, this conformity to Jesus Christ is the only authentic evidence of the truth of our faith, as the apostle Paul teaches us with the utmost clearness in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Faith and practice, in the christian religion, are inseparably connected; for as there can be no true morality without faith in the doctrines of Christ, so there can be no true faith without christian morality; and it is for this reason chiefly, that we should be diligent to distinguish the pure doctrines of revelation from human explications, because a belief of the former produces a holy conformity to the example of Christ; while an improper attachment to the latter leaves us where zeal for the traditions of the fathers left the Jews. We have treated of this at large in the preface to the third volume, and it is needless to enlarge here, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*



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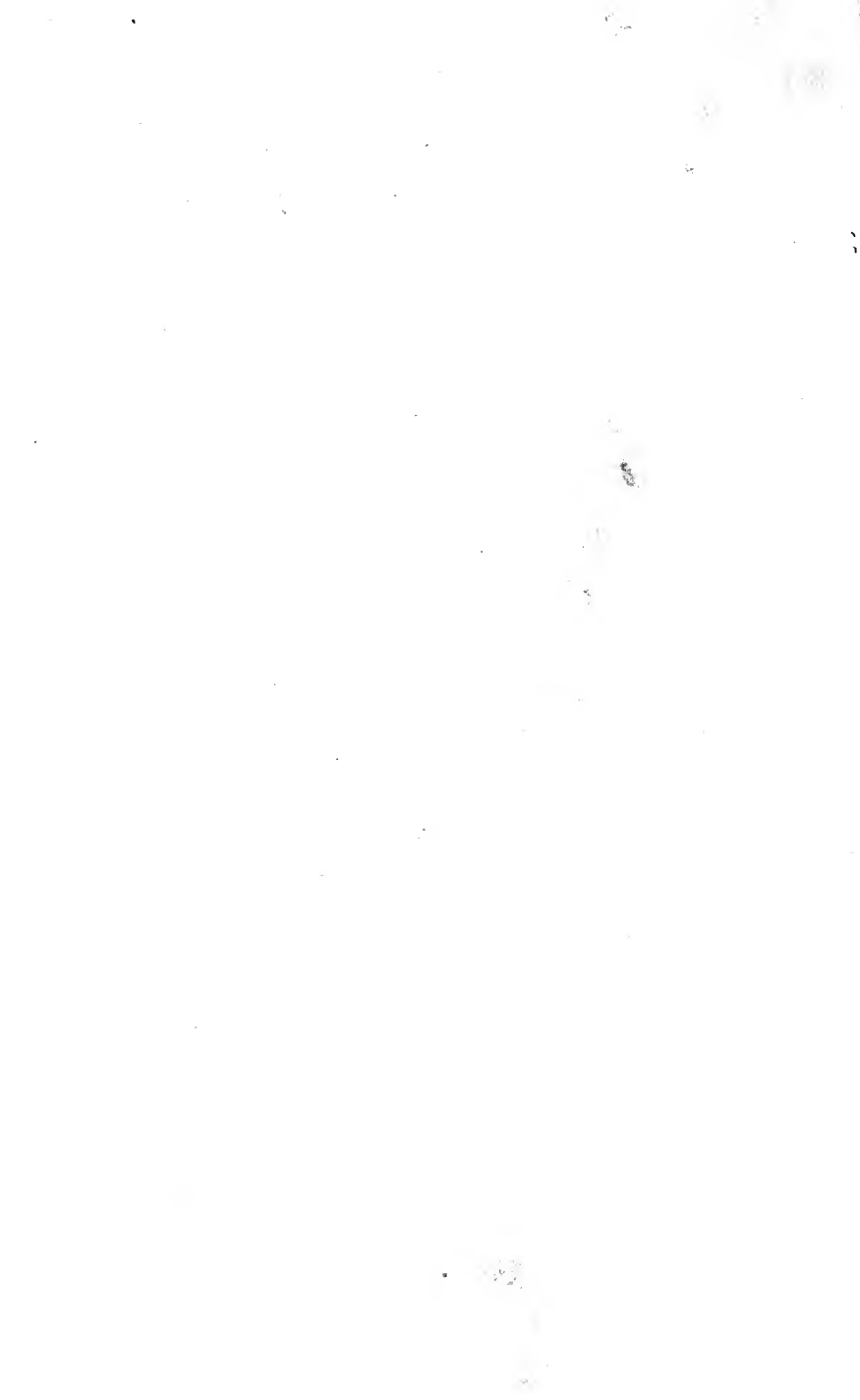
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# SERMON I.

*The Necessity of Universal Obedience.*



JAMES ii. 10.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

MY BRETHREN,

WERE I obliged to give a title to this epistle, from which I have taken my text, to distinguish it from the other books of our sacred canon, I would call it *the paradoxes of St. James*. It should seem, the apostle had no other design in writing than that of surprizing his readers by unheard-of propositions. In the first chapter he subverts that notion of religion, which is generally received both in the world and the church. To adore the God of heaven and earth, to receive his revelation, to acknowledge his Messiah, to partake of his sacraments, to burn with zeal for his worship, this is usually called religion. No, says St. James, this is not religion; at most this is only a small part of it: "Religion consists in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping himself unspotted from the world," ver. 27. In the second chapter he seems to take pains to efface the grand character of a christian, and of

christianity itself, and to destroy this fundamental truth of the gospel, "that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28. "No," says he, "man is not justified by faith only; Abraham our father was justified by works," chap. ii. 24. 21. and all christians are justified by works. In another place, St. James seems to place all religion in some minute and comparatively inconsiderable articles, or, what comes to much the same, to teach, that the omission of some comparatively small duty renders the most pure and solid piety of no account. Levity of conversation is one of these articles. How different, my brethren! is the morality of the scriptures from the morality of the world! We often hear high encomiums of some people in company. Observe that man, say they, what a pattern of piety is he! The church doors are hardly opened before he rushes into his seat with eagerness and transport. In approaching the Lord's table he discovers by every look and gesture a heart all inflamed with divine love. When his shepherds were smitten, and the sheep scattered, the most difficult sacrifices became easy to him. Country, family, titles, riches, he left all with pleasure for the sake of following the bloody steps of Jesus Christ in his suffering. He can be reproved for no more than one little inadvertence, that is, he has a levity of conversation. But what says St. James of this man, who seems to have a right of precedence in a catalogue of saints? What does he say of this man, so diligent to attend public worship, so fervent at the Lord's supper, so zealous for religion? He says, this man has no religion at all; "If

any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain," chap. i. 26.

But without attending to all the paradoxes of St. James, let us attend to this in our text. Here is a principle that seems more likely to produce despair in our hearts than to promote virtue; a principle which seems to aim at no less than the exclusion of the greatest saints on earth from heaven, and to oblige Moses, Elias, David, Paul, and other such eminent men to exclaim, "Who then can be saved!" Matt. xix. 25. This principle is, that to sin against one article of the divine laws is to render one's self guilty of a breach of them all. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

That you may the better enter into the spirit of our text, we have three sorts of reflections to propose to you. By the first we intend to fix the meaning of our apostle's proposition, and to clear it from all obscurity. Our second class of reflections will be applied to enforce the sense that we shall give the text. The last will characterise those sinners who live in this dreadful state, who, by habitually offending in one point, render themselves guilty of an universal subversion of the whole law of God; and here we shall direct you how to use the text as a touchstone to discover the truth or falsehood of your faith, the sincerity or hypocrisy of your obedience.

I. Let us fix the sense of our apostle's proposition, and for this purpose let us answer two questions.  
1. What kind of sin had St. James in view when

he said, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point?* 2. How did he mean, that, by *offending in one point*, the offender was guilty of violating *the whole law?*

The meaning of the first depends partly on what precedes the text. The apostle had been endeavouring to inspire christians with charity; not with that partial charity, which inclines us to pity and relieve the miseries of a few distressed neighbours, but with that universal love, which induces all the disciples of Christ to consider one another as brethren, and which, because all are united to God, unites all to one another, and teacheth each to consider all as one compact body, of which love is the bond.

The apostle enters into this subject by this exhortation, *My brethren! have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons*, ch. ii. 1. These words are rather difficult: but one of the following senses, I think, must be given to them. 1. Instead of translating, *have not the faith*, we may read, *judge not of faith by appearance of persons*; that is to say, Do not judge what faith christians have in Jesus Christ, whom God hath elevated to the highest glory, by the rank, which they occupy in civil society, by their attendants, and equipage, and habits. A man, who makes a very mean and contemptible appearance, a man all in rags is often a better christian than he, whose christianity, (so to speak,) is all set off with splendour, and grandeur, and fortune.

Or rather, *have not faith in the Lord of glory by shewing a partial regard for the appearance of persons*;

that is to say, Do not imagine yourselves believers, while you regard the appearance of persons. Do not imagine, that true faith is compatible with that meanness of soul, which makes people susceptible of very deep impressions of esteem at seeing a parade of human grandeur; do not suppose, that the soul of a good man must necessarily prostrate itself before pomp, and annihilate itself in the presence of great men; while he turns with disdain from the poor, infinitely greater for their piety than others for their pomp. A christian believing in Jesus Christ glorified, a christian persuaded that Jesus, his head, is elevated to the highest degree of glory, and hoping that he shall be shortly exalted to some degree with him; a christian, in whose mind such ideas are formed, ought not to entertain very high notions of earthly things, he ought to esteem that in man, which constitutes his real greatness, that immortality, which is a part of his essence, those hopes of eternal glory, at which he aspires, those efforts, which he is making towards bearing the image of his Creator: such qualities deserve esteem, and not the empty advantages of fortune.

The apostle, having established this general maxim, applies it to a particular case; but there are some difficulties in his manner of stating the case, as well as in the maxim to which he applies it. *If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or*

*sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? What assembly had the apostle in view here?*

Some think he spoke of an assembly of judges, and by *respect*, or appearance of persons, a spirit of partiality. They say, these words of St. James are synonymous to those of God to Jewish judges by Moses. *Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour*, Lev. xix. 15. *Ye shall not respect persons in judgment: but ye shall hear the small as well as the great*, Deut. i. 16, 17. They confirm this opinion by quoting a canon of the Jews, which enacts, that when two persons of unequal rank appear together in the Sanhedrim, one shall not be allowed to sit while the other stands; but both shall either sit together, or stand together, to avoid every shadow of partiality.

But, perhaps, our apostle spoke also of religious assemblies, and intended to inform primitive christians, that where the distinctions of princes and subjects, magistrates and people, were not known, there the rich would affect state, aspire to chief places, and gratify their senseless vanity by placing the poor on their footstools, in order to make them feel their indigence and meanness. However the apostle might mean, whether he spoke of juridical assemblies, or of religious conventions; of partial judgments, or of improper distinctions in the church, it is plain, he intended to preclude that veneration, which, in little souls, riches obtain for their possessors, and that dis-



dain which poverty excites in such minds for those whom providence hath exposed to it.

Among many reasons, by which he enforces his exhortation, that, which immediately precedes the text, is taken from charity, or benevolence, *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.* Then follow the words of the text, *for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

It should seem at first, from the connection of the text with the preceding verses, that when St. James says, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, he means, by this one point, benevolence. However, I cannot think the meaning of St. James ought to be thus restricted. I rather suppose that he took occasion from a particular subject to establish a general maxim, that includes all sins, which come under the same description with that of which he was speaking. On this account after he has said, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, he adds, *for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill*; he adds another example beside that of which he had been speaking. Consequently, he intended not only to speak of violation of the precepts of love; but also of all others, which had the same characters.

But in what light does he place this violation of the precept of love? He considers it as a sin com-

mitted with full consent, preceded by a judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation, and, to a certain degree, approved by him who commits it. All these ideas are contained in these words, *Ye have respect to persons, ye are partial in yourselves, ye are judges of evil thoughts, ye have despised the poor.* What the apostle affirms of love in particular, he affirms of all sins committed with the same dispositions. Every sin committed with full consent, preceded by a judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation; every sin that conscience is made to approve during the commission of it; every such sin is included in this maxim of our apostle, *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

In this manner divest the text of one vague notion, to which it may seem to have given occasion. We acquit the apostle of the charge of preaching a melancholy, cruel morality, and we affirm, for the comfort of weak and timorous minds, that we ought not to place among the sins here intended, either momentary faults, daily frailties, or involuntary passions.

1. By *daily frailties* I mean those imperfections of piety, which are inseparable from the conditions of inhabitants of this world, which mix themselves with the virtues of the most eminent saints, and which, even in the highest exercises of the most fervid piety, make them feel that they are men, and that they are sinful men. By *daily frailties* I mean wanderings in prayer, troublesome intrusions of sensible objects, low exercises of self-love, and many

other infirmities, of which you, my dear brethren, have had too many examples in your own lives in time past, and yet have too much experience in the tempers of your hearts every day. Infirmities of this kind do not answer the black description which St. James gives of the *offence* mentioned in the text. A good man, who is subject to these frailties, far from approving the sad necessity, that carries him off from his duty, deploras it. In him they are not conclusions from principles, laid down with full consent; they are sad effects of that imperfection, which God had thought proper to leave in our knowledge and holiness, and which will remain as long as we continue to languish life away in this valley of tears. To say all in one word, they are rather an imperfection essential to nature, than a direct violation of the law.

2. We ought not to number *momentary faults* among the offences, of which it is said, Whosoever committeth *one* is guilty of a violation of the whole law. Where is the regenerate man, where is the saint, where is the saint of the highest order, who can assure himself, he shall never fall into some sins? Where is the faith so firm as to promise never to tremble at the sight of racks, stakes, and gibbets? Where is that christian heroism, which can render a man invulnerable to some fiery darts, with which the enemy of our salvation sometimes assaults us; and, (what is still more unattainable by human firmness) where is that christian heroism which can render a man invulnerable to some darts of voluptuousness, which strike the tenderest parts of nature, and ex-

cite those passions which are at the same time the most turbulent and the most agreeable? A believer falls into such sins only in those sad moments in which he is surprised unawares, and in which he loses in a manner the power of reflecting and thinking. If there remain any liberty of judgment amidst the pleasure, he employs it to recal his reason, which is fleeing; and to arouse his virtue, that sleeps in spite of all his efforts. All chained as he is by the enemy, he makes efforts, weak indeed, but yet earnest, to disengage himself. The pleasures of sin, even when he most enjoys them, and while he sacrificeth his piety and innocence to them, are imbittered by the inward remorse that rises in his regenerate soul. While he delivers himself up to the temptation and the tempter, he complains, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. When the charm has spent its force, when his fascinated eyes recover their sight, and he sees objects again in their true point of light, then conscience reclaims its rights; then he detests what he had just before admired; then the cause of his joy becomes the cause of his sorrow and terror; and he prefers the pain, anguish, and torture of repentance, before the most alluring attractives of sin.

3. We will venture one step further. We affirm, that gusts of *involuntary passions* ought not to be included in the number of sins of which St. James saith, *Whosoever offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all.* God placeth us in this world as in a state of trial. We are all born with some passions, which it is our duty to attack, and mortify; but from which we shall

never be able to free ourselves entirely. The soul of one is united to a body, naturally so modified as to incline him to voluptuousness. Another soul has dispositions naturally inclining it to avarice, pride, envy, or jealousy. It is in our power to resist these passions; but to have, or not to have them, when we come into the world, doth not depend on us. We ought not always to judge of our state by the enemy, whom we have to encounter: but by the vigilance with which we resist him. In spite of some remains of inclination to pride, we may become humble, if we endeavour sincerely and heartily to become so. In spite of natural inclinations to avarice, we may become generous by endeavouring to become so, and so of the rest. Involuntary passions, when we zealously endeavour to restrain them, ought to be considered as exercises of our virtue prescribed by our Creator; and not as criminal effects of the obstinacy of the creature. The sins, into a commission of which they beguile us, ought always to humble us; indeed they would involve us in eternal misery, were we not recovered by repentance after having fallen into them: but neither they, nor transient offences, nor daily frailties ought to be reckoned among those sins, of which St. James says, *he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.* The sins of which the apostle speaks, are preceded by the judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation, and approved by conscience. Thus we have divested the text of one vague meaning to which it may seem to have given occasion.

But in what sense may it be affirmed of any sin, that *he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all?* The nature of the subject must answer this second question, and enable us to reject the false senses, that are given to the proposition of our apostle. It is plain, St. James neither meant to establish an equality of sins, nor an equality of punishments. It is evident, that as sins are unequal among men, so justice requires an inequality of punishment. The man who adds murder to hatred, is certainly more guilty than he who restrains his hatred, and trembles at a thought of murder. He whose hatred knows no bounds, and who endeavours to assuage it with murder, will certainly be punished more rigorously than the former.

What then was the apostle's meaning? He probably had two views, a particular and a general view. The particular design might regard the theological system of some Jews, and the general design might regard the moral system of too many christians.

Some Jews, soon after the apostle's time, and very likely in his days,\* affirmed, that God gave a great many precepts to men, not that he intended to oblige them to the observance of all, but that they might have an opportunity of obtaining salvation by observing any one of them; and it was one of their maxims, that he who diligently kept one command, was thereby freed from the necessity of observing the rest. Agreeable to this notion, a famous Rabbi† expounds these words in Hosea, *Take away all iniquity,*

\* See Whitby on James ii. 2.

† Kimchi on Hos. xiv. 2. Marg.

*and give good*, that is, according to the false notion of our expositor, pardon our sins, and accept our zeal for one precept of thy law. What is still more remarkable, when the Jews choose a precept, they usually choose one that gives the least check to their favorite passions, and one that is least essential to religion, as some ceremonial precept. This, perhaps, is what Jesus Christ reproves in the Pharisees and Scribes of his time, *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*, Matt. xxiii. 23. Perhaps these words of our Saviour, may be parallel to those of St. James. The apostle had been recommending love, and at length he tells the Jews, who, in the style of Jesus Christ, *omitted mercy*, that *whosoever should keep the whole law, and yet offend in this one point, would be guilty of all*.

But, as we observed just now, St. James did not intend to restrain what he said to love. If he had a particular view to the theological system of some Jews, he had also a general view to the morality of many christians, whose ideas of devotion are too contracted. He informs them, that a virtue incomplete in its parts, cannot be a true virtue. He affirms, that he who resolves in his own mind to sin, and who forces his conscience to approve vice while he commits it, cannot in this manner violate one single article of the law without enervating the whole of it. A man cannot be truly chaste without being

humble, nor can he be truly humble without being chaste. For the same reason no man can deliberately violate the law that forbids anger, without violating that which forbids avarice ; nor can any man violate the law which forbids extortion, without violating that which forbids impurity. All virtues are naturally united together, and mutually support one another. The establishment of one unjust maxim authorizeth all unjust maxims. This is the meaning of the proposition in our text, *Whosoever offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.*

Hitherto we have only explained the sense of our text, it now remains to be proved. The proposition of our apostle is founded on three principal reasons. He, who sins in the manner just now described ; he, whose mind resolves to sin, and who forces his conscience to approve vice, while he commits it, sins against all the precepts of the law, while he seems to sin against only one. 1. Because he subverts, as far as he can, the foundation of the law. 2. Because, although he may not actually violate all the articles of the law, yet he violates them virtually, I mean to say, his principles lead to an actual violation of all the precepts of the law. 3. Because we may presume, he, who violates the law virtually, will actually violate it, when it suits him to do so. These three reasons establish the truth of our apostle's proposition, and justify the sense, that we have given it. The discussion of these three reasons will be the second part of our discourse.

II. He who violates one precept of the law in the manner just now described, violates all ; because,



first, he subverts, as far as in him lies, the very foundation of the law. This will clearly appear by a comparison of vice with error, heresy with disobedience. There are two sorts of errors and heresies; there are some errors which do not subvert the foundation of faith, and there are other errors that do subvert it. If, after I have honestly and diligently endeavoured to understand a passage of scripture proceeding from the mouth of God, I give it a sense different from that which is the true meaning of it; if I give it this sense, not because I dispute the authority of an infallible God, but because I cannot perceive that it ought to be taken in any other sense than that in which I understand it, I am indeed in an error, but by falling into this error I do not subvert the foundation on which my faith is built. I always suppose the authority and infallibility of God, and I am ready to renounce my error as soon as I am convinced that it is contrary to divine revelation.

But if, after it has been made to appear with irrefragable evidence, that my error is contrary to divine revelation, and if, moreover, after it has been made to appear that revelation came from God, I persist in my error, then, by sinning against *one point* I become *guilty of all*, because, by denying one single proposition of revelation, I deny that foundation on which all other propositions of revelation are built, that is, the infallibility and veracity of that God who speaks in our scriptures. I put in the place of God my reason, my wisdom, my tutor, my minister, whomever or whatever determines me to prefer my error

before that truth, which I am convinced is clearly revealed in a book that came from heaven.

In like manner there are two sorts of vices, some which do not subvert the foundation of our obedience to the laws of God, and others that do. In the first class are those sins which we have enumerated, daily infirmities, transient faults, and involuntary passions. In the second class ought to be placed those sins of deliberation and reflection, of which we just now spoke, and which our apostle had in view. These sins strike at the foundation of our obedience to the laws of God.

What is the ground of our obedience to the divine laws? When God gives us laws, he may be considered under either of three relations, or under all the three together; as a sovereign, as a legislator, as a father. Our obedience to God, considered as a sovereign, is founded on his infinite authority over us, and on our obligation to an entire and unreserved submission to him. Our obedience to God as a legislator is founded on his perfect equity. Our obedience to God as a Father is founded on the certain advantages which they who obey his laws derive from them, and on a clear evidence that because he ordains them, they must be essential to our happiness. Now he who sins coolly and deliberately against one single article, saps these three foundations of the law. He is, therefore, guilty of a violation of the whole law.

He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God considered as a master, if he imagine, he may make any reserve in his obedience; if he

say, I will submit to God, if he command me to be humble, but not if he command me to be chaste; and so on. He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God considered as law giver, if he imagine God is just in giving such and such a law, but not in prescribing such and such other laws; if he suppose God is just when he appoints him to educate and provide for an only son, but that he ceaseth to do right when he commands him to sacrifice him, addressing him in this terrifying style, *Take now thy son, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*, Gen. xxii. 2. He subverts the foundation of obedience to God as a father, if he suppose that God hath our happiness in view in requiring us to renounce some passions, but that he goes contrary to our interests by requiring us to sacrifice some other passions, which he may suppose can never be sacrificed without sacrificing at the same time his pleasure and felicity.

He who sins in this manner, attributes to the objects which induce him to sin, excellences that can be in none but the Creator. He says, It is not God who is my master, my sovereign: It is the world, it is my company, it is my custom. He says, It is not God who is just: Justice is the property of my passions, my anger, my vengeance. He says, It is not God who is the source of my true happiness: it is my gold, my silver, my palace, my equipage, my Dalilah, my Drusilla. To *offend in one point* in this sense is to be *guilty of all*; because it subverts the foundation on which our obedience is built. And

this reason is emphatically assigned by St. James in the verses that follow the text, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, for,* adds the apostle, *He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

2. The man who offends in the manner that we have described, he who in his mind resolves to sin, and endeavours to force his conscience to approve vice while he commits it, breaks all the precepts of the law, because, whether he do actually break them or not, he breaks them virtually, and intentionally. He violates precepts of generosity, but he does not fall into debauchery. Why? Is it because he respects the divine laws which prohibit debauchery? No, but because, not being alike inclined to both these vices, he enjoys less pleasure in excess than in avarice. Could he find as much pleasure in violating the laws that prohibit excess, as he finds in violating those which forbid avarice, then, the same principle that impels him now to an incessant, immoderate love of gain, would impel him to drown his reason in wine, and to plunge himself into all excesses. By violating, then, laws commanding generosity, he violates, if not actually, yet virtually, laws prohibiting debauchery. What keeps him from violating the laws that forbid *clamour* and dissipation, is not respect for that God who commands recollection, retreat, and silence: but he affects these, because he has less aversion to retirement and silence, than he has to noise, clamour, and dissipation. Had he as much dislike of the first,

as he has of the last, then the same principle that now induces him to be always alone, always either inaccessible or morose, would induce him to be always abroad, always avoiding a sight of himself by fleeing from company to company, from one dissipation to another. As, therefore, he does not obey the law that enjoins silence by his perpetual solitude, so he virtually annihilates the law that forbids dissipation; and here again to offend *in one point* is to be *guilty of all*.

In fine, he who offends in the manner that we have explained, he whose mind determines to sin, and who endeavours to force his conscience to approve his practice, sins against all the precepts of the law, while he seems to offend only in one point, because there is sufficient reason to believe, he will some time or other actually break those laws, which now he breaks only intentionally. Here, my brethren, I wish each of you would recollect the mortifying history of his own life, and reflect seriously on those passions which successively took place in you, and which by turns exercise their terrible dominion over all them who are not entirely devoted to universal obedience. What proceeds only from a change of circumstances, we readily take for a reformation of manners; and we often fancy we have made a great progress in holiness, when we have renounced one vice, although we have only laid aside this one to make room for another that seemed opposite to it, but which was a natural consequence of the first. What elevates you to-day into excesses of ungoverned joy, is your excessive love of pleasure. Now, it is nat-

ural to suppose this excessive love of pleasure which elevates you into immoderate joy now that the objects of your pleasure are within your reach, will plunge you into depths of melancholy and despair, when you are deprived of those objects. That which induces you to-day to slumber in carnal security, is your inability to resist the first impressions of certain objects; but, if you know not how to resist to-day the impressions of such objects as lull you into security, you will not know how to resist to-morrow the impressions of other objects which will drive you to despair; and so this very principle of non-resistance, if I may so call it, which makes you quiet to-day, will make you desperate to-morrow. There is no greater security for our not falling into one vice, than our actual abstinence from another vice. There is no better evidence that we shall not practise the sins of old men, than our not committing the sins of youth. Prodigality is the vice of youth, and not to be profuse in youth is the best security that we shall not in declining life fall into avarice, the vice of old age. May one principle animate all your actions, a principle of obedience to the laws of God! then what keeps you from haughtiness, will preserve you from meanness; what saves you from the seduction of pleasure, will preserve you from sinking under pain; what keeps you from inordinate love to an only son, while it pleased God to spare him, will keep you from immoderate inquietude, when God thinks proper to take him away. But a man, who deliberately *offends in one point*, not only offends intentionally against all the articles of the law: but,

it is highly probable, he will actually violate all articles one after another; because, when universal esteem for all the laws of God is not laid down as the grand principle of religious action, the passions are not corrected, they are only deranged, one put in the place of another; and nothing more is necessary to complete actual, universal wickedness, than a change of vices with a change of circumstances.

All this is yet too vague. We have, indeed, endeavoured to explain, and to prove the proposition of our apostle; but unless we enter into a more minute detail, we shall derive very little advantage from this discourse. Those of our auditors who have most reason to number themselves with such as sin deliberately, will put themselves in the opposite class. The most abandoned sinners will call their own crimes either daily frailties, or transient faults, or involuntary passions. We must, if it be possible, take away this pretext of depravity, and characterise those sins which we have named sins of *reflection*, *deliberation*, and *approbation*; sins which place him who commits them precisely in the state intended by our apostle; he *offends in one point*, and his disposition to do so renders him guilty of total and universal disobedience. This is our third part, and the conclusion of this discourse.

III. St. James pronounces in our text a sentence of condemnation against three sorts of sinners. 1. Against such as are engaged in a way of life sinful of itself. 2. Against such as cherish a favorite passion. 3. Against persons of unteachable dispositions.

1. *They who are engaged in a way of life sinful of itself,* are guilty of a violation of the whole law, while they seem to offend only in one point.

We every day hear merchants and traders ingeniously confess, that their business cannot succeed unless they defraud the government. We will not examine whether their assertion be true; we will suppose it to be as they say; and we affirm, that a trade which necessarily obliges a man to violate a law so express as that of paying tribute to government, is bad of itself. That disposition of mind which induces a man to follow it, ought not to be ranked either with those human frailties, transient faults, or involuntary passions, which we have enumerated, and for which evangelical abatements are reserved. This is a blow struck at legislative authority. What, then, ought a merchant to do, who is engaged in a commerce which necessarily obligeth him to violate a law of the state concerning impost? He ought to give up this commerce, and to quit a way of living which he knows is iniquitous in itself. If he cannot prevail with himself to make this sacrifice, all his hopes of being saved are fallacious.

We every day hear military men affirm, that it is impossible to wear a sword with honour, without professing to be always disposed to revenge, and to violate all laws human and divine which forbid duelling. We do not inquire the truth of the assertion, we suppose it true. We do not examine, whether prudence could not in all cases suggest proper means to free men from a tyrannical point of honour; or whether there really be any cases, in which gentle-



men are indispensibly obliged, either to quit the army, or to violate the precepts that command us to give up a spirit of resentment. We only affirm, that a military man, who constantly and deliberately harbors a design of always avenging himself in certain cases is in this miserable list of sinners, who, by offending in *one point*, are *guilty of all*. We do not affirm, that he would be in this guilty condition, if he could not promise to resist a disposition to revenge in every future moment of his life; we only affirm that he is guilty of a violation of the whole law, if he do not sincerely and uprightly resolve to resist this inclination. You cannot be a christian without having a fixed resolution to seal the truths of the gospel with your blood, if it please providence to call you to martyrdom. You cannot, however, promise, that the sight of racks and stakes shall never shake your resolution, nor ever induce you to violate your sincere determination to die for religion, if it should please providence to expose you to death on account of it. It is sufficient for the tranquility of your conscience, that you have formed a resolution to suffer rather than deny the faith. In like manner, we do not affirm, that a military man is guilty of the offence with which we have charged him, if he cannot engage never to be carried away with an excess of passion inclining him to revenge; we only say, if he coolly determine always to avenge himself in certain cases, he directly attacks the authority of the lawgiver. *He offendeth in one point, and he is guilty of all*. If a man cannot profess to bear arms without harbouring a fixed intention of violating all laws human

and divine, that prohibit duelling, even to those who receive the most cruel affronts, either the profession of arms or the hope of salvation must be given up. No man in the army can assure himself that he is in a state of grace, unless his conscience attests, that he will avoid, with all possible circumspection, every case in which a tyrannical point of honour renders revenge necessary ; and that, if ever he be, in spite of all his precautions, in such a case, when he must either resign his military employments, or violate the laws that forbid revenge, he will obey the law, and resign his military honours.

It is too often seen, that our relation to some offenders inspires us with indulgence for their offences. This kind of temptation is never more difficult to surmount than when we are called to bear a faithful testimony concerning the state of our brethren, who refuse to sacrifice their fortune and their country to religion and a good conscience. But what relation is so near as to pre-occupy our minds to such a degree as to prevent our considering the life of such a person, as it really is, bad in itself ; or what pretext can be plausible enough to authorise it? We have sounded in their ears a thousand times these thundering words of the Son of God, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels*, Luke ix. 26. *He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, and, we may add, he that loveth houses or lands, ease, riches, or honours, more than me, is not worthy of me*, Matth. x. 37. We have summoned them by

the sacred promises and solemn engagements, which some of them have entered into at the table of the Lord, while they partook of the significant symbols of the body and blood of the Saviour, to devote themselves to the glory of God, and the edification of his church. We have unveiled their hearts, and shewn them how the artfulness of their ingenious passions exculpated their conduct, by putting specious pretexts in the place of solid reasons. We have reproved them for pretending, that they dare not face the danger of attempting to flee, when the government forbade their quitting the kingdom; and now liberty is granted, for making that a reason for staying. We have described the numerous advantages of public worship; we have proved, that the preaching of the gospel is, if I may speak so, the food of Christian virtues; and that, when people have accustomed themselves to live without the public exercises of religion, they insensibly lose that delicacy of conscience, without which they cannot either be good christians, or, what are called in the world, men of honour and probity; we have demonstrated this assertion by an unexceptionable argument taken from experience; we have said, Observe that man, who was formerly so very scrupulous of retaining the property of his neighbour; see, he retains it now without any scruple: observe those parents, who were formerly so tender of their children; see now with what inhumanity they leave them to struggle with want. We have represented to them, that to reside where the spirit of persecution is only smothered, not extinguished, is to betray

religion, by exposing the friends of it to the hazard of being martyred, without having any assurance of being possessed with a spirit of martyrdom; and we have endeavoured to convince them, that he who flatters himself he shall be able to undergo martyrdom, and lives where he is liable to it, while providence opens a way of escape, is presumptuous in the highest degree, and exposeth himself to such misery as the son of Sirach denounces, when he says, *He that loveth danger shall perish therein*, Ecclus. iii. 26. Not having been able to move them by motives taken from their own interest, we have tried to affect them with the interest of their children. We have told them, that their posterity will live without any religion, that they will have too much knowledge to adhere to superstition, and too little to profess the true religion; and this sad prophecy has been already verified in their families. To all these demonstrations they are insensible; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light; they guard themselves against the force of these exhortations; they are forging new fetters for themselves, which will confine them to a place, of which God has said, *Come out of her, my people! that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*, Rev. xviii. 4. They build, they plant, they marry, they give in marriage, and thus they have abused the patience of thirty-five years, in which they have been invited to repent. I ask again, what relation can be so near as to prevail with us to put this kind of life among the frailties, for which evangelical abatements are reserved.

Let us all, as far as providential circumstances will allow, follow a profession compatible with our duty. Let us do more, let us endeavour so to arrange our affairs that our professions may stimulate us to obedience, and that every thing around us may direct our attention to God. Alas! in spite of all our precautions, sin will too often carry us away; we shall too often forget our Creator, how loud soever every voice around us proclaims his beneficence to us, and his excellences in himself. But how great will our defection be, if our natural inclinations be strengthened by the engagements of our condition! A kind of life wicked of itself is the first sort of sin of which my text says, *Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all.*

2. In the same class we put sinners, who *cherish a darling passion.* Few hearts are so depraved as to be inclined to all excesses. Few souls are so insensible to the grand interest of their salvation, as to be unwilling to do any thing toward obtaining salvation. But, at the same time, where is the heart so renewed as to have no evil disposition? And how few christians are there, who love their salvation so as to sacrifice all to the obtaining of it? The offender, of whom we speak, pretends to compound with his lawgiver. Is he inclined to avarice? he'll say, Lord! allow me to gratify my love of money, and I am ready to give up my disposition to revenge. Is he inclined to revenge? Lord! allow me to be vindictive, and I will sacrifice my avarice. Is he disposed to voluptuousness? Lord! suffer me to retain my Drusilla, and my Delilah, and my vengeance, my

ambition, my avarice, and every thing else, I will sacrifice to thee.

A favourite passion is inconsistent with the chief virtue of christianity, with that, which is the life and soul of all others, I mean that love of God, which places God supreme in the heart. A jealous God will accept of none of our homage, while we refuse him that of our chief love. All the sacrifices that we can offer him to purchase a right to retain a darling sin, are proofs of the empire which that sin hath over us, and of our fixed resolution to free ourselves from the law of him, who would be, as he ought to be, the supreme object of our love. Do not fancy, that what we have said concerning involuntary passions is applicable to darling sin, and exculpates a favourite passion. One man, whose involuntary passions sometimes hurry him away, detests his own disposition ; but the other cherishes his. One makes many an arduous attempt to correct his error : the other engages to do so ; but he makes promises pass for performances, and means to get rid of the last by professing the first. One considers the grace that tears the deplorable passion from his heart as a most desirable benefit ; and even, while he falls into his sin, he considers it as the greatest misfortune of his life : the other regards him as a mortal enemy who endeavours to prevail with him to renounce a passion, in the gratification of which all his happiness depends.

Let us lay down the love of God as a foundation of all virtue. Let us love him chiefly, who is supremely lovely. Let our hearts adopt the language

of the psalmist, *Access to God is my supreme good. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 28, 25. Let us consider and avoid, as acts of idolatry, all immoderately lively and affectionate emotions of love to creatures. Let us entertain only a small degree of attachment to objects, which at most can procure us only a momentary felicity. A favourite passion is a second disposition of mind, that renders us guilty of a violation of the whole law, even while we seem to violate it only in an inconsiderable part.

3. Finally, *Intractable minds* are condemned in our text. Docility is a touchstone, by which a doubtful piety may be known to be real or apparent. The royal prophet describes in the fiftieth psalm such a rigid observer of the exterior of religion as we speak of; a man who has the name of God always in his mouth, and is ever talking of the holiness of his laws; a man always ready to offer whole hecatombs in sacrifice; but who has not patience to hear a representation of his duty, and an exhortation to perform it. The psalmist declares, all this appearance of devotion, if unaccompanied with docility, is useless, yea, more likely to arouse the anger of God than to obtain his favour. *Thou wicked wretch!* says he, in the name of God, to this phantom of piety, who imposes on the church by his outward appearance, and who, perhaps, imposeth on himself; *Thou wicked man, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction?* ver. 16. He author-

iseth us to use the same language to some of you. Why this assiduity at church, why this zeal on solemn festivals, why this fervour at the Lord's table, seeing you are unteachable; seeing you love none but vague maxims of virtue and holiness; seeing you will not allow your casuist to enter into some details; seeing every man loses your favour, if he hints your foibles; seeing your tenderest and most faithful friend would become suspected directly, yea, would seem an impertinent censor, the moment he should discover your faults, and endeavor to make you acknowledge and reform them?

My brethren, if we love virtue, we love all the means that lead to it, and with peculiar pleasure behold them who recommend it. Nothing is more opposite to that general devotedness to the laws of God which my text prescribes, than a spirit inimical against them who have the courage to controul the passions. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9. "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge," chap. xii. 1. "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death," chap. xiii. 14. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head," Psal. cxli. 5. May God always continue a succession of such righteous men, and may he incline our hearts to profit by their instructions! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



## SERMON II.

*The Great Duties of Religion.*



MATTHEW xxiii. 23.

*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

**WE** frequently meet with a sort of people in the world, who some of them neglect the chief virtues of religion, and supply the want of them by performing the least articles of it; and others, who perform the chief duties, and neglect the least. Observe one man, who cherishes a spirit of bitterness, and is all swelled with pride, envy, and revenge; by what art hath he acquired a reputation of eminent piety? By grave looks, by an affected simplicity of dress, by an assiduity in the exercises of public worship. See another, who is all immersed in wordly affairs, whose life is all consumed in pleasure, who neglects, and who affects to neglect, both public worship and private devotion. Ask him how he expects to escape in a well-regulated society that just censure which irregular actions, and a way of living inconsistent with christianity, deserve. He will tell you

I am a man of honour, I pay my debts, I am faithful to my engagements, I never break my word.

We are going to-day, my brethren, to attack both classess of this inconsistent sort of people; and to prove, that the practice of small virtues cannot supply the want of the chief; and that the performance of the chief virtues cannot make up for the omission of the least. These points are determined by Jesus Christ in the text. On the one hand, he denounces a woe against the Scribes and Pharisees, who scrupulously extended their obedience to the Mosaical law of tithes to the utmost limits, while they violated the more indispensable precepts of morality. On the other hand, he does not intend to divert the attention of his disciples from the least duties by enforcing the greatest. *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* As if he had said, Your principal attention, indeed, should be directed to equity of judgment, to charitable distribution of property, and to sincerity of conversation; but, beside an attention to these, you should diligently discharge the less considerable duty of tithing, and other such obligations. These are two propositions which I will endeavour to explain and establish. They will afford matter for two discourses; the first on the chief virtues, and the last on the least, or, more strictly speaking, the less considerable. Some preliminary remarks, however, are absolutely necessary for our understanding the text.

1. The word that should determine the sense, is equivocal in the original, and signifies sometimes to *exact* tithes, and at other times to *pay* them. It is

used in the first sense in Hebrews, *The sons of Levi have a commandment to take tithes of the people*; and a little after, *he whose descent is not counted from them, receives tithes of Abraham*, chap. vii. 5, 6. But, in the gospel of St. Luke, the word which we have elsewhere rendered to receive tithes, signifies to pay them, *I give tithes*, saith the Pharisee, *of all that I possess*, chap. xviii. 12.

The ambiguity of this term hath produced various opinions concerning the meaning of our text. The most laborious, and the most learned of the ancient expositors, I mean St. Jerom, is said to have taken the term in the first sense. According to this hypothesis, Jesus Christ paints the Pharisees here in colours, which have almost always too well suited the persons to whom governments have intrusted the business of tax-gathering. Inhumanity has almost always been their character. *Ye tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and ye omit judgment, mercy, and faith.* As if he had said, You tithe inconsiderable herbs, and you do not reflect, that it is incompatible with principles both of equity and mercy to tithe inconsiderable articles, from which the proprietors derive little or no advantage. It is not right, that these things should be subject to such imposts as governments charge on articles of great consequence.

We embrace the sense of our translators, and take the word to signify here *pay tithes*. This sense best agrees with the whole text. *Ye pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* It agrees better also with

the following words, *Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.* This is a proverbial way of speaking, descriptive of that disposition of mind, which inclines men to perform inconsiderable duties with a most scrupulous exactness, and to violate without any scruple the most essential articles of religion. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees would have been less remarkable in an inhumane exaction of tithes, than in a parade of paying them with a rigid nicety. Accordingly, it is a Pharisee who speaks the words just now cited from St. Luke, and who reckons scrupulosity among his virtues. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess,* that is to say, I pay tithes of those things, which seem to be too inconsiderable to be tithed.

2. Our second remark regards the law of tithes. Tithes were dues payable to God, and they consisted of the tenth of the produce of whatever was tithable. The Jews pretended, that the example of Abraham, who paid to God, in the person of Melchisedeck, his minister, a tenth of the spoils which he took from the confederate kings of the plain, ought to have the force of a law with all his descendants. To this mysterious circumstance they refer the origin of tithes. Natural religion seems to have inculcated among the pagans the necessity of paying this kind of homage to God. We meet with examples among the heathens for time immemorial. With them tithes were considered as a sacred tax. Hence Pisistratus, a tyrant of Athens, said to the Athenians, in order to obtain their consent to sub-

mit to his authority, Inquire whether I appropriate tithes to myself, and do not religiously carry them to the temples of the gods. We will not multiply quotations. It shall suffice to say, God declared to the Israelites, that the land of Canaan was his, as well as the rest of the world, that they should enjoy the produce of the land ; but should be as strangers and pilgrims, and have no absolute disposal of the lands themselves. In the quality of sole proprietor he obliged them to pay him homage, and this is the true origin of tithes. *All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's, Lev. xxvii. 30.* that is, tithe belongs to God of right, and cannot be withheld without sacrilege.

There were three sorts of tithes. The first kind was appointed for the support of the Levites, and was wholly devoted to that purpose, except a fifth, which was taken out for the priests. This was called by the Jews the first tithe, the provision for God, because it was dedicated to the maintenance of the ministers of the temple. *Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, Mal. iii. 10.* Hence the Jews thought themselves free from this kind of tithe, when they had no temple.

There was a second sort of tithe. Every head of a family was obliged to carry it himself to the temple at Jerusalem, and to eat it there. If he were prevented by distance of habitation, he was allowed to redeem this tax, that is to say, he was allowed to pay an equivalent. A law to this purpose is in Deu-

teronomy. "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks, that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee," that is to say, if the tithe would take damage in carrying, then shalt "thou turn it into money, and shalt carry it unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose," chap. xiv. 23, 25.

The third sort of tithes were called the tithes for the poor. These, it was supposed, were paid to God, because his benevolence had, if I may speak agreeably to an expression of Jesus Christ, incorporated them with himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. This tithe was paid every three years. "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shall lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand, which thou doest," Deut. xiv. 28, 29.

But what principally regards the sense of our text is, that the law had not precisely determined what things were titheable. It had only expressed the matter in general terms. This had given occasion to two opinions among the Jews, that of the scrupu-

lous, and that of the remiss. The remiss affirmed, that only things of value were titheable. The scrupulous, among whom the Pharisees held the first place, extended the law to articles of the least importance. Their rituals ordained, that all eatables were titheable, and in this class they put the inconsiderable herbs mentioned in the text. They are all specified in the talmud. Jesus Christ declares himself here for the opinion of the Pharisees; but what he blamed, and what he detested was, that they dispensed with the great duties of religion, under pretence of performing these, the least; and this is the subject we are going to examine.

I. We will define the great duties of religion.

II. We will unmask those hypocrites, who by observing the small duties of religion, pretend to purchase a right of violating the chief articles of it. We will endeavour to develop this kind of devotion, and to shew you the inutility and extravagance of it.

I. What are the chief duties of religion? or, to retain the language of my text, what are the *weightier matters of the law*?

In some respects all virtues are equal, because the foundation of our obedience is the same, that is, the majesty of the Supreme Legislator, who prescribed all. A man who should coolly and obstinately violate the least important duties of religion, would be no less guilty than he who should violate the most essential articles of it. His violation of the least ought to be accounted a violation of the greatest, because by sinning in the manner just now mention-

ed, he would subvert, as far as he could, the ground of all virtues, great and small. St. James saith, *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, chap. ii. 10. and the reason he assigns is, the same God hath prescribed all, *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill*. Now, adds the apostle, *if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law*, ver. 11. that is to say, thou subvertest the foundation of the law, that forbids adultery, which thou dost not commit, as well as that which forbids murder, which thou dost commit. In this respect, then, all virtues and vices are equal. In this view, there is no room for distinction between the more and the less important duties of religion.

But this, which is incontestible in one point of view, is not defensible in another. There are some things in the law more important than others; because, though they all proceed from the same tribunal, yet the majesty of God, the lawgiver, was displayed in a more express and solemn manner in ordaining some than others, so that he who violates the first kind of virtues, attacks this majesty in a more direct manner than he who is guilty of violating only the last.

The difficulty lies in exactly determining the rules by which these two classes of virtues are to be distinguished. The time allotted for a sermon renders such a discussion impracticable. It is, if I may so speak, essential to all sermons preached in this pulpit, that they be discussed superficially. We must ac-



commodate ourselves to custom, and briefly sketch out the present subject.

In order to ascertain what virtues ought to be arranged among the most important, and what among the least, five things must be distinguished. 1. The origin of a virtue. 2. The duration of it. 3. Its object. 4. Its influence. 5. Its destination. From these distinctions arise five rules.

The first rule regards the *origin* of a virtue. A virtue arising immediately from primitive law, is more important than others, an obligation to which arises from some particular circumstances; and those which are immediate consequences of this law, are more important than others, which are remotely consequential.

The second regards the *duration* of a virtue. A virtue that runs on to eternity, is more important than another, which belongs only to the economy of time.

The third rule regards the *object* of a virtue. A virtue, that hath a great object, is more important than another which hath an inconsiderable object.

The fourth rule is taken from the *influence* of a virtue. A virtue connected with other virtues, and moving along with itself a great many others, is more important than another virtue which operates independently and alone.

The fifth rule regards the *end* of a virtue. A virtue that constitutes the end to which all religion conducts us, is more important than other virtues, which at most only promote the means that lead to the end.

We shall briefly explain these five rules, and shall leave them to your mature deliberation.

The first rule is taken from the *origin* of a virtue. One virtue originating immediately in *primitive* law is more important than another, an obligation to perform which is founded only on some particular circumstances; and such virtues as are immediate consequences of this law, are more important than others that are only remotely consequential.

Primitive law is that class of maxims which derive their authority, not from revealed law only, but from the eternal truths on which they are founded, and from the nature of the intelligent beings to whom they are prescribed. Such are these: A created intelligence has no right to assume a freedom from the laws of his Creator: The Being who possesseth supreme perfection, is alone worthy of supreme adoration: *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12: Talents with which I am intrusted by another, ought not to be employed to gratify my particular caprice; but they ought to be so used as to enable me to give a good account of them to him who intrusted me with them, and directed the use of them. Multiply and enlarge these maxims, brethren; I only give you a clue. Virtues of this kind are far more important than others, an obligation to which is founded only on particular circumstances. Virtues of this last kind oblige only as consequences of the primitive law, of which I just now spoke; and they oblige more or less, as the consequences are more or less remote. To address consolatory conversation to a sufferer

obliges only as a consequence of this primitive virtue, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* To comfort an afflicted man by conversing with him, is a consequence more remote from this primitive virtue than to remove his affliction by supplying his wants. Accordingly, the virtues of this consequential kind cease to oblige, when the circumstances that found the obligation cease. Hence, it sometimes happens, these duties annihilate one another. We must often omit some to discharge others. We must defer, or wholly omit consolatory conversation, in order to procure and administer real supplies. We must omit relieving a stranger, in order to fly to relieve a fellow-citizen. We must cease to relieve one to whom we are related only as a fellow-citizen, in order to attend to the relief of another, who is a member with us of *the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. and so on.

2. Virtues anterior to particular circumstances subsist after those circumstances; and my second maxim is only the first in a different point of view. A virtue perpetuated to *eternity* is more important than another which is confined within the limits of time. Now, the virtues that go on to eternity, are the same which oblige prior to all the particular circumstances of time. The two rules therefore unite; it is one proposed in divers views.

Hear how St. Paul reasons to prove that charity is more excellent than all the miraculous gifts which God bestowed on the primitive christians. He enumerates these gifts: *God hath set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after*

that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues, 1 Cor. xii. 28. But, adds he, covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way, ver. 31. Then follows his encomium upon Charity. *Charity, or love, never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away, 1 Cor. xiii. 8.* Moreover, he places charity not only above all miraculous gifts: but he sets it above all other virtues. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity, ver. 13.*

My brethren, what St. Paul said of miraculous gifts, and of some virtues, that *they fail* in comparison with charity, an obligation to which continues for ever, we say of a thousand particular practices, to which, indeed, you are obliged, but which are not to be compared with other great virtues, of the excellence of which we have been speaking, and which are *weightier matters of the law*. All these particular circumstances will cease in another life: but these great virtues, to which we would persuade you to give the preference, will never cease. In heaven we can erect no hospitals, visit no sick people, wipe off no slander: but we shall be happily united by ties the most agreeable, the most close, and the most indissoluble. In heaven we shall love one another with sentiments the most sincere, the most lively, the most tender; because we shall participate the same God, propose to ourselves the same end, and be for ever in the highest bliss. In heaven we shall have no temple: we shall eternally enjoy

the presence of God. In heaven we shall not *take hold of each other's skirts*, Zech. viii. 23. according to the expression of a prophet, saying, *Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*, Isa. ii. 3. but we shall incessantly animate one another to celebrate the praises of the Author of our existence and happiness. In heaven we shall not approach a table to commemorate, by receiving a little bread and wine, our divine Redeemer, and to hold communion with God; but we shall be as closely connected to God as creatures can be to the Creator. Those virtues which approach nearest to them that are anterior to time, and to them that continue to eternity, are more important than others, to which circumstances of time oblige us.

3. Our third rule regards *objects* of virtue. A virtue that hath a great object, is more important than those which have small objects. The answer of Jesus Christ to a famous question in his time is well known. It was then warmly disputed, "Which is the great commandment?" Some Rabbies said, it was that which appointed *phylacteries*; others affirmed, it was the law of *circumcision*; others again contended for that which appointed *sacrifices*. No, said Jesus Christ, none of these commandments merits the highest place, "the great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength." This law admits of no dispensation, no limitation, no concurrence.

This law, I say, is *indispensible*: it binds alike angels and men, and they are only devils who, having

precipitated themselves by the greatest of all crimes into the greatest of all miseries, are reduced to the dreadful necessity of hating a God whose perfections incline him to render them miserable.

This law is *unlimited*. Others are confined to a certain sphere ; they cease to be virtues when they are carried to excess, and whatever carries us too far in performing one obligation, retrenches another obligation. Excessive justice runs into barbarity, and leaves no room for the exercise of humanity. Excessive penitence ceases to be repentance, degenerates into despair, and leaves no room for faith in the promises of mercy made to us in the gospel. Excessive faith ceases to be faith, degenerates into superstition and puerile credulity, and leaves no room for the exercise of reason. But who can love God in an extreme? A passion so noble can never be too vehement, nor can its flames ever burn with too much ardour.

This law is without *concurrence*. The great object of our love admits of no rival in the heart. In many cases we ought to sacrifice one duty, which has God for its object, to another that has a neighbour for its object. It would be better to absent one's self from the external duties of religion than to neglect a dying parent. Love to God in this case is not in opposition to love for a fellow creature. God himself requires us in such a case to suspend a performance of ritual service, and to bend all our attention to relieve a dying parent. The love then shewn to a dying parent is a necessary consequence of loving God, of that primitive love from which

all other loves proceed. Whenever the love of God and the love of our neighbour are in opposition, so that we cannot perform the last without neglecting the first, we need not hesitate; love to God must be preferred before love to creatures. The most lawful attachments become criminal, when they diminish, yea when they divide, the regard that we ought to have for God. "No man can serve two masters." "He that loveth father or mother, or son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment," Matt. vi. 24. x. 17. and xxii. 36, 37.

The objects of some virtues, which regard our neighbour, are greater than others of the same class. Charity which respects the life of a neighbour, is greater than that which regards his fortune. Charity that regards his salvation, is greater than that which regards his life; the objects are greater.

The same may be said of virtues which regard ourselves. The rule is certain. A virtue which hath a great object is more important than another which hath a small object.

4. Our fourth rule regards the *influence* of virtues. Every virtue connected with other virtues, and drawing after it many more, is greater than any single and detached virtue. The influence of virtues proceeds in some cases from the *relations* of him who performs them, and in other cases from the *nature* of the virtues themselves.

The virtues of a minister of state, and those of a minister of Christ, are of far greater importance in the execution of their offices than the other virtues of the same men which they practise as private persons in the comparative obscurity of their families. It is a very virtuous action in a statesman to provide good tutors for his children; but it is a far more virtuous action in him to prefer able professors in an university. The first influence only his family, the last the whole state. The same reasoning holds in the case of a minister of Christ, and of every other person, always proportioning, however, the duty to the relation that each bears in the world.

Sometimes the influence of a virtue is essential to the *nature* of the virtue itself. It is a virtue to bestow on a beggar a sum sufficient to free him from the necessity of begging; but it is a far more virtuous action to put him in a capacity of supporting himself; for by this mean he is not only freed from the temptations of poverty, but from those of idleness, the parent of all vice and misery. By this mean, you make a good member of society, a good father of a family, a good christian in the church, and so on.

What has been said on the difference of virtues, both in this and in the former rules, may be applied to the difference of vices. Vicious actions of extensive influence ought to be considered as more odious than others of confined effects. It is certainly a detestable action to utter, in excesses of debauchery, any maxims injurious to religion and good manners: but it is incomparably more detestable, coolly and



deliberately to pen, print, publish, extend, and perpetuate these maxims. There is no pretext specious enough to palliate the permission of such publications, as there are no colours black enough to describe the audacious authors of such books.

No, neither that spirit of toleration, which produces such innumerable blessings where it reigns, nor that freedom of commerce, which, where it is allowed, enriches nations, and renders them so flourishing and formidable; no, no pretext can palliate the liberty, or rather the licentiousness that we deplore. The law of God ordained that a blasphemer should be stoned, and this law was executed in all its rigour by the Jewish legislature. Have Christians more right to blaspheme God than Jews had? Has the christian magistrate a greater right to exercise indulgence towards blasphemers than Jewish magistrates had?

But if no pretext can be invented to palliate a permission of such publications, who can furnish colours black enough to describe the publishers of them? Thou miserable wretch, who, in order to obtain the empty reputation of an author, and to acquire the false glory of writing with vivacity and beauty, coverest thyself with real infamy, what madness animates thee! Wretch! who spreadest the poison of thy corruption, not only through thine own circle, but through all the countries where thine infamous productions go; infecting not only thy contemporaries, but all others who succeed thee; what punishment proportioned to thy malice can be inflicted on thee! Miserable wretch! methinks I dis-

tinguish thee hereafter in the croud of victims, which the vengeance of God sacrificeth in hell. Methinks I see thee amidst the unworthy captives, whom thy writings subdued to Satan, and I hear them address this frightful language to thee: 'Thou barbarian! was it not enough for thee to delight thyself with error and vice, didst thou aspire at the glory of giving us a relish for it! Was it not enough to exclude thyself from eternal happiness, must heaven also be shut against us, by thine abominable maxims as well as thy pernicious example! Was it not enough to precipitate thyself into these flames, must we be drawn after thee! Thou wast our betrayer in time, and we will be thy tormentors through all eternity.

Finally, the last rule to distinguish virtues the most important of others of inferior importance, is taken from the *end* of each. A virtue that constitutes the *end* to which all religion conducts us, is more important than other virtues which at most are only means to lead to the end. What is the end and design of all religion? Can there be one among us so great a novice in the school of Jesus Christ as to want an answer to this question? Let us hear St. Paul. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. This is the end of religion. In order to obtain this end, we are dedicated to God in baptism as soon as we are born. In our infancy we are inspired with a piety of prejudice in hope that in time we may imbibe a rational piety. As

soon as our minds unfold their powers we are taught to know our Creator. As we ripen in years and knowledge, tutors are provided for us, and we are conducted to places of public worship erected to the glory of our Creator; there being assembled we are invited to celebrate solemn festivals; there we are taught whence we came and whither we go, what we are and what we ought to be, what we should believe, and what we ought to practice: we are led by the exercise of prayer to the source of all that assistance which is necessary to enable us to surmount the obstacles which nature, example, and habit, in spite of an education the most rigid and holy, oppose to our sanctification; there we are made to ratify, by engagements the most solemn and binding, at the table of the Lord, all that had been promised for us at our baptism. Now what are all these practices? Are they not *means* to conduct us to the *end* of religion? Let us then put every thing in its proper place; let us value the means only as they lead to the end; and let us not imagine, when we have lost sight of the end, that we do any thing to purpose by continuing to make use of the means.

Here, my brethren, I finish my essay; for the rules laid down are sufficient to enable us to perceive the reasons which induced Jesus Christ to rank the virtues enumerated, *judgment, faith, and mercy*, among *the weightier matters of the law*. Can we refuse this rank to what Jesus Christ calls *judgment*; that is, attentive, impartial, incorruptible *justice*; such equity as that which engageth a judge to go through the fatigue of a long and painful discussion of an intri-

cate subject, to disregard the appearance of persons, never to suffer himself to be *blinded by gifts*, to determine a point and decide a cause only by the justice or injustice of it? Can we refuse this rank to *mercy*, that is, to that benevolence which inclines us always to tolerate the tolerable infirmities of our neighbours, to excuse them when any excuse can be made for them, to conceal and correct them, rather than to envenom and publish them; or to use the language of St. Paul, can we refuse to place in the highest order of virtues that charity "which suffereth long and is kind, which vaunteth not itself, which is not puffed up, which doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c. My God, what a description! My God, how seldom is this virtue practised, how little is it understood, even among christians! Finally, Can we refuse to place among the *weightier matters of the law*, what Jesus Christ calls *faith*, that is, such a rectitude and candour as all the world praise, though few practise, the virtue that makes a man sincere in his professions, steady in his friendships, punctual in his contracts, faithful in all his engagements? Our attempt, our rules may serve to convince you, that these virtues ought to be placed in the highest rank, and that their places cannot be supplied by a punctual payment of tithes, or by any other duties of the same class. This is so clear that it is needless to add any thing more on this article.

II. What we proposed to treat of in the second place demands a greater attention. We engaged to unmask such of our hearers as endeavor to acquire by the performance of less important duties, a right to neglect other duties of the highest class and of the utmost importance. And yet I have neither time nor courage to fulfil this engagement. All that the few remaining moments, all that the delicacy, or, if I may venture to use the words of an apostle, all that the *itching ears* of our times will allow me to do, is to set you a task. This is it. Recollect our rules, avail yourselves of them to enable you to form a just notion of your state; and to exemplify in a few articles what we cannot fully investigate, let one avail himself of our rules to enable him to make a just estimate of the decency of his outward deportment; let another judge by these of the value of those sacrifices which he has made for religion; another of his assiduity in attending public worship; and another of the encomiums which he makes on the dead, and which he hopes his survivors will after his decease make on him.

You are a man of a grave deportment. All the virtues seem painted in your countenance, your eyes habitually roll towards heaven, the smallest inadvertence offends and provokes you, your mouth never opens but to utter moral sentences; and yet you are proud and affronted at a smile, a look, the least indication of incivility. Every body knows you are always full of your own importance, your reputation, your rank, and what is still worse, your virtue. It should seem you are afraid of defiling

yourself by touching other men, and always exclaiming by your actions, if not in so many words, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxxv. 5. How little progress soever we have made in the knowledge of the human heart, and in the art of discerning the pretences, under which the most haughty souls conceal their pride, it is easy enough to see that what you esteem above all other things is self. Ah! *voe be to you!* you pay *tithe of mint, anise, and cummin*; but you omit the *weightier matters of the law*. Do I impose on you? What place then does humility occupy in your system of morality? What value do you set upon humility, that virtue of which Jesus Christ has given you so many excellent descriptions, and so many amiable models?

You have made great sacrifices for religion. You have left your country and your fortune, your honour and your family, yea, your all, to follow Jesus Christ: yet, were we to judge of your intention by your actions, we should affirm that you followed him only to have a fairer opportunity to insult and betray him. It is notorious that you violate, without remorse, the most essential laws of that religion, for the sake of which you made such noble sacrifices. In this exile, to which you voluntarily condemned yourself for the sake of religion, we see you covetous, envious, revengeful, wearing, and glorying to wear, the livery of the world. Ah! *voe be to you!* you pay *tithe of mint, anise, and cummin*: but omit the *weightier matters of the law*. I ask again, do I impose on you? What place, then, does

the practical part of religion occupy in your system? Is christianity less proposed to your heart than to your mind? Is the person from whom it proceeds, less jealous of his precepts than of his doctrines? Satisfied that his disciples *say Lord, Lord*, is he indifferent whether they perform or omit what he commands?

You are assiduous in attending public worship. You are scrupulously exact in the performance of every part. Our festivals are delicious days to you; but alas! devotion sours your temper, and you become insufferable as you grow devout. You make your friends martyrs; you treat your children like slaves, and your domestics like animals of a species different from your own. You are more like a fury than a man. Your house is a hell, and it seems as if you came into a christian church only to learn of the God, who is worshipped there, the art of becoming a tormentor of mankind. Ah! "Woe be to you! you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin;" but "you omit the weightier matters of the law." I ask again, Do I impose on you? What rank, then, in your system does discretion occupy? Where is that spirit of prudence, patience, gentleness, and goodness, which the inspired writers so often repeat, and so powerfully recommend in their writings?

You celebrate the praises of your dying friends, and incessantly exclaim, "How comfortably he died!" If you do not go so far as to place your departed friends, who in your opinion died in such a christian manner, among the number of the gods, you do place them without scruple in the number of

the saints. This sort of encomium is a model of that at which you aspire ; hence you often exclaim, speaking of your good departed friend, " Let me die his death, and let my last end belike his ! " Numb. xxiii. 10. When you are seized with any illness that threatens your life, you put on all the exterior of religion. I see one minister after another sitting at your bed-side. I hear your constant sobs and groans. Here is nothing but weeping and sighing and holy ejaculations ; but I stand listening to hear you utter one other word, that is, *restitution*, and that I never hear. I never hear you say, as Zaccheus said, " If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," Luke xix. 8. I never see your coffers disgorge the riches you have obtained by extortion ; you never hear, or never feel the cries " of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, whose hire is of you kept back by fraud, the cries of whom are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," James v. 4. You choose rather to set at defiance all those terrible judgments which God hath denounced against extortioners than to part from your idol, gain ; you would rather transmit your fortune under a curse to your posterity than restore what you and your ancestors have extorted. Ah ! " Wo be to you ! you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin ; but you omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, faith, and mercy ! "

My brethren, it is a deplorable thing, that when we treat of such an important subject as this, we are obliged to pay more attention to the delicacy of our



hearers than to the weight of the subject. But in the name of God, do you yourselves finish the list of those articles which timidity (or, shall I say, caution?) forbids me to extend. Go up to the *origin* of that disposition which I have been opposing. It must proceed from one of *three* principles; it must come from either narrowness of mind, or hypocrisy, or a criminal composition.

Perhaps it may proceed from *littleness of mind*. We are enslaved by external appearance. We determine ourselves by semblances. In the world more reputation is acquired by the shadow than by the substance of virtue. By habituating ourselves to this kind of imposition, we bring ourselves to believe that God will suffer himself to be imposed on in the same manner. "These things hast thou done," saith he by the mouth of a prophet, "and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself;" Psal. l. 21. We insensibly persuade ourselves, that, provided we lift our eyes to heaven, God will think our hearts are elevated thither; provided we kneel before the throne of God, he will think our hearts bow with our bodies; provided we mutter a few prayers, God will accept us as if we formed ideas and performed acts of love. This is littleness of mind.

Sometimes it proceeds from *hypocrisy*. Jesus Christ reproached the Pharisees with this. The Pharisees were attached to religion no further than as it acquired them reputation in the world. But I will not insist on this article. I freely acknowledge, I had almost said I lament, that hypocrisy is *not* the

vice of our age. Piety is now so little respected, that we need not much suspect people of aiming to acquire reputation by professing it; yea, perhaps, it may oftener happen that they who really have some degree of it conceal it in order to escape contempt, than that others who have none, affect to possess it in order to acquire public esteem.

Sometimes also this disposition of mind proceeds from a *criminal composition*. We have the face to compound with God. We are willing to perform the external part of religion, provided he will dispense with the internal part; we are ready to offer *sacrifices* provided he will dispense with obedience; we are willing to do what costs our depravity nothing, or next to nothing, if he will dispense with what would cost it much.

Let us finish. One maxim, which I intreat you to retain in memory, is the essence of my subject, and the spring that gives force to all the exhortations which I have addressed to you in the latter periods of this discourse. This maxim is, that a christian is obliged by his *heavenly calling*, not only to practise all virtues, but to place each in its proper rank; to give more application to such as merit more application, and to give most of all to such as require most of all.

On this principle, what an idea ought we to form of that *mercy* or benevolence, which my text places among the *weightier matters of the law*? You have heard the value of this in the body of this discourse. Such virtues as have God for their object are more important than others, which have our neighbour for

their object. But God, in order to engage us to benevolence, hath taught us to consider beneficence to our neighbours as one of the surest evidences of our love to himself. He unites himself with the poor; he clothes himself, as it were, with their miseries; and he tells us, *inasmuch as ye do good unto one of the least of these, ye do it unto me*, Matt. xxv. 40. What a sublime idea! From what a fund of love does such a benevolent declaration proceed! And, at the same time, what a motive to animate us to benevolence.

This virtue, to the practice of which we perpetually exhort you, ought to be extraordinarily exerted, my dear brethren, now that God visits us with a sort of judgment, I mean the excessive rigour of this winter. It is not a judgment upon you, rich men, God loads you with temporal blessings; but it falls upon you, miserable labourers, whose hands, benumbed with cold, are rendered incapable of working, the only way you have of procuring a morsel of bread for yourselves and your families: upon you, poor old people, struggling at the same time against the infirmities of old age and the rigours of the season: upon you, innocent victims to hunger and cold, who have no provision except cries and tears, and whom I see more dead than alive around a fire that emits less heat than smoke: upon you, wretched sick people, lodged in a hovel open on all sides to the weather, and destitute of both nourishment and clothing. Is it wrong to call a cause producing such tragical effects a judgment? Must I justify the term by reasons more con-

vincing? I am ashamed to allege them. Without pretending to answer for the fact, (it is an affair too mortifying for some of us to investigate,) we are assured, that some have perished with cold. I do not know who is in fault, but I recollect the complaint which St. Paul addressed to the Corinthians, when incest had been committed in their city. What! said he, have ye heard of this deed, and have ye not covered yourselves with *mourning*? I Cor. v. 1, 2. What! my dear brethren, in a christian society, do we see such events; do we behold the poor dying with cold, without being touched in our inmost souls, without inquiring into the cause of such a misfortune, without applying proper means to prevent such things in future?

With this pious design, the dispensers of your bounty will again humbly wait at the door of this church to receive your charitable contributions, in order to enable them to-day plentifully to supply the wants of such as perhaps may die to-day, if they be not relieved. With the same pious views, they have besought the magistrates to grant them an extraordinary collection, and next Wednesday they intend to conjure you by those shocking objects, with which their own minds are affected, and with which they have thought it their duty to affect ours, to afford such relief as may be necessary to prevent the many evils, with which the remainder of the winter yet threatens us.

If you accuse me of applying too often to you on this subject, I answer, my importunity is your glory. You have affectionately habituated me to

see you accessible, and myself successful, when I speak to you on subjects of this kind. I hope I shall always find you the same; I hope you will not be *weary in well doing*, 2 Thess. ii. 13. I hope the voice of so many wretched petitioners as beseech you by my mouth, will not sound in vain in this christian assembly. Hear it, you happy natives of these provinces, whom God distinguishes by so many favours. Hear it, my dear countrymen, whom heaven hath enriched in your exile, and who, after having yourselves been a long time in want of assistance, are now so able to assist others. Hear it, generous strangers, who sometimes mix your devotions with those which we offer to God in this house; contribute to our charities, and share with us the blessings which they procure. God grant us all grace to do his will. To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



# SERMON III.

*The Small Duties of Religion.*



MATTHEW xxiii. 23.

*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites !  
for ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and  
have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judg-  
ment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have  
done, and not to leave the other undone.*

IN order to form a just notion of the *little duties* of religion of which we are about to treat, we must avoid a disposition to fastidious nicety, and an inclination to panics, or groundless fears.

Nothing is more opposite to the genius of religion than what I call a fastidious nicety, a sort of trifling spirit. It is incompatible with the greatness of God, whom we serve, and the excellence of rational creatures, to whom religion is proposed. It is inconsistent, too, with the importance of those engagements to which the gospel calls us, and with the magnitude of those objects which it proposes to our faith.

What condemns a trifling spirit censures also an inclination to groundless fears. For example, a christian seriously prepares himself for the Lord's supper; when he partakes of it, a wandering thought alarms him, and he is filled with terror, as if he had

committed a high crime against God. But can we imagine, that God is setting snares for us, while he is giving us tokens of his love? Who can presume to approach the table of the Lord, I do not say worthily, but possibly, if there were any ground for such panics as these? Do you think you do honour to God, by attributing to him a turn for such comparatively insignificant niceties (forgive the expression, I cannot convey my meaning without it,) a disposition, I think, which you would hardly suppose in a sensible man? Can you suppose that God loves you with less wisdom, and less condescension than you love your children? Far from us be such odious thoughts! Remember, "the spirit which ye have received, is not a spirit of bondage to fear; but a spirit of adoption," Rom. viii. 15. Remember, ye are "not children of the bond woman; but of the free," Gal. iv. 31. "Stand fast then in that inestimable liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," chap. v. 1. "Give of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you," Luke xi. 41. Be fully persuaded that in a religion of love, love excuses much infirmity, and sets a value on some seemingly inconsiderable actions, which appear to have only a very remote connection with the disposition whence they proceed.

In what then, you will ask, consist what we call small or little duties? What are the *less weighty things of the law*, which Jesus Christ says we ought not to leave undone, after we have done the more weighty things? My brethren, the *duties* of which we speak to-day, ought not to be accounted *little*, ex-



cept when they are compared with other duties, which are of greater importance; and, as we said last Lord's-day, because they are consequences more remote from original primitive right. However, though little duties do not proceed so directly and immediately as great duties do, yet do they proceed from the same origin; and though they are not the first links of the chain of christian virtues, yet they are as truly connected with the origin as the first.

Choose of the list of moral virtues any one that seems the least important, and I will justify my idea of it. For instance, to be affable and accessible, to give attention to the tiresome tale of a tedious fellow christian in some difficulty, this is one of the *very least duties* that we can enjoin you, this is one of the *less weighty matters of the law*. Who will pretend to compare this with what you ought to do for this man in other cases? You ought to supply his wants when he is in a sick-bed, to defend his reputation when it is attacked, to support and provide for his family when it falls to decay. This first little duty, however, small as it may appear, proceeds from the same principle of primitive law as the last great duties do. This law is expressed in these words, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12. Would any one of you be convinced of this? Put yourself in the place of this man. Suppose a person elevated as much above you as you pretend to be above him, would it not mortify you if he either refused to hear you at all, or gave you only a care-

less negligent audience? Let each of you, my brethren, enlarge this thought, and by applying it to himself, let him judge whether my proposition be not sufficiently clear.

I carry my proposition further still. I affirm, not only that there is no duty so small in the moral law as not to proceed from primitive original right, but that God never prescribed an observance so insignificant in the ceremonial law as not to proceed from the same origin. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, Deut. vi. 5. this is the first principle of primitive law. If we ought to love God with all our hearts, we ought carefully to observe all the means which he hath appointed to cherish this love. Now, these means vary according to the various circumstances in which they to whom the means are prescribed may be. A worship charged with ceremonies would serve only to extinguish emotions of love, if prescribed to people in some conditions; yet the same sort of worship would inflame the love of other people in different circumstances. The Jews were in the last case. Born and brought up in slavery, employed, as they were, in manual occupations, they would have been destitute of all ideas under an economy without ceremonies. Surrounded with idolatrous nations, and naturally inclined, as they were, to idolatry, it was necessary, in order to prevent their copying such wretched examples, to which they had strong propensities and inducements, I say, it was necessary, if I may venture to speak so, not to give them opportunity to breathe, to keep them

constantly employed in some external action, every moment of the time devoted to religion.

Christians, I allow, are in circumstances altogether different. A mass of ceremonies would serve only to veil the beauty of that God, whom *no man had seen at any time* before the advent of Christ, and whom *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared*, John i. 18. Whatever contributes to the concealment of the perfections of this God damps that love which a contemplation of them inspires. Yet, as we are full of infirmities on this earth, we want a few signs to produce and cherish in us the love of God. Where is the man who is capable of a devotion all disengaged from sense? who can fix his eyes immediately on *the sun of righteousness*, Mal. iv. 2. Where is the man who is capable of such abstract meditations and pure emotions as constitute the worship of angels and seraphim? Alas! my soul, how difficult is recollection to thee, even with all the assistance of a religious ceremonial! How hard dost thou find it to maintain a spirit of devotion even in this place, in this concourse of people, with all these voices, and with those ordinances which are appointed for the maintenance of it? What wouldst thou do, wert thou left to thine own meditations only, to practise a piety altogether spiritual and free from external action?

Let us finish this article. The least important parts of ceremonial worship, as well as the least virtues of morality, which we call *little duties*, or the *less weighty matters of the law*, proceed from primi-

tive law, by consequences more remote, but as real as those of the most important duties.

What we have been saying of the *nature* of little duties demonstrates the *obligation* of them. They all proceed from primitive law. You cannot, therefore, neglect the performance of them without confining what ought to be infinite.

But this is too vague. We will treat of the subject more at large, and in order to enable you more fully to perceive your *obligation to little duties*, I will speak of them in four different views, each of which will open a field of reflections.

I. They contribute to maintain a tenderness of conscience.

II. They are sources of re-conversion after great falls.

III. They make up by their frequency what is wanting to their importance.

IV. They have sometimes characters as certain of real love as the great duties have.

Now, my brethren, whatever engages us to the performance of *little duties* must preserve us from the commission of what the world calls *little sins*. This is all I have to propose to you at present.

I. *An exact performance of little duties maintains tenderness of conscience.* By *conscience* I mean that instant, and, in some sort, involuntary approbation of our own conduct when we discharge our obligations, and that sentence of condemnation which we cannot help denouncing against ourselves, whenever we are so unhappy as to violate them. In the language of St. Paul, it is *the work of the law writ-*

*ten in our hearts, our thoughts accusing or else excusing one another, Rom. ii. 13.*

Conscience, considered in this point of light, is the same in our souls in regard to salvation as the senses are in our bodies in regard to health and life. The office of our senses is to inform us, by the short method of sensation, of whatever may be hurtful or beneficial to our bodies. If when any exterior body approached us we were always obliged to measure its size, to examine its configuration, to judge by the laws of motion, action, and reaction, whether its approach would be hurtful or beneficial to us, our frail machine would be crushed to atoms before we could finish the discussion. If it were necessary always before we took any nourishment to examine the nature of the aliments before us, to understand the properties and effects of them, we should die with hunger before we had finished our researches. God hath enabled the senses of our bodies to supply the place of tedious discussions. This beautiful economy is never disconcerted except when our bodies are disordered.

It is exactly the same in regard to conscience. If always when it was necessary to determine the morality of an action, we were obliged to turn over a large class of books, to consult our casuists, and to examine a whole system of rectitude, what would become of us? The short way of sentiment supplies the place of all this discussion. A sudden horror, excited by the idea of a crime which we are tempted to commit, a secret joy, excited by the idea of a virtue, which we are going to practice, are, in urgent

cases, systems, books, and casuists to us. When we lose this moral sense, we lose our best guide, and are then exposed to an infallible misery of proceeding from one error to another, from a first pernicious practice to a second, and so in the end to a gulf of final wretchedness.

Such being the design of conscience, the end for which God hath appointed it, we can never be too diligent to avoid those things which impair it, as, on the other hand, we can never apply ourselves too eagerly to such practices as contribute to improve and perfect it. Now, I affirm, that the first of these effects is produced by allowing ourselves to commit *little sins*, and the second by an exact performance of *little duties*.

The commission of little sins leads on to the perpetration of great crimes; and we cannot assure ourselves that we should religiously practice great virtues, unless we scrupulously discharge other obligations comparatively small. Of the many examples which present themselves to my mind, which shall I select to elucidate this subject? Where originate the vexations caused by those public robbers, who are the scourge of many a country? In a neglect of small virtues, in a practising of what are called little sins. At first the man transgressed in a small degree the laws of frugality and modesty. Not content with a convenient situation, he aspired to make a figure. His table became in his eyes too plain, he wished it might be furnished, not as formerly with plenty, but with taste and expensive delicacy. To compass these designs he was obliged

to exceed his income. His lawful income not being sufficient, he supplied his pressing necessities by means which at first sight seemed not very blameable.—He borrowed money. After some time his creditor became troublesome, at length formidable; at first he solicited, at last he threatened. The wretched debtor a while thought he must deliver himself up to his creditor; at length he saw himself reduced to the necessity either of retrenching his expences, or of transgressing a little the maxims of severe equity: he determined on the last, and availed himself of the property of others for whom he was in trust, intending, however, to replace it the first opportunity. Such an opportunity never happened; and the same motives that induced him to begin this vicious course of action engages him to persevere in it. Hence comes his venality, hence his public frauds, hence his base inclination to make sale of both church and state whenever he can find purchasers to come up to his price.

There is a virtue which we cannot fully treat of without danger. To enforce the practice of some virtues is sometimes to excite a disposition to violate it. To describe exactly the dangers which must be avoided by those who would practise the virtue of which I now speak, would be to increase the number of delinquents. But whence, think ye, come the utmost excesses of voluptuousness, and the enormous crimes which its votaries have been capable of perpetrating in order to cover the scandal of having yielded to it? Both proceed from a neglect of little duties, and a commission of little sins. I will

here borrow the language of the most eloquent and polite writer of his time. "Voluptuousness at first is nothing but an unintentional curiosity. It proceeds from an affection apparently lawful. A little worldly complaisance mixes with it. The mind by little and little turns to its object; the heart softens and dissolves. Means to please are sought. Inquietude follows and presses. Sight kindles desire. Desire engages to see. Certain vague wishes, at first not perceived, form themselves in the soul. Hence criminal familiarities, scandalous intrigues, continual agitations, and all the other consequences of a passion, fatal, restless, and unsatisfied, whether it be gratified or not."\*

So true is what we have affirmed, that by neglecting the least virtues we acquire a habit of neglecting others of the greatest importance. So true is it, that we prepare ourselves to practice the greatest crimes, by practising what are called little sins. We conclude, then, that *exactness in performing little duties cherishes tenderness of conscience*. This is our first reflection.

II. We affirm, in the second place, that small duties are *sources of re-conversion after great falls*. Some passages of scripture have occasioned a difficult case of conscience, which is this: Is the practice of little duties altogether useless to those who neglect great ones; and, all things considered, would it not be better for a man who neglects important obligations, to omit the performance of small duties, than to practise the last, while he neglects the

\* Flechier. Panegy. de St. Bernard.



first? This question rises out of these passages. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with," Isa. i. 11—13. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. "I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice," Jer. vii. 22, 23. "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he had cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol," Isa. lxvi. 3. "Unto the wicked, saith God, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16.

These passages, which might be easily multiplied, seem to determine the question that was just now proposed, and to establish the opinion of those who affirm, that men ought either to leave off the practice of small duties, if they determine to neglect great obligations, or to perform great obligations if they continue to practise small duties. There are, however, some celebrated casuists, whose morality in some cases may

deserve censure, although they are not censured at Rome, except for what merits applause; these casuists, I say, have decided the question differently, and I cannot help submitting to their reasons. I have more hope of a man who attends public worship, though he derive no advantage from it, than of him who hath resolved for ever to absent himself. I have more hope of a man who performs only the most superficial parts of the laws of benevolence, than of him who resolves to violate these, and all the rest too. I have more hope of him who suspends the exercise of his passions only the day before and the day after his participation of the Lord's supper, than of him who excommunicates himself and his whole family for ever. I have more reason to hope for him who, having made great sacrifices for the doctrines of religion, violates the precepts of it, than for him who both violates the precepts and abjures the doctrines. Not that I affirm, either that it is sufficient to perform small duties while we persist in a neglect of great obligations, or that the performance of the former is not detestable when we perform them carelessly and hypocritically. This, I think, is the key of the passages just now quoted. These small duties are remains of spiritual life in such as practise them; dying remains, I allow, but precious remains, however; and the state of these people is preferable to the condition of the other persons in question, whom death has enveloped in its dismal shade. Preserve, carefully preserve these precious remains, whatever just grounds of fear of your salvation may accompany them. Do not ex-

tinguish this *wick*, though it only *smokes*, Matt. xii. 20. Perhaps an idea of the sacrifices which you have made for the doctrines of religion, may incline you at last to submit to the precepts of it. Perhaps self-examination, superficial as it is, preparatory to the Lord's supper, may at some time or other lead you into reflections more deep and serious. Possibly, the sermons which now you attend only to satisfy some transient emotions of conscience, may in the end arouse your consciences effectually.

III. Small duties *compensate by their repetition, for what is wanting to their importance.* We are not called every day to make great sacrifices to order ; we are seldom required to set up the standard of the cross in barbarous climes, to sound the gospel to the ends of the world, and to accomplish the promises made to Jesus Christ, that he should have "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," Psal. ii. 8. Seldom are we called to dare executioners, to triumph in cruel sufferings and death, to confess Christ amidst fires and flames. We are rarely called to the great actions that make heroes ; to die for our neighbours ; to sacrifice ourselves for the public good ; and to devote ourselves for our country.

If we are seldom required to perform great duties, thanks be to God we are seldom tempted to commit great crimes, to deceive a friend, to betray a trust, to reveal a state-secret, to make a sale of justice, to perplex truth, or to persecute innocence. But in what moment of each day do we not meet with oppor-

tunities to commit little sins, and to perform duties of comparatively small importance ?

Are you confined at home ? You have little inconveniences to suffer, little perverse humours to bear with, little provocations to impatience to resist, little disgusts to endure.

Are you in company ? You have a few captious tempers to manage, idle reports to discountenance, a few pernicious maxims to combat, profane actions to censure ; sometimes you are obliged to resist iniquity boldly, and at other times to affect to tolerate it, in order to obtain an opportunity to oppose it on a future opportunity with greater probability of success.

Do you prosper ? What a source of *little duties* is prosperity, if we sincerely love virtue ? And what a source of *little sins*, if we are not always guarded against temptations to vice ? Now a little air of self-sufficiency inclines to solitude, then a little eagerness to shine impels to society. Here a little necessary expence must be incurred, there another expence must be avoided. Here something is due to rank, and must be observed, there rank would be disgraced, and something must be omitted.

Are you in adversity, under misfortunes, or sickness ? How many *miserable comforters* ? How many disgustful remedies ? What intolerable wearinesses ? So many articles, so many occasions to perform little duties, and to commit little sins.

Opportunities to commit little sins return every day, I may almost say, every moment of every day. A little sin is a little poison, slow indeed, but contin-

ually insinuating itself into the soul, till by degrees it issues in death. A man who does not watch against little sins, is liable to provoke God as often as an occasion to commit them presents itself. On the contrary, a man who makes conscience of practising little duties as well as great ones, finds every day, and every moment, opportunities of giving God proofs of his love. He hath not only a religion of times and circumstances, which is sometimes justly suspected, but a religion of influence that diffuseth itself into every part of his life. There is not a moment in which he doth not make some progress in his heavenly course. By his attention to every little duty, he discharges the greatest of all duties, that which St. Paul prescribes to all christians, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. He is an exact imitator of Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of his faith, who went about doing good," Heb. xii. 2. like him he can say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall never be moved," Psal. xvi. 8. Had I not reason to affirm, that little duties compensate, by the frequency of their return, for what is wanting to constitute their importance?

IV. Our third reflection leads us to a fourth. Little duties have sometimes *characters more evident of real love to God, than the most important duties have.* If hypocrisy, if false ideas of religion, sometimes produce little duties, it must be also allowed, that secular motives, interest and vain glory, sometimes give birth to great exploits. Pride, without any

mixture of love to order, is sometimes sufficient to engage us to make those great sacrifices of which we just now spoke. Sometimes nothing but an extreme and refined attachment to virtue can animate us to perform little duties. There is sometimes more genuine benevolence in accepting such tokens of gratitude as a poor man gives for a favour conferred on him than in conferring the favour itself. There is sometimes more humility in receiving the praise from a man whose esteem flatters our vanity a little, than in refusing to hear it. After all, though the love of God differs in many respects from mere worldly esteem, yet there are some resemblances. We often think ourselves obliged to render considerable services to people for whom we have no great regard; but it is only for such as we hold in the highest veneration that we feel certain little attachments, certain little attentions, certain solitudes, which indeed are called *little* in usual phrase, but which are strong demonstrations of the tender sentiments of the soul. It is just the same with divine love. But this is one of those truths of sentiment and experience, which each of you may understand better by consulting the history of his own life, and by watching the motions of his own heart, than by attending to our syllogisms and discussions.

Perhaps you may imagine God cannot, without debasing his Majesty, cast his eyes on those insignificant actions which we are recommending to you. But undeceive yourselves. What could be less considerable than those *two mites* which the poor widow in the gospel cast into the treasury? Mark xiii. 42.

Yet we know what Jesus Christ thought of that action. What service less considerable could be rendered Jesus Christ just before his death, than to pour ointment on his head? The apostles had indignation within themselves at this unseasonable ceremony, chap. xiv. 13. &c. They were angry with the woman for diverting the attention of Jesus Christ from those great objects with which his whole soul had been filled. But he reproved them. "Why trouble ye the woman?" said he; she hath performed an action worthy of emulation. "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her." What can be less considerable in itself than *a cup of cold water*? Yet Jesus Christ promises to reward even this with eternal life, when it is given from a principle of real piety. We said before, my brethren, and allow us to repeat it again, in a religion of love, whatever proceeds from a principle of love hath an intrinsic value.

I unite now the subjects of both the discourses, which I have addressed to you, on the words of my text, and, by collecting both into one point of view, I ask, What idea ought you to form of a religion which exhibits a morality so pure and complete? What idea of the preaching of those ministers, who are called to instruct you in it? What idea of the engagements of such disciples as profess to submit to the discipline of it?

What idea ought you to form of a *religion* that prescribes a morality so pure and complete? The

christian religion requires each of us to form, as well as he can, just notions of primitive law : to observe all the consequences, and to place each virtue that proceeds from primitive right, in its just order ; to give the first rank to those virtues which immediately proceed from it, and the second to those which proceed from it mediately and remotely. Christianity requires us to regulate our application to each virtue, by the place which each occupies in this scale ; to set no bounds to the loving of that God, whose perfections are infinite ; to entertain only a limited esteem for finite creatures ; to engage our senses in devout exercises, but to take care that they are held under government by our minds ; to sing the praises of the Lord with our voices, but animated with our affections ; in short, to look toward heaven, but to let inward fervour produce the emotion, determine the direction, and fix the eye.

How amiable would society be, if they who compose it were all followers of this religion ! How happy would it be to make treaties, to form alliances, to unite ourselves, by the most affectionate and indissoluble ties, to men inviolably attached to this religion ! Had not God shaken nature, and subverted kingdoms, or, in the language of a prophet, had he not “ shaken the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land,” Hag. ii. 6. to establish this religion in the world, yet it ought to be held in the highest estimation for its own intrinsic worth. How can we help being filled with indignation at those abominable men, who, in spite of all the demonstra-



tions of the divine origin of this religion, place their glory in weakening its empire over the heart!

2. But if you form such noble ideas of a religion, the morality of which is so extensive and so pure, what ideas ought you to form of the *preaching* of those who are appointed to instruct you in it? Which way, think you, ought they to bend their force? What kind of questions ought they to propose in the Christian pulpit? Under what point of view ought they to consider the texts, which make the matter of their discourses? Are they required to excite your astonishment by flights of imagination, or to gratify your curiosity by a display of their profound erudition? Does not their office rather require them to employ all the times you allow them to free you from your prejudices, to take off those scales from your eyes, which prevent your perceiving "the things which belong unto your everlasting peace," Luke xix. 42. and to give you such directions as you may follow, as far as can be in the tumult of the world, whither either your inclinations or your necessities call you.

My brethren, while I was meditating on my text, two methods of discussing it presented themselves to my mind.

Following the first of these plans, I divided my discourse into three parts, according to the three parts, that is, the three different herbs mentioned in the text. Each of these parts I subdivided into three more. First, I examined the force, the signification, the derivation of the original term, and I inquired whether the word were rightly rendered

*mint*. I quoted various opinions on this subject, for interpreters are very much divided about it. According to the Æthiopic version, Jesus Christ spoke of *hyssop*; and according to other versions, some other plant. Secondly, I examined the nature, the uses, the properties of the herb, to which I had restored the true name, and here I heaped up a great number of passages from Aristotle, Pliny, Solinus, Salmasius, and many other authors, who have rendered themselves famous by this kind of erudition. Thirdly, having studied *mint* as a critic and as a naturalist, I proceeded at length to examine it as a divine. I inquired why God demanded tithe of this herb. Perhaps, thought I, here may be some mystery in this affair. I say *perhaps*, for I acknowledge myself a mere novice in this science, as in a great many others. However, there may be some mysteries in this offering. I was certain, if imagination supplied the place of reason, and flights of fancy were put instead of facts, it would not be impossible to find mysteries here. If this herb be sweet, said I, it may represent the sweetness of mercy; if it be bitter, it may signify the bitterness of justice. If Jesus Christ meant *hyssop*, as some think, it was that very herb of which the famous bunch was made, that was dipped in the blood of sparrows at the purification of lepers. What mysteries! What I had done with *mint* under the first head, I did over again under the second article *arise*, and the same over again under the third head *curmin*. This was my first plan of discussion.

The second method was that which I have chosen. In a former discourse on this text, we endeavoured to convince you that you were under an indispensable obligation to perform the great duties of religion. In this we have been endeavouring to obtain your regard to the little duties of religion; to engage you to submit to the laws of God, even in things of the least importance; and thus to give you a complete chain of christian virtues.

My brethren, God forbid that our discourses, which ought always to be animated with a spirit of benevolence, should at any time degenerate into satire, and that we should enjoy a malicious pleasure in exploding the method of those who entertain ideas different from ours on the best manner of preaching. I grant, birth, education, and a course of study, have a great deal of influence over us in this respect. But, in the name of God, do not condemn us for treating you like rational creatures, for addressing to you, as to intelligent beings, the words of an apostle, We "speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say," 1 Cor. x. 15. Judge what are the obligations of the ministers of a religion, the morality of which is so extensive and pure.

3. Finally, What idea ought you to form of the engagements of such *disciples* as profess to give themselves up to this religion, the morality of which we have been describing? Where are the christians who have this complete chain of the virtues of christianity? Where shall we find christians, who, after they have performed, with all due attention, the great duties, hold themselves bound by an inviolable law

not to neglect the least? Alas! we are always complaining of the weight of the yoke of the Lord! We are perpetually exclaiming, like the profane Jews mentioned by Malachi, "Behold what a weariness it is!" chap. i. 13. We dispute the ground with God! It should seem he hath set too high a price on heaven. We are always ready to curtail his requisitions. What! say we, cannot he be contented with this? will he not be satisfied with that?

Ah! my dear brethren, let us open our eyes to our interest: let us obey the laws of God without reserve: let us observe alike the most important virtues which he hath prescribed to us, and those which are least important. We ought to do so, not only because he is our master, but because he is our father, because he proposes no other end but that of rendering us happy; and because so much as we retrench our duties, so much we diminish our happiness. To this God, whose love is always in union with justice, be honour and glory, dominion and majesty, both now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON IV.

*The Doom of the Righteous and the Wicked.*



REVELATION xxi. 7, 8.

*He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

IT is a subject deserving the most profound reflections, my brethren, that the most irregular being, I mean the devil, is at the same time the most miserable, and that the most holy Being, he who is holy by excellence, is at the same time the most happy, and thus unites in his own essence supreme holiness with sovereign happiness. Satan, who began his audacious projects in *heaven, the habitation of holiness*, 2 Chron. xxx. 27. Satan, who rebelled against God amidst the most noble displays of his magnificence, and who is still a *murderer* and a *liar*, John viii. 44. Satan is in the depth of misery. He was hurled down from a pinnacle of glory, expelled for ever from the society of the blessed, and there is a lake of fire *prepared for him and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41.

God is the most holy Being. Indeed, the terms *virtue* and *holiness* are very equivocal, when applied to an independent being, whose authority is absolute, who has no law but his own wisdom, no rules of rectitude but his own volitions. Yet, *order*, whatever is sublime in what we mortals call *holiness*, *virtue*, *justice*, eminently dwells in the Deity, and forms one grand and glorious object of the admiration and praise of the purest intelligences, who incessantly make it the matter of the songs which they sing to his honour, and who cry day and night one to another, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. O Lord, thou king of saints, who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee," Rev. xv. 3, 4. This Being, so holy, so just; this Being who is the source of holiness, justice, and virtue; this Being possesses at the same time the highest possible happiness. He is, in the language of scripture, the *happy God*\*, and as I said before, he unites in his own essence supreme holiness with supreme happiness.

What boundless objects of contemplation would this reflection open to our view, my brethren, were it necessary to pursue it? Consider it only in one point of light. The destination of these two beings so different, is, if I may be permitted to say so, the rule of the destination of all intelligent beings. All things considered, the more we partake of the impu-

\* 1 Tim. i. 11. See Vol. I. p. 113, note. Scrm. 2. On the Eternity of God.

riety of Satan, the more we partake of his misery. It would be absurd to suppose, that in *the time of the restitution of all things*, Acts iii. 21. which will soon arrive, and justify providence against the innumerable censures passed upon it, it would be absurd to suppose, that if we have appropriated the irregularities of the impure spirit we should not at that time partake of his misery; and it would be absurd to suppose, that we can partake of the virtues of the holy Being, without participating his felicity and glory.

Each part of these propositions is contained in the words of my text. He *that overcometh*, he who in this world of obstacles to virtue shall take the holiness of God for his rule, as far as it is allowable for frail creatures to regulate themselves by an example so perfect and sublime, *he that overcometh* shall have no bounds set to his happiness. He *shall inherit all things*, he shall enter into the family of God himself. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars," of what order soever they be, all those who do "the works of the devil," shall be placed in a condition like his, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

We invite you to-day to meditate on these truths, and in order to reduce the subject to the size of a single sermon, we will only insist on such articles of the morality of St. John as are least known and most

disputed. We will distinguish in this system such virtues to be practised, and such vices to be avoided as are most opposite to those prejudices which the world usually forms concerning the final doom of mankind.

I. The first *prejudice* which we intend to attack is this, *A life spent in ease and idleness is not incompatible with salvation, if it be free from great crimes.* Against this we oppose this part of our text, "He that overcometh shall inherit." In order to *inherit*, we must overcome. Here vigilance, action, and motion are supposed.

II. The second *prejudice* is this, *A just God will not impute to his creatures sins of infirmity and constitution, though his creatures should be subject to them during the whole course of their lives.* Against this we oppose these words of the apostle, "The fearful and whoremongers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

III. The third *prejudice* is this, *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences, provided we live uprightly, as it is called, and discharge our social duties.* Against this we oppose this word, the *unbelieving*. The unbelieving are put into the class of the miserable.

IV. The fourth *prejudice* is this, *Religions are indifferent. The mercy of God extends to those who live in the most erroneous communions.* Against this we oppose the word *idolaters*. Idolaters are considered among the most criminal of mankind.

V. The last *prejudice* is this, *None but the vulgar ought to be afraid of committing certain crimes. Kings*



will be judged by a particular law: the greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance. Against this we oppose these words, *abominable, poisoners,\* and all liars*, which three words include almost all those abominations which are called illustrious crimes. However, these abominable, these poisoners, and all these liars, shall have, as well as the fearful, the unbelieving, the unclean, and the idolaters, “their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

I. Let us begin with the first prejudice. *A life spent in ease and idleness is not incompatible with salvation, if it be free from great crimes.* St. John takes away this unjust pretext, by considering salvation as a prize to be obtained by conquest. *He who overcometh*, implies vigilance, activity, and motion. Two considerations will place the meaning of our apostle in the clearest light. We take the first from the nature of evangelical virtues, and the second from the nature of those vices which are forbidden in the gospel.

1. The nature of evangelical virtues demands vigilance, action, and motion. It is impossible to exercise these virtues under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. Let us examine a few of these virtues.

What is the *love* of God? It is that disposition of the soul which inclines us to adore his perfections,

\* *Poisoners* φαρμακευσι. Veneficis. Incantatoribus. Qui malis magiæ artibus utuntur. The French bibles read *empoisonneurs, poisoners.*

to admire with the highest joy his glorious attributes, and to desire with the utmost ardour to be closely united to him as to our supreme good; but this disposition cannot be exercised, it cannot be acquired without vigilance, action, and motion. We must meditate on that sovereign power which formed this universe by a single volition, and by a single volition determined its doom. We must meditate on that supreme wisdom which regulates all the works of supreme power, combining causes with effects, and means with ends, and which by this infinite combination hath always adjusted, and continues to arrange and direct all the works which we behold, and others without number which lie beyond the utmost stretch of our imagination. We must meditate on that perfect justice which is engraven on all the productions of the Creator, on all the conduct of providence, and remarkably on the consciences of mankind, which continually *accuse or excuse* their actions, Rom. ii. 15. Conscience is either tortured with remorse or involved in delight, according as we have been attached to virtue, or violated it. We must meditate on that infinite goodness which is *over all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 9. We must not only consider this palace where God hath lodged man, a palace of delights before the entrance of sin, but which, since that fatal period, is, alas! nothing but a theatre, and, if I may express myself so, an universal scaffold, on which he exercises the most terrible vengeance, and exhibits his most dreadful executions. We must enter, moreover, into the genius of religion; know the power of that arm which he exerts to deliver us from

bondage ; the power of those succours which he affords to enable us to triumph over our depravity ; the excellence of revealed mysteries ; the value of the pardon set before us ; the pleasure and peace poured into our souls ; and the magnificence of such objects as the gospel proposes to our hopes. All this requires vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in the circles of pleasure, at gaming tables, or in places of public diversion.

What is *faith* ? It is that disposition of our souls which *brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. and subjects them all to his decisions. In order to this, we must be convinced that God hath not left men to their natural darkness, but hath bestowed on them the light of divine revelation. We must examine this revelation and understand the proofs of its divinity. We must collect into one body the fundamental truths included in it. We must remove or invalidate those glosses which false teachers have applied to perplex the meaning of it. We must understand how to be deaf to every voice except that of eternal truth ; and to say from the bottom of a soul saturated with the love of this truth, *Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear*, 1 Sam. iii. 9. All this requires vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in circles of pleasure, at gaming tables, or in places of public diversion.

What is *benevolence*? It is that disposition of soul which engages us to consider our neighbour as ourselves, and to study his interest as our own. In order to this we must examine both his temporal and spiritual wants. If he be in a state of indigence, we must provide for him, either at our own expence, or by exciting in his favour the compassion of others. When he is ignorant we must inform him, when in an error undeceive him, when he strays we must recal him, when his spirits are overwhelmed, comfort him; we must visit him when he is confined, edify him by our conduct, and encourage him by our example. All this demands vigilance, action, and motion. Nothing of this can be acquired under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. Nothing of this can be done in circles of pleasure, at gaming tables, or at places of public diversion.

What is *repentance*? It is that disposition of our soul, which makes the remembrance of our sins a source of the bitterest grief. This supposes many self-examinations and self-condemnations, much remorse of conscience, many tears shed into the bosom of God, many methods tried to preclude falling again into sins, the remembrance of which is so grievous to us. Above all, this virtue supposes recompences in great number. If we have propagated any maxims injurious to religion, reparation must be made; for how can we be said to repent of having advanced such maxims, except we abjure them, and exert all our influence to remove such fatal effects as they have produced? If we have injured the reputation of a neighbour, recompence must

be made ; for how can we repent of having injured the reputation of a neighbour, unless we endeavour to establish it, and to restore as much credit to him as we have taken away ? Repentance also includes restitution of property, “ if we have taken any thing from any man,” Luke xix. 8. All the exercises of this virtue require vigilance, action, and motion. None of these are acquired under the influence of indolence, idleness, and ease. None of these are practised in circles of pleasure, at gaming tables, or at places of public diversion.

2. Even the nature of those vices which the gospel forbids, demonstrate that a life wasted in idleness is incompatible with salvation. He who hath well studied the human heart, and hath carefully examined the causes of so many resolutions broken by the greatest saints, so many promises forgotten, so many vows violated, so many solemn engagements falsified, will acknowledge, that these disorders seldom proceed from malice, yea, seldom from a want of sincerity and good faith. You often fall into temptations which you mean to resist. Your misfortune is, that you are not sufficiently prepared for resistance. How, for instance, can we resist temptations to pride, unless we close every avenue by which it enters into the heart ; unless we make serious reflections on the meanness of our original, the uncertainty of our knowledge, the imperfection of our virtue, the enormity of our crimes, and the vanity of our riches, titles, dignity, and life ? Again, how can we resist the sophisms of error, if we have only a superficial knowledge of religion, if we do

not build our faith on foundations immoveable and firm. In fine, how can we resist sensual temptations, unless we endeavour to dethrone our passions, unless we frequently and boldly attack and subdue them, assuage their fury, and force them as it were to bow to the dominion of reason?

This prejudice refutes itself. They who adopt it furnish us with weapons against themselves. An idle life is compatible with salvation, say you, provided it be free from great crimes. But I say, an idle life cannot be free from great crimes. Indolence is a source of great wickedness, and vigilance and activity are necessary to prevent the exercise of it.

Let us not pass over these reflections lightly, my brethren. The prejudice which we are attacking is very important in its consequences; it is a fatal prejudice, sapping the very foundations of christian morality. It is not a particular prejudice, confined within a narrow circle; it is general, even among christians, and spread far and wide. It is not a prejudice secretly revolved in the mind, and covered with a blushing veil; but it is a bold notorious prejudice, and christians exalt it into a maxim of religion, and a first principle of morality. This is the prejudice of that vain worldly woman, who, having rapidly read a few devotional books, and hastily repeated a few prayers, which proceeded less from her heart than her lips, spends one part of her life in places of public diversion, and the other in making art supply the place of nature, in disguising her personal defects, and in trying whether by borrowed ornaments she can ob-

tain from the folly of men such incense as she offers to herself, such as she derives from her own immoderate vanity and self-admiration. This is the prejudice of that soldier, who, at the end of a campaign, or at the conclusion of a peace, thinks he may employ the rest of his life in relating his adventures, and indemnify himself for his former dangers and fatigues by an idleness which is often a burden to those who are witnesses of it, and oftener still to himself, who petrifies in his own tales. This is the prejudice of a great many people, who have nothing else to say to their preachers, to all their casuists, and to all their religious instructors, but, I wrong nobody, I do no harm. Shall I venture to say my brethren, Why don't you do a little harm? I have, I declare, more hope of a man who, in a high fever, becomes so delirious, and apparently so mad, that the strongest person can hardly hold him, than I have of a lethargic patient, all whose senses are stupified, his spirits sunk, and his natural warmth gone. I have more hope for a sinner, who, in a violent passion, breaks the most sacred laws, and tramples on the most solemn engagements, than I have for a man, indolent, motionless, cold, insensible to all the motives of religion, and to all the stings of conscience.

My brethren, let us not deceive ourselves: there is something of consequence to do in every moment of a christian life. There are always in a christian life temptations to be resisted, and consequently in every moment of a christian life *we must overcome* these temptations. All *ages* require action. In every stage of life we have temptations to surmount,

and in every stage of life we must *overcome* them. We must overcome the temptations of childhood, the temptations of youth, the temptations of old age. All *conditions* require action. We must surmount some temptations in all conditions, and in all conditions we must *overcome* them. We must overcome the temptations of poverty, those of prosperity, those of elevated posts, and those which belong to a state of obscurity, a sort of death, a kind of grave. All *professions* require action. There are in all professions temptations to be surmounted, and in all professions we must *overcome* them. The statesman must subdue the temptations of his profession, the soldier must vanquish the temptations of his, the merchant of his, and so of the rest. All *situations* require action. In all situations there are temptations to be conquered, and in all situations we must *overcome* them. We must get above the temptations of health, those of sickness, and those of death. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things.*

I am well aware that to preach this gospel is, in the opinion of some, to teach a severe morality, to mark out a discouraging course, to invite to unequal combats. This morality, however, will seem severe only to lukewarm christians. This course will appear discouraging only to soft and indolent souls. These combats will seem unequal only to such as have no true courage, listless and dastardly souls. A real christian will be so inflamed with the love of his God, he will be attracted by so many powerful and comfortable motives, above all, he will be animated with a desire so strong to obtain a victory, which infallibly



follows the combat, that nothing will appear severe, nothing discouraging, nothing unequal in the course of obtaining it. What dominion over his heart will not that voice obtain, which, proceeding from the mouth of the *author and finisher of his faith*, addresses him, and says, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things," Heb. xii. 2.

Christian soul, dost thou complain of the battle? But in order to conquer you must fight. The glorified saints were once warriors, and are now conquerors. Flesh and blood, earth and hell, were their enemies. Faith and love, and all other christian virtues, were their armour. The clouds were their triumphal chariots. Angels, thousands of angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," Rev. v. 21. who wait continually before God, were their witnesses. The approbation of the Son of God, this rapturous declaration, "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matt. xxv. 23, well done, faithful confessor, thou hast nobly endured the cross; well done, martyr for morality, thou hast caused concupiscence to yield to the commandments of God; these extatical declarations were their crown. Jesus Christ is their rewarder, and joys unspeakable and full of glory, peace of soul, tranquillity of conscience, rivers of pleasure, *fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore, the city that hath foundations, Jerusalem which is above, the heavenly country, new heavens and a new earth*, the society of angels, perfect knowledge, refined virtues, ineffable sensations, sacred flames, God himself; Lo! these are the recompence, these their great reward. *He that over-*

*cometh shall inherit all things ; I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

II. The second prejudice which we are endeavouring to remove is this, *A just God cannot impute to his creatures sins of infirmity and constitution, though his creatures should be subject to them during the whole course of their lives.* Against this we oppose these words of the apostle, the *fearful* and the *unclean*.\* The most frequent excuse for impurity is constitution. A certain constitutional turn is generally considered as a ground of justification ; and it is eagerly maintained, lest we should be obliged to be holy for want of excuses to sin, and least the deceitful pleasures of sin should be imbittered by remorse. Yet *the unclean shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.* As to *fearfulness*, or timidity, what is there in us, that can be more properly called human frailty than this ? Let us hear St. John. Whom does he mean by the *fearful* ? I fear we shall find several classes of these in religion. There are many sorts of *the fearful, who shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

For example, a man who hears the name of God blasphemed, religion opposed, good manners attacked, but who hath not the courage to confess Jesus Christ, to say, I am a Christian, and to manifest his indignation against such odious discourses, such a man is *fearful*, he shall have no part in the inheri-

\* Πορνους. Our translation renders it *whoremongers*—the old French Bibles *paillards*—Mr. Saurin more accurately *impurs*—i. e. *unclean*.

tance of the children of God: A man who sees his neighbour wounded by calumny and slander, but who hath not courage to reprove the slanderer, though in his soul he detests him, such a man is one of the *fearful*, who shall have no part in the inheritance of the children of God. A magistrate who hath received from God the sword for the protection of oppressed widows and orphans, but who, terrified with the rank of the oppressor, sacrifices to him the rights of widows and orphans, such a man is *fearful*, he shall have no part in the inheritance of the children of God.

But, though these notions of fearfulness are just, and though the proposition in our text is true in all these senses, it is clear, I think, by the circumstances in which St. John wrote the revelation, by the persecutions which he foretold, by the exhortations which he addressed to believers to surmount them, and by many other considerations that the holy man had particularly, and perhaps only, that *fearfulness* in view, which induces some to deny that truth for fear of persecution, of which they were thoroughly persuaded. Of this sort of *fearful* persons he affirms, "they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

There is, I acknowledge, an equivocalness in the terms, or rather in the proposition, which may render this article obscure, and those which follow more so. When it is said, that "the fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, that murderers and poisoners shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," we are not to understand either such

as have once committed any of these crimes, or such as have lived some time in the practice of any one of them, but have afterwards repented. Were we to condemn to eternal flames all such persons as these, alas! who could escape? Not Moses; he was sometimes *unbelieving*. Not St. Peter; he was sometimes *fearful*. Not David; he committed *murder*, was guilty of *lying*, *abomination*, and *impurity*. Not any of you, my brethren; there is not one of you whose conscience does not reproach him with having done some act of *fearfulness*, *unbelief*, and *impurity*. Heaven forbid, we should have to reproach any of you with forming the act into a habit!

St. John speaks then, in this place, of those only who live in a habit of these vices. But, I repeat it again, although this evil habit may originate in human frailty, yet it is certainly that sort of *fearfulness* which we have been explaining; it is that *fearfulness* with which tyrants inspire such as ought to confess the truth. Ask those of our brethren, for whom we utter the deepest sighs, and shed the bitterest tears, what prevents their giving glory to God, by yielding to the exhortations which we have so long addressed to them, and which we daily continue to address to them. They tell you it is human frailty. Ask that head of a family why he doth not flee to some place where he might enjoy such a public worship as he approves, and partake of the sacraments for which he pines. Human frailty makes him fear he cannot live without his dear children. Ask that lady, who is in some sort mistress of her destiny, having neither family nor connection, and being loaded with silver

and gold ; ask her why she doth not avail herself of her independence to render homage to her religion. Human frailty makes her fear she cannot undergo the fatigue of a voyage, or bear the air of a foreign climate, or share the contempt generally cast on other refugees who do carry along with them reputation, riches, and honours. Ask that apostate, what obliges him to “receive the mark of the image of the beast on his forehead,” Rev. xiii. 16. Human frailty makes him fear prisons, dungeons, and gallies. Yet what saith St. John of this *fearfulness* inseparable from human frailty ? He saith, it excludes people from the inheritance of the children of God. The life of a christian is a continual warfare. Fearfulness is the most indefensible disposition in a soldier. Fearfulness in war is one of the vices that nobody dares to avow ; worldly honour either entirely eradicates it, or animates soldiers to subdue it. Want of courage is equally odious in religion. A timid christian is no more fit to fight under the standard of the *lion of the tribe of Judah*, Rev. v. 5, than a worldling under that of an earthly hero, *The fearful shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

After this, my brethren, shall we plead our frailty ? Shall we draw arguments for lukewarmness from what ought to invigorate us ? Shall we cherish our indifference by such passages as these ? “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” Matt. xxvi. 41. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and spirit against the flesh,” Gal. v. 17. “The Lord knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but

dust!" Psal.ciii. 14. Shall we attempt to frustrate all the kind intentions of the holy Spirit, who makes us feel our frailty only for the sake of engaging us to watch and fortify ourselves against it? Believe me, the sentence pronounced by St. John will never be revoked by such frivolous excuses; but it will be always true that *the fearful shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

III. Let us attend to the third prejudice. *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences, provided we live uprightly as it is called, and discharge our social duties.* Nothing can be more specious than this pretence. Of all tyrannies, that which is exercised over the mind is the most opposite to natural right. Fires and gibbets, racks and tortures, may indeed force a man to disguise his ideas, but they can never change them. The violence of torments may indeed make hypocrites, but it never yet made good proselytes.

We not only affirm that no human power can oblige us to consider a proposition as true which we know to be false, but we add, we ourselves have no such power over our own minds. It doth not depend on us to see, or not to see, a connection between two ideas; to assent to a truth, or not to assent to it. Evidence forces, demonstration carries us away.

Moreover, although God justly requires us to employ all the portion of genius which he hath given us, in searching after truth, yet his equity will not allow that we should not regard as evident what the genius which he hath given us makes appear evi-

dent ; and that we should not regard as false what the genius which he hath given us makes appear false. If it should happen, then, that a man, having exercised all the attention, and all the rectitude of which he is capable, in examining the most important questions of religion, cannot obtain evidence enough to determine his judgment ; if what appears evident to others seem doubtful to him ; if what seems demonstrative to them appear only probable to him, he cannot be justly condemned for unbelief. Consequently, what we have called a *prejudice* looks like the very essence of reason and truth ; and this proposition, *Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences*, ought to be admitted as a first principle.

My brethren, were it necessary to give our opinion of this article, we should boldly affirm, that the case just now proposed is impossible. We are fully persuaded that it is not possible for a man who hath a common share of sense, and who employs it all in examining whether there be a God in heaven, or whether the scripture be a divine revelation, to continue in suspense on these important subjects. But our conviction affords us no proof to others. There are some truths which cannot be demonstrated ; and equity requires us to allege in a dispute only what is capable of demonstration. We confine ourselves to that class of unbelievers whose infidelity of mind proceeds from depravity of heart ; and we affirm, that they are included in the sentence denounced by our apostle, and deserve to suffer it in all its rigour. Now we have reason to form this judgment of an unbeliever, unless he observe all the following con-

ditions, which we have never seen associated in any one person of this character.

1. He ought to have studied the great questions of religion with all the application that the capacity of his mind, and the number of his talents could admit. These questions belong to subjects the most interesting. To examine them carelessly, to offer them only, if I may venture to speak so, to the surface of his mind, is a full proof of the depravity of his heart.

2. We require an unbeliever to enter upon the discussion of these truths with a determination to sacrifice to them not only his strongest prejudices, but also his most violent passions and his dearest interests. If there be a God in heaven, if the christian religion be divine, all the plans of our love and hatred, sorrow and joy, ought to be regulated by these great truths. Every man who is not conscious of having examined them in such a disposition, and who hath obtained by his examination only doubts and uncertainties, hath reason to fear that the emotions of his senses and the suggestions of his passions have shackled, yea, imprisoned the faculties of his mind.

3. We require an unbeliever, who, notwithstanding all these conditions, pretends to be convinced that the ideas of believers are imaginary, to shew at least some mortification on account of this affected discovery. Mankind have the highest reason to wish that the hopes excited by religion may be well grounded; that we may be formed for eternity; that we may enjoy an endless felicity after death. If



these be chimeras, behold man stripped of his most glorious privileges! A person educated with other christians in the noble hope of immortality, and obtaining afterward proof that this hope is founded only in the fancies of enthusiasts; a man rejoicing at this discovery; a man congratulating himself on having lost a treasure so rich; a person unaffected with the vanishing of such inestimable advantages;—such a man, I say, discovers an enormous depravity of heart.

4. We require an unbeliever to acknowledge, that religion hath at least some probability. A man who can maintain that the system of infidelity is demonstrative, that this proposition, *There is no God*, is evident; that this other is incontestible, *Religion hath not one character of divinity*; a man who can maintain that a good philosopher ought not to retain in his mind the least doubt or uncertainty on these articles, that for his own part he hath arrived at mathematical demonstration;—such a man, if he be not the most extravagant of mankind, is, however, one of the most corrupt.

5. In fine, we require an unbeliever, on supposition that his system were probable, that the plan of religion were only probable, that had his a hundred degrees of probability and our's only one degree, I say, we require this unbeliever to act as if our system was evidently true, and as if his was demonstratively false. If our system of faith be true, all is hazarded when the life is directed by a system of infidelity; whereas nothing is hazarded if the life be regulated by religion, even supposing the system of

religion groundless. An unbeliever who is not ready to sacrifice his dearest passions even to a mere probability of the truth of the doctrine of a future life, gives full proof of the depravity of his heart.

Whether there be any one in the world, who, in spite of these dispositions, can persuade himself that religion hath no character of truth, we leave to the judgment of God: but as for those who sin against any of the rules just now mentioned, (and how many reasons have we to conclude that there are numbers of this character!) they are included in the sentence of our apostle, and they deserve to feel its utmost rigour. "The unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

IV. Let us advert to the fourth prejudice. *Religions are indifferent.* We will not go through the various sects of christianity, and decide these litigious questions, Which of these religions are compatible with salvation? Which of these religions are destructive of it? We will affirm only with our apostle, that "Idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." We intend particularly to wipe off that imputation which the church of Rome constantly casts on our doctrine. Under pretence that we have never been willing to denounce a sentence of eternal damnation against members of the most impure sects, they affirm that, in our own opinion, people may be saved in their community, and this, they say, is one of the articles of our faith.

This is a sophism which you have often heard attributed to a prince, who had united, as far as two such different things could be united, the qualities of a great king with those of a bad christian. Having a long time hesitated between the peaceable possession of an earthly crown, and the stedfast hope of a heavenly crown, his historian tells us, he assembled some doctors of the Roman communion and some of ours. He asked the first, Whether it were possible to be saved in the protestant communion? They answered, No. He then asked the second, Whether it were possible to be saved in the Roman communion? They replied they durst not decide the question. On this, the prince reasoned in this manner. "The Roman catholic doctors assure me " there is no salvation in the Protestant communion. "The Protestants dare not affirm that there is no " salvation in the communion of Rome. Prudence, " therefore, requires me to abandon the Protestant " religion, and to embrace the Roman; because, in " the opinion of the Protestants, it is at the most " only probable that I should perish in the church " of Rome, whereas, in the opinion of the Roman " catholics, it is demonstrative that I should be dam- " ned in the Protestant community." We will not attempt to investigate this point of history, by examining whether these Protestant ministers betrayed our religion by advancing a proposition contrary to it, or whether the historian betrayed the truth by altering the answer attributed to our ministers. Whatever we think of this historical fact, we affirm

with St. John, that "Idolaters shall have their part  
" in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

However, we ought to make a cautious distinction concerning doctrines, as we do concerning precepts, a distinction between questions of *fact* and questions of *right*. There is a question of right in regard to precepts; as for example—Is a course of life opposite to the precepts of the gospel a damnable state? To this we reply, Undoubtedly it is. There is also a question of fact, as for example—Shall all those who follow such a course of life suffer all the rigour of damnation? A wise man ought to pause before he answers this question; because he doth not know whether a man who hath spent one part of his life in a course of vice, may not employ the remaining part in repentance, and so pass into a state to which the privileges of repentance are annexed. In like manner, there are questions of fact and questions of right in regard to doctrines. The question of right in regard to the present doctrine is this: Can we be saved in an idolatrous community? Certainly we cannot. The question of fact is this: Will every member of an idolatrous community be damned? A wise man ought to suspend his judgment on this question, because he who had spent one part of his life in an idolatrous community, may employ the remaining part in repenting, and consequently may share the privileges of repentance. Except in this case, according to our principles, "Idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." But, according to our principles, the Roman catho-

lic church is guilty of idolatry ; consequently, according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome, if they do not forsake that community, are among such as “ shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

If it be necessary to prove, that, according to our principles, the church of Rome is guilty of idolatry, the evidence is easily obtained. Let us form a distinct idea of what, agreeably to scripture, we call *idolatry*. To regard a simple creature as God supreme ; to render to a simple creature the worship that is due only to the supreme God, is what we call idolatry. Now, according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome do render to a creature, to a bit of bread, such worship as is due only to the supreme God. By consequence according to our principles, the members of the church of Rome are guilty of idolatry.

They defend themselves by a somewhat specious, but groundless argument. It was employed by a man\* who disgraced his name by abandoning the Protestant religion, though, thanks be to God, I hope, I and my family shall always be enabled to continue it in the list of sincere Protestants. His words are these: “ Two or three articles, saith he, excited “ strong prejudices in my mind against the church “ of Rome ; transubstantiation, the adoration of the “ holy sacrament, and the infallibility of the church. “ Of these three articles, that of the adoration of “ the holy sacrament led me to consider the church “ of Rome as idolatrous, and separated me from its

\* Mr. Saurin of Paris.

“ communion. A book which I one day opened  
 “ without design, instantly removed this objection.  
 “ There I found a distinction between *error of place*  
 “ in worship, and *error of object*. The catholic wor-  
 “ ships Jesus Christ in the eucharist, an *object* truly  
 “ adorable. There is no error in this respect. If  
 “ Jesus Christ be not really present in the eucharist,  
 “ the catholic worships him where he is not ; this is  
 “ a mere error of *place*, and no crime of idolatry.”  
 A mere sophism! By the same argument the Israel-  
 ites may be exculpated for rendering divine honours  
 to the golden calf. We must distinguish error of  
*place* from error of *object*. The Israelite worships  
 in the golden calf the true God, an object truly  
 adorable. “ To-morrow is a feast to the Lord, the  
 God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the  
 land of Egypt,” Exod. xxxii. 5, 4. There is no er-  
 ror in this respect ; if God be not really present in  
 the golden calf the Israelite worships him where he  
 is not, a mere error of *place*, and not the crime of  
 idolatry. But St. Stephen saith expressly that this  
 calf was an idol. “ They made a calf, and offered  
 sacrifice unto the idol,” Acts vii. 41. By conse-  
 quence, error of place in worship doth not excul-  
 pate men from idolatry. As, therefore, according  
 to our principles, there is an error of place in the  
 worship which Roman catholics render to their host,  
 so also, according to our principles, they are guilty  
 of idolatry.

But are we speaking only according to our own  
 principles? Have we seen any thing in the wilder-  
 ness of Sinai which we do not daily see in the Re-

man communion? Behold, as in the deserts of Sinai, an innumerable multitude, tired of rendering spiritual worship to an invisible God, and demanding *gods to be made, which shall go before them!* Behold, as in the desert of Sinai, a priest forming, with his own hands, a god to receive supreme adoration! See, as in the desert, a little matter modified by a mortal man, and placed upon the throne of the God of heaven and earth! Observe, as in the desert, the Israelites liberally bestowing their gold and their jewels, to deck and adorn, if not to construct the idol! Hark! as in the desert of Sinai, priests publish profane solemnities, and make proclamation, saying, *To-morrow is a feast to the Lord!* Behold, as in the desert, the people *rising early* on festivals to perform matins! Harken! criminal voices declare, as in Sinai, *These are thy gods, or this is thy god, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.* What an I saying? I hear expressions more shocking still. This is, O shame to Christianity! O scandal in the eyes of all true christians! This is, yea, this bit of bread, on which a priest hath written, Jesus Christ the *saviour of mankind*, this is thy God. This is the God whom all the angels in heaven adore.— This is the God *by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.* This is the God who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. This is the God, who in the fulness of time took mortal flesh. This is the God who, for thy salvation, O Israel, was stretched on the cross. This is he, who in

the garden of Gethsemane said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 39. who rose conqueror over death and the grave, who passed into the heavens, and at whose ascension the heavenly intelligences exclaimed, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, that the Lord of hosts, the King of glory may come in," Ps. xxiv. 7, &c. *O Judah, Judah, thou hast justified thy sister Samaria.* O ye deserts of Sinai, never did ye see any thing equal to what our weeping eyes behold! Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come hither. Ye sons of Levi, separated to the service of the Lord, consecrate yourselves to-day to Jehovah. —But what are we about? Are we interrupting the soft still voice of the gospel, to utter the thundering commands of Mount Sinai? Shall we command you to-day, as Moses did formerly the Levites, "put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out, from gate to gate, throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour?"—Ah, Rome! Were we to adopt this method, you could not reproach us; you could only complain that we were too ready to learn the lessons you have taught us, and too eager to imitate your bloody example! Even in such a case we should have one great advantage over you; our hands would grasp the murdering sword to destroy thee only for the glory of God, whereas thine hath butchered us for the honour of an idol! We are not come with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but Zion, though all mangled by thy cruelty, utters only cool exhorta-



tions, affectionate remonstrances, and tender intreaties; she fights only with the "sword of the Spirit," and the "hammer of the word," Eph. vi. 17. Jer. xxiii. 29. Ah poor people! How long will you live without perceiving the golden candlestick which Jesus Christ hath lighted up in his church! May God take away that fatal bandage, which hides the truth from thine eyes! Or, if this favour be refused us, may God enable us to take away from thee such of our children as thou hast barbarously torn from the breasts of their mothers, in order to make them, like thine own, the children of a harlot.

V. To proceed to the last prejudice. *None but the vulgar ought to be afraid of committing certain crimes. Kings and statesmen will be judged by a particular law. The greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance.* What reason would subjects have to complain, and, I will venture to add, how insecure would princes and magistrates be, my brethren, if these pretences were well grounded; if they, who hold our lives and fortunes in their hands, were under no restraint in the abuse of sovereign power; and if, under our oppressions, we could not inwardly appeal to a supreme governor, and say, at least to ourselves, in private, "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work," Eccles. iii. 16, 17.

But if this be a claim of tyranny, it is not, however, a privilege derived from religion. It is destroyed by St. John in the words of our text, "abominable, and murderers, and poisoners, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." We do not understand that the apostle speaks here only of such eminent persons as govern mankind. There are liars, murderers, poisoners, and abominable of all ranks and conditions: but it is only in the courts of kings, it is on thrones, it is at the head of armies, and in the persons of such as are usually called *heroes* in the world, that crimes of this sort are ennobled: here altars are erected, and these detestable actions elevated into exploits worthy of immortal glory; they are inserted in our histories, in order to be transmitted to the latest posterity.

False protestations, by which a statesman, if I may speak so, obtains leave to lodge in the bosom of an ally, that he may be the better able to stab him to the heart; indeterminate treaties, and frivolous distinctions between the letter and the spirit of a public instrument; these, which we call illustrious *lies*, these are exploits worthy of immortal glory! Bloody wars, undertaken less for the good of the state than for the glory of the governors; cruel expeditions, tragical battles, sieges fool-hardy and desperate in a theory of the military art, but practicable in the eyes of ambition, or rather raving madness; rivers discoloured with blood; heaps of human bodies loading the earth; these which we call illustrious *murders*, these are exploits thought worthy of im-

mortal glory! Dark machinations, in which treason supplies the place of courage, assassination of the right of war, secret poison of public battle; these are actions truly *abominable*, yet these are thought worthy of immortal glory, provided they be crowned with success, and provided a historian can be found to disguise and embellish them! A historian, who can celebrate and adorn such heinous crimes, is, if possible, more *abominable* than his hero who committed them.

Shall we go back to the periods of fable? Shall we take example from those nations which lived without hope, and without God in the world? Shall we narrate ancient history? Shall we publish the turpitude of modern times? Ye horrid crimes! ye frightful actions! ye perfidious outrages! more fit for the hearts of infernal furies than for the bosoms of mankind, depart into eternal silence, and never shew your ghastly features again! Never were propositions more unwarrantable than these: the vulgar only ought to be afraid of certain crimes. Kings and statesmen will be judged by a particular law. The greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state, will plead their excuse, and secure them from divine vengeance.

Why were so many commands given to princes concerning administration of justice, breaches of peace, and declarations of war? To what purpose have so many Pharaohs been drowned, Nebuchadnezzars reduced to the condition of beasts, Herods devoured by worms, and strokes of divine vengeance fallen upon the proudest heads, except to teach us

that no creature is so august, no throne so magnificent, no dominion so invincible, as to free a creature from the necessity of obeying his Creator? What means that law which God formerly gave by the mouth of Moses? "When thou shalt set a king over thee, he shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away," Deut. xvii. 14, &c. He shall not amass for himself silver and gold. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write himself a copy of this law in a book, and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left." What mean these thundering words? "Thou profane wicked prince of Israel! thy day is come, thine iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; I will overturn it, and it shall be no more," Ezek. xxi. 25—27. In one word, what doth St. John mean by the words of my text? *All liars and poisoners, murderers and abominable shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

It would be difficult, my brethren, for men who never saw any thing greater than the courts of princes, a sort of earthly gods, to imagine a more pompous and venerable image than that which St. John exhibits here to our view. He brings forth the terrible day in which the supreme lawgiver will bring

earthly judges to account for that power with which he intrusted them, and of which most of them have made a very criminal use. There, all their flattering titles will be laid aside, no more Emperors, Monarchs, Arbiters of peace or war; or rather, there will these titles be repeated to mortify the pride, and to abate the insolence, of every one who abused them. There, pale, trembling, and afraid will appear those tyrants, those scourges of Almighty God, those disturbers of mankind, who once made the earth tremble with a single cast of their eyes. Then will be produced the vexations they have caused, the unjust decrees they have pronounced, the families they have impoverished, the houses, the cities, the kingdoms which they have burnt to ashes. Then will be judged the famous quarrels of Alexander and Darius, Cyrus and Cræsus, Pyrrhus and Fabricius, Hannibal and Scipio, Cæsar and Pompey, ill decided, in Cato's opinion, by the gods themselves in the battle Pharsalia. And you, you who hold the reins of this republic, you, in regard to whom we often say to this people, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," Rom. xiii. 1, 2. you, our governors and lords, what appearances will you make in that great day, and what sentence will you then receive? Ah! if it be possible for you to be so intoxicated with your own grandeur as to forget the majesty of that God, who placed you at the head of this people, and so neglect the duties of

your station ; if it be possible for the cries of the oppressed to sound in vain in your ears, and bribes to blind your eyes ; if it be possible for you to bestow the rewards due to fidelity and courage upon solicitation and intrigue, to sacrifice the public interest to private views ; if a personal pique dissolve a union essential to the good of the state ; if love of pleasure consume time devoted to the administration of justice ; if the tears of Sion in distress be not tenderly wiped away ; if religion and good manners be decried, and trampled on with impunity ; if Lord's days and public solemnities be openly profaned ; if, in a word, christianity be sacrificed to worldly policy, what will your condition be !

God grant this people may always be as happy in the character of their governors as in the gentle constitution of their government ! May a visible and bountiful benediction rest upon those, who, " in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shine as lights in the world ! " Phil. ii. 15. Never, never may any be at the head of the state who are unworthy of being members of the church ! God grant we may behold you who are intrusted with the public welfare, models worthy of our imitation : and by imitating your conduct in this life may we follow you into the world of glory ! Amen. To God be honor and glory for ever. Amen,

# SERMON V\*.

*God's Controversy with Israel.*



MICAH vi. 1, 2, 3.

*Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*

**T**HE wickedness of Sodom was so abominable, when God was about to consume it by fire, that we can never remark without astonishment his condescension to Abraham, when he gave him leave to plead for that detestable city. Abraham himself was amazed at it. He was afraid of inflaming that anger which he endeavoured to abate. "Oh!" said he, "let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Behold now, I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord," Gen. xviii. 30, 27. Yet God heard him, and answered him, and

\* This Sermon was preached on a fast-day, at the opening of a campaign in the year 1706.

agreed to spare Sodom, and to pardon an innumerable multitude of guilty persons, on condition a small number of righteous people could be found among them. Abraham asked, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou not spare the place, for the fifty righteous that are therein?" God replied, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous, I will spare all the place for their sakes." Abraham continued: "Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty? Peradventure there shall be forty, peradventure thirty, peradventure twenty, peradventure ten," Gen. xviii. 24, 26, 28, 29, &c. God heard Abraham, and suffered him to proceed to the utmost of his compassion, waiting, if I may speak so, till his servant gave the signal for the destruction of Sodom. So true is it, that his essence is love, and that *mercy and grace* are the strongest emanations of his glory! Exod. xxxiv. 6.

But, my brethren, if we admire the goodness of God, when he suffers only one worm of the earth to reason against his judgments, and to plead the cause of those criminals whose ruin was determined, what emotions, pray, ought the objects set before us in the text to produce in our minds to day? Behold! in the words of my text, behold! God not only permitting the sinner to plead his cause before him, and suspending his sovereign rights, but behold him offering himself to plead before the sinner, behold him descending from his tribunal, accounting for his conduct, and submitting himself not only to the judgment of one of his creatures, but proposing to do so to us all. "Hear ye what the Lord saith. Arise,



contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

This is the unheard of action which we are going to exhibit to you, in order to excite in you such sentiments of contrition and repentance as the solemnity of the day requires of you, especially now that the arm of the Lord is lifted up and stretched out over your heads, shall I say to destroy or to defend you?

At such a time can it be necessary to prepare your minds, and solicit your attention? If I have yet any more wishes to form for your felicity, I conjure you by the walls of this church, now indeed standing, but doomed to be rased by the enemy; by the interests of your wives and children, whose death is determined; by your regard for your civil and religious liberties; in the name of your magistrates, generals, and soldiers, whose prudence and courage cannot succeed without the blessing of the Almighty; I conjure you to address yourselves to this exercise with attentive minds and accessible hearts. May all worldly distractions, may all secular anxieties, troublesome *birds of prey*, always alighting on our sacrifices, O may you all be driven away to-day! God grant we may be *left alone* with him! O Lord, help us to repair the breaches made in our Jerusalem, to prevent others yet

threatened, to engage thee, the God of armies, on our side, and to draw down by our prayers and tears thy benedictions on the state and the church! Amen.

Before we enter into the spirit of our text, let us take a cursory view of the terms; each deserves our attention. "Hear ye what the Lord saith. Hills, mountains, ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye what the Lord saith." What loftiness in these terms! This is to prepare the mind for great things. It is a bad maxim of orators to promise much to auditors. The imagination of the hearer often outflies that of the speaker. Artful rhetoricians choose to surprise and amaze their hearers by ideas new and unexpected, so that the subjects of their orations may appear sublime by being strange.

But hath the holy Spirit need of our rules of rhetoric, and is the everlasting gospel subject to our oratorical laws? There is no proportion between the human soul, to which the prophet addresseth himself, and the Spirit of that God who animates the prophet. How great soever your expectation may be, your expectation will be always exceeded. Great objects will not be wanting to exercise your capacities, your capacities indeed may want ability to investigate them. "The thoughts of God will always be higher than your thoughts, as the heavens will always be higher than the earth," Isa. lv. 8. A prophet frequently seems at first to present only one object to view; but on a nearer examination his one object includes many: he seems at first only to speak of a temporal deliverer, but he speaks of the

Messiah ; at first the present life seems only intended, but at length we find eternity is contained in his subject. Our prophet had reason, therefore, to exclaim, "Mountains, hills, ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye."

"Hear ye what the Lord saith," adds the prophet. It is the Lord, who speaks by the mouths of his servants ; to them he commits his treasure, the ministry of reconciliation. These treasures, indeed, are in earthen vessels : but they are treasures of salvation, and whatever regards salvation interests you. Ministers are frail and feeble ; but they are ministers of the Lord, and whoever comes from him ought to be respected by you. When we censure a sinner, when we make our places of worship resound with *Anathemas*, *Maranathas*, instantly we excite murmuring and complaints. My brethren, if at any time we stretch these hands to seize the helm of the state, if we pretend to counteract your sound civility, if under pretence of pious purposes we endeavour officiously to intermeddle with your domestic affairs, mark us for suspicious and dangerous persons, and drive us back to our schools and studies ; but when we are in this pulpit, when we preach nothing to you but what proceeds from the mouth of God himself, and no other laws than those which come from his throne, be not surprised when we say to you, Hear us with respect, hear us with attention. "We are ambassadors for Christ. The Lord hath spoken." This is our commission, these are our credentials.

“Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye hills, hear ye mountains, hear ye strong foundations of the earth, hear ye what the Lord saith.” When God speaks, all ought to attend to what he says. He causes the most insensible creatures to hear his voice. “The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty, the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, it maketh Sirion to skip like a young unicorn, it divideth the flames of fire, it shaketh the wilderness, it maketh the forests bare,” Psal. xxix. 3, &c. The whole universe knows this voice, the whole universe submits to it. The voice of God does more than I have mentioned. It reigns in empty space; “It calleth those things which be not as though they were. By it the heavens, and all their host, were made. God spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,” Rom. iv. 17.

There is but one being in nature deaf to the voice of God, that being is the sinner. He, more insensible than the earth, and harder than the rocks, he refuseth to lend an ear. The prophet is forced to address himself to inanimate creatures, to hills and mountains, and strong foundations of the earth. “Hear ye hills, hear ye mountains, ye strong foundations of the earth,” and put my people to the blush. “The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider,” Isa. i. 3. “Israel hath forgotten the God that formed him, and is unmindful of the rock that begat him,” Deut. xxxii. 18.

Alas! how exactly does Israel now resemble Israel in the days of Micah! When we speak for God, we generally observe absent minds, wandering eyes, and insensible hearts. In vain we say, "The Lord hath spoken, hear what the Lord saith." It does not signify, the answer given us is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Each wants a gospel of his own. Each seizes the sacerdotal censor. A rigid morality is not suited to the taste of our auditors. Every sinner says of the preacher of it, as an impious king once said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil," 1 Kings xxii. 8. Henceforth, then, we must address ourselves to these arches, and pillars, and walls: Our auditory is insensible.

"The Lord hath a controversy with his people." What a controversy, my brethren! Never was such a cause heard before any judges. Never was a court concerned in an affair of such importance. The controverting parties, the manner of pleading, and the matter in dispute, are all worthy of attention.

The *parties*, who are they? On the one part the Lord of universal nature, he "before whom all nations are as a drop of a bucket; he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and considereth the inhabitants thereof as grasshoppers; he that weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," Isa. xl, 15, 22, 12. On the other part, man, Israel, the church. So that it is a husband pleading against his wife, a parent against his children, the Creator against his creature. Who ever heard of a controversy between parties more worthy of consideration!

The *manner* of pleading this cause is yet more remarkable. "The Lord hath a controversy with his people." Who can coolly hear this language? At the sound of these words conscience takes fright, the sinner flees to the clefts of the rocks, and calls to the mountains to fall on him, and cover him from the wrath of Jehovah. Each exclaims with a prophet, "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. Each cries with the ancient Israelites. "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," Exod. xx. 19. and with Job, "How should man be just with God?" chap. ix. 2. But, peace be to your consciences! God doth not come to you to-day with the dreadful ensigns of his vengeance. If he intends to cast the sinner, it is not by angry reproaches: but by reproofs of his love. Hear him. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." He knows, you have nothing to allege: but he means to affect you by generous motives; he means to excite in you that repentance, which is not to be repented of, that godly sorrow, that broken and contrite heart, which is of inestimable value in his sight.

As for you who have need of thunder and lightning, all you who must have hell opened under your feet, all you whose souls are insensible to motives of justice and equity, depart from this assembly. We are not preaching to you to-day. We speak to the people of God. "The Lord hath a controversy with his people. The Lord will plead with Israel." We address such of you as have hearts to feel these

tender expressions, expressions so tender that nothing in uninspired poets and orators can equal them; "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

In fine, the *matter* of this controversy is remarkable; it is the whole conduct of man to God, and the whole conduct of God to man. God is willing to exercise his patience to hear the complaints of his people, but he requires in return, that his people should hear his against them.

This is a general view of our text; but are general observations sufficient on a subject that merits the most profound meditation? We must go into the matter; we must go even to the bottom of this controversy; we must hear both parties, how disproportional soever they may be, and how improper soever it may seem to confront them; we must examine whether the fault lie in God or man. Forgive, O God! if worms of the earth presume to agitate the rash question, and to plead thus in thy presence! Thy condescension will only display thy glory. "Thou wilt be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest," Psal. li. 4.

Let us first hear what complaints man hath to bring against God, and what God hath to answer. Then let us see what complaints God hath to bring against man, and what man can allege in his own defence. But, as we have already hinted, you will not be surprised, my brethren, if we sometimes forget the prophet and the Jews, to whom he spoke, and consider the text as it regards christians in general, and this congregation in particular.

That a creature should complain of his Creator should seem a paradox. Of him every creature holds his life, motion, and being. The air he breathes, the animation of his frame, the sun that gives him light, the earth that bears him up, are all emanations of the goodness of his Creator. Yet, strange as it may appear, it is certain, man complains of God. To set the Deity at nought, to trample his laws under foot, to blaspheme his holy name, to harden under the tenderest marks of his love, as we do every day, is not this to murmur? Is not this to complain?

Let us hear these complaints. You have your wish, my brethren, and are all of you to-day in the condition, in which Job desired to be, when, in an excess of grief, he uttered these emphatical words, "O that I knew where I might find God! I would go even to his seat. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me," chap. xiii. 3—5. Order this cause, mortals, prepare these arguments, God is ready to hear you. When we enter into our own hearts, we find we are apt to complain of God on three accounts; his law seems too severe; his temporal favors too small; and his judgments too rigorous. Let us follow man in these three articles.

The laws of God seem too severe. "My people, what have I done unto thee?" To this, concupiscence answers, I choose to domineer in the world; but God would have me be humble, wash the feet of his disciples, "esteem others better than myself,"



Phil. ii. 3. and place myself, so to speak, in the meanest post in the world. I like to amass riches; but God requires my "conversation to be without covetousness," Heb. xiii. 5. and he would have me learn of lilies and sparrows to confide in his providence. I love to live well, and to fare sumptuously every day; but God requires me to be sober, to "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27. and instead of living to myself, to take from voluptuousness, and expend what I take in charity to others. I love to divulge the vices of a neighbour, and to erect my reputation on the ruin of his; but God threatens to exclude slanderers from his kingdom. In a word, the law of God controuls every passion of my heart. Ah! why did God give me laws so opposite to my inclinations, or why did he give me inclinations so opposite to his laws?

I understand you, sinners, you wish God had formed religion, not on the eternal rules of "righteousness and judgment, which are the base of his throne," Psal. xcvi. 2. but on the suggestions of such passions as animate you. Religion, intended by its wisdom to free the world from the vices that disfigure it, should have revealed, in your opinion, more ample methods of committing these very vices, and provided for the hardening of such consciences as the justice of God means to terrify. You wish that the sovereign God, by a condescension incompatible with the purity of his perfections, had imbibed, as it were, the wicked views and inclinations of sinful man, sinful man being so base and so wicked

as to refuse to conform to the holiness of the supreme God.

But hast thou, man, sufficiently reflected on this article? Thou complainest of the laws of God.—Who art thou? Whence dost thou come? Who gave thee thy being? Is not God thy governor? This firmament before thine eyes, that infinite space in which thine imagination is absorbed, those heavenly bodies revolving over thy head, the earth beneath thy feet, is not this the empire of God? And you, vile creature, confined in a corner of the universe, you house of clay, you worm of the earth, you nothing, lighter than vanity itself, you, who are only a vain phantom, walking in a vain shew, do you murmur at the laws of God? would you be Lord of religion? would you either say to God, Command this, forbid that, or would you mount his throne, and give the universe law? What presumption!

You complain of the laws of God. Are not these laws just in themselves? God requires you to love him. Is it possible to refuse obedience to this just command, considering the eminent perfections, the majesty, and benevolence of him who requires your esteem? God requires you to love your neighbour. And would it be right that you, made of the same dust as your neighbour, and doomed both to return to dust again; would it be right for you, under pretence of some exterior advantages in your own condition, to cherish a self-complacence that would debase the dignity of human nature, and teach mankind to estimate their worth by external appenda-

ges? Would it be fair in civil society that each should contribute to your happiness, that the artist should assist you by his industry, the scholar by his learning, the statesman by his wisdom, the soldier by his courage, and that you, a simple spectator of all these things, should think of nothing but enjoying yourself at the expence of all mankind? Would this be right? Are your complaints well grounded? "My people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

You complain of the laws of God. But what is the design of all these laws? Is it not to make you as happy as possible? Judge again yourself. Imagine yourself violating all the divine laws, having no veneration for God, no love for your neighbours, being haughty, overbearing, a liar, and a slanderer. Imagine yourself, on the other hand, humble, pious, zealous, patient, charitable. Is it not clear, that, in spite of the violence of your passions, you would like yourself best in the condition last mentioned? If your passions have so blinded your mind as to incapacitate you for entering into these reflections, imagine two men, the one animated with the vices, and the other with the virtues just spoken of, and if you can prefer the vicious man before the virtuous, I agree you shall complain of the laws of God.

You complain of the divine laws. But are not these laws infinitely proper to make you happy in this world? In what state would the human heart be, what bloody scenes would it revolve, were God to give it up to the infernal passion of envy, to excessive sensuality, to the miserable anxieties of avarice,

or to the tumultuous rage of ambition? Imagine a society where robbery, assassination, and adultery were allowed; a society in which self-interest was the only motive, passion the only law, and no bounds set to sin but such as ambition chose; where the magistrate was oppressing the people, the people revolting against the magistrate; where friend was betraying friend, and the receiver stabbing his benefactor; would you consent to live in such a society? Imagine an opposite plan, stretch your fancy as far as possible, and the further you go the more fully will you perceive, that nothing can be so well contrived to produce present human felicity as the divine law; and that, even supposing some particular cases, in which obedience is attended with loss, affliction, and pain, yet in all cases there is an ample indemnity both in a hope of future happiness, and in an enjoyment of present pleasure arising from a consciousness of real rectitude and upright self-approbation.

You complain of the laws of God. But doth not God exempify all these laws himself? he commands you to be just. Is not he himself just? *Righteousness and judgment, justice and equity, are the bases of his throne.* He requires you to be humble. But although this virtue may seem repugnant to the divine nature, yet we have beheld the prodigy of God humbling himself, of one, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon himself the form of a servant!" Phil. ii. 6, 7. God requires us to be benevolent. Is not he *love*? Are we not all over-

whelmed with his favours? Hath he not given us his Son? O admirable beauty of religion! My brethren, it transforms a creature into the image of his Creator! O matchless condescension of the God we adore! He unites true happiness to an imitation of his attributes, and invites us to participate his happiness by partaking of his holiness.

You complain of the laws of God. But what does God require of you but to endeavour to please him? Doth he not promise to accept your sincere obedience, though it be accompanied with many frailties and great imperfections? Hath he not engaged to assist you by the essential aid of the holy Spirit? Brethren, enter into your own hearts, listen to the suggestions, the joys, the hopes excited in your consciences. This is the hand of the Lord drawing you; this is the light of heaven *shining in your hearts*; this is the holy Spirit *converting the soul*, Psal. xix. 7. Should God descend and stand among you, amidst thunders and fires like those of Mount Sinai; should he stand among you surrounded with *blackness, and darkness, and tempest*; should he, from the centre of all these formidable ensigns of dreadful majesty, declare, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. human frailty might serve for an excuse; but he speaks as we said before, to *his people*, to them he presents himself with all the attractives of grace.

Ah! were you to deplore your depravity! Were you to say in the bitterness of your soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. God himself would comfort you, he would tell you, that "he would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Matt. xii. 20. If, sinking under a sense of sin, you were to cast yourself at his feet, and implore his assistance, he would give you his holy Spirit, who, conveying light and strength through all your heart, would eradicate all your sins. But you love sin, you thrust back the mighty hand stretched out to help you, you "grieve the holy Spirit of God, turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," Eph. iv. 30. Jude 4. and then complain that the laws of God are too severe. You consider God the lawgiver as a mortal enemy, who attacks all your pleasures. Ah! how unjust are your complaints! "O my people, what have I done unto thee? Are my commandments grievous, is not my yoke easy, my burden light? Am I not mild and lowly in heart? O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

The second class of human complaints against God regard him as the *governor* of the world. Man complains of providence, the economy of it is too narrow and confined, the temporal benefits bestowed are too few and partial.

Let us do justice to human nature, my brethren. If we cannot justify this complaint, let us acknowledge there is an appearance of equity in it. This complaint, we allow, hath some colour. God presents himself to us in religion under the tenderest relations, as a friend, a brother, a parent, a husband; *the earth* belongs to this friend, *and the fulness there-*

of is at the disposal of this God, and a single act of his will would instantly fill our houses with pleasures, riches, and honours; yet he leaves us in misery and indigence, and it would be in vain to search the New Testament for a single passage to ground a hope that we should become rich, reputable, and honourable in the world by sincerely practising the precepts of christianity.

If this complaint at first sight seem unanswerable in the mouth of a Christian, it is precisely from the mouth of a Christian that it cannot come without extreme ignorance and ingratitude. If you be Christians you must be so affected with the numberless benefits bestowed on you, that it is inconceivable how an idea of such temporal blessings as you think necessary to complete your happiness, can make such an impression on your mind, or find a place in your heart. Being Christians, you are persuaded that God hath "blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. That he hath chosen you in him before the foundation of the world, that he predestinated you unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 3, &c. Being Christians, you believe, that "God so loved you, that he gave his only begotten Son, that you believing in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. As you are christians, you are persuaded, that for your sakes the Lord hath "shaken the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land," and "hath sealed you, and given you the earnest of the Spirit in your hearts," Hag. ii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 22.

Being christians, you are convinced that the public ministration of the divine word, the ordinances of religion so often administered to you, are evidences of the watchful care of that providence over you, which gives "some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry," Eph. iv. 11, 12. You believe, for you are christians, that, when you die, heaven will be opened to you, as it was formerly to Stephen; that angels will uphold you in your agony, as they once comforted your Redeemer; and that, how difficult soever the race may be, you shall surmount all, and finish with a song of extatic triumph. Being christians, you believe there are *in your Father's house many mansions*, that Jesus Christ is *gone to prepare a place for you*, and that, throughout all eternity, your happiness shall suffer no diminution. Yea, being christians, you are already *quickened with Christ*, and even now *sit with him in heavenly places*, Ephes. ii. 5, 6.

Is it imaginable, that people enjoying so many advantages, favoured with so many benefits, and elevated with such glorious hopes, should complain for want of a few temporal gratifications, or spend a thought on such momentary accommodations as fire the unruly passions of worldlings?

This is not all. If the morality of Jesus Christ be thoroughly examined, it will be found almost incompatible with worldly prosperity. Such is the state of the human heart, that either Jesus Christ must alter his religious laws, in order to put us into the possession of temporal prosperity, or he must



deprive us of temporal prosperity in order to establish his morality in our hearts. You wish, you say, that he had promised pleasures to moderation, riches to charity, and worldly grandeur to humility. Instead of gratifying your wishes, he sees it necessary to the being of your moderation to remove from you the dangerous snares of pleasures; he doth not make the charitable man rich, lest riches should excite avarice; and he does not bestow worldly grandeur on the humble, lest it should diminish his humility. This is a well known truth of universal experience. It is generally seen, that every temporal good conveys a mortal poison into the heart of its possessor. The temptations attending prosperity are infinitely more difficult to overcome than those which belong to adversity. He who hath triumphed over persecutors, executioners, and tyrants, hath not unfrequently fallen a prey to pride, luxury, and intemperance, when objects proper to kindle these passions have presented themselves to him.

Temporal prosperity is not only opposite to our duty; but it is for this very reason hostile to our happiness. Had God given us a life full of charms, we should have taken little thought about another. It is natural to be delighted with an agreeable situation, and whatever attaches us to the world, cools our ardour for heaven; the inward man is renewed, as the outward man perisheth, and faith commonly grows as fortune decays. When the dove first flew out of the ark, finding nothing but wind and rain, and rolling waves, she returned to the ark for shelter and rest; but when, in her second flight, she saw

plains and fields, there she alighted and staid. Behold, my soul, thine own image. When the world exhibits to thy view prosperity, riches, and honours, thou art captivated with the beauty of the enchantress, and fallest a prey to her charms. But when the world puts on the gloom of poverty, anxiety, and misery, thou turnest thine eyes toward heaven, and seekest happiness in its natural source. Even as things are now, in spite of all the distresses that belong to life, we find it difficult to detach our affections from the world: but what would be the case, if all prospered according to our wishes? Speak to a man who talks of dying, exhaust philosophical and religious arguments to determine him to die contented; place him between two objects, heaven and earth, the world he is leaving, and the eternal state to which he is going: describe to him on the one hand the vanity and uncertainty of worldly enjoyments, tell him of the anxieties, the indigence, poverty, and nullity of every thing here; then open heaven to him, shew him happy angels for his companions, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne to feed him, and lead him into living fountains of eternal joy," Rev. vii. 17. Amidst so many just reasons for his detachment from the world, this world is yet dear to him; this life, this short life, this indigent life, this life which is nothing but vanity and deception, this life appears more desirable than heaven, and all its eternal glory. If, then, in spite of so many disagreeables in this life, it be so hard to quit it with content, what would be our condition were God to give us a firmer health, a longer life, and a more flourishing state of

affairs? What would be our condition, were there no mortifications in high rank, no uncertainty in friendships, no vicissitudes in fortune?

Our third complaint against God regards the *rigour of his judgments*. The Jews of Micah's time had experienced this in many cases, and the prophet threatened more. "Behold! the Lord cometh out of his place, and will tread upon the high places of the earth. The mountains shall be molten under him, and the vallies shall be cleft before him. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stript and naked, I will make a wailing like the dragons, and make a mourning as the owls, for her wound is incurable. Jerusalem shall become heaps. Zion shall be plowed as a field," chap. i. 3, 4, 8, 9, and iii. 12.

We have been treating of our text as it regards you, my brethren, we will therefore leave the prophet and his countrymen, in order to give you full liberty to exhibit your complaints, and to say now, in the presence of heaven and earth, what ills God hath inflicted on you. "O my people what have I done unto thee?" Ah, Lord! how many things hast thou done to us! Draw near, ye mourning ways of Zion, ye desolate gates of Jerusalem, ye sighing priests, ye afflicted virgins, ye deserts peopled with captives, ye disciples of Jesus Christ, wandering over the face of the whole earth, children torn from your parents, prisons filled with confessors, gallies freighted with martyrs, blood of our countrymen shed like water, carcasses once the venerable habitation of witnesses for religion, now thrown out to savage beasts and birds of prey, ruins of our churches, dust, ashes,

sad remains of houses dedicated to our God, fires, racks, gibbets, punishments till now unknown, draw nigh hither, and give evidence against the Lord.

My brethren, if we consider God a sa Judge, what a number of reasons may be assigned to prove the equity of all the evils that he hath brought upon us? The abuse of his favours, the contempt of his word, the slighting of all the warnings given us by his ministers, the pride and worldly-mindedness, the lukewarmness and indifference, and many other odious vices, which preceded our miseries, are evidences too convincing that we deserved all; and they ought to make our complaints give place to the sorrowful, but sincere confession, which a prophet puts in the mouth of the church, "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him," Lam. i. 18.

But as we said, that in this text God is to be considered as a father, we affirm all these chastisements, even the most rigorous of them, are perfectly consistent with this character. It was his love that engaged him to employ such severe means for your benefit. You know, my brethren, and you know but too well, that the ease with which the enjoyment of the presence of God is obtained, too often lessens the favour in our eyes. I appeal to experience. Recollect the time so dear to you, when the gospel was preached to you in your own country, and when God, with a bounty truly astonishing, granted you both spiritual and temporal prosperity. Did you, I appeal to your consciences, did you value these blessings according to their real worth? Were you never disgusted with the manna that fell every morning

around your habitations? Did you never say, with the Israelites, "There is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes?" Num. xi. 6. It was necessary, in order to re-animate your zeal for God, to take his candlestick away; it was necessary for you to learn the importance of salvation, by the difficulty of obtaining it; and to kindle your love to your spiritual husband by his absence. These events excited abundance of piety among you; and, though the misfortunes of the times have produced too many examples of human frailty, yet to these unhappy times we owe the bright examples of many eminent persons, whose names will go down with honor to the latest posterity.

Let us then acknowledge, my brethren, that, although we have insulted the rectitude of God, we are willing now to do homage to it; let us confess, God hath given his people no just ground of complaint; in all his conduct he hath displayed the power of a God, the fidelity of a husband, the tenderness of a parent; and we have nothing to reply to him, when he asks, "O my people what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

As God hath answered the complaints of his people, let us proceed to inquire how his people will answer the complaints of their God. Let us see what we ourselves can reply. He hath heard us, can we refuse to hear him? Let us proceed in this astonishing cause between God and his church. "The Lord hath a controversy with his people, the Lord will plead with Israel."

The history of the Jews is so well known, that every one of us is acquainted with their irregularities. They corrupted both natural and revealed religion. They had "as many gods as cities," Jer. ii. 28. They chose rather to sacrifice their children to Moloch than their sheep and oxen to Jehovah. There was no opinion so absurd, no worship so puerile, no idolatry so gross as not to be admitted among them. Having shaken off the ties of religion, the bridles of corrupt passions, they threw the reins on the necks of the most ungovernable dispositions, and rushed furiously into all the worst vices of the nations round them. With this conduct the prophets were always reproaching them, and particularly Ezekiel in these words, in which he describes this wretched people under an image the most odious that can be imagined. "O how weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things! O wife committing adultery, taking strangers instead of thy husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them that they come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. The contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms, and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee," Ezek. xvi. 30, &c. These words give us shocking ideas of this people; for if it was an abomination under the law to "bring the hire of a whore into the house of the Lord," Deut. xxiii. 18. for an offering, how much greater abomination must it be to apply the offerings of the Lord to the support of prostitutes!

Their crimes were aggravated, too, by the innumerable blessings which God bestowed on them. The prophet reminds them of these in the words that follow the text. "Remember, O my people, I redeemed thee out of the house of servants, remember what Balak consulted, and what Balaam answered." What favour did this people receive! What numberless engagements to fear God! He made a covenant with them, he divided the sea to let them pass over, he gave them bread from heaven to eat, he cleft the rock to give them drink, he brought them into the country of which Moses had said, "The land whither ye go is a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year," Deut. xii. 12.—Moreover, all their temporal blessings were types and pledges of spiritual benefits, either then bestowed, or promised in future. After so many favours on God's part, after so many crimes on the part of the people, had not the Lord reason to complain? Was ever controversy more just than this?

My brethren, you have certainly been often shocked at reading the history of this people; you have blamed their idolatry; you have detested their ingratitude; you have condemned the carelessness of their pastors, and all the vices of the people. But what would you say if we could prove that the excesses of priests and people are greater under the gospel than under the law? The Lord's controversy with you affirms this, and this we must now examine.

But which of us ministers, which of us has courage to enter into this detail? And which of you christian people would have humility enough to hear us out without murmuring, trembling with indignation, and exclaiming against your reprovor, *Away with him, away with him!* Surprising! When we just now pleaded the unjust cause of man against the Creator, the patient Creator satisfied every inquiry; the earth did not open under our feet to swallow us up; no fire from heaven came down to destroy us; but every article of the controversy received a full answer. Now that we ought to proceed to hear the complaints of the Creator against us, I already hear every one murmuring, and refusing to pay as much regard to the just complaints of God, as God condescended to pay to those which had no foundation in reason and equity.

Well, we will speak to you in your own way; we will treat you as sick people are treated when their physicians are obliged to disguise remedies, and conceal operations necessary to their recovery; we will decide nothing; but we will leave each of you to judge of his own conduct. We will only produce a few of the articles of God's controversy with you, and propose a few maxims for you to examine; but if there remain the least degree of rectitude in you, we conjure you to apply these maxims in earnest to yourselves.

First. *When God distinguishes a people by signal favors, the people ought to distinguish themselves by gratitude to him.* The equity of this maxim is clear to every one of us, and nobody will dispute it. I



ask then, were any people in the world ever favored of heaven as the people of these provinces have been? A people (permit me to go back to your origin) a people formed amidst grievous oppressions and barbarous impositions; a people subject to tyrants more cruel than the Pharaohs of Egypt; a people not ashamed to call themselves beggars, and to exhibit poverty on their standards; a people who, in the space of six months, gave up six thousand of themselves to racks and gibbets; a people risen from this low condition into the present state of magnificence; a people who, placed in a corner of the world, and occupying only a few acres, extend their influence over the whole world; a people opposing at the same time two great kings; a people in whose favor the sea suspended its usual flux on the day that was to decide the fate of these provinces for ever; a people whose forts were all occupied by the enemy, and who, when they had nothing to trust to but the unavailing fidelity of a few citizens, saw the enemy *that came out against them one way, flee before them seven ways*, Deut. xxviii. 7. a people inhabiting a country formed, (if I may speak so,) against the laws of nature, but which the God of nature supports as it were by miracle; a people taxing, governing, and making laws for themselves; a people walking in the light of the gospel shining in all its glory, and enjoying the reformation in its utmost purity. This is only an imperfect sketch of the blessings, which God in distinguishing mercy confers on you. Do you distinguish yourselves by your gratitude? Is there more piety among you than among other

nations? Is there a greater attention to the word of God, and more deference to his laws? Are there more good examples in parents, and are their children better educated than others? Is there more zeal for family religion? Is the truth more highly esteemed, and is more done for the propagation of the gospel? Do the sufferings of pious persons for religion excite more compassion? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own conduct.

Perhaps some of my hearers, whom the correcting hand of God hath long pursued, and whom he seems to reserve as monuments of his lasting displeasure, perhaps they may think this maxim concerning the blessings of providence does not regard them. But shall we be so ungrateful as not to acknowledge the benefits bestowed on us? And shall we be so insensible as not to mourn over our own ingratitude?

My brethren, let us look back a little. Let us for a moment turn our eyes to the land of our nativity, from which we are banished; let us remember the time, when, to use the language of the psalmist, we went in "a multitude to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise," Psal. xli. 4. nor let us forget the many advantages, which we enjoyed till the day of our exile. How happy a climate! What an agreeable society! What opportunities for commerce! What a rapid progress in arts and sciences! Was our gratitude proportioned to the liberal gifts of God? Alas! the exile we lament, the dispersion that separates us from our nearest relations, the lassitude we feel, the tears we shed, are not these sad, but

sufficient proofs of our insensibility and ingratitude ? This is the first article of God's controversy against us, and this is the first maxim of self-examination.

The second regards the chastisements of God. *When men are under the hand of an angry God, they are called to mourning and contrition. Pleasures, innocent in other circumstances, are guilty in this case.* You perceive at once the truth of this maxim. God by his prophet says to you, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah vi. 9. One of his most cutting reproofs to his people was this, "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die," Isa. xxii. 12, &c. Thus, in like manner, another prophet complained to his God, "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive instruction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return," Jer. v. 3.

Now, my brethren, though the blessings of providence surround us, yet it is plain we are at present under the rod of correction. I lay aside all the afflictions just now mentioned; I will not remind you of gibbets, and racks, and tortures, subjects so proper to banish from our minds the senseless joy that fills them, were we either "grieved for the affliction of

Joseph, or pleased to remember the dust of Zion." I will speak only of the cause of our assembling now, of this cruel and tragical war. Is not the destroying angel gone abroad? Doth not the "sword of the Lord, drunk with blood," turn the whole universe into one vast grave? Are your fortunes, your liberties, or your religion safe? Should your fleets and armies be always victorious in future, would not your husbands, and relations, and friends be in imminent danger? Would our victories cost us no tears? Would not our laurels be bloody? Alas! the tears of some mother having lost her son, the sighs of some wife having lost her husband, the complaints of some friend who had lost a friend, would not these interrupt our songs of triumph, and mix mournful sounds among our shouts of joy?

We are, then, under the correcting hand of God. Yet what impressions do these frightful objects make on us? What effects are produced in our souls by objects so proper to fill them with fear and trembling? Have we broke up any party of pleasure? Have we kept away from any public amusement? Have we laid aside any festivals and public shews? Is nothing to be seen among us but fasting and weeping, sackcloth and ashes? Would not any stranger who should see us, say every thing succeeded according to our wishes; that there was no danger, no war, no blood shedding, no probability of another campaign, that should cover the earth with the limbs of the dead? This is the second article of God's controversy with us. This is the second ground of examination. I

pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own conduct.

The third maxim regards the end of preaching and the ministry. *To attend public worship is not to obtain the end of the ministry. Not to become wise by attending is to increase our miseries by aggravating our sins.* On this principle we affirm, that every time our places of worship are opened, every time you attend public service, every time you hear a sermon, you are required to derive some real benefit, answerable to the end proposed. Is it so? When we survey this assembly, and look on it with eyes of flesh, the sight strikes every beholder with surprise and awe. Here are princes, magistrates, generals, men excelling in learning and science of every kind. We can hardly find in all Europe so many venerable personages assembled in so small a place.—Moreover, here is all the exterior of piety, assiduity, attention, eagerness, a great concourse of people, and every thing that looks like zeal and fervour. Yet the end, the great end of the ministration of the divine word, is it even known among us?

When each of you come into this holy place, do you think what you are going to do? When you enter the house of God, do you *keep your feet*, according to the language of a prophet? When you approach this desk, does your heart accompany him who prays? Does your fervour rise up with his petitions, and does your soul warmly unite itself with his requests to supplicate the throne of grace, and to avert the anger of Almighty God? When you

hear a sermon, have you the docility requisite to such as receive instruction? Does your memory retain the doctrines taught? Does your heart apply to itself the searching truths sometimes delivered? When you return home do you recollect what you have been hearing? Do you ever converse about it afterward? Do you require any account of your children and servants of their profiting? In a word, what good comes of all the exhortations, expostulations, and arguments used among you? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you once more to judge of your own conduct.

Our fourth maxim regards slander. *Slander is a vice impure in its source, dangerous in its effects, general in its influence, irreparable in its consequences; a vice that strikes at once three mortal blows; it wounds him who commits it, him against whom it is committed, and him who sees it committed. It is tolerated in society, only because every one has an invincible inclination to commit it.* Examine this place on this article. Are not your slanders famous even in distant climes? Do not strangers and travellers observe your propensity to this vice? Are not many of you cruelly attentive to the conduct of your neighbours, and always asking, Where is he? Whence does he come? What is he about? What are his opinions? Have you no pleasure in discovering people's imperfections? Does not malice publish some vices, which charity ought to conceal? Are no tales invented? None enlarged? No calumnies added? Are not the characters of the most respectable persons attacked, of heads of families, magistrates and ministers? Is

not one unreasonably taxed with heresy, another with fraud, another with criminal intrigues, and so on? This is the fourth article of God's controversy. I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave you to judge of your own actions.

Fifthly. *If the dangers that threaten us, and the blows that providence strikes, ought to affect us all, they ought to affect those most of all who are most exposed to them.* To explain ourselves. There is not one of us so secure, there is no credit so firm, no house so established, no fortune so safe, as not to be affected by this war. Consequently, there is not any one person who ought not, by fervent prayer, and genuine piety, to endeavour to engage heaven to prosper our armies.

It is, however, clear beyond a doubt, that our generals, officers, and soldiers have a particular and personal concern in the approaching campaign. Men who, beside all the infirmities and dangers to which human nature is subject, and to which they are exposed in common with all mankind, are going to expose themselves to the dangers of sieges and battles, and all other concomitants of war; they who are always contending with death; they who march every day through fires and flames; they who have always the sound of warlike instruments in their ears, crying with a thundering voice, *Remember ye are mortal*; people of this profession, ought not they to be more affected with these objects than we who see them only at a distance? And, consequently, ought not they to enter with greater sincerity into the religious dispositions which such objects are apt to ex-

cite? This is the maxim, the fifth article of God's controversy with us.

See, examine. Is piety respected among your troops? Does the ark of the Lord always go at the head of your army? Does the pillar of a cloud direct your steps? Does benevolence animate you towards one another, partners as you are in common danger? Do the mouths that are ready to utter the last sigh, open only to bless the Creator, and to commit to him a soul hovering on the lips, and ready to depart? Are offences against Jesus Christ punished as severely as offences against officers in the army? "Do ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are ye stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 22. Would you force a victory in spite of him? Would you triumph without God, or would you have him succeed your attempts, when you carry impiety on your foreheads, irreligion in your hearts, and blasphemy in your mouths? I pronounce nothing. I decide nothing. I leave each of you to draw such inferences from this maxim as naturally belong to it.

Our sixth maxim regards gaming. *If gaming be innocent in any circumstances, they are uncommon and rare. It is easier to renounce this pleasure than to enjoy it without excess.* Examine yourselves on this article. Are there none of us, to whom gaming is become necessary? None who relish no other pleasure? Are there no fathers and mothers, who train up their families in it, and embolden them by their examples? Is there no opulent man, who imagines he has a right to spend his fortune in gaming? Is there no necessitous person, who hazards the sup-



port, yea the daily bread of his family in this practice? I determine nothing. I pronounce nothing. I leave you to judge of your own actions.

But why not pronounce, why not decide? Wherefore respect false delicacy? "Why not declare the whole counsel of God?" Acts xx. 27. "Why strive to please men?" Gal. i. 10. Ah, my brethren! were I to hold my peace, the walls, and the pillars, and the arches of this building, the hills and the mountains would rise up in judgment against you. "Hear, ye mountains, hear ye hills, hear the Lord's controversy. The Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." Yea, the Lord hath a controversy with you. His reproofs would cleave your hearts asunder, and dissolve you in floods of tears, were you capable of reflections and emotions. He complains of all the vices we have mentioned. He complains that you are insensible to the most terrible threatenings of his mouth, and the heaviest strokes of his hand. He complains that ye bite and devour one another like wild and savage beasts. He complains that impiety, irreligion, and intemperance reign over those souls which are formed for the honour of having God for their king. He complains that you forget the excellence of your nature, and the dignity of your origin, and that you occupy your immortal souls with amusements unworthy of the attention of creatures having the least degree of intelligence. He complains that exhortations, expostulations, and intreaties, the most forcible and affecting, are almost always without success. He complains of some abominable crimes which are

committed in the face of the sun, and of others that are concealed under the darkness of the night, the horrors of which I dare not even mention in this place dedicated to the service of God. He complains that you force him, as it were, to lay aside his inclination to bless you, and oblige him to chastise you with severity. Behold! the storm gathers, the thunder mutters and approaches, the lightning is ready to flash in our faces, unless our fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes avert these judgments which threaten us, or, shall I rather say, which are already falling upon us?

Such is the controversy of God with you; these are his complaints. It is your part to reply. Justify yourselves, plead, speak, answer. "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" What have you to say in your own behalf? How can you justify your ingratitude, your insensibility, your luxury, your calumnies, your dissipations, your lukewarmness, your worldly mindedness, your pride, your unworthy communions, your forgotten fasts, your false contracts, your broken resolutions, the hardening of your hearts against threatenings and promises, and personal chastisements, some public calamities already inflicted on the church, and others ready to overwhelm it? Have we any thing to reply? Again I say, justify yourselves, plead, speak, answer.

Ah, my brethren, my brethren! am I deceiving myself; I think I see your hearts in your countenances, and read in your faces the reply you are going to make. Methinks I see your hearts penetrated with genuine grief, your faces covered with holy

confusion, and your eyes flowing with tears of godly sorrow. Methinks I hear the language of your consciences, all "broken and contrite, and trembling at the word of the Lord," Psal. li. 19; methinks I hear each of you say, "though I were righteous, yet would I not answer: but I would make supplication to my judge," Isa. lxvi. 2. Job ix. 15. This was the disposition of the people after they had heard Micah. God said, "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." And the people, afflicted on account of their sins, afraid of the judgments of God, all wounded and weighed down with a sense of guilt, confused and astonished at their condition, replied, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?"

This was the answer of the Jews, and this is the answer we expect of you. Let each of you say, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" How shall I turn away those torrents of divine judgments which threaten to overwhelm the christian world? We, the ministers of Christ, we answer in the name of God, prevent them by sighs and tears of genuine repentance, prevent them by cool, constant, and effectual resolutions, by effusions of love, and by increasing zeal for universal obedience.

This ought to be the work of this day; it is the design of the fast, and the aim of this sermon; for it is not sufficient, my brethren, to trace the controversy of God with you, it must be finished, the parties must be reconciled, and each of us must yield

obedience to the voice that says to every one of us, "he may make peace with me, he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 5.

Magistrates, princes, noblemen, ministers, people, parents, children, will you not all of you embrace this invitation? Do you not solemnly protest, in the presence of heaven and earth, and before the angels that wait in this assembly, that you prefer this peace before all the riches in the world? Do you not all resolve, with the utmost sincerity and good faith, never more wilfully to break the commandments of God? O Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest the hearts of all mankind, thy searching eyes survey the most secret purposes of the souls of all this assembly!

If each of us reply thus to God, let us cherish the pleasure that is inspired by the return of his favour. Christians, what came you out to-day to see? What came you out to hear? God pleading before you, God justifying himself, God convicting you: yet, after all, God pardoning you. What may we not expect from a God so patient and kind.

Lo! I see on a happy future day the tears of Zion wiped away, the mourning of Jerusalem ended, our captives freed from bondage, our galley-slaves from chains.

I see on a happy future day victory following our march, our generals crowned with laurels, and every campaign distinguished by some new triumph.

Methinks I behold, on some future day, our prayers exchanged for praise, our fasts for solemn festivals, our mourning for joy and triumph, and all the

faithful, assembled to-day to implore the aid of the God of armies, again convoked to bless the God of victory, and making this place echo with repeated shouts, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord hath done valiantly. The sword of the Lord and Gideon." Psal. cxviii. 16. Judg. vii. 20.

I see on some happy future day our enemies confounded; one post running to meet another, one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his army is routed. I see commerce flourishing among this people, and liberty forever established in these provinces.

Go then, generous warriors, go verify these pleasing omens, go holily prodigal of spilling your blood in defence of liberty, religion, and your country. May the God of armies return you victorious as rapidly as our wishes rise! May he re-unite the many hearts, and re-assemble the many families, which this campaign is going to separate! May he prevent the shedding of human blood; and, while he makes you conquerors, may he spare the people subdued by you! May he return you to wear the crowns and laurels which our hands will be eagerly preparing for you! May he, after he shall have granted you all a long and happy life, useful and glorious to the state and to your families, open the gates of eternal happiness to you, and fix you forever in the temple of peace! To him be honour and glory henceforth and for ever. Amen.



## SERMON VI.

*The Harmony of Religion and Civil Polity.*



PROVERBS xiv. 34.

*Righteousness exalteth a Nation.*

**T**O propose maxims of civil polity in a religious assembly, to propose maxims of religion in a political assembly, are two things, which seem alike senseless and imprudent. The christian is so often distinguished from the statesman, that, it would seem, they were opposite characters. We have been lately taught to believe, that Jesus Christ, by giving us an idea of a society more noble than any we can form upon earth, hath forbidden us to prevent the miseries of this state, and to endeavour to procure the glory of it. It hath been said, that kingdoms and states cannot be elevated without violating the laws of equity, and infringing the rights of the church.

How general soever this odious notion may have been, hardly any one hath appeared openly to avow it till of late. The impudence of pleading for it was reserved for our age, for a christian admitted into your provinces, cherished in your bosom, and, O shame of our churches! appearing among protes-

tant refugees, as the devil formerly presented himself before the Lord, among the angels of God.\*

We propose to-day, my brethren, to endeavour to unravel the sophisms of this author, to shew you the agreement of religion with civil polity, and to establish this proposition, that as there is nothing in religion to counteract the design of a wise system of civil polity, so there is nothing in a wise system of civil government to counteract the design of the christian religion. It was the wisest of all kings who taught us this lesson. He speaks of the *exaltation* of a nation, and this is the end of civil polity. He speaks of *righteousness*, and this is the design of religion, or rather this is religion itself. He affirms that the latter is the foundation of the former, and this is the agreement of religion with civil government. It is *righteousness*, saith he, It is *righteousness* that *exalteth a nation*.

This proposition of Solomon needs both explication and proof; and this discourse is intended to furnish both.

In our first part we will state the question, fix the sense of these terms, *righteousness*, *exaltation*; we will set aside the various false senses which occasioned the opinion that we intend to oppose; and by these means we will preclude such objections as may be made against our doctrine.

In the second part we will allege some arguments in favour of the proposition contained in the text, when properly explained, and so prove that *righteousness exalteth a nation*.

\* Voyez Bayle, Continuat. des pensees divers. tom. ii. pag. 598.



This nation is exalted, my brethren; but, allow me to say, it is not by its *righteousness*. We have not therefore chosen this text to create an opportunity of making encomiums on you; but we treat of the subject in order to fix your attention on the proper means of preserving and augmenting your elevation. Happy if our design meet with success; happy if we contribute, though not according to the extent of our wishes, yet, according to the utmost of our ability, to the glory of this state.

I. We just now insinuated, that the false glosses put upon the maxim of the wise man, were the principal causes of our backwardness to admit the truth of it. It is therefore important to state the question clearly.

1. When we affirm that *righteousness* and religion in general, (for it would be easy to prove that the word *righteousness*, in the text, is to be taken in this vague sense,) I say, when we affirm that religion *exalteth a nation*, we do not mean such a religion as many imagine. We ingenuously acknowledge, and would to God the whole world acknowledged, that neither the religion of a cruel man, nor the religion of a superstitious person, nor the religion of an enthusiast, can *exalt a nation*.

How can the religion of a *cruel* man exalt a nation? The religion of such men is too well known for the peace of Europe. Such as these, under pretence of devotion, cut a free course for their own black and inflexible passions. These arm themselves with the civil sword, to destroy all who doubt the truth of their systems; they put violence in the

place of demonstration, and endeavour to establish the gospel as if it were the koran of Mohammed, by force and constraint. These characters, as I just now said, are too well known for the peace of Europe. Even now, while I speak, I behold many who have suffered under such cruelty, and have opposed the strongest arguments against it. No, my brethren, this is not the religion that *exalleth a nation*. Such a religion depopulates states, ruins commerce, and is a never failing source of civil wars and intestine commotions. The religion of which we speak, is a kind, patient, gentle religion; a religion, the grand character of which is forbearance, benevolence, and fraternal love; a religion inimical to error and heresy; but which, however, pities the erroneous and the heretic; a religion which exerts itself to eradicate false doctrines; but which leaves each at liberty to admit the truth; a religion which hath no other sword than the *Sword of the Spirit*, nor any other weapon than that of the word.

How can the religion of a *superstitious* man exalt a nation? It makes devotion degenerate into idleness, it increaseth the number of ecclesiastics, and so renders many members useless to society. It wastes in pretendedly pious foundations immense sums, which might have contributed to the advancement of arts and sciences. It generates scruples in the minds of statesmen, and so restrains the exercise of those fine faculties, which God created for the good of the state. It puts the casuist in the place of the prince, and the prince in the place of the casuist; the casuist on the throne, and the prince in confession

at his feet. No, my brethren, this is not the religion, of which we speak. The religion of which we speak, is opposite to superstition. It is just and solid, requiring us to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's*, Matt. xii. 17. It prescribes bounds to sovereigns: but it requires casuists also to know their place.

How can the religion of an *enthusiast* contribute to the exaltation of a nation? the soul of an enthusiast is always agitated with visions and reveries. He incessantly thrusts himself into the company of the great, in order to inspire them with his own spirit, and to breathe into them the soul of enthusiasm. He endeavours to animate governors called to watch over a state, and to conduct the people to national happiness, with his wild schemes. He is always talking of extirpating the reformation, and thundering excommunications against those who do not enter into his extravagant projects; his anathemas are as extravagant and wild as the projects themselves. This is not the religion, of which we speak. The religion that *exalteth a nation*, is derived from the treasures of the Divine Intelligence; it was formed in the mind of that sublime Spirit, from whom wisdom proceeds, as the stream flows from the spring: and not in the ideas of a disordered brain, nor in the dreams of a visionary.

We wish you to take religion and righteousness in the *true* sense of the terms. This is our first elucidation. This is the first precaution, that must be used to understand the state of the question.

2. We do not mean to affirm, that the true religion is so necessary in *all* its doctrines, and in *all* the extent of its precepts, that there are no instances of the flourishing of societies, which have not been wholly regulated by it. We acknowledge that some societies of men, who have been only partially governed by its maxims, have enjoyed long and glorious advantages upon the theatre of the world; either because their false religions contained some principles of rectitude in common with the true religion; or because God, in order to animate such people to practise some virtues, superficial indeed, but, however, necessary to the being of society, annexed success to the exercise of them; or because he prospered them to answer some secret designs of his wisdom; or because, finally, rectitude was never so fully established on earth as to preclude injustice from enjoying the advantages of virtue, or virtue from suffering the penalties of vice. However it were, we allow the fact, and we only affirm that the most sure method that a nation can take to support and exalt itself, is to follow the laws of righteousness and the spirit of religion. This is a second elucidation, tending to state the question clearly.

3. We do not affirm, that in every particular case religion is more successful in procuring some temporal advantage than the violation of it; so that to consider society only in this point of light, and to confine it to this particular case, independently of all other circumstances, religion yields the honour of prosperity to injustice. We allow some state crimes have been successful, and have been the steps by

which some people have acquired worldly glory. We even allow, that virtue hath sometimes been an obstacle to grandeur. We only affirm, that if a nation be considered in every point of light, and in all circumstances, if all things be weighed, it will be found that the more a society practises virtue, the more prosperity it will enjoy. We affirm, that the more it abandons itself to vice, the more misery will it sooner or later suffer ; so that the very vice which contributed to its exaltation will produce its destruction ; and the very virtue, which seems at first to abase it, will in the end exalt its glory. This is a third elucidation.

4. We do not mean by exaltation that sort of elevation at which worldly heroes, or rather tyrants, aspire. We acknowledge that, if by *exalting a nation* be understood an elevation extending itself beyond the limits of rectitude, an elevation not directed by justice and good faith, an elevation consisting of the acquisitions of wanton and arbitrary power, an elevation obliging the whole world to submit to a yoke of slavery, and so becoming an executioner of divine vengeance on all mankind ; we allow, that, in this sense, exaltation is not an effect of righteousness. But, if we understand by *exalting a nation*, whatever governs with gentleness, negotiates with success, attacks with courage, defends with resolution, and constitutes the happiness of a people, whatever God always beholds with favourable eyes ; if this be what is meant by *exalting a nation*, we affirm a nation is exalted only by righteousness.

5. In fine, we do not affirm that the prosperity of

such a nation would be so perfect as to exclude all untoward circumstances. We only say, that the highest glory and the most perfect happiness which can be enjoyed by a nation in a world, where, after all, there is always a mixture of adversity with prosperity, are the fruits of righteousness. These elucidations must be retained, not only because they explain the thesis which we are supporting, and because they are the ground of what we shall hereafter say; but also because they serve to preclude such objections, to solve such difficulties, and to unravel such sophisms, as the author whom we oppose urges against us.

One argument against us is taken from the abuses which religion hath caused in society; but this objection is removed, by taking away false ideas of religion. A second objection is taken from the case of some idolatrous nations, who, though they were strangers to revealed religion, have yet arrived at a great height of worldly glory; but this objection is removed by our second elucidation. A third objection is taken from some particular case, in which vice is of more advantage to a state than virtue; but this objection falls before the manner in which we have stated the question. A fourth objection is taken from extravagant notions of glory; but this objection is removed by distinguishing true exaltation from false. Finally, an objection is taken from the evils which the most virtuous societies suffer; and we have acknowledged, that this world will always be to public bodies what it is to individuals, a place of misery; and we have contented ourselves with affirm-

ing, that the most solid happiness which can be enjoyed here, hath righteousness for its cause. The narrow limits to which we are confined, will not allow us to carry our reflections any further. They, however, who meditate profoundly on the matter, will easily perceive that all these objections are, if not abundantly refuted, at least sufficiently precluded by our explications.

We will now proceed to shew the grounds of the maxim of the wise man. We will open six sources of reflections; an idea of society in general; the constitution of each government in particular; the nature of arts and sciences; the conduct of providence; the promises of God himself; and the history of all ages. These articles make up the remainder of this discourse.

II. 1. Let us first form an idea of *society in general*, and consider the motives which induced mankind to unite themselves in society, and to fix themselves in one place. By doing this, we shall perceive, that *righteousness* is the only thing that can render nations happy. Every individual hath infinite wants; but only finite faculties to supply them. Each individual of mankind hath need of knowledge to inform him, laws to direct him, property to support him, medicines to relieve him, aliments to nourish him, clothing and lodging to defend himself against the injuries of the seasons. How easy would it be to enlarge this catalogue! Similar interests form a similar design. Divers men unite themselves together, in order that the industry of all may supply the

wants of each. This is the origin of societies and public bodies of men.

It is easy to comprehend that, in order to enjoy the blessings proposed by this assemblage, some fixed maxims must be laid down and inviolably obeyed. It will be necessary for all the members of this body to consider themselves as naturally equal, that by this idea they may be inclined to afford each other mutual succour. It will be necessary that they should be sincere to each other, lest deceit should serve for a veil to conceal the fatal designs of some from the eyes of the rest. It will be necessary for all to observe the rules of rigid equity, that so they may fulfil the contracts which they bound themselves to perform, when they were admitted into this society. It will be necessary that esteem and benevolence should give life and action to righteousness. It will be necessary that the happiness of all should be preferred before the interest of one; and that in cases where public and private interests clash, the public good should always prevail. It will be necessary that each should cultivate his own talents, that he may contribute to the happiness of that society to which he ought to devote himself with the utmost sincerity and zeal.

Now, my brethren, what can be more proper to make us observe these rules than religion, than *righteousness*? Religion brings us to feel our natural equality; it teacheth us that we originate in the same dust, have the same God for our Creator, are all descended from the same first parents, all partake of the same miseries, and are all doomed to the



same last end. Religion teacheth us sincerity to each other, that the tongue should be a faithful interpreter of the mind, that we should "speak every man truth with his neighbour," Eph. iv. 25. and that, being always in the sight of the God of truth, we should never depart from the laws of truth. Religion teacheth us to be just, that we should "render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour; that whatsoever we would men should do unto us, we should do even so unto them," Rom. xiii. 7. Matt. vii. 12. Religion requireth us to be animated with charity, to consider each other as creatures of one God, subjects of the same king, members of one body, and heirs of the same glory. Religion requireth us to give up private interest to public good, not to seek our own, but every one another's wealth; it even requireth us to lay down our lives for the brethren. Thus, by considering nations in these primitive views, it is *righteousness* alone that *exalts* them.

2. But all this is too vague. We proceed next to consider *each form of government in particular*. It is impracticable for all the members of society, on every pressing occasion, to assemble together and give their suffrages. Public bodies, therefore, agree to set apart some of their number who are accounted the soul, the will, the determination of the whole. Some nations have committed the supreme power to one, whom they call a Monarch; this is a monarchical state. Others have committed supreme power to a few of their own body called Magistrates, Sen-

ators, Nobles, or some other honourable appellation; this is a republic, called in the schools an aristocracy. Others have diffused supreme power more equally among all the members of their society, and have placed it in all heads of families; this is a popular government, usually called a democracy. Society gives its authority and privileges into the hands of those persons; it intrusts and empowers them to make laws, to impose taxes, to raise subsidies, to make peace, or to declare war, to reward virtue, to punish vice, in one word, to do whatever may be beneficial to the whole society, with the felicity of which they are intrusted.

If we consider those various forms of government, we shall find that each nation will be more or less happy in its own mode of governing, will more or less prevent the inconveniencies to which it is subject, according as it shall have more or less attachment to religion or righteousness.

What are the particular inconveniencies of a monarchical government? In what cases is monarchy fatal to the liberty, and so to the felicity of the nation? When the monarch, instead of making the good of the people his supreme law, follows nothing but his own caprice. When he thinks himself vested with supreme power for his own glory, and not for the glory of his kingdom. When, by stretching his authority beyond its lawful bounds, he endeavours arbitrarily to dispose of the lives and fortunes of his subjects. When, in order to avenge a private quarrel, or to satiate his thirst for glory, from which his people derive no benefit, he engageth them in bloody

wars, and sacrificeth them to a vain and imaginary grandeur. When he wastes the substance of his people in superb buildings, in excessive embellishments, and in sumptuous equipages. When he imposes on them enormous tributes, and exorbitant taxes. When he is inaccessible to the widow and the orphan. When he gives himself up to indolence, and doth not study the wants of his subjects. When, though he appropriates to himself the advantages of empire, yet, in order to free himself from the fatigue of governing, he commits the reins to a rash counsellor or to an insolent favourite. When he entertains such an idea of royalty as one anciently formed, who defined it a right to do whatever we will with impunity; such an idea as that, which a mean flatterer gave of it to Alexander the Great, Do as many unjust actions as you will, impoverish your subjects by exactions, extortions, and rapines, to satisfy your luxury and imbibition, it is all right, it is all lovely, because you choose to have it so.\* When, instead of being the father of his people, he strives to be the executioner, like that brutal Emperor who wished the Roman empire had but one head that he might strike it off at a blow.† These are the inconveniencies of the first kind of government.

In what cases is the second kind of government hurtful? Is it not when any one of the magistrates, instead of considering himself as a single member of the assembly, aims to be the head of it? When he intrudes into office by sinister means. When he

\* Plutarch ad princip. indoct.

† Sueton. Calig. Chap. xxx.

useth his power not for the public good, but for the advancement and glory of his own family. When he is mean enough to sell his vote. When he ingratiates himself with a number of seditious people, in order to form cabals, and to engross supreme power. When he doth not take pains to inform himself of the merits of a cause, before he determine it. When he associates colleagues with himself, whose incapacity is intended to be made a foil to his own abilities instead of calling in men more able than himself to supply his own defects. In fine, when he makes himself judge in his own cause.

Let us observe, lastly, when a popular government becomes hurtful. Is it not when, by a mere principle of levity, laws are made and unmade by caprice? When, under pretence of equality, a proper deference to superior understandings is refused? When intrigue and cabal give effect to evil counsels? When a powerful action oppresses the virtuous few? When popular liberty degenerates into licentiousness and anarchy, and when the ambition of many becomes an evil as enormous and fatal as the tyranny of one? These, and many more, are the imperfections of these three sorts of government. Need we to take up your time in proving, that all these ills are most and best precluded by religion? Do we not all recollect some scripture maxims which would restrain these excesses? I need not therefore multiply quotations to prove this point. Is not each of us convinced that, if we thus consider nations in regard to the forms of their government, it is righteousness alone that exalts them?

3. Our doctrine will appear in a clearer light still, if we proceed to examine *the liberal arts and sciences*. The more a society follows the spirit of religion, the more will religion cherish them under its fostering wing. Jurisprudence will flourish, because law will be disengaged from ambiguity, which perpetuates animosities; because counsellors will plead none but just causes; and because judges will never suffer themselves to be corrupted by *gifts, which blind the eyes of the wise*, but will always decide according to the spirit of the law, and the dictates of conscience.

The *military art* will flourish, because the soldier will not defraud the officer, the officer will not defraud the soldier; because both will go into the army not merely to obtain the favour of their governors, but to please God; because, being prepared to die by an anticipated repentance, their ardour will not be restrained by the fear of falling into the hands of an angry God; because, should they have neglected to conciliate the favour of God before a battle, they would be persuaded, even in the heat of it, that the best way to please him would be to discharge the duty of their office; whereas, when soldiers feel their consciences agitated, when amidst the discharge of the artillery of their enemies they discover eternal flames, when they see hell opening under their feet, and the horrors of eternal punishment succeeding those of the field of battle, they will always fight with reluctance, and endeavour to avoid future misery by fleeing away from present death.

In a virtuous state *commerce* will flourish, because the merchant, always speaking the truth, and dealing with good faith, will attract general credit, and confidence ; always following the rules of wisdom and prudence, he will never engage in rash undertakings, which ruin families and subvert whole houses ; not being animated with avarice or vain glory, he will not first acquire riches by injustice, and next waste them with indiscretion ; depending on the blessing of heaven, all his labours will be enlivened with courage and joy.

In such a state *divinity* will flourish, because each, burning with zeal for the glory of God, will carefully cultivate a science which hath God for its object ; because, being free from a party spirit, he will receive the truth, whatever hand may present it to him ; because, by referring religion to its chief end, he will not spend his life in the pursuit of trifles ; because, full of zeal for his salvation, he will be attentive to every step towards it ; because, not being enslaved by his passions, he will not be enveloped in the darkness produced by them, or, to express myself in the language of scripture, because by doing the will of God, he will know whether such and such doctrines come from the Supreme Being, or from the preacher only, John vii. 17.

The *mechanical arts* will flourish in a virtuous state, because they, on whom God hath not bestowed genius equal to the investigation of abstract sciences, whom he hath fitted for less noble stations in society, will fill up those stations with the utmost care, and will be happy in deriving from them such

advantages as they produce. Thus a just notion of arts and sciences opens to us a third source of arguments to prove the truth of our text.

4. The doctrine of *providence* opens a fourth, as others have observed. The conduct of providence in regard to public bodies is very different from that which prevails in the case of individuals. In regard to the latter, providence is involved in darkness. Many times it seems to condemn virtue and crown injustice, to leave innocence to groan in silence, and to empower guilt to riot and triumph in public. The wicked rich man fared sumptuously every day, Lazarus desired in vain to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table, Luke xvi. 19, 21. St. Paul was executed on a scaffold. Nero reigned on Cæsar's throne. And to say all in one word, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and Herod lived and died in a palace.

But providence is directed in a different method in regard to public bodies. Prosperity in them is the effect of righteousness, public happiness is the reward of public virtue, the wisest nation is usually the most successful, and virtue walks with glory by her side. God sometimes indeed afflicts the most virtuous nations; but he doth so with the design of purifying them, and of opening new occasions to bestow larger benefits on them. He sometimes indeed prospers wicked nations; but their prosperity is an effort of his patience and long suffering, it is to give them time to prevent their destruction; yet, after all, as I said before, prosperity usually follows righteousness in public bodies, public happiness is the reward

of public virtue, the wisest nation is the most successful, and glory is generally connected with virtue.

They to whom we are indebted for this reflection have grounded it on this reason—A day will come when Lazarus will be indemnified, and the rich man punished; St. Paul will be rewarded, and Nero will be confounded; Jesus Christ will fill a throne, and Herod will be covered with ignominy. Innocence will be avenged, justice satisfied, the majesty of the laws repaired, and the rights of God maintained.

But such a retribution is impracticable in regard to public bodies. A nation cannot be punished then as a nation, a province as a province, a kingdom as a kingdom. All different sorts of government will be then abolished. One individual of a people will be put in possession of glory, while another will be covered with shame and confusion of face. It should seem, then, that providence owes to its own rectitude those times of vengeance in which it pours all its wrath on wicked societies, sends them plagues, wars, famines, and other catastrophes, of which history gives us so many memorable examples. To place hopes altogether on worldly policy, to pretend to derive advantages from vice, and so to found the happiness of society on the ruins of religion and virtue, what is this but to insult providence? This is to arouse that power against us, which sooner or later overwhelms and confounds vicious societies.

5. If the obscurity of the ways of providence, which usually renders doubtful the reasonings of men on its conduct, weaken the last argument, let us proceed to consider in the next place the declara-



tions of God himself on this article. The whole twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, all the blessings and curses pronounced there fully prove our doctrine. Read this tender complaint which God formerly made concerning the irregularities of his people. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight?" chap. xxxii. 29, 30. Read the affecting words which he uttered by the mouth of his prophet, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. Their time should have endured for ever. I should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them," Psal. lxxxi. 13. &c. Read the noble promises made by the ministry of Isaiah, "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; thy seed also had been as the sand, and thy name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed from before me," chap. xlvi. 17, &c. Read the terrible threatenings denounced by the prophet Jeremiah, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. And it shall come

to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord, Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord; the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary of repenting," chap. xv. 1, &c. The language of our text is agreeable to all these passages; it is *righteousness*, saith the text, it is righteousness that *exalleth a nation*. Thus God speaks; moreover, thus he acts, as we shall shew you in the next article.

6. *The history of all ages* affords us another class of arguments in defence of our doctrine, and so proves the truth of it by experience.

Had ever preacher a wider or more fruitful field than this which opens to our view in this part of our discourse? Shall we produce you a list of Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, and Greeks, or Romans, who surpassed them all? Shall we shew you all these nations by turns exalted as they respected righteousness, or abased as they neglected it?

By what mysterious art did ancient Egypt subsist with so much glory during a period of fifteen or six-

teen ages!\*

By a benevolence so extensive, that he who refused to relieve the wretched, when he had it in his power to assist him, was himself punished with death; by a justice so impartial, that their kings obliged the judges to take an oath that they would never do any thing against their own consciences, though they, the kings themselves, should command them; by an aversion to bad princes so fixed as to deny them the honours of a funeral; by invariably rendering to merit public praise, even beyond the grave; for when an Egyptian died, a session was held for the direct purpose of inquiring how he had spent his life, so that all the respect due to his memory might be paid; by entertaining such just ideas of the vanity of life, as to consider their houses as inns, in which they were to lodge, as it were, only for a night, and their sepulchres as habitations, in which they were to abide many ages, in which, therefore, they united all the solidity and pomp of architecture, witness their famous pyramids; by a life so laborious, that even their amusements were adapted to strengthen the body and improve the mind; by a readiness to discharge their debts so remarkable, that they had a law which prohibited the borrowing of money except on condition of pledging the body of a parent for payment, a deposit so venerable, that a man who deferred the redemption of it was looked upon with horror; in one word, by a wisdom so profound, that Moses himself is renowned in scripture for being *learned in it*.

\* Diodor. Sicul. lib. i. sect. 2. Herod. lib. ii.

By what marvellous method did the Persians obtain such a distinguished place of honour in ancient history ?\* By considering falsehood in the most horrid light, as a vice the meanest and most disgraceful ; by a noble generosity, conferring favours on the nations they conquered, and leaving them to enjoy all the ensigns of their former grandeur ; by an universal equity, obliging themselves to publish the virtues of their greatest enemies ; by observing as an inviolable secret state affairs, so that, to use the language of an ancient author, neither promises nor threatenings could extort it, for the ancient laws of the kingdom obliged them to be silent under pain of death ; by a decorum so regular, that queens and all court ladies quitted the table as soon as ever the company began to lay aside moderation in drinking ; by religiously recording noble actions, and transmitting them to posterity in public registers ; by educating their children so wisely, that they were taught virtue as other nations were taught letters ; by discovering no grief for such youths as died uneducated. The children of the royal family were put at fourteen years of age into the hands of four of the wisest and most virtuous statesmen. The first taught them the worship of the gods ; the second trained them up to speak truth and practise equity ; the third habituated them to subdue voluptuousness, to enjoy real liberty, to be always princes, and always masters of themselves and their own passions ; the fourth inspired them with courage, and, by teaching them how to command themselves, taught them how to maintain dominion over others.

\* Herod. lib. i. iii. Plat. Alcib. i.

We purposely omit the noble and virtuous actions of the Assyrians, the Medes, the Greeks, and other nations, who were the glory of the ages in which they lived. But let us not pass by ancient Rome: Was ever nation more exalted? \* One expression of Cæsar will give us a just notion of their excellence. Cicero recommended a friend to him, and this was his answer; *In regard to Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him king of Gaul. If you have any other friends you wish to have promoted, you may command me.* † But by what unheard-of prodigy did old Rome, composed at first of no more than three thousand inhabitants, carry conquest in less than six hundred years to the ends of the earth? Thus speaks the emperor Julian. By what impenetrable secret did this confused mixture of vagabonds and thieves become a seminary of heroism and grandeur? By a wise docility, so that even kings sometimes submitted to the advice of individuals; witness Tullus Hostilius, who durst not decide the case of Horatius, but referred it to the people; ‡ by an observation of the law so strict, that Brutus condemned his two sons to die by the hands of the public executioner, for having listened to the ambitious proposals of the Tarquins, who were conspiring to enslave the citizens and remount the throne; by a frugality so great, that such men as Curius, Fabricius, Regulus, Æmilius, Paulus, and Mummi-

\* Montagne de la grandeur Romaine, liv. ii. chap. 24.

† Cicer. Epist. ad famil. lib. vii. 5. Some copies read not *Furius*, but *M. Orfus*. See Spanheim in the Cæsars, p. 161.

‡ Liv. lib. i. 16.

us, these great deliverers of the Roman people, were seen to feed their own cattle, to cultivate their lands, and to live without pomp and parade ; by an excellent economy, so that Atilius Regulus, who commanded a Roman army in Africa, demanded leave of the Senate to go home and provide for the wants of his family, from whom a day-labourer had stolen the working-tools used in cultivating his estate of seven acres ; a requisition so just that the Senate engaged to buy tools to cultivate his land, and to support his wife and children at the public charge ;\* so far did they carry this virtue, that the elder Cato, returning from Spain to Italy, sold his horse to save the charge of freight ; and usually, when he travelled, carried his own knapsack, which contained all his travelling necessaries ; by an ardent love for the general good, so that every thing was reserved for the public ; temples, baths, roads, aqueducts, triumphal arches, all were superb when the national glory was in view, as all things for the use of individuals were plain ; by an utter aversion to useless bravery, so that they considered in a light equally mean the general who exposed his person needlessly, and him who avoided danger when the public good rendered it necessary for him to expose himself ; † by a scrupulous caution not to undertake unjust wars ; to guard against which they had a college at Rome, where it was coolly examined whether an intended war were just or unjust, before it was proposed to the

\* Liv. Epitom. liv. 18. Montagne de la parsimonie des anciens, liv. i. chap. 52.

† Sallust de bell. Catil. ix.

senate and the people ;‡ by an insurmountable aversion to every species of military fraud, so that Lucius Marcius (my brethren, how ought this idea of Pagan heroes to cover some with confusion, who ostentatiously affect to play the hero in the christian world!) Lucius Marcius, I say, having deceived Perses, king of Macedonia, by giving him false hopes of peace, and having conquered him by this stratagem, was adjudged by the senate to have violated the Roman laws, and to have swerved from the ancient customs, according to which it was a maxim to conquer by valour and not by fraud.

If, having shewn the cause of the prosperity of ancient nations, we were to inquire into the reasons of their decline ; were we to compare the Egyptians under their wise kings with the Egyptians in a time of anarchy, the Persians victorious under Cyrus with the Persians enervated by the luxuries of Asia ; the Romans at liberty under their consuls with the Romans enslaved by their emperors, we should find, that the decline of each of these nations was owing to the practice of vices opposite to the virtues which had caused its elevation ; we should be obliged to acknowledge, that vain-glory, luxury, voluptuousness, disunion, envy, and boundless ambition, were the hateful means of subverting states, which in the height of their prosperity expected, and in all appearance justly expected, to endure to the end of time ; we should be obliged to allow, that some excesses, which in certain circumstances had contributed to exalt these nations, were in other circumstances the means of ruining them.

‡ Coll. des feciaux, Dion. Halic. lib. ii. Antiq. Rom. liv. i. 32.

True, ambition impelled Cæsar to elevate the republic of Rome to a pitch as high as it is possible for human grandeur to attain. Armed for the defence of the republic, he fought for it, though less for it than for his own glory, and displayed, we grant, the Roman eagle in the farthest parts of Asia, rendered Gaul tributary, swelled the Rhine with German blood, subdued the Britons, and made all the Adriatic coasts resound the fame of his victories. But did not the same ambition impel him to excite a civil war, to arm Rome against Rome, to cover the Pharsalian field with carnage, and soak the ground with Roman blood, to pursue the shattered remains of Pompey's army into the heart of Africa, to give a queen, or rather a prostitute, the kingdom of Egypt, to reduce the first and most free of all nations to a state of meanness and servility beneath the most abject of mankind? For, my brethren, what were these Romans after they had lost their liberty, and given themselves up to absolute masters? These Romans, who had given the universe law; these Roman citizens, even the meanest of them, who would have thought themselves disgraced had they mixed their blood with that of kings; these Romans, once so jealous of their liberty, have we not seen these very people, under their emperors, submit to vassalage so as to become a scandal even to slaves? Infamous flatterers, did not they erect altars to Claudius, Caligula, and Nero? Did not Rome hear one of its citizens address this language to the last of these monsters? *Choose, Cæsar, what place you will among the immortal gods. Will you sway the scap-*



*tre of Jupiter, or mount the chariot of Apollo? There is not a deity who will not yield his empire to you, and count it an honour to resign in your favour.\**

But is it necessary to quote ancient history in proof of what we have advanced, that is, that the same vices which contribute at first to exalt a nation, in the end cause its decline and ruin? There is a NATION,† in favour of which all things seem to promise a general and lasting prosperity. It has an advantageous situation, a fruitful soil, a temperate climate, an agreeable society, an easy access, a mutual generosity, an inimitable industry, quick penetration in council, heroical courage in war, incredible success in trade, surprising dexterity in arts, indisputable reputation in sciences, an amiable toleration in religion, severity blended with sweetness, sweetness tempered with severity.

Does this nation pass the bounds? At first it acquires advantages more than nature and art had given it. The boundless ambition of the monarch inspires the subject with a noble pride. Authority, established by despotal power, enslaves the judgments of all to the will of one. A treacherous policy at first imposes on neighbouring states. Troops, impelled by a rash valour, at first surmount all obstacles. Toleration is banished, the prince takes the place of God himself, and exercises his prerogative. Violating the faith of edicts procures some present advantages. An insatiable avidity adds fortress to

\* Lucan. Pharsal. lib. i.

† This sermon was preached in 1706.

fortress, city to city, province to province, kingdom to kingdom. But where is divine providence? Where is the truth of our text, *righteousness exalteth a nation*? What pitch of grandeur can religion obtain for a people, which cannot be obtained by other means?

Stop. The objection made to our doctrine demonstrates the truth of it. The ambition of the monarch, communicated to his subjects, will there produce all the fatal effects of ambition. Despotical power, which enslaved the judgments of all to the absolute will of one, will cause the judgments of all to resist the will of one. That deceitful policy, which took neighbouring states by surprise, will inspire them with distrust and precaution. Troops hurried on by rashness will find out that rashness is the high road to defeat. Toleration disallowed will affect the hearts of faithful subjects, and industry will flee to foreign climes. The violation of edicts will destroy confidence in all the public instruments of government. An insatiable avidity of territorial acquisitions, of possessing forts, cities, provinces, and kingdoms, without number, will require more attention, and greater expence than any nation can furnish. A state in this condition will sink under the weight of its own grandeur, it will be attenuated by being expanded; and, if I may use such an expression, impoverished by its abundance. Each passion put in motion will give a shock peculiar to itself, and all together will unite in one general blow, fatal to the edifice which they had erected. A prince, by becoming an object of the admiration of the

world, becomes at the same time an object of jealousy, suspicion, and terror. Hence come civil commotions and foreign wars. Hence the forming of leagues and deep-concerted plots. Hence mortality, scarcity, and famine. Hence heaven and earth in concert against a state that seemed to defy both earth and heaven. Hence an eternal example to justify providence in all future ages, and to demonstrate to the most obstinate the doctrine of the text, that only rectitude can procure substantial glory.

Thus, we think, we have sufficiently established our prophet's proposition: and we will finish the arguments by which we have supported it, by giving you the character of that author who hath taken the greatest pains to subvert it.\*—He was one of those inconsistent men, whom the finest genius cannot preserve from self-contradiction, and whose opposite qualities will always leave us in doubt whether to place them in one extreme, or in another diametrically opposite. On the one hand, he was a great philosopher, and knew how to distinguish truth from falsehood, for he could see at once a

connection of principles, and a train of consequences; on the other hand, he was a great sophister, always endeavouring to confound truth with falsehood, to wrest principles, and to force consequences. In one view, admirably learned and of fine parts, having profited much by the labours of others, and more by the exercise of his own great sense: in another view, ignorant, or affecting to be igno-

\* Mr. Bayle.

rant of the most common things, advancing arguments which had been a thousand times refuted, and starting objections which the greatest novice in the schools durst not have mentioned without blushing. On the one hand, attacking the greatest men, opening a wide field for them to labour in, leading them into devious and rugged paths, and, if not going beyond them, giving them a world of pains to keep pace with him : on the other hand, quoting the meanest geniusses, offering a profusion of incense to them, blotting his writings with names that had never been pronounced by learned lips. On the one hand, free, at least in appearance, from every disposition contrary to the spirit of the gospel, chaste in his manners, grave in his conversation, temperate in his diet, and austere in his usual course of life : on the other, employing all the acuteness of his genius to oppose good morals, and to attack chastity, modesty, and all other christian virtues. Sometimes appealing to a tribunal of the most rigid orthodoxy, deriving arguments from the purest sources, and quoting divines of the most unsuspected soundness in the faith : at other times, travelling in the high road of heretics, reviving the objections of ancient heresiarchs, forging them new armour, and uniting in one body the errors of past ages with those of the present time. O that this man, who was endowed with so many talents, may have been forgiven by God for the bad use he made of them ! May that Jesus, whom he so often attacked, have expiated his crimes ! But, though charity constrains us to hope and wish for his salvation, the honour of our holy religion obliges us pub-

licly to declare that he abused his own understanding; to protest, before heaven and earth, that we disown him as a member of our reformed churches, and that we shall always consider a part of his writings as a scandal to good men, and as a pest of the church.

We return to our prophet. Let us employ a few moments in reflecting on the truths we have heard. Thanks be to God, my brethren, we have better means of knowing the *righteousness that exalts a nation*, and more motives to practise it, than all the nations of whose glory we have been hearing. They had only a superficial, debased, confused knowledge of the virtues which constitute substantial grandeur; and, as they held errors in religion, they must necessarily have erred in civil polity. God, glory be to his name! hath placed at the head of our councils the most perfect legislator that ever held the reins of government in the world. This legislator is Jesus Christ. His kingdom, indeed, is not of this world; but the rules he has given us to arrive at that, are proper to render us happy in the present state. When he says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you," Matt. vi. 33. he gives the command, and makes the promise to whole nations as well as to individuals.

Who ever carried so far as this divine legislator ideas of the virtues of which we have been treating in several parts of this discourse, and by practising which *nations are exalted*? Who ever formed such just notions of that benevolence, that love of social

good, that generosity to enemies, that contempt of life, that wisdom, that veneration for noble exploits, that docility and frugality, that devotedness to public use, that distance from false glory, that magnanimity, and all the other virtues which render antiquity venerable to us? Who ever gave such wise instruction to kings and subjects, magistrates and people, lawyers and merchants, soldiers and statesmen, the world and the church? We know these virtues better than any other people in the world. We are able to carry our glory far beyond Egyptians and Persians, Assyrians and Medes, Lacedemonians, Athenians, and Romans; if not that sort of glory which glares and dazzles, at least that which makes tranquil and happy, and procures a felicity far more agreeable than all the pageantry of heroism and worldly splendour.

Christians, let not these be mere speculations to us. Let us endeavour to reduce them to practice. Never let us suffer our political principles to clash with the principles of our religion. Far from us, and far from us for ever be the abominable maxims of that pernicious Florentine,\* who gave statesmen such fatal lessons as these: A prince who would maintain his dignity, ought to learn not to be virtuous, when affairs of state require him to practise vice; he ought to be frugal with his own private fortune, and liberal with public money; he ought never to keep his word to his own disadvantage; he ought not so much to aspire at virtue as at the semblance

\* Machiavel. Prince. xv. xvi. xvii.

of it; he ought to be apparently merciful, faithful, sincere, and religious, but really the direct opposite; that he cannot possibly practise what are accounted virtues in other men, because necessity of state will often oblige him to act contrary to charity, humanity, and religion; he ought to yield to the various changes of fortune, to do right as often as he can, but not to scruple doing wrong when need requires. I say again, far from us be these abominable maxims! Let us obey the precepts of Jesus Christ, and by so doing let us draw down blessings on this nation more pure and perfect than those which we now enjoy.

The blessings we now enjoy, and which providence bestowed on us so abundantly a few days ago,† should inspire us with lasting gratitude; however, my brethren, they are not, they ought not to be the full accomplishment of our wishes. Such laurels as we aspire at are not gathered in fields of battle. The path to that eminence to which we travel, is not covered with human gore. The acclamations we love are not excited by wars and rumours of wars, the clangour of arms, and the shouting of armed men.

Were our pleasure, though not of the purest sort, perfect in its own kind, we should experience a rise in happiness! But can we enjoy our victories without mourning for the miseries which procured them! Our triumphs indeed abase and confound our enemies, and make them lick the dust; yet these very

† At the battle of Ramillies, May 23, 1706.

triumphs present one dark side to us. Witness the many wounds which I should make a point of not opening, were it not a relief to mourners to hear of their sufferings, were it not equitable to declare to those whose sorrows have procured our joy, that we remember them, that we are concerned for them, that we sympathize with them, that we are not so taken up with public joy as to forget private woe. Witness, I say, so many desolate houses among us. Witness this mourning in which so many of us appear to-day. Witness these affectionate Josephs, who lament the death of their parents. Witness these Marys and Marthas weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. Witness these distressed Davids, who weep as they go, and exclaim, "O Absalom my son! my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Witness these Rachels, who make Rama echo with their cries, "refusing to be comforted, because their children are not," Jer. xxxi. 15.

My dear brethren, on whom the hand of God is heavy, ye sorrowful Naomis, ye melancholy Maras, with whom the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly, Ruth i. 20. we share your griefs, we mix our tears with yours, we feel all the blows that strike you. O fatal victory! O bloody glory! you are not fruits of righteousness.

Christians, if our joy be mixed, it is because our *righteousness* is mixed. Let us not search for our misfortunes in any other cause. Let us do, when any thing is wanting to complete our joy, what the ancient people of God did, whenever they were con-



quered. The congregation was assembled, the ephod was put on, the oracle was consulted, inquisition was made from tribe to tribe, from family to family, from house to house, from person to person, who it was, whose sin had caused the loss of the victory, or the loss of a regiment; and when he was discovered, he was put to death. Joshua, after he had met with a repulse before Ai, and had lost thirty-six men, rent his garments, and lay on his face upon the earth, before the ark of the Lord. In like manner, let us, my brethren, at the remembrance of infected countries, fields of battle covered with carcasses, rivers of blood dying the soil, confused heaps of dead and dying fellow-creatures, new globes of fire flying in the air, let us examine ourselves. Happy if, as in the case just now mentioned, only one criminal could be found among many thousands of innocent persons! Alas! we are obliged, on the contrary, to lament, that there is hardly one innocent among thousands of the guilty.

Where is the Achan who embitters the glorious and immortal victories which God grants to Israel? What tribe, what family, what house shall be taken? Is it the magistrate? Is it the people? Is it the pastor? Is it the flock? Is it the merchant? Is it the soldier? Ah! my brethren! do you not hear the oracle of the Lord answering from the terrible tribunal erected in your own consciences? It is the magistrate; it is the people; it is the pastor; it is the flock; it is the merchant; it is the soldier.

It is that *magistrate*, who, being required to have always before his eyes that God by whom kings

reign, and that throne before which the greatest monarchs of the world must be judged, is dazzled with his own grandeur, governed by a worldly policy, and hath more at heart to enforce the observation of his own capricious orders than those rules of eternal rectitude which secure the safety and happiness of a nation.

It is that *people* who, instead of considering the felicity of *that nation whose God is the Lord*, are attempting to be happy independently of God; choosing rather to sacrifice to blind chance than to him, who is the *happy God*, and who alone dispenses prosperous and adverse circumstances.

It is that *minister* who, instead of confining his attention to the discharge of all the duties of his office, performs only such parts as acquire him a popular reputation, neglecting private duties, such as friendly and affectionate remonstrances, paternal advice, private charities, secret visits, which characterise the true ministers of the gospel.

It is that *congregation* which, instead of regarding the word dispensed by us as the word of God, licentiously turns all public ministrations into ridicule, and under pretence of ingenuity and freedom of thought, encourages infidelity and irreligion or, at best, imagines that religion consists more in hearing and knowing than in practice and obedience.

It is that *soldier* who, though he is always at war with death, marching through fires and flames, hearing nothing but the sound of warlike instruments crying to him with a loud voice, *Remember you must die*,

*you must die*, yet frames a morality of his own, and imagines that his profession, so proper in itself to incline him to obey the maxims of the gospel, serves to free him from all obligation to obedience.

Ah! this it is, which obscures our brightest triumphs; this stains our laurels with blood; this excites lamentations, and mixes them with our songs of praise. Let us scatter these dark clouds. Let us purify our righteousness in order to purify our happiness. Let religion be the bridle, the rule, the soul of all our councils, and so may it procure us unalterable peace, and unmixed pleasure! or rather, as there is no such pleasure on earth, as imperfection is a character essential to human affairs, let us elevate our hearts and minds to nobler objects, let us sigh after happier periods, and let each of us seek true glory in the enjoyment of God. God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



## SERMON VII.

*The Lives of Courtiers.*



2 SAMUEL XIX. 32—39.

*Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old, and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim : for he was a very great man. And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voic of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother; but behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee; and whatsoever thou shalt require of me that will I do*

*for thee. And all the people went over Jordan ; and when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzilai, and blessed him ; and he returned unto his own place.*

**WE** propose to examine to day, my brethren, how far business, the world, a court, are fit for a young man, and how far they agree with a man in the decline of life. It is a prejudice too common in the world, that there are two ways to heaven, one way for young men, and another way for men in years. Youth is considered as a sort of title to licentiousness, and the most criminal pleasures. Virtue is usually regarded as proper for those who cannot practise vice with a good grace. God forbid such a pernicious maxim should be countenanced in this pulpit ! Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren, the precepts of the moral law are eternal, and fitted to all ages of life. At fifteen, at twenty, at thirty, at forty, at fourscore years of age, what the apostle affirms is true, "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 21. These things are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." There is no dispensation in these cases on account of age. At any age "they that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

It is, however, clear, that circumstances sometimes change the nature of moral actions ; that an action is innocent, when done in some circumstances.

which ceaseth to be so when it is done in different circumstances; and, to come to the design mentioned at the beginning of this discourse, it is clear, that business, the world, a court, to a certain degree, suit a young man, and that they are unfit for a man in the decline of life.

Each part of this proposition, my brethren, is contained in the text, as we are going to shew you. Barzillai, by committing his son to king David, and by allowing Chimham to avail himself of the favor of his prince, teacheth us how far business, the world, and a court become a young man. Barzillai, by wishing only to retreat into retirement and silence himself, teacheth us how far a court, the world, and business become an old man; or rather, he teacheth us, that they do not become him at all, and that there is a certain time of life when the wise man takes leave of the world.

I. We suppose Barzillai was a good man, and that his example sufficiently proves it. Indeed this man is very little known. I recollect only three places in scripture where he is spoken of. The first is in the seventeenth chapter of the second book of Samuel. There we are told, that Barzillai "was of the tribe of Gilead, of the city of Rogelim," ver. 27. and that he was one of those who brought refreshments to David and his court, when he fled from his barbarous son. This passage tells us how he became so dear to David. The second is our text. The third is in the first book of Kings, where David gives this commission to his son Solomon. "Shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gilcadite. and let

them be of those that eat at thy table; for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother," ch. ii. 7. This passage gives us reason to conjecture, or rather it proves, that Chimham was the son of Barzillai; for the commission given by David, when he was dying, to Solomon, certainly refers to these words of our text, "Behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee." Thus, all we know of Barzillai contributes to persuade us that he was a good man; that his example sufficiently proves it; that as he consented that his son should go into the world, and even into the most pompous and dangerous part of it, he thought it might be innocently done. A good father would not have consented that his son should enter on a course of life criminal in itself. If we have deceived ourselves in our notion of Barzillai, it will not affect the nature of our reflections. Our question is this, How far does the world, a court, or business become a young man? We shall elucidate this question by the following considerations. 1. A wise man will never choose a court, or high offices, as most and best fitted to procure true *peace*. He must be a novice in the world indeed, who doth not know the solidity of this maxim. He must have reflected very little on the turbulent condition of courtiers, and of all such as are elevated to any superior rank in the world. He must have paid very little attention to the snares, which are every where set to disturb their tranquillity; to the envies and jealousies, which are excited



against them ; to the plots, which are formed against their happiness ; to the reverses of fortune, to which they are exposed ; to the treachery of such friends as surround them, and to the endless vicissitudes, which they experience. In general, a man must be indifferent to peace, at least, he must know but little in what it consists, to seek it in pomp and worldly grandeur. I forgive a young man of fifteen or twenty for making such a mistake. At that time of life young men deserve pity ; their eyes are too childish not to be dazzled by a false glare ; they have not then learnt to know appearances from realities by their own experience, or by the experience of others. They do not then know, that happiness consists in a private condition, a moderate revenue, a few tried friends, a chosen circle, a few relations, business enough to preserve vigour of mind without fatiguing it, a wisely directed solitude, moderate studies, in a word, in a happy mediocrity. My brethren, independence is the blessing, which deserves to be first of all chosen by us, should God leave to our choice the kind of life which we ought to follow ; or if he did not frequently intend by placing us on earth more to exercise our patience than to consummate our felicity. O delicious independence, O inestimable mediocrity ! I prefer you before the most glorious sceptre, the best established throne, the most brilliant crown ! What are those eminent posts of which the greatest part of mankind are so fond ? They are golden chains, splendid punishments, brilliant prisons and dungeons. Happy he, who, having received from providence blessings sufficient for his

rank, easy with his fortune, far from courts and grandeurs, waits with tranquillity for death; and, while he enjoys the innocent pleasures of life, knows how to make eternity his grand study, and his principal occupation.

2. A wise man will always consider a court, and eminent posts, as dangerous to his salvation. It is in a court, it is in eminent posts, that, generally speaking, the most dangerous snares are set for conscience. Here it is that men usually abandon themselves to their passions, because here it is that they are gratified with the utmost ease. Here it is that man is tempted to consider himself as a being of a particular kind, and infinitely superior to those who crawl among the vulgar. It is here where each learns to play the tyrant in his turn, and where the courtier indemnifies himself for the slavish mortifications to which his prince reduces him, by enslaving all his dependents. Here it is that secret intrigues, underhand practices, bloody designs, dark and criminal plots are formed, of which innocence is usually the victim. Here it is that the most pernicious maxims are in the greatest credit, and the most scandalous examples in the highest reputation. Here it is that every disposition of mind changes, if not its nature, at least its appearance, by the false colouring with which all are disguised. Here it is that every one breathes the venom of flattery, and that every one loves to receive it. Here imagination prostrates itself before frivolous deities, and unworthy idols receive such supreme homage as is due to none but the sovereign God. Here it is that

the soul is affected with many a seducing image, the troublesome remembrance of which often wholly engrosses the mind, especially when we wish to nourish it with such meditations as are suited to immortal intelligences. Here a confused noise, an infallible consequence of living in the tumult of the world, gets possession of the mind, and renders it extremely difficult to relish that silent retirement, that abstraction of thought, which are absolutely necessary to self-examination, and to the study of our own hearts. Here it is that men are carried away in spite of themselves by a torrent of vicious examples, which, being thought, and called by every body about them illustrious, authorise the most criminal actions, and insensibly destroy that tenderness of conscience, and dread of sin, which are very powerful motives to keep us in the practice of virtue. These general maxims admit of some exception in regard to Chimham. He saw in the person of his king, the virtues of a pastor, and the excellence of a prophet. David's court was an advantageous school for him on many accounts: but yet was it altogether exempt from all the dangers we have mentioned? O Chimham, Chimham, I will not detain thee in the port, when providence calls thee to set sail! But that sea, with the dangers of which thou art going to engage, hath many, many rocks, and among them, alas! there have been innumerable shipwrecks.

3. A wise man will never enter a court or accept of an eminent post, without fixed resolutions to surmount the temptations, with which they are accompanied, and without using proper measures to

succeed in his design. Far from us forever be, my brethren, that disposition of mind, which by fixing the eye upon the prince, makes us lose sight of him, "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice!" Prov. viii. 15. Far from us be such an avidity to make our fortunes as to engage us to forget that we have souls to save, and an eternal interest to pursue! Far from us be that desire of elevating ourselves in this world, which debaseth the dignity of our nature, and inclines us to practices unworthy of men whom the God of heaven and earth hath called into his family! Those holy men who are proposed to us for examples, have been sometimes at court, and they have sometimes exercised the highest offices of state, but they have always made it an inviolable law to set before their eyes that God, in the presence of whom "all nations are as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance," Isa. xl. 15. Moses was at court; but it was with that heroic firmness, with that noble pride, with that magnanimity which became him whom the Lord of hosts had chosen for his messenger, and placed at the head of his people. Moses was at court; but it was to say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go that they may serve me. Let my people go. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs. They shall come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants. Let my people go, or the hand of the Lord shall be upon thy cattle, upon thy horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep, and there shall be a very grievous murrain," Exod.

vii. 16. viii. 2. and ix. 3. Nathan was at court; but it was to say to David, "Thou art the man; wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?" 2 Sam. xii. 7, 9. Elijah was at court; but it was to resist Ahab, who said to him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" No, replied he, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim," 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18. Micaiah was at court; but it was to resist the projects of an ambitious prince, and to say to him, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd," chap. xxii. 17. Jehu was at court; but it was to mortify Joram, who asked him, Is it peace? "What peace," replied he, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" 2 Kings ix. 22. John the Baptist was at court; but he went thither to tell Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," Mark vi. 13.

Some of these holy men have filled the highest posts, and discharged the most important offices of state; but they have done so with that integrity of mind, and with that piety and fervour of heart, which would seem incompatible with worldly grandeur, were we not informed, that to the pure all things are pure, and that God knows how to preserve the piety of his elect amidst the greatest dangers, when zeal for his glory engageth them to expose themselves for his sake. Samuel discharged important offices, he occupied an eminent post; but he

could render a faithful account of his administration, and ventured to face the people with this noble appeal, "Behold, here I am, witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4. And what is more than all this, and what we wish to inculcate more than all this, is what he subjoins, "of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." To which the people replied, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand." Nehemiah was elevated to high offices, he was even a favourite of the king; but he availed himself of his elevation to procure the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restitution of divine worship in the temple. When the idolatrous prince put this question to him, Why is thy countenance sad? He replied, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nehem. ii. 2, 3. Daniel filled an high office, even in an idolatrous court; but there he continued his humble diet; he would not hold his office at the expence of his conscience; amidst the tumult of the world he knew how to manage his affairs so as to find time *to understand by books the number of the years predicted by the prophets, to attend to the condition of Jerusalem, to make supplication with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.* Is there any one of you, my brethren, so much master of himself?

Have you courage enough to resist so many enemies? Are you able to withstand so many temptations, and to escape all these dangers? Go then, not only to the courts of Davids, but to those of the most profligate princes. *Go, shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; go, be the salt of the earth; rise, not only to the great offices of state, but ascend a throne, take the government and reign.*

4. The evils which embitter the lives of courtiers, and of all who are elevated to eminent posts, and (what may seem a paradox,) the hazard of being damned among human grandeurs, ought not to discourage those from occupying the highest offices who are capable of doing great good to society and the church.

The first part of this proposition is indisputable. The difficulties which belong to the lives of courtiers, and of all persons elevated to eminent posts, ought not to discourage those who are able to benefit society and the church. It is clear, I think, to all who know the first principles of christianity, that the design of God in placing us in the world was not to enable us to follow that kind of life which is the most conformable to our inclinations, though such a kind of life should have nothing in it contrary to the laws of God. God intended to exercise us in a painful state of probation. I allow, virtue has charms of its own, and often brings its reward along with it in this world; but also it often requires us to mortify our dearest passions, and our strongest inclinations. How often, by the heavy afflictions in

which piety involves us, is that celebrated expression of an apostle verified, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. A good man will consult, when he is choosing a course of life, (and you will have spent this hour well, my brethren, if you retain only this maxim, and reduce it to practice.) A good man, when he is choosing a course of life, will consult not what will render his family most illustrious, not what will be most likely to transmit his name to posterity, not what will most advance his fortune, and will best gratify his own inclinations, but what will be most useful to society and religion. Do not say the pleasures of a court are insipid, the life of a courtier is intolerable, perpetual consultations are burdensome, a multitude of business is tiresome; ceremonies disgust me, splendid titles give me pain; I like a tranquil life, I prefer obscurity and quiet, I love to cultivate my garden, and to spend much of my time in reading and retirement. Noble effort of devotion, indeed! to choose temporal tranquillity as the chief end of your studies and actions! And, pray, what benefit do religion and the state derive from your reading your books and cultivating your flowers? What! is it a question between God and you, whether the course of life, that he prescribes to you, be disagreeable to you, whether perpetual consultations be troublesome, whether much business fatigues, whether ceremonies disgust, and whether titles be unsatisfying to you? Is this the dispute between God and you? Is the question, what kind of life you prefer? Do you suppose, if God had left to



the martyrs the choice of what course they would have taken through life, they would have chosen that, to which God called them? Would they have preferred before every other path that, in which "they were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword," would they have "wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented?" Heb. xi. 37. You say, you shall become a martyr, if you execute the elevated office to which you are called. Very well, God calls you to this martyrdom. The first part of our proposition is indisputable. The disagreeables in the lives of courtiers, and of all other persons elevated to eminent posts, ought not to deter any man from accepting an office, when it is probable he may, by discharging it well, do great good to society in general, and to the church in particular.

I go further, and I maintain the second part of the proposition. The snares, which are thick set in high life, and which endanger our salvation, ought not to deter us from accepting high offices, when we can do good to society and the church by executing them. There is some difficulty in this subject, we will endeavour to explain it. Our principal concern is to be saved. Our highest engagement is to avoid every thing that would endanger our salvation. Our first exercise should be diffidence, distrust of ourselves. The son of Sirach hath taught us, that he, "who loved danger shall perish therein," Ecclus. iii. 26. What law, then, can oblige us to pursue a course of life, which all assure us is almost impassable to men who would walk in the way of salvation? Is it

not presumption, is it not tempting God to expose one's self in this manner ?

I reply, it is presumption, it is a tempting of God, to expose one's self to danger, when no good will come of it. For example, you know by experience, that if gaming were innocent in itself, it is, however, dangerous to you; that always, when you allow yourself to game, you receive some injury, you either play with an avidity of gain too great, or you lose all patience with the loss of your money, or, some way or other, your mind is always disconcerted. Leave off gaming then. What good do you do to society at large, or to the church in particular, by your gaming? Were it probable, that in future you should always escape unhurt, even a probability of suffering is enough to deter you, and you cannot expose yourself without a presumptuous tempting of God. Again, you know, by sad experience, that the company you keep is fatal to you; that always, when you are in it, you violate the laws of piety, charity, and modesty. Quit this company then. What good is done to the state and the church by your frequenting this company. Were it probable that in future you should receive no damage, the bare probability that you might, ought to induce you to avoid it. In like manner, you are convinced that your opponent, who is, as well as yourself, a candidate for a certain office, will execute it as well as you would. The office is dangerous, and you fear you have not virtue enough to execute it with safety to your salvation. Renounce your pretensions then. Choose a way of life less dangerous.

Let us go a step further. It is rash, it is tempting God to expose ourselves to difficulties which cannot possibly be surmounted. A pretence of doing good to the state and the church will not alter the case. A court is pestiferous. A king, who ought to maintain order, lives only to subvert it; he consults no law but his passions, and his will is his only reason. You may, perhaps, moderate his passions, if not wholly regulate them; you may, perhaps, if not wholly terminate the misfortunes of his reign, yet diminish them. But how must you procure this advantage? You must rise into an opportunity to do good, by becoming yourself an instrument of his extortions, by passing encomiums on his guilty pleasures, by disgracing yourself to become the panegyrist of his tyranny. In such a case, it would be better to quit the court, to give up the favour of such a prince, to obey the divine laws, and to leave the government of the world to God. It must be granted that, when crimes are necessary to public good, it is not you who are appointed to commit them, this is not your calling. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united," Gen. xlix. 6.

But, when temptations are surmountable, when God offers to assist us to surmount them, when nothing but our own idleness can prevent our conquering, and when we are able, by exposing ourselves to danger, to serve society and the church. I affirm, that we are then called to expose ourselves, and to meet, resist, and surmount all difficulties. I affirm, in such a case, it is our duty not to avoid, but to ap-

proach difficulties, and to take pains to surmount them. A minister of the gospel hath more difficulty in his way of salvation than a private person. A private christian, in general, is responsible only for his own soul; but a minister of the gospel is accountable for the souls of all whom God hath committed to his care. Every part of his office is a source of difficulties and trials. If he have great abilities, I fear he will become vain; if he have not, I fear he will envy his superiors. If he be set in some conspicuous place, I fear his feeble eyes will be dazzled with his situation; if he live in obscurity, I fear he will sink into indifference. If he be appointed to speak to the great, I fear he will become pliant and mean; if he be confined to people of ordinary rank, I fear he will become indifferent to their souls, and not take sufficient pains to procure the salvation of them. Snares and temptations every where! *Who is sufficient for these things?* But what! must a man then bury his talents lest he should abuse them? No. This is not to choose the way by which it is the pleasure of God to save us. It doth not belong to us to choose what kind of virtue he shall think fit to exercise. The duty of a christian is, not to omit the acquisition of knowledge, but to endeavour not to be puffed up with it. It is not to avoid conspicuous places, but to guard against being infatuated with them. It is not to flee from the notice of the great, but to watch against servility and meanly cringing in their presence.

In like manner, you are sure you may be very useful to religion and society by filling a high office.

You are aware of the intrigues of a court. You are certain that, if the small number of virtuous men, who fill high offices, were to retire from public business, the state would be abandoned to injustice and oppression, and become the prey of tyrants. You are one of these virtuous characters. You ought then to fill this post, and the difficulties you meet with cannot dispense with your obligation. I repeat it again, it doth not belong to us to choose the way in which it shall be the pleasure of God to save us. It is not our business to single out a particular virtue, and insist on such a course of life as shall exercise it: whether it be a noisy or a silent path, whether it be a frequented or a solitary way, whether it be the practice of public or of private virtue. But, say you, I cannot help, while I execute this office, my impatience; I am obliged to give audience to a man who torments me with tedious and confused harangues in a course of business; I wish to eradicate this evil, and to get rid of this trial of my patience, by quitting my place. No, do not get rid of this man: do not quit your place: but take pains with yourself to correct your impatience: try to cool your blood, and regulate your spirits. It is by the way of patience that God will save you. But I shall not have courage to plead all alone for rectitude, I shall have the weakness to sacrifice it, if it should happen at any time not to be supported by others. I will eradicate this evil, and avoid the temptation by quitting my employment. No. Do not quit an employment in which your influence may be serviceable to the interests of virtue; but take pains with

your own heart, and subdue it to the service of rectitude, that you may be able to plead for virtue without a second. But I shall certainly sink under temptation, unless God afford me extraordinary support. Well, ask for extraordinary support then ; you have a right to expect it, because the place you fill renders it necessary for the glory of God. Let us finish this article, and let us form a clear notion of what we mean by *a calling*. That place, in which it is probable, all things considered, we can do most good, is the place to which providence calls us. To fill that is our calling. This establishes our fourth maxim, that the evils which imbitter the lives of courtiers, and of all who are elevated to eminent posts, the danger of perishing by the ills which accompany human grandeurs, ought not to deter from occupying them such persons as have it in their power to render signal services to the state and the church.

Thus we have made a few reflections serving to determine how far the honours and affairs of a court suit a young man. Let us proceed to shew that they are improper for an old man. This is the principal design of the text. “The king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old ; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy

servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." This is the subject of our second part.

Were it proper for me, my brethren, to make a digression from the principal object of our present attention, I could not deny myself the pleasure of making an observation of another kind. Before I spoke of Barzillai, who modestly refused human grandeur, I should speak of the gratitude of David, who, to his praise be it spoken, made him the offer. This latter example deserves consideration, my brethren, were it only for its singularity. Gratitude is very rare among princes, it is not a virtue at court. Devote yourselves, poor courtiers! I say, devote yourselves sincerely and heartily to earthly princes, devote to them your rest, your fortune, your lives; be lavish of your blood in their service; for their security and glory, expose yourselves in the most desperate undertakings, attempt the most bloody sieges and battles; what will you find princes after all your services? Ingrates. Do not expect to meet with a David eager to give you substantial proofs of his gratitude, to say to you, "Come over with me, and I will feed you with me in Jerusalem;" to perpetuate his goodness, to transmit it to your posterity, and to say to his successor, "Shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillia, and let them be of those that eat at thy table." How often do partiality and

intrigue prevail, in the distribution of royal favours, over reason and equity? How often are the children of those, who, with a generous courage sacrificed their lives for the public good, obliged to beg their bread. How often have they urged in vain the meritorious services of their parents; how often have they without success produced blood yet warm shed for the public safety? How often have they in vain demanded that subsistence from charity, which they had a right to expect from equity? David, distinguished among all believers, distinguishes himself also among all kings. "Come over Jordan with me," said he to Barzillai, "and I will feed you with me in Jerusalem."

A king thus offering grandeurs from a principle of gratitude is an uncommon sight. It is, perhaps a sight more unusual than that of a man refusing them from a principle of wise moderation. "How long have I to live," replies good Barzillai, "that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." His refusal proceeds from three causes; the insensibility of old age, the misfortune of old age, and the nearness of old age to death. "I am fourscore years of age; can I discern between



good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" This is the insensibility of old age, and the first cause of his refusal.

"Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" This is the misfortune of old age, and the second cause of his refusal.

"How long have I to live? I pray thee let thy servant return, and let me die in mine own city, and be buried by my father and my mother." This is the nearness of old age to death, and this is the third cause of his refusal. These are three sources of many reflections.

1. The *insensibility* of old age is the first cause of the refusal of Barzillai. "I am this day fourscore years of age: can I discern between good and evil? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" This insensibility may proceed either from a principle of wisdom, or from constitution. It may proceed, first, from wisdom. A man, who hath experienced the vanity of human grandeur; a man, who hath often asked himself, of what use is this kind of life? what good comes of this pomp and pleasure? a man, who, by frequently reflecting on all he sees and hears, hath formed a just notion of man, and of his real wants, a man, whose reiterated meditations have purified his taste, and formed in him a habit of employing himself about things of importance; such a man does not entertain a very high idea of the privilege of living with the great, of eating at their tables, and of participating their pleasures. Only such pleasures as have

God immediately for their object, and eternity for their end, can always satisfy. Such pleasures are approved by reason, ripened by age, and such pleasures are satisfactory at all times, and in all stages of life. All other pleasures are fatiguing, and in the end extremely disgustful. "Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, and singing women? Why should the king recompense me with such a reward?"

But there is also a constitutional insensibility. The senses, which transmit pleasures to us, become blunt, and pleasures are blunted with them. Indeed, we sometimes see old people, to the shame of human nature, pretending to rise above the ruins of a decaying body, and trying to support the inconveniences of old age by the pleasures of youth. We sometimes see men, whose relaxed and trembling hands are too feeble to hold a box of dice, or a hand of cards, supported by others, and gaming with a part of themselves, as they cannot do so with the whole. We have seen some, who, not being able to go themselves to a play, have caused themselves to be carried thither, exposing their extravagance on a theatre, intended for the exhibition of other scenes, and so acting a real tragedy along with a fictitious one. We have seen some, who, having bodies decaying with diseases contracted by youthful passions, or, to use an emphatical expression of an apostle, having "received within themselves that recompense of their error, which was meet," covered with wounds brought upon themselves by their debaucheries; we have seen them trying to divert

the pain reflecting on the cause of their decline by the absurd method of gazing still on the very objects, which were first fatal to their innocence, and by glutting their imaginations now their senses can relish no more. We have seen men dedicate the last moments of life to the god of pleasure, just as they sacrificed their youth and manhood to the same deity. We have seen old men, who, too dim-sighted themselves to see the glitter of diamonds and jewels, have taken a pleasure in exposing the brilliancy of them to the eyes of others; who, not having a body to adorn, have ornamented a skeleton, and who, lest they should be taken for dead corpses, have decked themselves with trinkets fit only for people in the vigour of life. However, these shameful phenomena do not destroy our reflection. It is always true, that pleasure loses its point at a certain age. If the old men, of whom we have been speaking, yet love pleasure, it is not taste that tempts them. Like the inhabitants of the most abominable city that ever disgraced the world, they weary themselves, though they were some time ago struck blind, to find the door, the door of Lot, towards which their brutal passions had given a direction to their bodies, before they lost their sight. They act thus, because, though musical entertainments no more delight their ears, yet they keep them from hearing the cries of conscience, which would rend them asunder. They act thus, because, though they have only a confused sight of the charms of worldly objects, yet these objects serve, like a wall, to keep out of sight a future world, a glimmering of which would confound and

distract them. However, the irregularity of the heart of an old man doth not alter the infirmities of his body. It is always true, that at a certain time of life, we acquire a constitutional, organical insensibility. Isaac, that good old man, arrives at a very advanced age, but his eyes are become dim, he cannot distinguish one of his children from another, he mistakes the hands of Jacob for those of Esau, "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau," Gen. xxvii. 22. He cannot distinguish venison from goat's flesh. He confers that benediction on the youngest which he intended for the eldest. If nature grants to a few of mankind the privilege of a very long life, the privilege is sold, and a part of the pleasure of living must be given for the purchase; objects of pleasure must retire, and senses to be pleased with these objects not unfrequently retire first. Before this earthly house falls by its own frailty, to use an expression of the wise man, "the years arrive in which we are obliged to say, we have no pleasure," Eccl. xii. 1. &c. Then, according to the description of the same author, "the sun, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return not after the rain. The keepers of his house," that is, the hands, "tremble; his strong men," that is his legs and feet, "bow themselves; his grinders," that is, his teeth, "cease to perform their functions, because they are few; those that look out of the windows," that is, the eyes, "are darkened; the doors," that is, the ears, "shall be shut in the streets; the daughters of music," that is, the organs of speech, "shall be brought low; the al-

mond tree shall flourish," that is, the head shall become white with age ; "the silver cord," that is, the spinal marrow, "shall be broken; the grasshopper," that is, the stomach, "shall be a burden; the golden bowl," the brain, "shall be broken; the pitcher," that is, the lungs, "shall be broken at the fountain; and the wheel," the heart, "shall be broken at the cistern." A sad, but natural description, my brethren, of the infirmities of old age. A condition very unfit for the world and pleasure, for business and a court. "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?"

2. The *bitter misfortunes* of old age are a second reason of the refusal of Barzillai. "Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" Certainly an old man ought to be treated with the greatest respect and caution. The scripture gives us a precept, which humanity, to say nothing of religion, should induce us to obey: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," Lev. xix. 32. What can claim our patient attention so much as a man stooping under the weight of age and infirmities? What duty can be more indispensable than that of rendering to the infirmities of old age such assistance as these old people once rendered to the helplessness of our infancy? Particularly, what can be more venerable than an old man, who hath spent his youth

in procuring those benefits to society which his old age now hardly suffers him to enjoy? What more just than to respect a soldier grown grey in arms, whose venerable silver head hath been preserved by miracle? Who more worthy of esteem than an ancient magistrate, whose life hath been devoted to the felicity of the state? What more respectable than an old minister of the gospel, whose spirits have been exhausted in studying and preaching the truth? To people of this character the words of the wise man belong, "the hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness," Prov. xvi. 31.

Whatever idea Barzillai formed of the equity and benevolence of David, he did justice to himself. He well knew that a man of eighty would be a burden to this good king. "Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king?" A man at this time of life too strikingly exhibits human infirmities to give pleasure in circles of company, where such mortifying ideas are either quite forgotten, or slightly remembered. The tokens of death, which an old man carries about with him, excite reflections too dismal to contribute to the pleasure of a company, which endeavours to sweeten life by innocent recreations, or by others which concupiscence adds to those of religion. Involuntary complaints and sighs but ill accord with musical instruments and the vocal melody of gay assemblies. Pressing infirmities, continual fears and cares, the anticipated dying of a man of fourscore, ill assort with sumptuous tables. The last years of life, all heavy, dull, and frozen, disconcert a festival celebrated by people

full of fire, vivacity, and vigour. Barzillai felt his frailty, and, though he was fully convinced that David had a fund of goodness sufficient to bear with him, yet he would not abuse his politeness. "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? Why should the king recompence me with such a reward? Why should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?"

Wo be to him who hath rendered worldly pleasures necessary to him in old age. He will not find a David every where to offer them to him. Here, my brethren, I fear sinning against my own principles; I fear being accused of wanting such veneration for the aged as I just now said was their due; I fear I shall be taxed with despising the ancient, so worthy of our attention and regard. However, I must mention a few reflections tending to justify the conduct of Barzillai, and to unfold the spirit and sense of the text. I must make these reflections, too, for other reasons; in general for the benefit of this whole assembly; for your sakes in particular, our aged hearers, that you may be induced, by the idea of a world that avoids you, to return to God, who opens his arms to receive you; for your sakes, also, young people, that you may be prevailed on to amass pleasures in your youth which will remain with you in old age. Wo be to him, I say, who renders worldly pleasures necessary to his old age! Happy, on the contrary, he, who hath laid up treasure for time to come! Happy the man, who hath prepared for himself pleasures for a time, when the pleasures of the world are insipid, and when he

himself is intolerable to those, who enjoy them? Happy he, who instead of pining after the circles of the gay and the great, hath no other desire than that of making his court to the King of kings! Happy he, who, instead of attempting to please himself with *the voices of singing men and singing women*, delights himself with pious books and holy meditations! Happy the man, who, when he becomes a burden to society, knows, like Barzillai, how to relish the pleasure of retirement and solitude! Happy he, who, instead of pursuing a fleeing phantom of felicity and glory, knows how to direct his sighs to the bosom of that God in whom substantial glory and true felicity dwell, objects which never elude his search! Happy he, whose eyes, however weakened by age, are not become too dim-sighted to see the gate of heaven! Happy the man, whose faltering voice and feeble hands can yet address this prayer to God, and say with a prophet, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth," Psal. lxxix. 9.

3. In fine, my brethren, Barzillai revolved in his mind *the nearness of old age to death*. This was the principal cause of his refusal. How long have I to live? These words imply a retrospect, how long have I lived? and a prospect, how long have I yet to live? "I am this day fourscore years old. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." This was a very reasonable request, my brethren, both in regard to the principle laid down, and the consequence



derived from it. The principle is, that there is very little distance between old age and death. So little, that the good old man thought that there was but just time enough for him to pass over Jordan with the king, to return back, and to prepare for his funeral. "How long have I to live? I am this day fourscore years old. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." Was ever principle better founded? How little is necessary to overset and break the frame of a man of this age? What is necessary? A vapour! a puff of wind!

Let us pause here a moment, my brethren, and let us not behold this spectacle without reflecting on the vanity of this life. A life of fourscore years appears to me a most abundant source of reflections on human frailty. True it is, that diseases which consume us, sudden deaths, which cry to us, *children of men, return*, and which cut off numbers before they have lived half their days, fires, shipwrecks, assassinations, epidemical diseases, all these are very proper to teach us what a little account we ought to make of the present life. But, how frequently so ever these sad accidents happen, we generally take care to harden ourselves against any apprehensions of danger from them, by considering them as extraordinary events, by hoping we shall escape them, and by flattering ourselves that we shall arrive at a good old age.

Well! you are to arrive at this good old age! But how many years will elapse before you do arrive

at it? No, no, I repeat it again, nothing is more proper to discover our frailty. Should a thousand uncommon circumstances concur, should a vigorous constitution, a wise and cautious course of action, and a proper choice of diet unite to preserve you to this age; should you escape water, and fire, and thieves, and earthquakes, the frailty of infancy, the impetuosity of youth, and the infirmities of advanced age; should you, by a kind of miracle, arrive at the utmost limits prescribed to mankind, what then? Must you not presently die? The longest life seldom extends to a century. When a man hath lived an hundred years in the world, he is the wonder of the universe, and his age alone renders him famous. The most obscure life becomes conspicuous, when it is drawn out to this length. It is spoken of as a prodigy, it is published in foreign countries; history records the man, who had the extraordinary happiness to live to such an age, it writes his name with precision, and transmits his memory to the most distant posterity; it says, at such a time, in such a place lived a man, who attained his hundredth year. After this, he must die. Old age is an incurable malady, and we are old at fourscore. O shadow of life, how vain art thou! O grass! how little a time dost thou flourish in our field! O wise and instructive principle of Barzillai, There is very little distance between old age and death! "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, I pray thee let me return, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother."

But if the principle of this good old man be well founded, the consequence derived from it is better founded, that is, that worldly affairs do not suit a man drawing near the end of his life ; that when death is so near, a man should be wholly employed in preparing for it. If Barzillai had been a wise man through the whole course of his life, as we may suppose he had, he had not put off till now a preparation for this event, which is certainly the most serious and important of life. Even they who have lived the most regularly, and gone innocent through all the busy scenes of life, have long accounts to settle, and questions of the last importance to agitate, when they come to die. Every thing engages Barzillai to avoid disconcerting himself in his last moments, and to devote the few that remain to seriousness. Yes, every thing engages him to do so ; and, to confine myself to some reflections, the length of time he had lived, the cares of his mind at present, and the consolations arising from a meditation of death, all incline him to take leave of the king and, the court, the pleasures and the business of the world, tables richly served, and concerts well performed, all incline him to think of nothing but death.

1. *The long time he had lived.* If the account which God requires every man to give at death, be terrible to all men, it should seem particularly so to old men. An old man is responsible for all the periods of his life, all the circumstances he has been in, and all the connections he hath formed. Then, before a tribunal of impartial justice, will every in-

stant of that long life, which is now at an end, be examined. Then will all the objects which time seems to have buried in eternal silence be recalled to view. Then sins of youth, which have left no trace on the mind, because the eagerness with which we proceed to the commission of new crimes, does not allow time to examine what we have committed, then will they all rise out of that sort of annihilation in which they seemed to be lost. *Fourscore years spent in offending thee, my God!*\* said a dying man. Too true in the mouth of him who said so! Too true in the mouths of most old men! A motive powerful enough to engage an old man to employ in penitential exercises every moment which the patience of God yet affords, and which, at his age, cannot be many.

2. The continual *cares*, which exercised the mind of Barzillai, were a second spring of his action. We consider riches as protectors from care: but in general they are the direct contrary. A rich man is obliged, as it were, to give himself wholly up to discover and defeat a general plot laid to engross his fortune. He must resist such as would violently force it from him. He must unmask others, who, under color of justice, and supported by law, involve him in law suits to establish illegitimate claims. He must penetrate through a thousand pretences of generosity, disinterestedness and friendship, into the soul of a false friend, who aims at nothing but gratifying his own avarice or ambition. He must watch

\* Mr. de Montausier. See the close of his funeral oration, by Flechier.

night and day to fix his riches, which having wings are always ready to fly away. How difficult is it for a soul, distracted with so many cares, to devote as much time to work out salvation as a labor so important requires! How necessary is it to make up by retirement and recollection in the last stages of life, what has been wanting in days of former hurry, and which are now no more! I recollect, and I apply it to Barzillai, a saying of a captain, of whom historians have taken more care to record the wisdom than the name. It is said, that the saying struck the Emperor Charles V. and confirmed him in his design of abdicating his crown, and retiring to a convent. The captain required the Emperor to discharge him from service. Charles asked the reason. The prudent soldier replied, *Because there ought to be a pause between the hurry of life and the day of death.*

3. In fine, if Barzillai seemed to anticipate the dying day, by continually meditating on the subject, it was because the *meditation*, full of horror to most men, was full of charms to this good old man. When death is considered as accompanied with condemnatory sentences, formidable irreversible decrees, chains of darkness, insupportable tortures, smoke ascending up for ever and ever, blazing fires, remorse, rage, despair, desperate exclamations, "mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. x. 11. and vi. 16, 17. When we consider death, as so many men,

alas! ought to consider it, and as by their continual irregularities they prepare it for consideration, no wonder the thought is disagreeable, and must be put far away. But when death is considered, as some of you, my brethren, ought to consider it, you whose faults have been washed with penitential tears, and repaired by a real conversion, your view of death is more delightful, and affords you more pleasure than the tables of the great, the amusements of a court, and the most melodious concerts could procure. Then these expressions, in appearance so mortifying, *let me return, let me die*, are fraught with happiness.

*Let me die*, that I may be freed from the many infirmities, and diseases, and pains, to which my frail body is exposed!

*Let me die*, that I may get rid of the misfortunes, the treachery, the perfidy, the numerous plots and plans which are always in agitation against me, in a society of mankind!

*Let me die*, and let me no more see truth persecuted and innocence sacrificed to iniquity!

*Let me die*, let all my doubts and darkness vanish, let me surmount all my difficulties, and let all the clouds that hide interesting objects from me disappear! Let me go to know as I am known, and let me put off this body of sin! Let me leave a world, in which I cannot live without offending God! Let me kindle the fire of my love at the altar of the love of God!

*Let me die*, and leave this untoward company of men, who seem almost all to have taken counsel

against the Lord, and against his anointed, to subvert his throne, and, were it possible, to deprive him of the government of the world!

*Let me die*, that I may form intimate connections with happy spirits, and that I may enjoy that close union with them, that communion of ideas, that conformity of sentiments, which render heaven so delightful!

*Let me die*, that I may behold the patriarchs and the prophets who acquired in the church an everlasting reputation, and on whose heads God hath already placed the crowns which he promised to their faith and obedience!

*Let me die*, that I may hold communion with the happy God! I feel a void within me, which none but he can fill; I feel desires elevating me to his throne; I feel "my soul longing and fainting, my heart and my flesh crying out," when I think of presenting myself before him, Psal. lxxxiv. 2. Doth my heart say, "Seek his face? Thy face O Lord will I seek," Psal. xxvii. 8. And, as in this vale of tears thou art always hidden, I will seek thee in another economy!

A meditation of death, such as this, hath charms unknown to the world; but to you, my brethren, they are not unknown. The prospect of dying is better to Barzillai than all the pleasures of a court. A tomb appears more desirable to him than a royal palace. "Let me turn back, that I may die, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother!" May we all by a holy life prepare for such a death! God grant us grace to do so! To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.





# SERMON VIII.

*Christian Conversation.*



COLOSSIANS iv. 6.

*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,*

**I**T is a complaint, as old as the study of human nature, that mankind are prone to excess, that they never observe a just mean; that in practising one virtue, they neglect another; that in avoiding one vice, they run into an opposite; in a word, that men usually go into extremes. This general maxim, which is exemplified in almost all the actions of men, is particularly remarkable in those familiar conversations, which religion allows, which society renders necessary, and for which God seems to have purposely formed us. Observe the conduct of men in this article, you will find every where excesses and extremes. On the one hand, you will see rude and uncivil people putting on in the most innocent companies austere looks, ever declaiming against the manners of the world, exclaiming against every body, affecting to be offended with every thing, and converting every company into a court of justice, resounding with sentences against the guilty. On the other hand, you will find people, under pretence of

avoiding this extreme, exceeding the bounds of religion, and imagining that, in order to please in conversation, christianity must be laid aside, and each expression must have an air sordid and vicious. Nothing is so rare as a wise union of gravity and gentility, piety and sweetness of manners; a disposition that engages us to preserve inviolable the laws of religion without injuring the rights of society, and to do justice to society without violating religion.

However, it is this just medium to which we are called, without which our conversation must be criminal, and which St. Paul teaches us in the text: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." "Let your speech be seasoned with salt;" here the rights of religion are preserved, this is the livery of the gospel, the character of christianity. "Let your speech be always with grace;" here the rights of society are asserted, this is the innocent pleasure which Jesus Christ allows us; this is the sweetness of manners, which, far from opposing, he expressly enjoins us to acquire and practise. The title of my discourse, then, shall be, *The art of speaking*; and on this subject we will treat:—*The art of speaking*, not according to the rules of grammar, not in the sense used in polite academies, according to the rules of worldly good breeding, an art too insignificant to be taught in this pulpit; but *the art of speaking* according to the laws of the gospel, according to the precepts of Jesus Christ, the christian art of speaking.

May God, who hath called us to treat of this important duty, enable us to treat of it properly! May he so direct us, that this discourse may serve us both for instruction and example! May our language be *seasoned with salt and grace*; with *salt*, that it may be grave and agreeable to the majesty of this place, and to the purity of our ministry; and with *grace*, that we may acquire your attention, and insinuate into your hearts! Amen!

*Salt* must be the first seasoning of our conversation. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this term is metaphorical, and put for purity, of which salt is a symbol. The reason of this metaphor is clear; it is taken from the use of salt, which preserves the flesh of animals from putrefaction. For this purpose it was used in sacrifices, according to the words of Jesus Christ. "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." "Let your speech be seasoned with salt," that is, never let your lips utter any discourse which does not savour of the respect you have for the God you adore, the religion you profess, and the christian name which you have the honour to bear. This is, in substance, the first law of conversation. Let us be more particular.

The spirit of this maxim may be expressed in five rules. The apostle recommends a seasoning of piety, a seasoning of chastity, a seasoning of charity, a seasoning of severity, and a seasoning of solidity. Consequently he condemns five usual imperfections of conversation. 1. Oaths. 2. Obscene language. 3. Slander. 4. Extravagant complaisance. 5. Futility. Either I am deceived, my brethren, or every

person in this auditory needs instruction in some one of these articles.

1. The first vice of conversation, which the apostle condemns, is *swearing*. The first seasoning, which he recommends to us, is the salt of *piety*. Sad necessity for a christian preacher, preaching to a christian audience! Sad necessity, indeed, obliged to prove that blasphemy ought to be banished from conversation! however it is indispensibly necessary to prove this, for nothing is so common among some called christians as this detestable vice. It is the effect of two principles, the first is a brutal madness, and the other is a most false and fanciful idea of superior understanding and free and easy behaviour.

It is a brutal madness that puts some people on swearing. Our language seems too poor to express this disposition, and the words *brutality* and *madness* are too vague to describe the spirit of such as are guilty of this crime. These, shall I call them men or brute beasts? cannot be agitated with the least passion, without uttering the most execrable imprecations. Froward souls, who cannot endure the least controul without attacking God himself, taxing him with cruelty and injustice, disputing with him the government of the world, and not being able to subvert his throne, assaulting him with murmurings and blasphemies. Certainly nothing can be so opposite to this *salt* of conversation as this abominable excess. They who practise it ought to be secluded from christian societies, yea to be banished even from worldly companies. Thus the supreme Lawgiver, able to save and to destroy, hath determined. Read the

twenty-fourth of Leviticus, "The son of an Israelitish woman blasphemed the name of the Lord," ver. 11, &c. At this news all Israel trembled with horror. The prudent Moses paused, and consulted God himself what to do in this new and unheard-of case. The oracle informed him in these words, "Bring forth him that hath cursed, without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou, Moses, shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin, and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him." Have you attended to this sentence? It not only regards the blasphemer, it regards all that hear him. If you be sincere members of the congregation of Israel, you ought, though not to stone the blasphemer, yet to declare your abhorrence of his conduct, and, if he remain incorrigible, to endeavour to rid society of such a monster.

Human legislators have treated such people with the utmost rigor. The Emperor Justinian condemned blasphemers to death.\* Some have bored their tongues.† Others have drowned them.‡ Others have branded them with a red hot iron in the forehead,§ intending, by fixing this mark of infamy in a

\* Constitut. lxxi. a lxvi.

† Beyerlinc. Theatr. vit. human, tom. iii. page 139.

‡ Ibid.

§ Paul. Emil. de gest. Franc. fol. 164. pag. 2. edit. de Vascoscan 1576.

part so visible, to guard people against keeping company with a blasphemer. It was Lewis the ninth, a king of France, who was the author of this law. I cannot help relating the words of this prince in justification of the severity of the law. A man of rank in the kingdom having uttered blasphemy, great intercession was made for his pardon; but the king's answer was this, *I would submit*, said he, *to be burnt in the forehead myself, if by enduring the pain I could purify my kingdom from blasphemy.*

We affirmed, further, that some people habituated themselves to swearing from false notions of glory and freedom of conversation. A man sets up for a wit in conversation, he pretends to conciliate the esteem of his company, and affects to put on the air of a man of the world, free from the stiffness of pedants. (This is not an invention of mine, this is a natural portrait, my brethren, and some of you gave me the original.) This man, I say, having taken into his head this design, and not being able to derive means of succeeding from his genius, or education, calls in the aid of oaths; of these he keeps various forms, and applies them instead of reasons, having the folly to imagine that an oath artfully placed at the end of a period renders it more expressive and polite; and, judging of the taste of his hearers by his own, inwardly applauds himself, and wonders what heart can resist the power of his eloquence. An elocution mean and contemptible, and fitter for an unbridled soldiery than for those that command them. An elocution directly opposite to the words of my text, "Let your speech be seasoned with

salt." Never let the name of God go out of your lips without exciting such sentiments of veneration in your minds as are due to that sacred name. Never speak of the attributes of God in conversation without recollecting the majesty of that Being to whom they belong. "Accustom not thy mouth to swearing," said the wise son of Sirach, "neither use thyself to the naming of the holy One; for he that nameth God continually shall not be faultless," Ecclus. xxiii. 9, 10. The first vice of conversation to be avoided is swearing and blasphemy, the first seasoning of conversation is piety.

2. The apostle prescribes us a seasoning of *chastity*. Against this duty there are some direct and some oblique attacks. Direct violaters of this law are those nauseous mouths, which cannot open without putting modesty to the blush, by uttering language too offensive to be repeated in this sacred assembly; yea, too filthy to be mentioned any where without breaking the laws of worldly decency. We are not surprised that people without taste, and without education, that a libertine, who makes a trade of debauchery, and who usually haunts houses of infamy, should adopt this style: but that christian women, who profess to respect virtue, that they should suffer their ears to be defiled with such discourse, that they should make parties at entertainments, and at cards with such people, and so discover that they like to have their ears tickled with such conversation, is really astonishing. We repeat it again, decorum, and worldly decency are sufficient to inspire us with horror for this practice. And shall

the maxims of religion affect us less than human rules? "Fornication, and all uncleanness," said St. Paul, "let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints," Eph. v. 3.

Barefaced immodest discourse is not the most dangerous, for it ought to be then least tolerated, because it is then most execrable, when it is uttered equivocally. There is an art of disguising obscenity, and of conveying poison the most fatally, by communicating it in preparations the most subtile and refined. Men in general choose rather to appear virtuous than to be so, and, to accommodate such people, there is an art of introducing vice under coverings so thick as to seem to respect the modesty of the company, and yet so thin as fully to expose it. A fine and delicate allusion, a lively and original tour of expression, an ingenious equivocation, a double meaning, an arch look, an affected gravity, these are the dangerous veils, these the instruments that wound us when we are off our guard. For what can you say to a man who behaves in this manner? If you suffer his airs to pass without censure, he will glory in your indulgence, and take your silence for approbation. If, on the other hand, you reimonstrate, he will tax you with his own crime; he will tell you that your ear is guilty, his language is innocent; that immodesty is in your heart, not in his expressions; and that of two senses to which his language is applicable, you have adapted the immodest, when you ought to have taken the chaste meaning.



If to talk in this manner be to make an offering of the tongue to the enemy of our salvation, certainly to lend an ear to such conversation, and by certain expressive smiles to promise a favourable attention to it, is to dedicate the ear to him. And do not deceive yourselves, you will never be able to persuade such as know the human heart, that you love virtue, while you take pleasure in hearing conversation injurious to virtue. You will be told, and with great reason, that you are a friend to nothing but the appearance of it. Were virtue itself the object of your esteem, you would not keep company with such as wound it. But by your indulgence of such people, you give us great reason to presume, that were not human laws and worldly decency in your way, you would give yourself up to the practice of vice; for, in spite of these, you take pleasure in beholding it when appearances are saved, and even disguise it yourself under specious pretexts.

Further, we include in our notion of immodest conversation, licentious songs, which lawless custom has rendered too familiar, songs, which, under a pretence of gratifying a passion for vocal and instrumental music, disseminate a thousand loose, not to say lascivious, maxims, excite a thousand irregular emotions, and cherish many criminal passions. Attend to this article of our discourse, ye parents, who idolize your children, children whom you ought to dedicate to Jesus Christ, but whom you lead into a licentiousness that is a disgrace to your families. Music is an art criminal or innocent, according to

the use made of it. Those pious men, whom the holy scriptures propose to us for models, did not deny themselves the enjoyment of it: but they applied it to proper subjects. St. Paul even recommends it. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*, Col. iii. 16. Thus also a prophet formerly applied both his voice and his instrument to celebrate the praises of his Creator. "Awake up, my glory, awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations. Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery, Psal. lvii. 3, 9. and lxxxii. 1, 2, &c. Thus a christian musician ought to sing: but never, never should his mouth utter licentious verses. An unchaste tongue is a sad sign of a depraved heart. A woman who paints vice in colours so agreeable, proves that she considers it in a very amiable light, and has no objection to the practice of it. For my part, I shall never be able to persuade myself that any consecrate their bodies to be temples of the Holy Ghost, who, to use an expression of St. Paul, make their tongues *members of an harlot*, 1 Cor. vi. 15.

Slander and calumny are a third defect of conversation, and the third law which our apostle imposes on us, is a seasoning of charity. I freely acknowledge, my brethren, that I cannot enter on this arti-

cle without losing that moderation of temper, which is necessary to a preacher who would treat of the subject properly. Whether it be weakness of mind, or self-interest, or whether it be the enormous lengths to which you practise this vice in this place, too much practised, alas, every where! or whatever be the cause, I can scarcely retain my temper; for I feel myself at once ready to confound instruction with reproof. Is there any character among you so respectable, any intention so innocent, any conduct so irreproachable, any piety so conspicuous, as to escape the cruelty of your calumniating conversations?

What shall I say to you my brethren? I wish I knew how to collect the substance of many sermons into this one article: I would endeavour to exhibit calumny in one small portrait, at which you might continually look, and which might perpetually inspire you with holy horror.

1. Consider this vice in its source. Sometimes it proceeds from littleness of mind, for there are people who cannot converse, they neither understand religion or government, arts or sciences, and their conversation would languish and die away, were not the void filled up with a detail of the real imperfections of their neighbours, or of others, which the most cruel malignity ascribes to them, and the number of these always far surpasses that of real defects. Sometimes it comes from pride. People wish to be superior to their neighbours, and not having the noble courage to rise above them by the practice of more virtue, they endeavour to sink them by slan-

derous conversation. Sometimes envy is the source. There are persons who place their happiness in the misery of others. A neighbour's prosperity shocks them, his reputation wounds them, and his rest is their torment. Sometimes a guilty conscience generates slander. Bad men fear the public eye should discover and fix on their own crimes, and they try to prevent this misfortune by artfully turning the attention of spectators from themselves to the vices of their fellow-citizens.

2. Consider the fatal *consequences* of slander. Judge of the hearts of others by your own. What makes one man invent a calumny induces another to receive and publish it. As soon as ever the voice of slander is heard, a thousand echoes repeat it, and publish vices which your want of charity, or excess of injustice, attributed to your neighbour. What renders this the more deplorable is the usual readiness of mankind to give credit to calumny; a readiness on the one part to utter calumny, and on the other to believe it, overwhelm a neighbourhood with all the misery of defamation.

3. Consider the *duties* which they who commit this crime bind themselves to perform; duties so hard, that some would rather die than perform them, and yet duties so indispensable, that no man can expect either favour or forgiveness who neglects the discharge of them. The first law we impose on a man who hath unjustly acquired the property of a neighbour, is to restore it. The first law we impose on a man who hath injured the reputation of another, is to repair it. There is a restitution of honour

as well as of fortune. Which of you, now, who hath dealt in slander, dare form the just and generous resolution of going from house to house to publish his retractions? Who is there among you, that by committing this sin does not hazard all his own reputation?

4. Consider how extremely opposite this sin is to the law of charity. You know the whole religion of Jesus Christ tends to love. The precepts he gave, the doctrines he taught, the worship he prescribed, the ordinances he instituted, the whole gospel is the breath of love. But what can be more incompatible with love than slander! consequently who deserves less the name of christian than a slanderer?

5. Consider how many different forms calumny assumes. In general, all the world agree it is one of the most hateful vices: yet it is curious to see how persons who declaim the most loudly against this crime, practise it themselves. All the world condemn it, and all the world slide into the practice of it. The reputation of our neighbour is not only injured by tales studied and set, but an air, a smile, a look, an affected abruptness, even silence, are envenomed darts shot at the same mark, and it will be impossible for us to avoid falling into the temptation of committing this crime, unless we keep a perpetual watch.

6. Consider the various illusions, and numberless *pretexts*, of which people avail themselves, in order to conceal from themselves the turpitude of this crime. One pretends he said nothing but the truth; as if charity, did not oblige us to conceal the real

vices of a neighbour, as well as not to attribute to him fanciful ones. Another justifies his conduct by pretending that he is animated not by hatred, but by equity; as if God had appointed every individual to exercise vengeance, and to be an executioner of his judgments; as if, supposing the allegation true, a man does not sin against his own principles (for he pretends equity) when he shews his neighbour in an unfavourable point of view, by publishing his imperfections and concealing his virtues. Another excuses himself by saying, that as the affair was public he might surely be permitted to mention it; as if charity was never violated except by discovering unknown vices; as if men were not forbidden to relish that malicious pleasure which arises from talking over the known imperfections of their neighbours.

7. Consider, *into what an unhappy situation calumny puts an innocent person who wishes to avoid it.* What must a man do to preclude or to put down a calumny? Cherish good humour, paint pleasure in your face, endeavour by your pleasing deportment to communicate happiness to all about you, be, if I may speak so, the life and soul of society, and it will be said, you are not solid, you have the unworthy ambition of becoming the amusement of mankind. Put on an austere air, engrave on your countenance, if I may speak thus, the great truths that fill your soul, and you will be taxed with pharisaism and hypocrisy; it will be said, that you put on a fair outside to render yourself venerable, but that under all this appearance very likely you conceal

an impious irreligious heart. Take a middle way, regulate your conduct by times and places, *weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice*, and you will be accused of luke-warmness. Pick your company, confine yourself to a small circle, make it a law to speak freely only to a few select friends who will bear with your weaknesses, and who know your good qualities, and you will be accused of pride and arrogance; it will be said, that you think the rest of mankind unworthy of your company, and that you pretend wisdom and taste are excluded from all societies, except such as you deign to frequent. Go every where, and in a spirit of the utmost condescension converse with every individual of mankind, and it will be said you are unsteady, a city, a province cannot satisfy you, you lay all the universe under contribution, and oblige the whole world to try to satiate your unbounded love of pleasure.

In fine, consider what *punishment* the holy Spirit has denounced against calumny, and in what class of mankind he hath placed slanderers: You who, by a prejudice, which is too general a rule of judging, imagine *you possess all virtues, because you are free from one vice*, to use the language of a modern author,\* you, who poison the reputation of a neighbour in company, and endeavour thus to avenge yourself on him for the pain which his virtues give you, in what list hath St. Paul put you? He hath classed you with misers, idolaters, debauchees, and adulterers, “If any man be a fornicator, or cove-

\* Flechier.

tous, or an idolater, or a *railer*, with such an one keep no company, no not to eat." "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor *revilers*, (this is your place) nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. v. 11. and vi. 9. But we judge of vices and virtue, not according to the rules laid down in the gospel, but according to such as prevail in the world. It is not Jesus Christ, it is the world, that is our sovereign. We blush at what they censure, and we feel no remorse at committing what they think fit to tolerate. Ah! why are not legislators more indulgent when they condemn to racks and gibbets a wretch whom excess of hunger impelled to steal our property; why do they not inflict one part of their rigour on him who, in cool blood, and with infernal malice, robs us of our reputation and honour! *Let your speech be seasoned with the salt of charity.*

Fourthly, The apostle intends to inspire us with a seasoning of *severity*, and to banish from our conversations a fourth vice, which we have named extravagant complaisance. When is complaisance extravagant? Are we going to pass encomiums on such untoward spirits as disturb all mankind; on such superstitious martyrs of truth and virtue as render themselves impertinent by affecting regularity, such as represent piety under an appearance so frightful that it cannot be taken for piety, and give it an air so hideous that it is impossible to love it? No, my brethren. In this article we deplore a frailty too



common among the best christians. We fall into a circle of bad company, we hear them blaspheme the name of God, attack religion, profane the most holy mysteries, and calumniate innocence. We tremble at this conversation, and from the bottom of our souls detest it; our spirit is stirred in us, we are like St. Paul, when he saw the Athenian idolatry, but we conceal our pious indignation, we dare not openly avow it, we even embolden the criminal by infirmity, though not by inclination.

A christian ought to know how to unfurl the banner of Jesus Christ, and as in times of persecution a man was reputed ashamed of his faith, and guilty of idolatry by silence and neutrality; as the casting of a single grain of incense on the altar of an idol was accounted an act of apostacy, so when the emissaries of vice attack religion on the practical side, a man ought to say, I am a christian, he ought not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, he ought to restrain the infidel, repress the libertine, resist the calumniator.

Finally, perpetual voids are a fifth defect of conversation, and a fifth duty prescribed to us is a seasoning of *solidity*. It is Jesus Christ himself who furnisheth us with this reflection, by informing us in the gospel, that we must give an account for *every idle word*. In order to profit by this declaration we must understand it, and in order to understand it we must avoid two extremes equally opposite to the design of the Saviour of the world, we must neither give the passage a sense too rigorous nor too lax.

First, the words of Jesus Christ must not be taken in a sense too rigorous. He does not mean by *idle words*, those discourses, of which we do not immediately perceive the utility, but which, however, are unavoidable in an intercourse with mankind. There are two ways of proving that our Saviour had not in view this sort of conversation.

1. It should seem, by examining the original, that the passage ought to be rendered not *idle words*, but *wicked words*. Many expositors adopt this sense, and affirm, that the Greek word here used answers to a Hebrew word, which signifies both *useless* and *wicked*.\* We are certain the writers of the new testament frequently use Greek words in a Hebrew sense. As then the Hebrew word signifies *wicked* and *useless*, these expositors thought they had a right to translate the word *wicked*, not *idle*. Moreover, they add, that the original Greek word has this meaning, and is frequently taken in an active sense (forgive this technical term) and not always in a passive, in good authors; that is, it does not mean only that which is not directed to any good end, but that which actually defeats a good design. Thus Cicero, speaking of the opponents of the Stoics, says, they accuse the doctrine of their philosophers concerning fate, of being an *idle* doctrine; he uses the same term that is used in the passage we are considering, and he means, by an *idle* doctrine, a doctrine which encourages idleness. For, say the enemies of the Stoics, if a blind fate produces our virtues and vices, all our efforts are useless, and we may

\* Le Clerc in Hammond on Matt. xii. 26

waste our lives in idleness. By *idle words*, then, Jesus Christ means to forbid, not words merely useless, but words which have a bad tendency, as those had which attributed the miracles of Christ to magic.

There is a second way of restraining the meaning of Jesus Christ. Let us retain the term *idle*, used in our version, and let us explain this passage as we explain all other passages in scripture which forbid idleness. When the scripture enjoins us to labour, does it mean that we should be always at work? When it forbids us to be idle, does it mean to disallow relaxation and rest? Does it blame an honest recreation? No. It condemns only such as consume all their life in inaction. Thus here, Jesus Christ, by condemning *idle words*, does not mean those innocent conversations which we have observed are necessary, but he means such as are made up of nothing but vanity and unprofitableness.

Let us, however, carefully avoid giving a loose sense to the words of Jesus Christ. He allows vague and superficial conversation only as he allows idleness. He means that, in general, our conversation should turn on grave and useful subjects.

We generally persuade ourselves that churches and closets are the only places where we ought to employ ourselves about solid subjects. Let us undeceive ourselves. We ought to attend to such subjects even while we are in pursuit of pleasure. For example, are we returning from a sermon? Why not entertain one another with the subjects we have been hearing? Why not endeavour to imprint on one another's memories the truths that have been proved, and to im-

press on one another's hearts such precepts as have been enforced? Have we been visiting a dying person? Why not make such reflections as naturally occur on such occasions the matter of our conversation? Why not embrace such a fair opportunity of speaking on the vanity of life, the uncertainty of worldly enjoyments, and the happiness of a pious departure to rest? Have we been reading a good book? Why not converse with our companions on the information we have derived from it? Are we ministers of religion? Surely there is great propriety in entertaining our friends with the subjects which we teach in public, and investigate in our studies. Why should we not apply them to the benefit of such as surround us? Why not endeavour to subdue that resistance which the wretched hearts of mankind make to the truths of religion? Were these rules observed, each company would become a school of instruction, the more useful because the more natural and easy, and knowledge and virtue would be mutually cherished.

What! say some, would you prohibit all the pleasure of life? Must we never open our mouths but to utter sententious discourses? Would you condemn us to eternal melancholy? Ah! this is a gross error. Pleasure is incompatible with piety, is it? What! is piety so offensive to you, that it spoils all your pleasure if it only makes its appearance?

After all, what pleasure can those vain conversations afford, which consume the greatest part of life? Had we been always sequestered from the rest of mankind, perhaps we might imagine that the confused noise made by a company of talkers about no-

thing might give pleasure; but who that has seen the world can fall into this error? What! superficial chat about the most common appearances of nature! Tiresome tittle tattle about the sun and the rain! Ill-timed visits, perpetually returning, always a burden to those who pay, and to those who receive them! Are these the pleasures which you prefer before a sensible useful conversation! Puerile mistake! It is the solid sense and utility of a conversation that make the pleasure of it. "Let your speech be always seasoned with salt."

Let us proceed to examine the other term, *grace*. St. Paul says, "let your speech be always with grace." We have before intimated, that the apostle means by the word *grace*, agreeableness, gracefulness. The word *grace*, we allow, must often be taken in scripture in a very different sense; but two reasons determine us to take it here in this sense.

1. The nature of the thing. It was natural for the apostle, after he had spoken of what sanctifies conversation, to speak of what renders it insinuating.
2. The word is often taken in this sense in scripture. Thus the wise man says, "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain," Prov. xxxi. 30. And thus the psalmist, "grace is poured into thy lips,"\* Psal. xlv. 2.

\* Our author follows the reading of his own French version in Prov. xxxi. 30. *La grace trompe, et la beauté s'évanouit*. Our translation reads, *Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain*: but critics render the original words, *gratia, gratiositas, vetustas* morum, sermonum, actionum, gestuum. So that Mr. S. may be justified in giving this sense to the text. In the same sense, it should

But what is this *grace*? I think we must have observed, that the disagreeableness of conversation generally proceeds from one of these five causes; either from extravagant raillery, or from proud decisions, or from bitter disputes, or from invincible obstinacy, or from indiscreet questions. Against these five vices we oppose five virtues, or, to use the language of the text, five sorts of *graces*, which render conversation charming: The grace of complaisance, the grace of humility, the grace of moderation, the grace of docility, and the grace of discretion. These we call the *graces*, the embellishments of conversation.

1. *Extravagant raillery* generally poisons conversation. Who can bear to be turned into ridicule? Who likes to have his own foibles exposed? Who would choose to be the subject of the wit of a company, especially when, not being able to return wit for wit, a man is obliged tacitly to own himself a genius inferior to those who attack him? Abstract reasonings are not necessary to make this article plain. We appeal only to the feelings of such as make a trade of rallying others. How is it, pray, that you cannot bear to be rallied in your turn? Whence that gloomy silence? How is it, that your vivacity is extinct, and your spirits damped, unless you, as well as the rest of mankind, love to be respected?

seem, is that famous passage in John i. 17. *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, to be taken. *Grace* signifies here affability, sweetness of deportment, propriety of behaviour, conformity between the good news he brought, and the graceful manner in which he delivered the message.

We would substitute *complaisance* in the place of extravagant raillery. Instead of making a little genius feel his insignificance, we should stoop to his size. Courtiers understand this art well, and they know as well when to make use of it, either to obtain the esteem of a superior, or to acquire the friendship of an inferior, or an equal. See with what address they shew you to yourselves by your bright sides. Observe with what dexterity they entertain you with what you are pleased and interested in. And shall christian charity yield to worldly politeness?

2. A second vice that poisons conversation is *proud decision*. What can be more intolerable than a man who stalks into company as a genius of the first order, who lays down his own infallibility as a first principle, who delivers out his nostrums as infallible oracles, as the decisions of a judicature so high that it would be criminal to appeal from them? What aggravates the injustice of this character is, that these peremptory people are generally the most ignorant; and that their ignorance is the cause of their positiveness. A little ignorant genius, who hath never gone to the bottom of any one article of science, who knows neither the objections that lie against a subject, nor the arguments that support it, who knows nothing but the surface of any thing, quickly fancies that he perfectly comprehends, and can fully ascertain the subject of his attention. He does not know what it is to doubt, and he pities those who do. On the contrary, a man of real knowledge knows so well by his own experience the weakness of the human mind, and so thoroughly understands

his own defects, that he keeps in himself a counterpoise for pride; he proposes his opinions only as problems to be examined, and not as decisions to be obeyed. This is what we call the *grace* of humility. A man ought to submit his judgment to the discussion of those to whom he proposes it; he should allow every one a liberty of thinking for himself, and presuppose, that if he has reason, so have others; that if he has learning, others have it too; that if he has meditated on a subject, so have others. Even subjects, of the truth of which we are most fully persuaded, ought to be so proposed as to convince people that it is a love of truth, and not a high conceit of ourselves, that makes us speak, and thus we should exemplify the rule laid down by an apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3.

3. *A bitter spirit of disputing* is a third vice of conversation. Yield instantly, yield even when you have reason on your side, rest satisfied with knowing the truth yourself, when they to whom you propose it, wilfully shut their eyes against it. The reason of this maxim is this: When a man refuses to admit a proposition sufficiently demonstrated, the more you press him, the further he will recede from you. The principle that induces him to cavil, is pride, and not weakness of capacity; if you persist in shewing him the truth, you will irritate his pride by confounding it; whereas, if you give his passion time to cool and subside, perhaps he will return of himself and renounce his error.



St. Paul was an excellent model of this *grace of moderation*, “unto Jews he became as a Jew, to them that were without law as without law, all things to all men,” 1 Cor. ix. 20. Why? was it idleness or cowardice? Neither; for never was servant more zealous for the interest of his master, never did soldier fight with more courage for his prince. It was owing to his moderation and charity. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, “that I might gain the Jews;” to them that are without law as without law, “that I might by all means save some.”

4. *Obstinacy* is incompatible with the grace of *docility*, a necessary ingredient in agreeable conversation. To persist in maintaining a proposition because we have advanced it, to choose rather to heap up one absurdity upon another than to give up the first, to be deceived a thousand times rather than to say once, I am mistaken; what can be more contrary to good manners in conversation than these dispositions? It is a high enjoyment to open one's eyes to the light when it rises on us, and to testify by a sincere recantation that we proposed our opinions rather with a desire to be instructed in what we did not know, than to display our abilities in what we did understand.

Finally, *indiscreet questions* are a fifth pest of conversation; questions which put a man's mind upon the rack, and reduce him to the painful dilemma either of not answering, or of betraying his secrets. Too much eagerness to pry into other men's concerns is frequently more intolerable than indifference; and to determine, in spite of a man, to be his confi-

dent, is to discover more indiscreet curiosity than christian charity. St. Paul reprov'd the widows of his time for this vice, and in them all succeeding christians. "Younger widows learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not," 1 Tim. v. 11, 13. The *grace* opposite to this vice is *discretion*.

My brethren, the truths you have been hearing are of the number of those to which in general the least attention is paid. Few people have ideas of piety so refined as to include the duties which we have been inculcating. Few people put into the list of their sins to be repented of, the vices we have been reprov'ing, few therefore are concerned about them. Yet there are many motives to engage us to use extreme caution in our conversations. I will just mention a few.

First. Vices of conversation are daily sins; they are repeated till they form a habit; by slow degrees they impair and destroy conscience; and in a manner the more dangerous, because the process is imperceptible, and because little or no pains are taken to prevent it. Great crimes have a character of horror, which throws us off at a distance. If we happen to be surpris'd into a commission of them through our own weakness, the soul is terrified, repentance instantly follows, and repetition is not very common; but in the case before us, sin makes some progress every day, every day the enemy of our salvation obtains some advantage over us, every day renders

more difficult and impracticable the great work, for which we were created.

Secondly. By practising these vices of conversation we give great ground of suspicion to others, and we ought to be persuaded ourselves, that our hearts are extremely depraved. It is in vain to pretend to exculpate ourselves by pretending that these are only words, that words are but air, empty sounds without effect. No, says Jesus Christ, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matt. xii. 34. Hence this saying of St. Chrysostom, *The tongue often blushes to speak what the heart dictates; but the heart, having no witness, gives itself up to irregular passions. It is only owing to a superfluity of depravity within, that the tongue renders it visible.\** If then our reputation be dear to us, if we have at heart the edification of our neighbours, if we wish to assure our hearts that we are upright in the sight of God, who continually sees and thoroughly knows us, let our conversation be a constant and irreproachable witness.

Lastly. The judgment of God should be a prevalent motive with us. You have heard it from the mouth of Jesus Christ. You will be required to "give an account in the day of judgment for every idle word. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," Matt. xii. 36, 37. We judge of our conversations only by the impressions they make on our minds, and as they seem to us only as sounds lost in the air,

\* Chrysostom. Tom. i. Hom. 43. in Matth.

we persuade ourselves they cannot materially affect our eternal state. But let us believe eternal truth; "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Dreadful thought! For which of us can recollect all the vain words he has uttered the last ten years? They are gone along with the revolutions of time, they expired the moment they were born. Yet they 'are all, all registered in a faithful memory, they are all, all written in a book; they will be all one day brought to our remembrance, they will be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and will contribute in that day to fix our eternal doom. "O Lord! enter not into judgment with thy servant! O God! cleanse thou me from secret faults;" Psal. cxliii. 2. and xix. 13. These are three motives to animate us to practise the duty under consideration. We will add three rules, to help us the more easily to discharge it.

1. If we would learn to season our conversation, we must choose our company. This is often disputed; however, we affirm, conformity of manners is the bond of this commerce. Seldom does a man pass his life with a slanderer without calumniating. Few people keep company with libertines unless they be profligate themselves. Example carries us away in spite of ourselves. A pagan poet advanced this maxim, and St. Paul, by quoting, hath consecrated it. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. Let us begin a reformation of our conversation by selecting our companions. Let us break with the enemies of God. Let us dread the contagion of poison, and avoid the manufactur

ers of it. As there is no sinner so obstinate as not to be moved by an intercourse with good men, so there is no virtue so well established as not to be endangered by an intimacy with the wicked.

2. A second great secret in conversation is the art of silence. To talk a great deal, and to reflect on all that is said, are two things incompatible, and certainly we cannot speak wisely, if we speak without reflection. The book of Ecclesiasticus advises us to "make a door and a bar for the mouth," chap. xxviii. 25. "The fool," said the wise man, "is full of words," Eccles. x. 14. "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle," Psal. xxxix. 1. An ancient hermit abused this maxim; for, after he had heard the first verse of the thirty-ninth psalm, he refused to hear the second, saying, the first was lesson sufficient for him. The reader of this verse to him asked him many years after whether he had learnt to reduce this lesson to practice. Nineteen years, replied the hermit, have I been trying, and have hardly attained the practice. But there was some reason in the conduct of this hermit, though he carried the matter to excess. In order to speak well, we must speak but little, remembering always the maxim of St. James, "If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain," chap. i. 26.

In fine, the great rule to govern the tongue is to govern the heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. In vain do you strive to prevent effects, unless you

remove the cause. It is in vain to purify the streams, while the spring continues polluted. It is in vain to attempt a few forced actions, like those mentioned by the psalmist, "whose words were softer than oil, when war was in their heart," Psal. lv. 21. It is extremely difficult to act long under constraint. The heart insensibly guides the tongue. Would you avoid rash judging, obscenity, calumny, fawning, all the vices of which we have shewn the enormity, begin with your own heart. There establish the love of God. Love piety, respect virtue, and talk as you will, you cannot but speak well.

Let us feel these motives, my brethren. Let us obey these rules. Let us practise these duties. Let us blush for having so long lived in the neglect of them. Henceforth let us dedicate our voices to the praise of our Creator. Let us praise God. To praise God is the noblest of all employments. To praise God is the incessant employment of all the angels in heaven. To praise God must be our eternal exercise. Let us this instant, on the spot, begin to reduce this new plan of conversation to practice. Let us cry, with blessed spirits, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts: and let these first fruits of holy conversation consecrate all the remainder of life. God grant us this grace. To Father, Son and Spirit, be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

## SERMON IX.

*The Duty of giving Alms.*



LUKE xi. 41.

*Give alms of such things as you have.*

**O**UR churches are houses of God: places where he bestows his favours in richest profusion. Indeed his omnipresence cannot be confined; heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, the whole universe is the theatre of his liberality. It is, however, in his churches that he affords the most distinguishing proofs of his presence, and opens his most magnificent treasures. Hence Solomon, after he had erected that superb palace described in the first book of Kings, addressed this prayer to God, "May thine eyes be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there. When thy people Israel shall pray toward this place, when they are smitten down before the enemy; when heaven is shut, and there is no rain; when there be in the land famine, pestilence and blasting; when they pray towards this place, when they spread forth their hands towards this house, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place," 1 Kings, viii. 27, 29, &c. Let us not imagine all these prerogatives were confined to the temple of Jerusa-

lem. They are in our churches. Always when we assemble in this place, we conduct you to the tribunal of God, and say to you, in the language of eternal wisdom, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1.

To-day, christians, this house changes its appearance. It is no more a superb palace, the seat of riches and abundance. It is an alms-house. It is, if I may be allowed to say so, a general hospital, in which are assembled all those poor, all those indigent widows and destitute orphans, all those famished old people, who were born in your provinces, or who, through the calamities of the times, have been driven to your coasts, and permitted to reside here. What a sight! To-day God takes the place of man, and man that of God. God asks and man answers. God begs, and man bestows. God sets before us heaven, grace, and glory; and from his high abode, where he dwells among the praises of the blessed, he solicits your charity, and says to you, by our mouth, "Give alms of such things as you have."

What opportunity more proper can we have to preach charity to you? For several weeks these arches have resounded with the greatest benevolence that was ever heard of.\* Your preachers have fixed your attention on that great sacrifice by which men are reconciled to God, so that if we be so happy to-day as to touch your hearts, there will be a harmony between love and charity, between the Creator and

\* The Weeks of Lent.



the creature. "The heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the heavens," Hos. ii. 22. Heaven will say to the faithful soul, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." John i. 29. and the faithful soul, properly affected with gratitude, will reply, "O God, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth," Psal. xvi. 23. and will pour upon the feet of Jesus Christ that ointment which cannot be put upon the head of Christ himself. My brethren, assist our feeble efforts. And thou, O God, who art *love* itself, animate every part, every period, every expression of this discourse, so that all our hearers may become disciples of love! Amen.

"Give alms of such things as you have;" these are the words of our text, the gospel of this day. We will not detain you in comparing the words of our translation with those of the original, in order to justify our interpreters. Some expositors think the text is not an exhortation to charity, but a censure on the pharisees for their notion of it. After the pharisees had obtained great sums by rapine and extortion, they endeavoured to conceal, yea to embellish their crimes by alms-deeds. According to these interpreters, Jesus Christ only intended to condemn these infamous practices, so that instead of reading the words, as we do, "give alms of such things as ye have," we ought to read them, "Ye give alms of such things as you have, and ye suppose all things are clean to you."

But this interpretation, which is in itself a striking truth, ought, however, to be rejected, as neither be-

ing agreeable to the scope of the place, nor the literal sense of the words, which are followed by a precept, nor to ancient versions, nor to the following words, "all things *shall* be clean to you," which carries in it the nature of a promise, and which must therefore be naturally joined to a precept.

Let us then retain the sense of our version, and let us take the words for an order of our Master prescribing charity. He addressed this order to the pharisees, and in them to all christians. The pharisees were a class of men, who loved showy virtues, and who thought by discharging small duties to make amends for the omission of great and important ones. Jesus Christ reproves them in this chapter; "Ye, pharisees, make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." They tithed mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, but they neglected charity. On another occasion we have observed, that they resembled some modern christians, who put on the air of piety, lift their eyes to heaven, besprinkle our churches with tears, utter their souls in perpetual sighs and complaints, and incessantly cry religion! religion! but who know charity only by the pain they feel when it is mentioned to them. "Ye, pharisees, make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. But rather," rather than put on all these airs of piety, rather than affect an ignorant zeal, rather than practice exactness in trifles, "give alms of such things as you have." Charity is the centre, where all virtues meet. "O man, what doth the Lord re-

quire of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, though I give my body to be burned, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains," and, we may add, though I should receive the communion every day of my life, though I fast every week, though I burn with the zeal of a seraph, yet if "I have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal!" Mich. vi. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c.

But these reflections are too vague, let us be more particular. We will divide this discourse into two parts. In the first, we will recommend alms-giving by making an eulogium on benevolence, which ought to be the principle of it. In the second part we will make some particular observations on alms-giving itself.

I. An eulogium on benevolence shall be our first part. We consider this virtue in several different views. 1. As it regards society. 2. As it respects religion. 3. As it influences death. 4. As it regards judgment. 5. As it respects heaven. And, lastly, as it regards God himself. Benevolence is the happiness of society, and the essence of religion. It triumphs over the horrors of death, and pleads for us before that terrible tribunal at which we must be judged. Benevolence is the bond of celestial intelligences, the brightest ray of their glory, and the chief article of their felicity. Benevolence is the image of God himself, and the expression of his essence. So that to practise the duty of charity, to give alms from this principle, is to be a worthy citi-

zen, a good christian, cheerful in death, absolved from guilt, and a member of the church triumphant. To give alms is to return to our center, to resemble God, from whom our souls derived their existence. Let us examine each of these articles.

1. Benevolence constitutes the happiness of *society*; to give alms is to perform the duty of a good citizen. In order to comprehend this, it will be only necessary to examine the principle of action in him who refuses to assist the poor according to his ability, and the miseries to which society would be reduced were each member of it to act on the same principle. The principle of a man, who does not contribute to assist the poor according to his power, is, that he who possesses temporal benefits, ought to hold them only for himself, and that he ought never to impart them to others except when his own interest requires him to do so; and that when his own interest is unconnected with the condition of his neighbour, he ought not to be affected with his misfortunes. Now it is certain no principle can be more contrary to public good. What would become of society were all the members of it to reason in this manner? Should the statesman say, I will make use of my knowledge and experience to arrive at the pinnacle of honour, and to conduct my family thither; but, when the interest of my country is unconnected with mine, I will abandon the helm, and give myself no concern to procure advantages for other people! What if a general should say, I will employ all my courage and strength to surmount every obstacle in the way of my fortune; but should

the enemy offer me advantages greater than I can procure of my country, I will turn my hand, and destroy the country which I now defend! What if the minister should say, I will endeavour only to save myself, or I will study only to display my talents; but when this end cannot be obtained, I will harden my heart against perplexed minds, distressed consciences, people dying in despair, and I will neglect every duty, which has only God and a miserable wretch for spectators!

Extend this principle of self-interest. Apply it to different conditions of life, and you will perceive it leads from absurdity to absurdity, and from crime to crime. You will see, that he who makes it the rule of his actions, violates all the laws which mankind made for one another, when they built cities and formed states. In such establishments men make tacit conditions, that they will succour one another, that they will reward some services by other services, and that when any are rendered incapable of serving others, or of maintaining themselves, they should not be left to perish, but that each should furnish such relief as he himself would wish to receive in the same case.

If a rich man, therefore, refuse to assist the poor, he violates this primitive law, and consequently saps the foundation of society. As good politicians, we ought to proceed rigorously against a miser, he should be lodged among animals of another species, and such pleasures as arise from a society of men should be refused to him, because he refuses to contribute to them, and lives only for himself. For want of hu-

man laws, there is I know not what malediction affixed to those who are destitute of charity. They are considered with horror. Their insensibility is a subject of public conversation. People give one another notice to be upon their guard with such men, and to use caution in dealing with people of principles so odious. For do not deceive yourselves; do not think to impose long on the public; do not imagine your turpitude can be long hid, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed," Matt. x. 26. We know well enough how to distinguish a charitable man from a miser. A note of infamy is set upon the last, and people say to one another, See, observe that old man, who alone possesses a fortune sufficient for ten families, see how avariciously he accumulates money, and how cruelly he refuses to assist the poor with the least particle of what death is just going to take from him! See that proud ambitious woman, who displays her vanity with so much parade in the sight of the whole world, see how she makes the poor expiate the guilt of her pride, by feeding her vanity with what ought to buy them bread. Thus people talk. They do more, they reckon, they calculate, they talk the matter over at large in public company, one relates the history of the miser, and another makes quaint remarks, and all together form an odious portrait, which every man abhors.

2. Consider benevolence in regard to *religion*, and particularly in regard to the christian religion, of which we affirmed it was the essence. In what light soever you view Jesus Christ, the teacher of the gospel, you will find him displaying this virtue. Con-

sider him as appointed to save you, observe his birth, his preaching, his actions, his preparation for death, his death itself; in all these different views he recommends charity to you.

Consider Jesus as appointed for salvation. What inclined God to form the design of saving the world? Was it any eminent quality in man? Were we not *children of wrath*, execrable objects in the eyes of the Lord? Was it any service rendered to God? Alas! we were enemies in our minds by wicked works, Col. i. 21. Was it any prospect of retribution? But "our goodness extendeth not unto him," Psal. xvi. 2. Is not all-sufficiency one of his attributes? What then inclined God to form a plan of redemption? Ask Jesus Christ. He will inform you, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son," John iii. 16. Ask the apostle Paul. He will tell you, "It was for his great love wherewith he loved us," Eph. ii. 4.

The birth of Jesus Christ preacheth love to us; for why this flesh? why this blood? why this incarnation? In general it was for our salvation. My brethren, have you ever weighed these words of St. Paul? "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood,"—(the scripture contains elevated sentiments which can never be enough studied. Divines distinguish senses of scripture into literal and mystical; we add a third, a sublime sense, and this passage is an example,)—"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 14,

&c. Observe these words, “he took part of flesh and blood that he might be merciful.” What! could he not be merciful without flesh and blood? “In that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” How! Is not Jesus Christ, as Lord of the universe, able to deliver us from temptations? True, he is Almighty. His compassion inclines him to succour us. Yet, it should seem, according to St. Paul, that something was wanting to his omnipotence. It seems as if universal knowledge was not sufficient to inform him fully of the excess of our miseries. What was wanting was to know our ills by experimental feeling. This knowledge is incompatible with deity, deity is impassible; and it was to supply this, and to acquire this knowledge, that God made known to the world the unheard-of mystery of *God manifest in the flesh*, so that the Saviour might be inclined to relieve miseries which he himself had felt. “He also himself took part of flesh and blood, that he might be merciful. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Jesus Christ in his doctrine hath taught us benevolence, for to what but love does all his doctrine tend? What is the new commandment he gave us? “That we should love one another,” John xiii. 24. What is “pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father?” Is it not “to visit the fatherless and the widows?” James i. 27. What one thing was lacking to the young man who had not committed adultery, had not killed, had not defrauded? Was it not “to sell his goods, and give to the poor?”



Matt. xix. 21. The whole system of christianity tends to charity ; the doctrines to charity ; the duties to charity ; the promises to charity ; the ordinances which assemble us in one house, as members of one family, where we eat at one table, as children of one father, all tend to establish the dominion of charity.

The actions of Jesus Christ preach charity to us, for all his life was employed in exercises of benevolence. What zeal for the salvation of his neighbours ! Witness his powerful exhortations, his tender prayers, his earnest entreaties. What compassion for the miseries of others ! Witness his emotions, when “ he saw the multitudes fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,” Matt. ix. 36. witness the tears he shed at the grave of Lazarus, and over ungrateful Jerusalem. We have, in a few words, an abridgement of the most amiable life that ever was : “ He went about doing good,” Acts. x. 38.

Jesus preached charity in his preparation for death.

You know what troubles agitated his mind at the approach of this terrible period. You know what difference there is between his death and our death. As we draw near to death we approach a throne of grace ; but Christ went to a tribunal of vengeance. We go to our father ; he went to his judge. We are responsible for our own sins ; but upon the head of this victim lay all the crimes of the people of God. Amidst so many formidable objects, what filled the mind of Jesus Christ ? Love, “ Now, holy Father, I am no more in the world,” said he, “ but

these are in the world, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are," John xvii. 11. As if he had said, Father, take me for the victim of thy displeasure, let me feel all its strokes, give me the dregs of the cup of thine indignation to drink; provided my beloved disciples be saved, my joy will be full.

In fine, Jesus Christ taught us benevolence by his death; for "greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John xv. 13. There was neither a wound in his body, nor an incision in his hands or his feet, nor a drop of his blood that was shed, which did not publish benevolence. His love supported him against the fears of death, the terrors of divine justice, and the rage of hell. His love extended even to his executioners; and, less affected with his own pains than with the miseries to which their crimes exposed them, he fetched, (it was one of his last sighs,) a sigh of love, and ready to expire, said, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34.

Such is the gospel. Such is your religion. Now I ask, my brethren, can a man imagine himself a disciple of such a master, can he aspire at such noble promises, can he admit such truths, in one word, can he be a christian, and not be charitable? Have we not reason to affirm, that benevolence is the essence of christianity, the center to which the lines of all christian virtues tend?

3. A third reflection, that is, that benevolence triumphs over the horrors of *death*, ought to have great weight with us. A meditation of death is one

of the most powerful of all motives to guard us against temptations, agreeably to a fine saying of the son of Sirach, "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss," Ecclus. vii. 36. This thought hath a peculiar influence in regard to charity.

In effect, what is death? I consider it principally in two views, first, as a general shipwreck, in which our fortunes, titles, and dignities are lost. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," 1 Tim. vi. 7. Next, I consider it as the time of examination and judgment, for "it is appointed to all men once to die, and after that the judgment," Heb. ix. 27. The moment of death is a fatal period, in which are united the excesses of our youth, the distractions of our manhood, the avarice of our old age, our pride, our ambition, our impurity, our covetousness, our treacheries, our perjuries, our calumnies, our blasphemies, our lukewarmness, our profanations; all these crimes will form one black cloud, heavy and hanging ready to burst on our heads.

These are two just views of death, and ideas of these make, if I may be allowed to say so, the two most formidable weapons of *the king of terrors*, the most terrible of all terrible things. But the benevolent man is covered from these attacks.

The charitable man need not fear a deprivation of his fortune, for in this respect he does not die. He hath prevented the ravages of death by disburdening himself of his riches. He hath eradicated the love of the world. He hath given to the poor what

would otherwise have fed avarice. Yet, let me recollect myself, the charitable man doth not impoverish himself by his benevolence. He hath sent his fortune before him. These are scriptural ideas. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, will he pay him again. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations," Prov. xix. 17. Luke xvi. 9. At death the christian beholds these friends opening their arms to receive him. I recollect here an epitaph said to be engraven on the tomb of Atolus of Rheims. *He exported his fortune before him into heaven by his charities, he is gone thither to enjoy it.* What a fine epitaph, my brethren! Happy he, who, instead of such pompous titles as the vanity of the living puts on the tombs of the dead, under pretence of honouring the merit of the deceased, instead of such nauseous inscriptions as feed pride among bones, worms, and putrefaction, objects so proper to teach us humility, happy he, who has a right to such an epitaph as that just now mentioned! *He exported his fortune before him into heaven by his charities, he is gone thither to enjoy it.* Happy he, who, instead of splendid funeral processions, and a long train of hired attendants, who seem less disposed to lament death than to increase the numbers of the dead, happy he, whose funeral is attended and lamented by the poor! Happy he, whose funeral oration is spoken by the wretched in sobs and sighs and expressions like these, *I was naked, and he clothed me, I was hungry, and he fed*

me, I lived a dying life, and he was the happy instrument of providence to support me!

A charitable man need not fear death considered as a time of account. What saith the scripture concerning charity in regard to our sins? "It covereth a multitude," 1 Pet. iv. 8. Daniel giveth this counsel to a guilty king, "Break off thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor," chap. iv. 27. Not that our scriptures authorize a sacrilegious commentary, such as some sinners make upon these passages. Under pretence, that it is said, *charity covereth a multitude of sins*, or that it *puts away our sins*, (the sense of the first is disputed, and we will not now explain it,) under this pretence, I say, some christians pretend to make a tacit compact with God. The import of this contract is, that the sinner should be allowed by God, for the sake of his alms-deeds, to persist in sin. An unjust man, who retains the property of others, will give a trifle to the poor, and, under pretence that *charity covereth a multitude of sins*, will hold himself free from the law of restitution. A debauchee will give alms, and, under pretence that *charity covereth a multitude of sins*, will think himself authorised to lead an unclean life. Great God! is this the idea we form of thy majesty! If these be the motives of our virtues, whence do our vices spring? Shall we pretend with presents to blind thine eyes, eyes of purity itself! Would we make thee, O God! an accomplice in our crimes! and have we forgot that prohibition so remarkable in thy law, "thou shall not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the

Lord?" Deut. xxiii. 18. It is, however, very certain that charity disarms death, in regard to that account which we are about to give of the manner in which we have disposed of our property, for charity is the least equivocal mark of our christianity, and the least suspicious evidence of our faith.

I do not know whether in the perfect enjoyment of health, and the pleasures of life, you enter into these reflections; but when you think yourselves ready to expire, you implore our assistance, and require us to comfort you. We seldom succeed much on these occasions. Miserable comforters are we all. Religion with all its evidences, grace with all its charms, the promises of the gospel with all their magnificence, are generally insufficient to administer consolation. Christians, you must certainly disarm us then to-day against yourselves. Put into our hands to-day an argument against that fear of death which will shortly seize you. Give weight to our ministry, and by disarming death by your charities, put us into a condition to shew you death disarmed at the end of your life.

4. Charity provides against the terrors with which an apprehension of the last judgment ought to inspire us. Jesus Christ hath furnished us with this idea, for thus he speaks in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, he shall say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirs-

ly, and ye gave me drink. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," ver. 32, &c.

There is another of the passages of which we just now spoke, and which ought to be understood in a sense altogether sublime. Jesus Christ personates the poor, and takes on himself, if I may speak so, all their obligations. What is the reason of this conduct? If the poor be so dear to him, why does he leave them to suffer; and if he leave them to suffer, why does he say they are so dear to him? My brethren, this is intended to exercise our faith, and to purify our love. Should Christ come to us in pomp and glory, surrounded with devouring fire, with all the ensigns of his majesty, attended by seraphims, and by thousand thousands ministering unto him; should he come in this manner to ask of us a cup of water, a piece of bread, a little money, which of us would refuse to grant his request? But this mark of our love would be suspicious. It would proceed from emotions excited by the splendour of his majesty, rather than from genuine love. No wonder a king is respected in his court, and upon his throne; majesty dazzles, and ensigns of supreme dignity excite emotions in all the powers of our souls. But should this king survive some disgrace, should he be banished from his kingdom, and abandoned by his subjects, then his real friends would be discovered, and he would prepare them a thousand rewards. This is an image of Jesus Christ. In vain prostrating ourselves at the foot of his throne, we say to him a thousand times over, *Lord, thou knowest that we love thee.*

Perhaps this profession of esteem may proceed more from a love of the benefits, than of the benefactor who bestows them. Banished from his heavenly court in the persons of his members, forsaken by his subjects, covered with rags, and lodged in an hospital, he comes to try his real friends, solicits their compassion, presents his miseries to them, and tells them at the same time, that his condition will not be always thus despicable, that he shall be soon re-established on his throne, and that he will then recompense their care with eternal felicity; this is the meaning of the words just now read, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink." Grand motive to charity! Immense weight with a soul the least animated with ingenuousness and fervour! I am not surprised, however, that motives so strong in themselves are frequently ineffectual with us. Always confined in a sphere of sensible objects, taken up with the present moment, contracted within the limits of our own small circle, we never look forward to futurity, never think of that great day in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and fix our eternal doom. But who is there, who is there, that in the presence of all mankind, in the presence of all the angels of heaven, in the presence of the whole universe, and in the presence of God himself, can bear this reproof from the mouth of the Son of God, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink!"

5. Let us consider charity in regard to heaven itself. We say benevolence is a celestial virtue, and



we propose this fifth reflection to you, in order to enforce the necessity, and to display the excellence of charity. Understand, my brethren, all the other virtues which the gospel prescribes to us, are characterized by a mortification, which obliges us to enter into our nothingness, and reminds us of our turpitude and misery. They are not absolute positive excellencies, they are remedies for our ills. For example, faith supposes our ignorance; hope supposes our poverty; patience implies afflictions; repentance supposes sin. All public worship, prayer, humiliation, fasting, sacraments, all imply that we are gross and carnal. All this will have no place in heaven. In heaven there will be no faith, no hope, no prayer, no patience. In heaven there will be neither humiliation, nor fasting, nor sacraments. Charity, rising out of love, is superior to all other exercises, it hath an excellence proper to itself; love will follow us to heaven, and heaven is the abode of love. There God, who is love, establisheth his empire; there perfect love reigns; there is seen the ineffable love which the father hath for his Son; there is found that incomprehensible union which unites the three divine persons who are the object of our worship; there Jesus Christ, our mystical head, unites himself with his members; there is displayed the love of God to glorified saints, with whom he shares his felicity and glory; there the love of glorified saints to God is made manifest; there are seen those tender ties which unite the inhabitants of heaven to each other, hearts aiming at the same end, burning with the same fire, enlivened with the same zeal, and joining in one voice

to celebrate the author of their existence ; there, then, benevolence is a heavenly virtue ; it constitutes the felicity of the place. Love is the most perfect of all pleasures. The more the Deity approacheth his saints by an effusion of this love, and the more he communicates the delights of it to them, the more the saints approach God by a return of love ; and the nearer they draw to the source of happiness, the happier they render themselves and one another by such communications.

Let us not lightly pass over this reflection. It is good to be here. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Matt. xi. 15. He that hath the most refined sense, the quickest invention, the most noble imagination, let him conceive a society united by the purest principles, and cemented by the firmest virtue. This is paradise, this is love. This is charity ; charity that gives no alms, because none in heaven are indigent, but charity which goes so far as to give all, to give up happiness, to give self, to sacrifice self for other objects of love ; witness the presents which came from heaven ; witness the description of this holy place ; witness God, who gave us his Son, his only Son, the tenderest object of his love ; witness the Son, who gave himself ; witness the blessed angels, who encamp round about us to protect and defend us ; witness the triumphs of glorified saints, who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, as if more interested in his happiness than in their own ; witness the crowns which the saints cast before the throne of the Lamb, resigning, as it were, in his favour their felicity and glory ; witness these expres-

sions of love, which we shall one day understand by an experimental enjoyment of them, "his banner over me is love. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," Cant. ii. 4. and vi. 5.

After having elevated our meditation to heaven, we return to you, my brethren. We blush at what we are doing to-day. We are ashamed to preach, complain, and exhort. Why? Are we endeavouring to engage you to sacrifice your fortunes, to renounce your lives, to become accursed for your brethren? Are we trying to induce you to perform some heretical and uncommon act of love? No. Alas! Alas! We are obliged to exhort, and complain, and preach, to obtain of you a little bit of bread, a few tattered clothes, a little small share of what you give with great profusion to the world. Good God! What christians are you! Is this the church! Are you the household of faith? Are we preaching to citizens of heaven? Are we knocking at the doors of hearts that believe a life eternal? But how will you enter into that abode with such unfeeling souls? Would you go to interrupt the communion of saints? Would you go to disorder heaven, and to disconcert angels? And do you not perceive, that if you do not put on bowels of mercies, you banish yourselves from an abode in which all breathe charity and love?

In fine, We consider charity in regard to God himself. Love is the essence of Deity. God is love. So an apostle hath defined it. Here reflections rise from every part to establish our principle. Nature, providence, society, the church, heaven, earth, elements, all preach to us the love of God ; all preach to us the excellence of charity, which makes us resemble God, in the most lovely of his attributes. It would give us pleasure to enlarge on each of these articles, were it not necessary, after having made some general reflections on benevolence, which is the principle of alms-giving, to make some particular reflections on alms-deeds themselves.

II. My brethren, were it only necessary in this discourse to give you high ideas of benevolence, and to convince you in general of the necessity of giving alms, we would here put a period to our sermon. But can we be ignorant of what passes on these occasions? Each satisfies himself with a vague approbation of such truths. Each is convinced that we ought to be charitable, and that the poor should be relieved : but each is content with himself, and, examining less what he gives than whether he gives, persuades himself that he does enough, and that nobody ought to complain of him. It is then necessary, before we finish this discourse, to enter into some detail, and to prescribe some rules, by which we may pretty well know what each is obliged to give in alms. We will not determine with exact precision on this article. We are fully convinced, that, were we to conduct you from principle to principle to an exact demonstration of what the gospel requires of you in this

case, we should speak of things which would make you suspect that we took pains to advance unheard-of maxims, and to preach paradoxes.

We will then content ourselves with proposing five considerations to you; or, to speak more plainly, we will produce five calculations, to which we beg your attention, and, after we have spoken of them, we will leave every man's conscience at liberty to draw consequences. The first calculation is that of the charities which God prescribed to the Jews under the law. The second is that of the charities of the primitive christian church. The third is that of our superfluous expences. The fourth is that of the number of our poor. The last is that of the funds appropriated to their support.

I. The first calculation is that of the alms which God prescribed to the Jews, and in this we include all that they were indispensibly obliged to furnish for religion. This calculation may well make christians blush, as it convinces us of this melancholy truth, that, though our religion excels all religions in the world, yet its excellence lies in the gospel, and not in the lives of those who profess it.

1. The Jews were obliged to abstain from all the fruits that grew on trees new planted the first three years. These first fruits were accounted uncircumcision. It was a crime for the planters to appropriate them, Lev. xix. 23.

2. The fruits of the fourth year were devoted to the Lord. They were called *holy, to praise the Lord withal*. Either they were sent to Jerusalem, or being valued, they were *redeemed* by a sum equivalent

paid to the priest; so that these people did not begin to receive the profits of their fruit trees till the fifth year.

3. The Jews were obliged every year to offer to God the "first of all the fruits of the earth," Deut. xxvi. 2. When the head of a family walked in his garden, and perceived which tree first bore fruit, he distinguished it by tying on a thread, that he might know it when the fruits were ripe. At that time each father of a family put that fruit into a basket. At length all the heads of families, who had gathered such fruit in one town, were assembled, and deputies were chosen by them to carry them to Jerusalem. These offerings were put upon an ox crowned with flowers, and the commissioners of the convoy went in pomp to Jerusalem, singing these words of the hundred and twenty-second psalm, "I was glad, when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." When they arrived at the city, they sung these words, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." At length they went to the temple, each carrying his offering on his shoulders, the king himself not excepted, again singing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors," Psal. xxiv. 7.

4. The Jews were obliged to leave the corn on their lands ends for the use of the poor; and, in order to avoid the frauds which might be practised in this case, it was determined to leave the sixtieth part of the land as a just proportion for the poor, Lev. xix. 9.

5. The ears of corn, which fell from the hand in harvest time, were devoted to the same purpose; and if you consult Josephus,\* he will tell you that the Jews held themselves obliged by this command of God, not only to leave the poor such ears of corn as fell by chance, but to let fall some freely and on purpose for them to glean.

6. The Jews were obliged to give the fortieth part of their produce to the priest, at least it is thus the Sanhedrim explained the law written in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy.

7. They were obliged to pay a tenth to maintain the Levites, Numb. xvii. 16.

8. The produce of the earth every seventh year belonged to the poor, at least the owner had no more right than people who had no property, Lev. xxv. 23. This command is express, and the Jews have such an idea of this precept, that they pretend the captivity in Babylon was a punishment for the violation of it. To this belong these words, "The land shall enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemy's land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths," chap. xxxvi. 34.

9. All debts contracted among this people were released at the end of every seven years; so that a debtor, who could not discharge his debt within seven years, was at the end of that time released from all obligation to discharge it, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. Deut. xv. 2.

To all these expences add extraordinaries for sacrifices, oblations, journies to Jerusalem, half shekels

\* Antiq. Jud. cap. 8. lib. iv.

to the sanctuary, and so on, and you will find, that God imposed upon his people a tribute amounting to nearly half their income.\* What is worthy of consideration is, that the modern Jews, as you may convince yourselves by conversing with them, not being able literally to discharge a great number of precepts, which originally related to their ancestors, are far from being lax in relieving their poor; so that if there are as many Jews in a place as form what they call a congregation (and ten they say are sufficient) they appoint treasurers to collect charities for the poor. Lest avarice, prevailing over principle, should prevent the discharge of this duty, they have judges who examine their ability, and who tax them at about a tenth of their income, so that one of the greatest offences which we give them, and which prejudices them against christianity, is the little charity christians have for the poor. A scandal, by the way, and to your confusion let it be spoken, which would undoubtedly increase, if they were better acquainted with you, and if they saw that affected dissipation, which prevents many of you from seeing the hands held out to receive alms for the poor at the doors of our churches.

This is the first calculation we have to propose to you. Having proposed it to your examination we will determine nothing. One reflection, however, must not be omitted, that is, that the gospel is an economy infinitely more noble, and more excellent than the law. The gospel, by abolishing the leviti-

\* Episcopus Inst. Theol. lib. iii. cap. 5.



cal ceremonies, hath enforced the morality of judaism much more effectually, and particularly what regards charity. Jesus Christ hath fixed nothing on this article. He hath contented himself by enjoining us in general "to love our neighbour as ourselves," not being willing to set any other bounds to our love for him than those which we set to our love for ourselves. If then under an economy so gross, if under an economy in which differences were made between Jews and Gentiles, nation and nation, people and people, (which always restrain charity,) God required his people to give, to say the least, a third part of their income, what, what are the obligations of christians! I repeat it again, were I to pursue these reflections, I should certainly be taxed with advancing unheard-of maxims, and preaching paradoxes.

II. The second calculation we have to propose to you is that of the charities of the *primitive christians*. The great master had so fully imparted his own charitable disposition to his disciples, that, according to St. Luke, "all that believed had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," Acts ii. 44, 45. In the time of Tertullian, christian charity was proverbial, and it was said of them, "See how they love one another;"\* insomuch that the heathens, surprised to see an union so affectionate, ascribed it to supernatural causes. They said, christians had some unknown characters imprinted on their bodies, and

\* Tertul. Apol. xxxix.

these characters had the virtues of inspiring them with love for one another.† Lucian, that satyrical writer, who died in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, in a discourse on the death of the philosopher Peregrinus, who burnt himself at the olympic games, Lucian, I say, by attempting to satirize christians, passed a high encomium on them. “It is incredible, says he, what pains and diligence they use by all means to succour one another. Their legislator made them believe that they are all brethren, and since they have renounced our religion, and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are common‡.” We have also an undoubted testimony of Julian the apostate on this article. He was one of the greatest persecutors of the primitive christians, and he was a better politician in the art of persecution than either his predecessors or successors. Julian did not attack religion with open violence; he knew, what we have seen with our own eyes, that is, that violence inflames zeal, and that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. He attacked religion in another manner, and, as the charity of the primitive christians rendered christianity venerable, this tyrant attempted to clothe paganism with christian charity. Thus he wrote to a pagan priest. “Let us consider, saith he, that nothing hath so much contributed to the progress of the superstition of christians as their charity to strangers. I think we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place; for it would be a

† Minutius Felix.

‡ Lucian, tom. 2. de la mort du fil. Peregrine.

shame for us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none, and while the impious Galileans (thus he calls christians) provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours.”

If you wish for observations more particular concerning primitive christian charity, we answer,

1. The primitive christians expended large sums in propagating the *faith*, and in preaching the gospel. They thought that the principal care of a christian, after *bringing into captivity* his own *thoughts to the obedience of Christ*, was to convert others. Ecclesiastical history gives us many examples, and particularly that of St. Chrysostom, mentioned by Theodoret. “He assembled monks full of zeal, and sent them to preach the gospel in Phenicia; and, having understood that there were people dispersed along the banks of the Danube who thirsted for the waters of grace, he sought out men of ardent zeal, whom he sent to labour like apostles in the propagation of the *faith*.”\* I blush to mention this example, because it recalls that reproach which we just now mentioned, that is, that we have no zeal for the salvation of infidels, and that the fleets which we send to the new world, are much more animated with a desire of accumulating wealth, than of conveying the gospel to the natives.

2. The primitive christians paid a wonderful attention to the *sick*. They kept people on purpose for this pious office. In the city of Alexandria alone, the number was so great, that Theodosius was obliged to diminish it, and to fix it at five hundred; and

\* Theod. Hist. Eccles. v. 29, 30, &c.

when it was afterwards represented to him that the number was unequal to the task, he increased it to six hundred, as a law in the Theodosian code informs us.\* I cannot help repeating on this occasion a beautiful passage of Eusebius. Speaking of a plague which ravaged Egypt, after he had described it, he adds, “ Many of our brethren, neglecting their own health, through an excess of charity have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. After they had held in their arms the dying saints, after they had closed their mouths and their eyes, after they had embraced, kissed, washed, and adorned them with their best habits, and carried them on their shoulders to the grave, they have been glad themselves to receive the same kind offices from others who have imitated their zeal and charity.”†

3. The primitive christians were very charitable in redeeming *captives*. Witness St. Ambrose, who was inclined to sell the sacred utensils for that purpose. Witness St. Cyprian, who, in a letter to the bishops of Numidia concerning some christians taken captive by barbarians, implores their charity for the deliverance of these miserable people, and contributed towards it more than a thousand pounds. Witness a history related by Socrates. The Romans had taken seven thousand persons prisoners, many of whom perished with hunger in their captivity. A christian bishop named Acacius assembled his church, and addressed them in this sensible and pious language: “ God needeth not, said he, neither dishes or

\* Code Theod. lib. xvi. 2.

† Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 22

cups, as he neither eats nor drinks; I think it right, therefore, to make a sale of a great part of the church plate, and to apply the money to the support and redemption of captives." Socrates adds, that he caused the holy utensils to be melted down, and paid the soldiers for the ransom of the prisoners, maintained them all winter, and sent them home in the spring with money to pay the expence of their journey."\*

In fine, the charity of the primitive christians appears, by the pious *foundations* which they made, by the innumerable hospitals which they supported, and above all, by the immense, and almost incredible, number of poor which they maintained. Observe these words of St. Chrysostom: "Consider, says he, among how many poor, widows, and orphans, this church distributes the charity of one rich man; the number in the catalogue is three thousand, not to mention extraordinary assistances given to prisoners, people sick in hospitals, strangers, leprous persons, servants of the church, and many other persons, whose necessities oblige them to apply every day, and who receive both food and clothing."† What renders this the more remarkable is, that the primitive christians placed their glory in their charities. We have a famous example in the conduct of the church of Rome in regard to the Emperor Decius. This tyrant demanded their treasure; a deacon answered for the whole church, and required one day

\* Ambros. Offic. lib. ii. cap. 28. S. Cyprian Let. ix. Edit. Oxon. 57. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 21.

† Chrysost. Homil. lxxvi. in St. Matt. Edit. Front. Duc. lxxvii.

to comply with the order of the Emperor. When the term was expired, he assembled all the blind, and the lame, and the sick, that were supported by the church, and pointing to them, told the tyrant, “these are the riches of the church, these its revenue and treasure.”† I have collected these examples to convince you, my brethren, that we have degenerated from the virtue of our ancestors, and that the lives of the primitive christians, at least in this article, were a lively comment on the doctrine of their master.

III. A third calculation, which we conjure you to examine as christians ought, is that of your *superfluous expences*. We do not call those expences superfluous which are necessary to your maintenance, nor those which contribute to the convenience and pleasure of life, nor those which support your rank; we do not touch this part of your fortune; we agree, that, before you think of your brethren, your countrymen, the *household of faith*, you should set apart (sad necessity, my brethren, which engageth us to preach to you a morality so lax, and to ask so little, lest we should obtain nothing) we agree, I say, that before you think of the poor you should set apart as much as is necessary for your maintenance to a certain degree; for your ornaments to a certain degree; for your amusement and appearances to a certain degree; all this we give up, and agree, that this part shall be sacred, and that it shall be accounted a crime to touch the least particle of it. But reckon, I beseech you, what sums are consumed beyond all this. Cast your eyes about this church. Endeavour to

† Ambros. Offic. lib. ii. cap. 28.

calculate the immense sums that have been spent in luxury since you laid aside that wise simplicity which your ancestors exemplified ; I say since that time, for before, this article could not have appeared in a christian sermon. Let us reckon what is now spent in extravagant entertainments, excessive gaming, immodest dresses, elegant furniture, and constant public amusements, all become now necessary by habit. Such a calculation would convince us, that what is given to the poor is nothing in comparison with what is spent in luxury ; and yet I will venture to affirm, that in times like the present we are bound to give a great deal more than our superfluities in charity. The poor we recommend to you are, for the most part, so venerable ; they have impoverished themselves for such a noble cause, that we ought to retrench even our necessary expences to support them. At least this superfluity, such a superfluity as we have described, a superfluity given to vice, can we refuse to give it to the Lord ? If we dedicate it to the poor, we offer to God altogether our criminal pleasures and the money they cost, our passions and our charities ; and by so doing we discharge two religious duties, and present a double sacrifice.

IV. The last calculation we make (a sad calculation indeed, but, however, necessary) is that of the number of our *poor* ; and, to abridge the matter, we join to this an account of the *funds* which we have to support them. It is necessary to enter into this detail, for some people pay no attention to these things ; indeed, they know in general that there are

poor, but, satisfied with their own abundance, they give themselves little concern to know how many such persons there are.

Turn your eyes a moment from your own prosperity, and fix them on these objects. All the world knows, that an infinite number of poor people are supported in this country by charity; all the world knows that the afflictions with which it hath pleased God to visit our churches, have filled these provinces with an innumerable multitude of distressed objects, who have no other resource than the charity of our magistrates. This charity will always be a reason for our gratitude. It enlivens not only those who partake of it, but all the rest of the exiles who behold with the tenderest sensibility the benefits conferred on their brethren. But woe be to you, if the charity of the state be made a pretext for your hard-heartedness, and if public beneficence be made an obstacle to private alms-deeds! Understand, then, that beside the poor we have mentioned, there is a great number who have no share in the bounty of the states. This church hath several members of this sort. Beside an infinity of occasions which present themselves every day, beside a thousand extraordinary cases unprovided for, beside a number of indigent persons occasionally relieved, the church supports many hundreds of families, in which are many infants, many sick, many aged, and many dying; they who have been supported through life, must be buried after their death at the charge of the church. All these wants must be regularly supplied every week, whether there be money in



hand or not. When your charities fail, our officers assist the poor with their purse, as at all times they assist them with their pains. Is the payment of the weekly sums deferred? Alas! if it be deferred one single day, the poor have no bread that day: the dying expires without succour: the dead lies unburied, and putrifies, and infects those who assisted him while alive.

Whatever pains are taken, whatever exactness is observed, how great soever your charities be, the poor's fund in this church cannot supply all their wants.—What am I saying, the funds of the church? We have none. We have no other supplies than what are derived from our charity given at the door of the church, from legacies left by a few pious persons, and from collections. All these are expended, and more than expended. Our officers are in arrears, and have no other hopes than what are founded on your donations to-day, or next Wednesday, to the collection of which I give you this public notice.

You will ask me, without doubt, How then do all these poor subsist? for it is very certain they do subsist, and nobody perishes with hunger. How do they subsist? Can you want to be informed? Why, they suffer—they weep—they groan—from want of food they fall sick—sickness increases their wants—their wants increase their sickness—they fall victims to death—a death so much the more cruel by how much the more slow it is;—and this death—this death cries to heaven for vengeance against you who shut up your bowels of compassion from them.

My brethren, with what eyes do you see these things? What effects do these sad objects produce upon you? Can you behold the miseries of your brethren without compassion? Can you without any emotion of pity hear Jesus Christ begging his bread of you? And all these blows that we have given at the door of your hearts, shall they serve only to discover the hardness of them, and to aggravate your guilt?

We frequently complain, that our sermons are useless; that our exhortations are unprofitable; that our ministry produces neither wisdom in your minds, nor virtue in your hearts, nor any alteration in your lives. You in your turn complain: you say we declaim; you affirm we exaggerate; and, as the reasonableness or futility of our complaints depends on a discussion into which it is impossible for us to enter, the question remains undetermined.

My brethren, you have it in your power to-day, and next Wednesday to make your apology. You may give a certain proof that you are not insensible to the care which God takes for your salvation. You may do us the favour to confound our reproofs, and to silence reproof for the future. Behold, our wants are before you. Behold, our hands are held out to receive your charity.

Do not lessen your gift on account of what you have hitherto done; do not complain of our importunity; do not say the miseries of the poor are perpetual, and their wants have no end; but rather let your former charities be considered as motives to future charities. Become models to yourselves. Fol-

low your own example. Recollect, that what makes the glory of this state and this church, what Jesus will commend at the last day, what will comfort you on your death-bed, will not be the rich beaufets that shine in your houses, the superb equipages that attend you, the exquisite dishes that nourish you, not even the signal exploits and numberless victories which astonish the universe, and fill the world with your names; but the pious foundations you have made, the families you have supported, the exiles you have received—these, these will be your felicity and glory.

You say, the miseries of the poor are perpetual and their wants endless; and this disheartens you. Alas! Is not this, on the contrary, what ought to inflame your charity? What! should your charity diminish as wants increase? What! because your brethren are not weary of carrying the cross of Christ, are you weary of encouraging them to do so?

You say, the miseries of the poor are perpetual, and their wants have no end. I understand you; this reproach touches us in a tender part. But have we less reason to complain, because we are always miserable? Yet, perhaps, we may not always be in a condition so melancholy. Perhaps God *will have mercy upon his afflicted*. Perhaps the flaming sword, which hath pursued us for more than twenty years, will *return into its scabbard, rest and be still*. Perhaps we may some day cease to be a wretched people, wandering about the world, exciting the displeasure of some, and tiring out the charity of oth-

ers. Perhaps God, in order to recompence the charity which you have testified by receiving us, will grant you the glory of re-establishing us; and, as you have lodged the captive ark, will empower you to conduct it back to Shiloh with songs of victory and praise. Perhaps, if we all concur to-day in the same design; if we all unite in one bond of charity; if, animated with such a noble zeal, we address our prayers to him, after we have offered to him our alms; perhaps we may build again the walls of our Jerusalem, and redeem our captive brethren from prisons, and galleys, and slavery. Perhaps, if God has determined that Egypt, which enslaves them, should be for ever the theatre of his vengeance and curse, he may bring out the remainder of his Israel with a *mighty hand and an out-stretched arm, with jewels of silver and jewels of gold, with flocks and herds, not an hoof being left behind*, according to the expression of Moses, *Exod. x. 11.*

After all, let us remember what was said at the beginning of this discourse, that if God requires alms of you, it is owing to his goodness towards you. Yes, I would engrave this truth upon your minds, and fix this sentiment in your hearts. I would make you fully understand, that God has no need of you to support his poor, and that he hath a thousand ways at hand to support them without you. I would fain convince you, that if he leaves poor people among you, it is for the reason we have already mentioned; it is from a sublime principle, for which I have no name. In dispensing his other favours, he makes you sink with joy under the weight of his

magnificence and mercy; to-day he offers to owe you something. He would become your debtor. He makes himself poor, that you may be enriched by enriching him. He would have you address that prayer which a prophet formerly addressed to him, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding," 1 Chron. xxix. 11, &c.

May these forcible reasons, and these noble motives convey light into the darkest minds, and soften the most obdurate hearts; and may each apply them to himself in particular! It happens, not unfrequently, that on these occasions each trusts to the public, and, imagining that the charity of an individual will be nothing to the total sum, for this reason omits to give. No, my brethren, there is no person here who does not make one. There is no person here who ought not to consider himself the public, and, if I may venture to say so, representing in some sort the

whole congregation. Every person here ought to consider his own contribution as deciding the abundance or the insignificance of our collection. Let each therefore tax himself. Let no one continue in arrears. Let a noble emulation be seen amongst us. Let the man in power give a part of the salary of his office. Let military men give a part of their pay. Let the merchant give a part of the profits of his trade. Let the mechanic give a part of the labour of his hands. Let the minister consecrate a part of what his ministry produces. Let the young man give a part of his pleasures. Let the lady bestow a part of her ornaments. Let the dissipated give the poor that *box of ointment*, which was intended for profane uses. Let the native of these provinces give a part of his patrimony : and let the refugee give a part of what he has saved from the fury of the ocean when his vessel was dashed to pieces ; and with a part of these remnants let him kindle a fire to offer sacrifices to that God who saved him from perishing by shipwreck.

My brethren, I know not what emotions of joy penetrate and transport me. I know not what emotions of my heart promise me, that this discourse will be attended with more success than all we have ever addressed to you. Ye stewards of our charity, ask boldly. *Come into our houses ye blessed of the Lord*, and receive alms of a people who will contribute with joy, yea even with gratitude and thanks.

But, my brethren, we are not yet content with you. Should you exceed all our expectations ; should you give all your fortune ; should you leave

no poor hereafter among you ; all this would not satisfy me. I speak not only for the interest of the poor, but for your own interest ; we wish you to give your charities with the same view. In giving your alms, give your minds, give your hearts. Commit to Jesus Christ not only a little portion of your property but your bodies, your souls, your salvation, that so you may be able to say in the agonies of death, “ I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,” 2 Tim. i. 12. God grant us this grace. To him be honour and glory for ever.





# SERMON X.

*Christian Heroism.*



PROVERBS xvi. 32.

*He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.*

**W**ERE we to judge of these words by the first impressions they make on the mind, we should place them among such hyperbolical propositions as imagination forms to colour and exceed truth. The mind on some occasions is so struck as to magnify the object in contemplation. The more susceptible people are of lively impressions, the more subject they are to declamation and hyperbole. We find these maxims sometimes necessary in explaining the sacred authors. Were we to adhere scrupulously to their words, we should often mistake their meaning, and extend their thoughts beyond due bounds. The people of the east seldom express themselves with precision. A cloud intercepting a few rays of light is the "sun darkened." A meteor in the air, is "the powers of the heavens shaken." Jonah in the belly of the fish, is a man "down at the bottom of the mountains." Thunder is the "voice of Jehovah, powerful and full of majesty, dividing flames of fire, breaking cedars of Lebanon, making Syrians skip,

and stripping forests bare." A swarm of insects is "a nation set in battle array, marching every one on his ways, not breaking their ranks, besieging a city, having the teeth of a lion, and the cheek teeth of a great lion," Joel i. 6, and ii. 7, 9.

If we be ever authorised to solve a difficult text by examining the licence of hyperbolical style; if ever it be necessary to reduce hyperbole to precision, is it not so now in explaining the text before us, "He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city?" What justness can there be in comparing a man, who by reflection corrects his passions, with an hero, who, in virtue of concerted plans, great fatigues, spending days and nights on horseback, surmounting difficulties, enduring heats and colds, braving a variety of dangers, at last arrives, by marching through a shower of shot darkening the air, to cut through a squadron, to scale a wall, and to hoist his flag in a conquered city?

But, however just this commentary may appear, you will make no use of it here, unless you place christianity in the exercise of easy virtues, and after the example of most men accommodate religion to your passions, instead of reforming your passions by religion. Endeavour to form principles, resist fashion and custom, eradicate prejudice, undertake the conquest of yourself, carry fire and sword into the most sensible part of your soul, enter the lists with your darling sin, "mortify your members which are upon earth," rise above flesh and blood, nature and self-love, and, to say all in one word, endeavour to "rule your spirit;" and you will find that Solomon

hath rigorously observed the laws of precision, that he hath spoken the language of logic, and not of oratory, and that there is not a shadow of hyperbole or exaggeration in this proposition, "He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

But to what period shall we refer the explication of the text? We will make meditation supply the place of experience, and we will establish a truth, which the greatest part of you have not experienced, and which perhaps you never will experience. This is the design of this discourse. Our subject is true heroism, the real hero.

I enter into the matter. The word *heroism* is borrowed of the heathens. They called those men heroes, whom a remainder of modesty and religion prevented their putting into the number of their gods, but who, for the glory of their exploits, were too great to be enrolled among mere men. Let us purify this idea: The man of whom Solomon speaks, "he who ruleth his spirit," ought not to be confounded with the rest of mankind; he is a man transformed by grace; one who, to use the language of scripture, is a "partaker of the divine nature." We are going to speak of this man, and we will first describe him, and next set forth his magnanimity, or, to keep to the text, we will first explain what it is to "rule the spirit," and, secondly, we will prove, that "he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city." If we proceed further, it will only be to add a few reflections, tending to convince you, that you are all called to heroism; that there is no middle way in religion; that you must of necessity either

bear the shame and infamy of being mean and dastardly souls, or be crowned with the glory of heroes.

I. Let us first explain the words of the text, "to rule the spirit." Few words are more equivocal in the sacred language than this which our interpreters have rendered *spirit*. It is put in different places for the thoughts of the *mind*, the passions of the *heart*, the emotions of *sense*, phantoms of *imagination*, and illusions of *concupiscence*. We will not trouble you with grammatical dissertations. In our idiom, "to rule the spirit," (and this is precisely the idea of Solomon) "to rule the spirit" is never to suffer one's self to be prejudiced by false ideas; always to see things in their true point of view; to regulate our hatred and our love, our desires and our inactivity, exactly according to the knowledge we have obtained after mature deliberation, that objects are worthy of our esteem, or deserve our aversion, that they are worth obtaining, or proper to be neglected.

But, as this manner of speaking, "to rule the spirit," supposes exercise, pains, labours, and resistance, we ought not to confine ourselves to the general idea which we have given. We consider man in three points of light; in regard to his natural dispositions; in regard to the objects that surround him; and in regard to the habits which he hath contracted.

1. Consider the *natural dispositions* of man. Man, as soon as he is in the world, finds himself the slave of his heart, instead of being master of it. I mean, that instead of a natural facility to admit only what is true, and to love only what is amiable, he feels I know not what interior power, which indisposes him

to truth and virtue, and conciliates him to vice and falsehood.

I am not going to agitate the famous question of free-will, nor to enter the lists with those, who are noted in the church for the heresy of denying the doctrine of human depravity; nor will I repeat all the arguments good and bad, which are alleged against it. If there be a subject, in which we ought to have no implicit faith, either in those who deny, or in those who affirm; if there be a subject, in the discussion of which they who embrace the side of error advance truth, and they who embrace the side of truth advance falsehoods, this is certainly the subject. But we will not litigate this doctrine. We will allege here only one proof of our natural depravity, that shall be taken from experience, and, for evidence of this fatal truth, we refer each of you to his own feelings.

Is virtue to be practised? Who does not feel, as soon as he is capable of observing, an inward power of resistance? By *virtue* here, I understand an universal disposition of an intelligent soul to devote itself to order, and to regulate its conduct as order requires. Order demands that when I suffer, I should submit myself to the mighty hand of God, which afflicts me. When I am in prosperity, order requires me to acknowledge the bounty of my benefactor. If I possess talents superior to those of my neighbour, order requires me to use them for the glory of him, from whom I received them. If I am obliged to acknowledge that my neighbour hath a richer endowment than I, order requires me to acquiesce with submission, and to acknowledge with humility this

difference of endowment ; should I revolt with insolence, or dispute through jealousy or self-love, I should act disorderly.

What I affirm of virtue, that it is a general disposition, that I affirm also in regard to an indisposition to sin. To avoid vice is to desist alike from every thing contrary to order, from slander and anger, from indolence and voluptuousness, and so on.

He who forms such ideas of the obligations of men, will have too many reasons to acknowledge, by his own inward feelings and experience, that we bring into the world with us propensities hostile and fatal to such obligations. Some of these are in the body ; others in the mind.

Some are in the *body*. Who is there that finds in his senses that suppleness and readiness of compliance with a volition, which is itself directed by laws of order ? Who does not feel his constitution rebel against virtue ? I am not speaking now of such men as brutally give themselves up to their senses, who consult no other laws than the revolutions of their own minds, and who, having abandoned for many years the government of their souls to the humours of their bodies, have lost all dominion over their senses. I speak of such as have the most sincere desire to hear and obey the laws of order. How often does a tender and charitable soul find in a body subject to violence and anger obstacles against the exercise of its charity and tenderness ? How often does a soul, penetrated with respect for the laws of purity, find in a body rebellious against this virtue, terrible obstacles, to which it is in a manner constrained to yield ?

Disorder is not only in the body ; the *soul* is in the same condition. Consult yourselves in regard to such virtues and vices as are, so to speak, altogether spiritual, and have no relation, or a very distant one, to matter, and you will find you brought into the world an indisposition to some of these virtues, and an inclination to the opposite vices. For example, avarice is one of these spiritual vices, having only a very distant relation to matter. I do not mean that avarice does not incline us towards sensible objects, I only say, that it is a passion less seated in the material than in the spiritual part of man ; it rises rather out of reflections of the mind, than out of motions of the body. Yet how many people are born sordid ; people always inclined to amass money, and to whom the bare thought of giving, or parting with any thing, gives pain ; people who prove, by the very manner in which they exercise the laws of generosity, that they are naturally inclined to violate them ; people who never give except by constraint, who tear away, as it were, what they bestow on the necessities of the poor ; and who never cut off those dear parts of themselves without taking the most affectionate leave of them ? Envy and jealousy are dispositions of the kind which we call spiritual. They have their seat in the soul. There are many persons who acknowledge the injustice and baseness of these vices, and who hate them, and who nevertheless are not sufficient masters of themselves to prevent the dominion of them, at least to prevent a repetition of them, and not to find sometimes their own misery in the prosperity of other persons.

As we feel in our constitution obstacles to virtue, and propensities to vice, so we perceive also inclinations to error, and obstacles to truth. These things are closely connected; for if we find within us natural obstacles to virtue, we find for that very reason natural obstacles to truth; and if we be born with propensities to vice, we are born on that very account prone to error. Strictly speaking, all ideas of vice may be referred to one, that is to error. Every vice, every irregular passion openly or tacitly implies a falsehood. Every vice, every irregular passion includes this error, that a man who gratifies his passion, is happier than he who restrains and moderates it. Now every man judging in this manner, whether he do so openly or covertly, takes the side of error. If we be then naturally inclined to some vices we are naturally inclined to some errors, I mean, to admit that false principle on which the irregular passion establisheth the vice it would commit, the desire of gratification. An impassionate man is not free to discern truth from falsehood, at least he cannot without extreme constraint discern the one from the other. He is inclined to fix his mind on whatever favours his passion, changes its nature and disguises vice in the habit of virtue; and, to say all in one word, he is impelled to fix his mind on whatever makes truth appear false, and falsehood true.

I conclude, the disposition of mind of which Solomon speaks, and which he describes by *ruling the spirit*, supposes labour, constraint, and exercise. A man who would acquire this noble disposition of mind, a man who would *rule his spirit*, must in some sort



re-create himself ; he finds himself at once, if I may be allowed to say so, at war with nature ; his body must be formed anew ; his humours and his spirits must be turned into another channel ; violence must be done to all the powers of his soul.

2. Having considered man in regard to his natural dispositions, observe him secondly in regard to *surrounding objects*. Here you will obtain a second exposition of Solomon's words, *He that ruleth his spirit* ; you will have a second class of evidences of that exercise, labour, and constraint, which true heroism supposes. Society is composed of many enemies, who seem to be taking pains to increase those difficulties which our natural dispositions oppose against truth and virtue.

Examine the members of this society among whom we are appointed to live, consult their ideas, hear their conversation, weigh their reasonings, and you will find almost every where false judgments, errors, mistakes, and prejudices ; prejudices of birth, taken from our parents, the nurses who suckled us, the people who made the habits in which we were wrapped in our cradles ; prejudices of education, taken from the masters to whom the care of our earlier days was committed, from some false ideas which they had imbibed in their youth, and from other illusions which they had created themselves ; prejudices of country, taken from the genius of the people among whom we have lived, and, so to speak, from the very air we have breathed ; prejudices of religion, taken from our catechists, from the divines we have consulted, from the pastors by whom we have been di-

rected, from the sect we have embraced; prejudices of friendship, taken from the connections we have had, and the company we have kept; prejudices of trade and profession, taken from the mechanical arts we have followed, or the abstract sciences we have studied; prejudices of fortune, taken from the condition of life in which we have been, either among the noble or the poor. This is only a small part of the channels by which error is conveyed to us. What efforts must a man make, what pains must he take with himself to preserve himself from contagion, to hold his soul perpetually in equilibrium, to keep all the gates of error shut, and incessantly to maintain, amidst so many prejudices, that freedom of judgment which weighs argument against objection, objection against argument, which deliberately examines all that can be advanced in favour of a proposition, and all that can be said against it; which considers an object in every point of view, and which makes us determine only as we are constrained by the irresistible authority, and by the soft violence of truth, demonstration, and evidence?

As the men who surround us fascinate us by their errors, so they decoy us into vice by their example. In all places, and in all ages, virtue had fewer partizans than vice; in all ages and in all places, the friends of virtue were so few in comparison of the partizans of vice, that the saints complained, that the earth was not inhabited by men of the first kind, and that the whole world was occupied by the latter, *the godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men. The Lord looked down from hea-*

*ven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one, Psal. xii. 1. and xiv. 2, 3.* An exaggeration of the prophet, I grant, but an exaggeration for which the universality of human depravity hath given too much occasion. Cast your eyes attentively on society, you will be, as our prophet was, astonished at the great number of the partizans of vice; you will be troubled, as he was, to distinguish in the crowd any friends of virtue; and you will find yourself inclined to say, as he said, *there is none that doeth good, no not one.*

But how difficult is it to resist example, and to *rule the spirit* among such a number of tyrants, who aim only to enslave it! In order to resist example, we must incessantly oppose those natural inclinations which urge us to imitation. To resist example, we must not suffer ourselves to be dazzled either with the number or the splendour of such as have placed vice on a throne. To resist example, we must brave persecution, and all the inconveniences to which worldly people never fail to expose them who refuse to follow them down the precipice. To resist example, we must love virtue for virtue's sake. To resist example, we must transport ourselves into another world, imagine ourselves among those holy societies who surround the throne of a holy God, who make his excellencies the continual matter of their adoration and homage, and who fly at the first signal of his hand, the first breath of his mouth. What a work, what a difficult work for you, poor

mortal, whose eyes are always turned toward the earth, and whom your own involuntary and insurmountable weight incessantly carries downward!

3. Finally, we must acknowledge what labor, pains and resistance the disposition, of which Solomon speaks, requires, if we consider man in regard to the *habits*, which he hath contracted. As soon as we enter into the world, we find ourselves impelled by our natural propensities, stunned with the din of our passions, and, as I just now said, seduced by the errors, and carried away by the examples of our companions. Seldom in the first years of life, do we surmount that natural bias, and that power of example, which impel us to falsehood and sin. Most men have done more acts of vice than of virtue, consequently, in the course of a certain number of years we contribute by our way of living to join to the depravity of nature, that which comes from exercise and habit. A man, who would *rule his spirit*, is then required to eradicate the habits, which have taken possession of him. What a task!

What a task, when we endeavor to prevent the return of ideas, which for many years our minds have revolved! What a task, to defend one's self from a passion which knows all the avenues of the mind, and how to facilitate access by means of the body! What a task, to turn away from the flattering images, and seducing solicitations of concupiscence long accustomed to gratification! What a task, when we are obliged to make the greatest efforts in the weakest part of life, and to subdue an enemy, whom we have been always used to consi-

der as unconquerable, and whom we never durst attack, when he had no other arms than what we chose to give him, and enjoyed no other advantages than such as we thought proper to allow! Such labor, such pains and constraint must he experience, who acquires the art of *ruling his spirit!* Now then, as we have explained this disposition of mind, let us assign the place, which is due to him who hath it. Having given an idea of real heroism, we must display the grandeur of it, and prove the proposition in my text, “he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.”

II. For this purpose, it is not necessary to observe, that, by *him that taketh a city*, Solomon does not mean a man who, from principles of virtue, to defend his country and religion, hazards his life and liberty in a just war; in this view, he that taketh a city, and he that ruleth his spirit, is one and the same man. Solomon intends conquerors, who live, if I may express myself so, upon victories and conquests; he intends heroes, such as the world considers them.

Neither is it necessary precisely to fix the bounds of this general expression, *is better*. “He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.” The sense is easily understood; in general, it signifies that *he that ruleth his spirit*, discovers more fortitude, more magnanimity, and more courage; that he hath more just ideas of glory, and is more worthy of esteem and praise, than they who are called in the world conquerors and heroes.

We will prove this proposition, by comparing the hero of the world with the christian hero; and we

will confine the comparison to four articles : First, the motives which animate them ; secondly, the exploits they perform ; thirdly, the enemies they attack ; and lastly, the rewards they obtain. *He that taketh a city*, is animated with motives mean and worldly, which degrade an intelligent soul, even while they seem to elevate it to a pinnacle of grandeur and glory ; but *he that ruleth his spirit*, is animated by motives grand, noble, and sublime, every way suited to the excellence of our nature. *He that ruleth his spirit*, is capable of all the exploits of *him that taketh a city* ; but *he that taketh a city*, is not capable of the exploits of *him that ruleth his spirit*. *He that taketh a city*, attacks an exterior enemy, to whom he hath no attachment ; but *he that ruleth his spirit*, attacks an enemy who is dear to him, and hath the greatness of soul to turn his arms against himself. In fine, *he that taketh a city*, is crowned only by idiots, who have no just notions of grandeur and heroism ; but *he that ruleth his spirit*, will be crowned with the hands of the only just appraiser and dispenser of glory. These are four titles of superiority which the christian hero hath over the false hero, four sources of proofs to establish the proposition in our text, “ he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.”

1. Let us consider the *motives* which animate a conqueror *that taketh a city*, and the motives which animate a man that obtains *rule over his spirit* ; the motives of the true hero, with the motives of the false hero. What are the motives of a false hero ? What spirit animates him, when he under-

takes to conquer a city? This is one of the questions which sinful passions have most obscured. Truth is disguised in epistles dedicatory, and in profane eulogiums, yea, sometimes in religious discourses. The majesty of a victorious general, the glory of a conqueror, the pompous titles of victor, arbiter of peace, arbiter of war, have so dazzled us, and in some sort so perverted the powers of our soul, that we cannot form just notions of this subject. Hear pure nature, formerly speaking by the mouth of a nation, who were the more wise for not being civilized by the injustice of our laws and customs. I speak of the ancient Scythians. The most famous taker of cities came to their cabins and caverns. He had already subdued his fellow-citizens and neighbours. Already Thebes and Athens, Thrace and Thessaly, had submitted to his arms. Already, Greece being too small a sphere of action for him, he had penetrated even into Persia, passed the famous Phrygian river, where he slew six hundred thousand men, reduced Caria and Judea, made war with Darius and conquered him, performed exploits more than human, and, in spite of nature, besieged and took Tyre, the most famous siege recorded in ancient history, subjugated the Mardi and Bactrians, attained the mountains Caucasus and Oxus, and, in a word, conquered more countries, and enslaved more people, than we can describe, or even mention within the limits allotted to this exercise. This man arrives in Scythia. The Scythians sent deputies to him, who thus addressed him: "Had the gods given you a body proportioned to your am-

bition, the whole universe would have been too little for you: with one hand you will have touched the east, and with the other the west, and, not content with this, you would have followed the sun, and have seen where he hides himself. Whatever you are, you are aspiring at what you can never obtain. From Europe you run into Asia, and from Asia back you run again into Europe; and, having enslaved all mankind, you attack rivers, and forests, and wild beasts. What have you to do with us? We have never set foot in your country. May not a people living in a desert be allowed to be ignorant of who you are, and whence you come? You boast of having exterminated robbers, and you yourself are the greatest robber in the world. You have pilaged and plundered all nations, and now you come to rob us of our cattle. It is in vain to fill your hands, for you are always in search of fresh prey. Of what use are your boundless riches, except to irritate your eternal thirst? You are the first man who ever experienced such extreme want in the midst of such abundance. All you have serves only to make you desire with more fury what you have not. If you be a god, do good to mankind; but if you be only an insignificant mortal, think of what you are, and remember that it is a great folly to occupy things which make us forget ourselves."\* These are the motives which animate the heroes of the world; these are the sentiments which are disguised under the fine names of glory, valour, greatness of soul, heroism. An insatiable avidity of riches, an

\* Quintus Curtius, lib. vii. cap. 8.



invincible pride, a boundless ambition, a total forgetfulness of what is, what ought to be, and what must be hereafter.

The motives of him, who endeavours to render himself master of his own heart, are love of order, desire of freedom from the slavery of the passions, a noble firmness of soul, which admits only what appears true, and loves only what appears lovely, after sober and serious discussion. In this first view, then, the advantage is wholly in favor of *him, that ruleth his spirit*. *He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city*.

2. Compare, in the second place, the *exploits of him that ruleth his spirit*, with the exploits of *him, that taketh a city*. He, who is capable of *ruling his spirit*, is capable of all that is great and noble in *him, that taketh a city*: but *he, that taketh a city*, is not capable of all that is great and magnanimous in *him, that ruleth his spirit*. I will explain myself.

What is there great and magnanimous in a hero that taketh a city? Patience to endure fatigue, to surmount difficulties, to suffer contradiction; intrepidity in the most frightful dangers; presence of mind in the most violent and painful exercises; unshaken firmness in sight of a near and terrible dissolution. These are dispositions of mind, I grant, which seem to elevate man above humanity; but a christian hero is capable of all this, I speak sincerely, and without a figure. A man, who hath obtained a religious freedom of mind, who always preserves this liberty, who always weighs good and evil, who believes only what is true, and does only what

is right ; who hath always his eye upon his duty, or as the psalmist expresseth it, who “ sets the Lord always before him,” such a man is capable, literally capable, of all you admire in a worldly hero. No difficulty discourages him, no contradiction disconcerts him, no fatigue stops him, no dangers affright him, no pain but he can bear, no appearance of death shocks him into paleness, and fear, and flight. Our women and children, our confessors and martyrs have literally performed greater exploits of fortitude, patience, courage, and constancy, in convents, prisons, and dungeons, at stakes and on scaffolds, than Alexanders and Cæsars in all their lives. And where is the hero of this world, who hath performed so many actions of courage and magnanimity in sieges and battles, as our confessors have for thirty years on board the gallies? The former were supported by the presence of thousands of witnesses ; the latter had no spectators but God and their own consciences. The christian hero is capable then of all that is great in the hero of the world. But the worldly hero is incapable of performing such exploits as the christian hero performs ; and he knows perfectly that his heroism doth not conduct him so far in the path of glory. Try the strength of a worldly hero. Set him to contend with a passion. You will soon find this man, invincible before, subdued into slavery and shame. He who was firm and fearless in sight of fire and flame, at the sound of warlike instruments, becomes feeble, mean, and enervated by a seducing and enchanting object. Sampson defeats the Philistines ; but Dalilah sub-

dues Sampson. Sampson carries away the gates of Gaza: but Sampson sinks under the weight of his own sensuality. Hercules seeks highway robbers to combat, and monsters to subdue; but he cannot resist impurity. We find him on monuments of antiquity carrying an infant on his shoulders, an emblem of voluptuousness, stooping under that unworthy burden, and letting his club fall from his hand. There is therefore no declamation, no hyperbole in our proposition; the christian hero is capable of performing all the great actions performed by the hero of the world; but the hero of the world is incapable of performing such noble actions as the christian hero performs; and in this respect, "he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city."

3. Compare *him, that taketh a city, with him that ruleth his spirit*, in regard to the *enemies*, whom they attack, and you will find in the latter a third title of superiority over the former. *He that taketh a city*, attacks an exterior enemy, who is a stranger, and often odious to him. The ambition, that fills his soul, leaves no room for compassion and pity; and, provided he can but obtain his end, no matter to him though the way be strewed with the dying and the dead, to obtain that, he travels over mountains of heads, and arms, and carcases. The tumultuous passions, which tyrannize over him, stifle the voice of nature, and deafen him to the cries of a thousand miserable wretches sacrificed to his fame.

The enemy, whom the christian combats, is his own heart: for he is required to turn his arms against

himself. He must suspend all sentiments of self-love ; he must become his own executioner, and, to use the ideas and expressions of Jesus Christ, he must actually *deny himself*.

Jesus Christ well knew mankind. He did not preach like some preaching novices, who, in order to incline their hearers to subdue their passions, propose the work to them as free from difficulty. Jesus Christ did not disguise the difficulties which the man must undergo who puts on the spirit of christianity ; and I do not know whether we meet with any expression in the writings of pagan poets or philosophers more natural, and at the same time more emphatical than this ; “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,” Matt. xvi. 24.

Not that this is literally practicable, not that man can put off himself, not that religion requires us to sacrifice to it what makes the essence and happiness of our nature ; on the contrary, strictly speaking, it is sin which makes us put off or deny what is great and noble in our essence ; it is sin which requires us to sacrifice our true happiness to it. If Jesus Christ expresses himself in this manner, it is because when man is possessed with a passion, it is incorporated, as it were, with himself ; it seems to him essential to his felicity ; every thing troubles, and every thing puts him on the rack, when he cannot gratify it ; without gratifying his passion, his food hath no taste, flowers no smell, pleasures no point, the sun is dark, society disagreeable, life itself hath no charms. To attack a reigning passion is *to deny self* ; and *here is the patience of the saints* ; this is the enemy whom the christian at-

tacks; this is the war which he wageth. How tremulous and weak is the hand when it toucheth a sword to be plunged into one's own bosom! Love of order, truth, and virtue support a christian hero in this almost desperate undertaking.

4. In fine, Compare *him that ruleth his spirit, with him that taketh a city*, in regard to the *acclamations* with which they are accompanied, and the *crowns* prepared for them. Who are the authors of those acclamations with which the air resounds the praise of worldly heroes? They are courtiers, poets, panegyrists. But what! are people of this order the only persons who entertain just notions of glory? and if they be, are they generous enough to speak out? How can a soul wholly devoted to the will and caprice of a conqueror; how can a venal creature, who makes a market of eulogiums and praises, which he sells to the highest bidder; how can a brutal soldiery determine what is worthy of praise or blame? Is it for such people to distribute prizes of glory, and to assign heroes their rank! To be exalted by people of this sort is a shame; to be crowned by their hands an infamy.

Elevate, elevate thy meditation, christian soul, rise into the Majesty of the Great Supreme. Think of that sublime intelligence, who unites in his essence every thing noble and sublime. Contemplate God, surrounded with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim. Hear the concerts which happy spirits perform to his glory. Hear them, penetrated, ravished, charmed with the divine beauties, crying night and day, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the

whole earth is full of his glory. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" This Being so perfect, this Being so worthily praised, this Being so worthy of everlasting praise, this is he who will pronounce upon true glory; this is he who will compose the eulogium of all who aspire at it; this is he who will one day praise in the face of heaven and earth all those who shall have made the noble conquests which we have been describing.

Imagination sinks under the weight of this subject, and this object is too bright for eyes like ours; but the nature of things doth not depend on our faculty of seeing them. As God calls us to combats more than human, so he sees fit to support us by a prospect of more than human rewards. Yes, it is the supreme Being, it is he, who will one day distribute the praises which are due to such as have triumphed over themselves. What a spectacle! what a prospect! Yes, christian champion, after thou hast resisted flesh and blood, after thou hast been treated as a fool by mankind, after thou hast run the race of tribulation, after thou hast made thy life one perpetual martyrdom, thou shalt be called forth in the presence of men and angels; the master of the world shall separate thee from the crowd; there he will address to thee this language, *Well done, good and faithful servant*; there he will accomplish the promise which he this day makes to all who fight under

his standard, *he that overcometh shall sit down in my throne.* Ah! glory of worldly heroes, profane encomiums, fastidious inscriptions, proud trophies, brilliant, but corruptible diadems! what are you in comparison with the acclamations which await the christian hero, and the crowns which God the rewarder prepares for him?

And you, mean and timid souls, who perhaps admire these triumphs, but who have not the ambition to strive to obtain them; you soft and indolent spirits, who, without reluctance, give up all pretensions to the immortal crowns which God prepares for heroism, provided he require no account of your indolence and effeminacy, and suffer you, like brute beasts, to follow the first instincts of your nature; undeceive yourselves. I said, at the beginning, you are all called to heroism; there is no mid-way in religion; you must be covered with shame and infamy, along with the base and timid, or crowned with glory, in company with heroes. The duty of an intelligent soul is to adhere to truth, and to follow virtue; we bring into the world with us obstacles to both; our duty is to surmount them; without this we betray our trust; we do not answer the end of our creation; we are guilty, and we shall be punished for not endeavouring to obtain the great end for which we were created.

Let this be the great principle of our divinity and morality. Let us invariably retain it. Let us not lose ourselves in discussions and researches into the origin of evil, and into the permission of the entrance of sin into the world. Let us not bury ourselves

alive in speculations and labyrinths; let us not plunge into abysses, from which no pains can disengage us. Let us fear an ocean full of rocks, and let an idea of the shipwrecks, which so many rash people have made, stop us on the shore. Let us consider these questions, less with a view to discover the perfections of the Creator, in the thick darkness under which he hath thought proper to conceal them, than in that of learning the obligations of a creature. I do not mean to decry those great geniusses, who have treated of this profound subject. Their works do honour to the human mind. They are eternal monuments to the glory of a reason, which knows how to collect its force, and to fix itself on a single object; but, it is always certain, that we cannot arrive at clear truth on this subject, except by means of thousands of distinctions and abstractions, which most of us cannot make. The subject is so delicate and refined, that most eyes are incapable of seeing it, and it is placed on an eminence so steep and inaccessible, that few geniusses can attain it.

Let us religiously abide by our principle. The duty of an intelligent soul is to adhere to truth, and to practise virtue. We are born with a disinclination to both. Our duty is to get rid of this; and, without doing so, we neglect the obligation of an intelligent soul; we do not answer the end for which we were intended; we are guilty, and we shall be punished for not having answered the end of our creation.

Let us consider ourselves as soldiers placed round a besieged city, and having such or such an enemy



to fight, such or such a post to force. You, you are naturally subject to violence and anger. It is sad to find, in one's own constitution, an opposition to virtues so lovely as those of submission, charity, sweetness, and patience. Groan under this evil; but do not despair; when you are judged, less attention will be paid to your natural indisposition to these virtues, than to the efforts which you made to get rid of it. To this point direct all your attention, all your strength, and all your courage. Say to yourself, this is the post which my general intends I should force; this is the enemy I am to fight with. And be you fully convinced, that one of the principal views which God hath in preserving your life, is, that you should render yourself master of this passion. You, you are naturally disposed to be proud. The moment you leave your mind to its natural bias, it turns to such objects as seem the most fit to give you high ideas of yourself, to your penetration, your memory, your imagination, and even to exterior advantages, which vanity generally incorporates with the person who enjoys them. It is melancholy to find within yourself any seeds of an inclination, which so ill agree with creatures vile and miserable as men. Lament this misfortune, but do not despair; to this side turn all your attention and all your courage and strength. Say to yourself, this is the post which my general would have me force; this is the enemy whom he hath appointed me to oppose. And be fully convinced, that one of the principal views of God in continuing you in this

world is, that you may resist this passion, and make yourself master of it.

Let us, all together, my brethren, endeavour to rule our own spirits. Let us not be dismayed at the greatness of the work, because *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.* Grace comes to the aid of nature. Prayer acquires strength by exercise. The passions, after having been tyrants, become slaves in their turn. The danger and pain of battle vanish, when the eye gets sight of conquest. How inconceivably beautiful is victory then! God grant we may obtain it! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

# SERMON XI.

*Christian Casuistry.*

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PROVERBS iv. 26.

*Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established.*

THE sentence which we have now read, includes a subject of immense magnitude, more proper to fill a volume, than to be comprised in a single sermon; however, we propose to express the substance of it in this one discourse. When we shall have explained the subject, we will put it to proof; I mean, we will apply it to some religious articles, leaving to your piety the care of applying it to a great number, and of deriving from the general application this consequence, if we *ponder the paths of our feet, all our ways will be established.*

I suppose, first, you affix just ideas to this metaphorical expression, *ponder the path of thy feet.* It is one of those singular figures of speech, which agrees better with the genius of the sacred language than with that of ours. Remark this once for all. There is one among many objections made by the enemies of our religion, which excels in its kind; I mean to say, it deserves to stand first in a list of the most extravagant sophisms: this is, that there is no reason for

making a difference between the genius of the Hebrew language and the idiom of other languages. It would seem, by this objection, that a book not originally written in the idiom of the language of scepticism cannot be divinely inspired. On this absurd principle, the scripture could not be written in any language; for if a Greek had a right to object against inspiration on this account, an Arabian, and a Persian, and all other people have the same. Who doth not perceive at once, that the inspired writers, delivering their messages at first to the Jews, *to whom were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 2. spoke properly according to the idiom of their language? They ran no risk of being misunderstood by other nations, whom a desire of being saved should incline to study the language for the sake of the wisdom taught in it.

How extravagant soever this objection is, so extravagant that no infidel will openly avow it, yet it is adopted, and applied in a thousand instances. The book of Canticles is full of figures opposite to the genius of our western languages; it is therefore no part of the sacred canon. It would be easy to produce other examples. Let a modern purist, who affects neatness and accuracy of style, and gives lectures on pronunciation, condemn this manner of speaking, *ponder the path of thy feet*; with all my heart. The inspired authors had no less reason to make use of it, nor the interpreters to affirm, that it is an eastern expression, which signifies to take no step without first deliberately examining it. The metaphor of the text being thus reduced to truth,

another doubt rises concerning the subject to which it is applied, and this requires a second elucidation. The term *step* is usually restrained in our language to actions of life, and never signifies a mode of thinking; but the Hebrew language gives this term a wider extent, and it includes all these ideas. One example shall suffice. *My steps had well nigh slipped*, Psal. lxxiii. 2. that is to say, I was very near taking a false step: and what was this step? It was judging that the wicked were happier in the practice of licentiousness, than the righteous in obeying the laws of truth and virtue. Solomon, in the words of my text, particularly intends to regulate our actions; and in order to this he intends to regulate the principles of our minds, and the affections of our hearts. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways SHALL BE established*, for so I render the words. Examine your steps deliberately before you take them, and you will only take wise steps: if you would judge rightly of objects, avoid hasty judging: before you fix your affection on an object, examine whether it be worthy of your esteem, and then you will love nothing but what is lovely. By thus following the ideas of the wise man we will assort our reflections with the actions of your lives, and they will regard also, sometimes, the emotions of your hearts, and the operations of your minds.

We must beg leave to add a third elucidation. The maxim in the text is not always practicable. I mean, there are some doctrines, and some cases of conscience, which we cannot fully examine without coming to a conclusion that the arguments for, and

the arguments against them are of equal weight, and consequently, that we must conclude without a conclusion; weigh the one against the other, and the balance will incline neither way.

This difficulty, however, solves itself; for, after I have weighed, with all the exactness of which I am capable, two opposite propositions, and can find no reasons sufficient to determine my judgment, the part I ought to take is not to determine at all. Are you prejudiced in favour of an opinion, so ill suited to the limits which it hath pleased God to set to our knowledge, that it is dangerous or criminal to suspend our judgments? Are your consciences so weak and scrupulous as to hesitate in some cases to say, I do not know, I have not determined that question? Poor men! do you know yourselves so little? Poor christians! will you always form such false ideas of your legislator? And do you not know that none but such as live perpetually disputing in the schools make it a law to answer every thing? Do you not know, that one principal cause of that fury, which erected scaffolds, and lighted fires in a church, that ought to breathe nothing but peace and love, was a rash decision of some questions which it was impossible for sensible men to determine? Are you not aware that one of the most odious ideas that can be formed of God, one the least compatible with the eminence of his perfections, is, that God requireth of us knowledge beyond the faculties he hath given us? I declare, I cannot help blushing for christians, and especially for christians cultivated as you are, when I perceive it needful to repeat this principle,

and even to use precaution, and to weigh the terms in which we propose it, lest we should offend them. To what then are we reduced, Great God, if we have the least reason to suspect that thou wilt require an account, not only of the talents which it hath pleased thee to commit to us, but even of others which thou hast not committed to us? To what am I reduced, if, having only received of thee, my Creator, a human intelligence, thou wilt require of me angelical attainments? Whither am I driven, if, having received a body capable of moving only through a certain space in a given time, thou, Lord, requirest me to move with the velocity of aerial bodies? At this rate, when thou in the last great day shalt judge the world in righteousness, thou, Judge of the whole earth, wilt condemn me for not preaching the gospel in Persia, the same day and the same hour in which I was preaching it in this assembly? Far from us be such detestable opinions! Let us adhere to the sentiments of St. Paul, God shall judge the gentile according to what he hath committed to the gentile; the Jew according to what he hath committed to the Jew; the christian according to what he hath committed to the christian. Thus Jesus Christ, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more," Luke xii. 48. Thus again Jesus Christ teacheth us, that God will require an account of five talents of him to whom he gave five talents, of two talents of him to whom he gave two, and of one only of him to whom he gave but one.

What did our Redeemer mean when he put into the mouth of the wicked servant this abominable pretext for neglecting to improve his Lord's talent? "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man," or, as it may be better translated, *a barbarous man*, "reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed." I return to my subject. When we have examined two contradictory doctrines, and can obtain no reasons sufficient to determine our judgment, our proper part is to suspend our judgment of the subject, and not to determine it at all.

It will be said, that, if this be possible in regard to speculative points, it is not applicable to matters of practice. Why not? Such cases of conscience as are the most embarrassing are precisely those which ought to give us the least trouble. This proposition may appear a paradox, but I think I can explain and prove it. I compare cases of conscience with points of speculation; difficult cases of conscience with such speculative points as we just now mentioned. The most difficult points of speculation ought to give us the least concern; I mean, we ought to be persuaded that ignorance on these subjects cannot be dangerous. The reason is plain; if God intended we should see these truths in their full depth and clearness, he would not have involved them in so much obscurity, or he would have given us greater abilities, and greater assistances, to enable us to form adequate and perfect ideas of them. In like manner, in regard to cases of conscience attended with insurmountable difficulties, if our salvation de-



pended on the side we take in regard to them, God would have revealed more clearly what side we ought to take. In such cases as these, intention supplies the place of knowledge, and probability that of demonstration.

So much for clearing the meaning of the wise man; now let us put his doctrine to proof. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established." Wouldest thou take only sure steps, at least as sure as is possible in a world, where "in many things we offend all," weigh all the actions you intend to perform first with the principle, from which they proceed: then with the circumstances, in which you are at the time: next with the manner, in which you perform them: again with the bounds, which restrain them: afterwards with those degrees of virtue and knowledge at which you are arrived: and, lastly, with the different judgments, which you yourself form concerning them.

I. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it proceed from a bad principle.

II. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it be performed in certain circumstances.

III. An action good in itself may become criminal, by the manner in which it is performed.

IV. An action good in itself may become criminal, by being extended beyond its just limits.

V. An action good in itself when performed by a man of a certain degree of knowledge and virtue, may become criminal, if it be performed by a man of inferior knowledge and virtue.

VI. In fine, an action good in itself now, may become criminal at another time.

These maxims ought to be explained and enforced, and here we are going, as I said at first, to apply the doctrine of the wise man to a few subjects, leaving to your piety the care of applying them to a great number, which will necessarily occur in the course of your lives.

I. We ought to ponder our steps in regard to the *principle* from which they proceed. An action good in itself may become criminal, if it proceed from a bad principle. The little attention we pay to this maxim is one principal cause of the false judgments we make of ourselves. Thus many, who allow themselves very expensive luxuries, say, they contribute to the increase of trade. To increase trade, and to employ artists, considered in themselves, are good works, I grant; but is it a desire of doing these good works that animates you? Is it not your vanity? Is it not your luxury? Is it not your desire of sparkling and shining in the world?

Thus our brethren, who resist all the exhortations that have been addressed to them for many years, to engage them to follow Jesus Christ *without the camp*, reply, that were they to obey these exhortations, all the seeds of truth now remaining in the land of their nativity would perish, and that the remnants of the reformation would be entirely extirpated. Diligently to preserve even remnants of the reformation, and seeds of truth, is certainly an action good in itself; but is this the motive which animates you when you resist all our exhortations? Is it not love of the

present world? Is it not the same motive that animated *Demas*? Is it not because you have neither courage enough to sacrifice for Jesus Christ what he requires, nor zeal enough to profess your religion at the expence of your fortunes and dignities? Thus again they who are immersed in worldly care tell us, that were they to think much about dying, society could not subsist, arts would languish, sciences decay, and so on. I deny this principle. I affirm, society would be incomparably more flourishing were each member of it to think continually of death. In such a case each would consult his own ability, before he determined what employment he would follow, and then we should see none elected to public offices except such as were capable of discharging them; we should see the gospel preached only by such as have abilities for preaching; we should see armies commanded only by men of experience, and who possessed that superiority of genius which is necessary to command them. Then the magistrate, having always death and judgment before his eyes, would think only of the public good. Then the judge, having his eye fixed only on the Judge of all mankind, would regard the sacred trust committed to him, and would not consider his rank only as an opportunity of making his family, accumulating riches, and behaving with arrogance. Then the pastor, all taken up with the duties of that important ministry which God hath committed to him, would exercise it only to comfort the afflicted, to visit the sick, to repress vice, to advance the kingdom of that Jesus whose minister he hath the honour to be, and not

officially to intrude into families to direct them, to tyrannize over consciences, to make a parade of gifts, and to keep alive a spirit of party.

But, not to carry these reflections any further, you say, society could not subsist, sciences would languish, and arts decay, if men thought much about dying. Very well. I agree. But I ask, is this the motive which animates you when you turn away your eyes from this object? Is it fear lest the arts should decay, sciences languish, society disperse? Is it this fear which keeps you from thinking of death? Is it not rather because an idea of this *king of terrors* disconcerts the whole system of your conscience, stupified by a long habit of sin; because it urges you to restore that accursed acquisition, which is the fund that supports your pageantry and pride: because it requires you to renounce that criminal intrigue, which makes the conversation of all companies, and gives just offence to all good men?

My brethren, would you always take right steps? Never take one without first examining the motive which engages you to take it. Let the glory of God be the great end of all our actions; *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. A motive so noble and so worthy of that holy calling with which God hath honoured us, will sanctify all our steps, will give worth to our virtues, and will raise those into virtuous actions, which seem to have the least connection with virtue. A bustling trade, a sprightly conversation, a well matched union, a sober recreation, a domestic amusement, all become virtues in a man

animated with the glory of God; on the contrary, virtue itself, the most ardent zeal for truth, the most generous charities, the most fervent prayers, knowledge the most profound, and sacrifices the least suspicious, become vices in a man not animated with this motive.

II. Let us ponder our steps in regard to the *circumstances* which accompany them. An action, good or innocent in itself, may become criminal in certain circumstances. This maxim is a clue to many cases of conscience in which we choose to blind ourselves. We obstinately consider our actions in a certain abstracted light, never realized, and we do not attend to circumstances which change the nature of the action. We think we strike a casuist dumb, when we ask him, what is there criminal in the action you reprove? Hear the morality of the inspired writers.

It is allowable to attach ourselves to a pious prince, and to push for port. Yet when Barzillai had arrived at a certain age, he thought it his duty to flee from court, and to quit his prince, and he said to David who invited him to court, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, and singing women? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother," 2 Sam. xix. 35, 37.

It is allowable to erect houses proportional to our fortunes and rank. Yet the buildings of the Israelites drew upon them the most mortifying censures, and the most rigorous chastisements, after their re-

turn from captivity. This was because, while their minds were all employed about their own edifices, they took no thought about rebuilding the temple. "Is it time for you," said the prophet Haggai, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" chap. i. 4.

It is allowable, sometimes, to join in good company, and to taste the pleasures of the table and society; yet Isaiah reproached the Jews of his time in the most cutting manner, for giving themselves up to these pleasures, at a time when recent crimes, and approaching calamities should have engaged them to acts of repentance. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts; surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts," Isa. xxii. 12, &c.

It is allowable to eat any thing, without regard to the Levitical law. Yet St. Paul declares, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth," 1 Cor. viii. 13.

How many circumstances of this kind might I add? Let us retain what we have heard, and let us make these the basis of a few maxims.

The case of scandal is a circumstance which makes a lawful action criminal. I infer this from the example of St. Paul just now mentioned. What is scandal? Of many definitions I confine myself to one.

A scandalous or offensive action is that which must naturally make a spectator of it commit a fault. By this touchstone examine some actions, which you think allowable, because you consider them in themselves, and you will soon perceive that you ought to abstain from them. By this rule, it is not a question only, when it is agitated as a case of conscience, Is gaming criminal or innocent? The question is not only, what gaming is to you, who can afford to play without injuring your family or fortune; the question is, whether you ought to engage another to play with you, who will ruin his. When a case of conscience is made of this question—Can I, without wounding my innocence, allow myself certain freedoms in conversation? The question is not only whether you can permit yourself to do so without defiling your innocence, but whether you can do so without wounding the innocence of your neighbour, who will infer from the liberties you take, that you have no regard to modesty, and who perhaps may avail himself of the license you give him.

Another circumstance, which makes a lawful action criminal, is taken from the passage of Isaiah just now mentioned. I fear suppressing a sense of present sins and of approaching calamities. I wish, when we have had the weakness to commit such sins as suspend the communion of a soul with its God, I wish we had the wisdom to lay aside for some time, not only criminal, but even lawful pleasures. I wish, instead of going into company, even the most regular, we had the wisdom to retire. I wish, instead of relishing then the most lawful recreations,

we had the wisdom to mourn for our offending a God whose law ought to be extremely respected by us. To take the opposite course then, to allow one's self pleasure, innocent indeed in happier times, is to discover very little sense of that God whose commands we have just now violated; it is to discover that we have very little regard for our salvation, at a time when we have so many just causes of doubting whether our hope to be saved be well grounded.

The afflicted state of the church is another circumstance, which may make an innocent action criminal: So I conclude, from the passage just now quoted from Haggai. Dissipations, amusements, festivals, ill become men, who ought to be *grieved for the afflictions of Joseph*; or to speak more clearly, less still become miserable people whom the wrath of God pursues, and who, being themselves as *fire brands hardly plucked out of the burning*, are yet exposed to the flames of tribulation, one in the person of his father, another in those of his children, and all in a million of their brethren.

Age, again, is another circumstance converting an innocent to a criminal action. This I conclude from the example of Barzillai. Let a young man, just entering into trade, be all attention and diligence to make his fortune; he should be so: but that an old man, that a man on the brink of the grave, and who hath already attained the age which God hath marked for the life of man, that such a man should be all fire and flame for the success of his trade, just as he was the first day he entered on it, that he should, so to speak, direct his last sigh toward money and the



increase of his trade, is the shame of human nature ; it is a mark of reprobation, which ought to alarm all that bear it.

Let a young man in the heat of his blood, a youth yet a novice in the world, and who may promise himself, with some appearance of truth, to live a few years in the world, sometimes lay aside that gravity, which however so well becomes men, whose eyes are fixed on the great objects of religion ; let him, I say, I forgive him ; but that an old man, whom long experience should have rendered wise, that he should be fond of pleasure, that he should make a serious affair of distinguishing himself by the elegance of his table, that he should go every day to carry his skeleton, wan and tottering, into company employed in the amusements of youth ; this is the shame of human nature, this is a mark of reprobation which ought to terrify all that bear it.

III. Would we have all our ways established ? Let us examine the *manners* that accompany them. An action good in itself, yea, more, the most essential duties of religion become criminal, when they are not performed with proper dispositions. One of the most essential duties of religion is to assist the poor ; yet this duty will become a crime, if it be performed with haughtiness, hardness, and constraint. It is not enough to assist the poor ; the duty must be done with such circumspection, humanity, and joy, as the apostle speaks of, when he says, *God loveth a cheerful giver*, 2 Cor. ix. 7. Another most essential duty of religion is to interest one's self in the happiness of our neighbour, and if

he turn aside from the path of salvation, to bring him back again. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*: thus God spoke by his servant Moses, Lev. xix. 17. *Exhort one another daily*: this is a precept of St. Paul, Heb. iii. 13. To this may be added the declaration of St. James: *If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*, chap. v. 19, 20. But this duty would become a crime, were we to rebuke a neighbour with bitterness, were the reproof more satire than exhortation, were we to assume airs of haughtiness, and discover that we intended less to censure the vices of others than to display our own imaginary excellencies. It is not enough to rebuke a neighbour; it must be done with all those charitable concomitants, which are so proper to make the most bitter censures palatable; it must be done with that modesty, or, may I say, with that bashfulness which proves that it is not a spirit of self-sufficiency that reproves our neighbour, but that it is because we interest ourselves in his happiness, and are jealous of his glory.

IV. Our fourth maxim is, that an action good in itself may become criminal by being extended beyond its proper *limits*. It was said of a fine genius of the last age, that he never quitted a beautiful thought till he had entirely disfigured it. The observation was perfectly just in regard to the author, to whom it was applied; the impetuosity of his imagination made him overstrain the most sensible

things he advanced, so that what was truth. when he began to propose it, became an error in his mouth by the extreme to which he carried it. In like manner, in regard to a certain order of christians, virtue becomes vice in their practice, because they extend it beyond proper bounds. Their holiness ought always to be restrained, and after they have been exhorted to righteousness and wisdom, it is necessary to say to them with the wise man, *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise*, Eccles. vii. 17. an idea adopted by St. Paul, Rom. xii. 3.

*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise* in regard to the mysteries of religion. As people sometimes lose their lives by diving, so sometimes people become unbelievers by believing too much. It is not uncommon to see christians so eager to elucidate the difficulties of the book of Revelation as not to perceive clearly the doctrine of evangelical morality.

*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise* in regard to charity. The laws of equity march before those of charity; or rather the laws of charity are founded on those of equity. To neglect to support a family and to satisfy creditors, under pretence of relieving the poor, is not charity, and giving alms: but it is rapine, robbery, and iniquity.

*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise* in regard to closet devotion. So to give one's self up to the devotion of the closet as to lose sight of what we owe to society; to be so delighted with praying to God as not to hear the petitions of the indigent; to devote so much time to meditation as to

reserve none for an oppressed person who requires our assistance, for a widow who beseeches us to pity the cries of her hungry children ; this is not piety, this is vision, this is enthusiasm, this is sophism of zeal, if I may express myself so.

*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise* in regard to distrusting yourselves, and fearing the judgments of God. I know, the greatest saints have reason to tremble, when they consider themselves in some points of light. I know Jobs and Davids have exclaimed, *If I may justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Job. ix. 20. Psal. cxxx. 3. I know, one of the most powerful motives which the inspired writers have used, to animate the hearts of men with piety, is fear, according to this exclamation of Solomon, *Happy is the man that feareth alway*, Prov. xxviii. 14. and according to this idea of St. Paul, *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*, 2 Cor. v. 11. I know, the surest method to strengthen our virtue is to distrust ourselves, according to this expression, *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*, 1 Cor. x. 12.

However, it is certain, some fears of God proceed rather from the irregularity of the imagination, than from a wise and well directed piety. Fear of the judgments of God is sometimes a passion, which hath this in common with all other passions, it loves to employ itself about what favours, cherishes, and supports it ; it is reluctant to approach what would diminish, defeat, and destroy it. Extremes of vice

touch extremes of virtue, so that we have no sooner passed over the bounds of virtue, than we are entangled in the irregularities of vice.

V. We said in the fifth place, that each ought to ponder his path with regard to that degree of holiness at which the mercy of God hath enabled him to arrive. An action good in itself, when it is performed by a man arrived at a certain *degree of holiness*, becomes criminal, when it is done by him who hath only an inferior degree. There never was an opinion more absurd and more dangerous than that of some mystics, known by the name of *Molinists*. They affirmed, that when the soul was lodged at I know not what distance from the body, that when it was in I know not what state, which they called *abandonment*, it partook no more of the irregularities of the body which it animated, so that the most impure actions of the body could not defile it, because it knew how to detach itself from the body.

What kind of extravagance can one imagine, of which poor mankind have not given an example? Yet the apostle determines this point with so much precision, that one would think it was impossible to mistake it. *Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure*, Titus i. 15. I recollect the sense which a celebrated bishop in the isle of Cyprus gave these words in the first ages of the church. I speak of Spiridion. A traveller, exhausted with the fatigue of his journey, waited on him on a day which the church had set apart for fasting. Spiridion instantly ordered some refreshment for him, and invited him by his

own example to eat. No, I must not eat, said the stranger, because I am a christian. And because you are a christian, replied the bishop to him, you may eat without scruple, agreeably to the decision of an apostle, *Unto the pure all things are pure.* We cannot be ignorant of the shameful abuse which some have made of this maxim. We know some have extended it even to the most essential articles of positive law, which no one can violate without sin. We know particularly the insolence with which some place themselves in the list of those pure persons, of whom the apostle speaks, although their gross ignorance and novel divinity may justly place them in the opposite class. But the abuse of a maxim ought not to prevent the lawful use of it. There are some things which are criminal or lawful, according to the degree of knowledge and holiness of him who performs them. “Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure.” Would you then know how far to carry your scruples in regard to some steps? Examine sincerely, and with rectitude, to what degree you are *pure* in this respect. I mean, examine sincerely and uprightly, whether you be so far advanced in christianity, as not to endanger your faith and holiness by this step.

Do you enquire whether you may, without scruple, read a work intended to sap the foundation of christianity? Examine yourself. A man arrived at a certain degree of knowledge, is confirmed in the faith, even by the objections which are proposed to him to engage him to renounce his religion. “Unto

the pure all things are pure." If you answer this description, read without scruple Lucretius, Spinoza, and all the other enemies of religion. The darkness with which they pretend to cover it, will only advance its splendour in your eyes. The blows which they gave it, will only serve to convince you that it is invulnerable. But if you be yet *a child in understanding*, as an apostle speaks, such books may be dangerous to you; poison without an antidote, will convey itself into your vitals, and destroy all the powers of your soul.

Would you know whether you may, without scruple, mix with the world? Examine yourself. "Unto the pure all things are pure." A man arrived at a certain degree of holiness, derives, from an intercourse with the world, only pity for the world. Examples of vice serve only to confirm him in virtue. If you answer this description, go into the world without scruple; but if your virtue be yet weak, if intercourse with the world disconcert the frame of your mind, if the pleasures of the world captivate your imagination, and leave impressions which you cannot efface; if, after you have passed a few hours in the world, you find it follows you, even when you wish to get rid of it, then what can you do so proper as to retreat from an enemy dangerous to virtue. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, nothing is pure."

VI. In fine, if we wish our ways should be established, let us weigh them with the *different judgments* which we ourselves form concerning them. The meaning of the maxims, the substance of what we

daily hear in the world, and which the writings of libertines have rendered famous, that youth is the season for pleasure, and that we should make the most of it; that fit opportunities should not be let slip, because they so seldom happen, and that not to avail ourselves of them, would discover ignorance of one's self; the substance of this sophism (shall I say of infirmity or impiety?) is not new. If some of you urge this now, so did the Jews in the time of *Isaiab.* This prophet was ordered to inform them, that they had sinned to the utmost bounds of the patience of God; that there remained only one method of preventing their total ruin, that was fasting, mourning, baldness, and girding with sackcloth; in a word, exercises of lively and genuine repentance. These profane people, from the very same principle on which the prophet grounded the necessity of their conversion, drew arguments to embolden them in sin; they slew oxen, they killed sheep, they gave themselves up to unbridled intemperance, and they said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die."

This is precisely the maxim of our libertines. Youth is the season for pleasure, and we should improve it; opportunities of enjoyment are rare; we should be enemies to ourselves not to avail ourselves of them. Would not one say, on hearing this language, that an old man, going out of the world, must needs regret that he did not give himself up to pleasure in his youth? Would not one suppose that the sick, in beds of infirmity and pain, must needs reproach themselves for not spending their health



and strength in luxury and debauchery? Would not one imagine, that the despair of the damned through all eternity, will proceed from their recollecting that they checked their passions in this world?

On the contrary, what will poison the years of your old age, should you arrive at it; what will aggravate the pains, and envenom the inquietudes inseparable from old age, will be the abuse you made of your youth.

So in sickness, reproaches and remorse will rise out of a recollection of crimes committed when you was well, and will change your death-bed into an anticipated hell. Then, thou miserable wretch, who makest thy belly thy God, the remembrance of days and nights consumed in drunkenness, will aggravate every pain which thine intemperate life hath brought upon thee. Then, thou miserable man, who incessantly renderest an idolatrous worship to thy gold, saying to it, in acts of supreme adoration, *Thou art my confidence*; then will the rust of it be a witness against thee, and eat thy flesh, as it were with fire. Then, unhappy man, whose equipages, retinue, and palaces, are the fruits of oppression and injustice, then “the hire of the labourers which have reaped down thy fields, which is of thee kept back by fraud, will cry, and the cries of the reapers will enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth;” then “the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” Then, miserable wretch, thou who makest *the members of Christ the members of an harlot*, then that Drusilla, who now fascinates thine eyes, who seems to thee to unite in her person all

manner of accomplishments ; that Drusilla, who maketh thee forget what thou owest to the world and the church, to thy children, thy family, thy God, and thy soul, that Drusilla will appear to thee as the centre of all horrors ; then she, who always appeared to thee as a goddess, will become as dreadful as a fury ; then, like that abominable man, of whom the holy scriptures speak, who carried his brutality so far as to offer violence to a sister whose honour ought to have been to him as dear as his own life ; then will “ the hatred wherewith thou hatest her, be greater than the love wherewith thou hadst loved her.” 2 Sam. xiii. 15.

The same in regard to the damned ; what will give weight to the chains of darkness with which they will be loaded, what will augment the voracity of that worm which will devour them, and the activity of the flames which will consume them in a future state, will be the reproaches of their own consciences for the headlong impetuosity of their passions in this world.

My brethren, the best direction we can follow for the establishment of our ways, is frequently to set the judgment which we shall one day form of them, against that which we now form. Let us often think of our death-bed. Let us often realize that terrible moment, which will close time, and open eternity. Let us often put this question to ourselves, What judgment shall I form of that kind of life which I now lead, when a burning fever consumes my blood, when unsuccessful remedies, when useless cares, when a pale physician,

when a weeping family, when all around shall announce to me the approach of death? What should I then think of those continual dissipations which consume the most of my time; what of those puerile amusements, which take up all my attention; what of these anxious fears, which fill all the capacity of my soul; what of these criminal pleasures, which infatuate me; what judgment shall I make of all these things, in that terrible day, when the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, when the foundations of the earth shall shake, when the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the great white throne shall appear, when the judge shall sit, and the books be opened, in which all my actions, words, and thoughts are registered?

If we follow these maxims, we shall see all objects with new eyes; we shall tremble at some ways which we now approve; we shall discover gulphs in the road, in which we walk at present without suspicion of danger.

I said at the beginning, my brethren, and I repeat it again, in finishing this exercise, the text we have been explaining includes a voluminous subject, more proper to make the matter of a large treatise than that of a single sermon. The reflections, which we have been making, are only a slight sketch of the maxims with which the wise man intended to inspire us. All we have said will be entirely useless, unless you enlarge by frequent meditation the narrow bounds in which we have been obliged to include the subject.

*Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established.* Who weighs, who calculates, who connects and separates before he believes and judges, before he esteems and acts? The least probability persuades us; the least object, that sparkles in our eyes, dazzles us; the least appearance of pleasure excites, fascinates, and fixes us. We determine questions on which our eternal destiny depends, with a levity and precipitancy, which we should be ashamed of in cases of the least importance in temporal affairs. Accordingly, the manner in which we act, perfectly agrees with the inattention with which we determine the reason of acting. We generally spend life in a way very unbecoming intelligent beings, to whom God hath given a power of reflecting, and more like creatures destitute of intelligence, and wholly incapable of reflection.

In order to obey the precept of the wise man, we should collect our thoughts every morning, and never begin a day without a cool examination of the whole business of it. We should recollect ourselves every night, and never finish a day without examining deliberately how we have employed it. Before we go out of our houses each should ask himself, Whither am I going? In what company shall I be? What temptations will assault me? What opportunities of doing good offer to me? When we return to our houses, each should ask himself, Where have I been? What has my conversation in company been? Did I avail myself of every opportunity of doing good?

My brethren, how invincible soever our depravity may appear, how deeply rooted soever it may be, how powerful soever tyrannical habits may be over us, we should make rapid advances in the road of virtue, were we often to enter into ourselves; on the contrary, while we act, and determine, and give ourselves up without reflection and examination, it is impossible our conduct should answer our calling.

My brethren, shall I tell you all my heart? This meditation troubles me, it terrifies me, it confounds me. I have been forming the most ardent desires for the success of this discourse; and yet I can hardly entertain a hope that you will relish it. I have been exhorting you with all the power and ardour of which I am capable; and, if you will forgive me for saying so, with the zeal which I ought to have for your salvation; I have been exhorting you not to be discouraged at the number and the difficulties of the duties which the wise man prescribes to you; but, I am afraid, I know you too well to promise myself that you will acquit yourselves with that holy resolution and courage which the nature of the duties necessarily demands.

May God work in you, and in me, more than I can ask or think! God grant us intelligent minds, that we may act like intelligent souls! May that God, who hath set before us life and death, heaven and hell, boundless felicity and endless misery, may he so direct our steps, that we may arrive at that happiness which is the object of our wishes, and which ought to be the object of all our care! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever.—  
Amen.



# SERMON XII.

*The Necessity of progressive Religion.*



I CORINTHIANS, ix. 26, 27.

*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

MY BRETHREN,

**T**HAT was a fine eulogium, which was made on one of the most famous generals of antiquity. It was said of him, that he thought there was *nothing done while there remained any thing to do*. To embrace such a system of war and politics, was to open a wide field of painful labour; but Cæsar aspired to be a hero, and there was no way of obtaining his end, except that which he chose. Whoever arrives at wordly heroism, arrives at it in this way. By this marvellous secret the Roman eagles flew to the uttermost parts of Asia, rendered Gaul tributary, swelled the Rhine with German blood, subdued Britain, pursued the shattered remains of Pompey's army into the desarts of Africa, and caused all the rivers that fell into the Adriatic sea, to roll along the sound of their victories. My brethren, success is not ne-

cessarily connected with heroism; the hero Cæsar was a common misfortune, all his heroism public robbery, fatal to the republic, and more so to Cæsar himself. But, in order to be saved, it is necessary to succeed; and there is no other way of obtaining salvation, except that laid down by this great general, *think nothing done, while there is any thing to do.* Behold, in the words of our text, behold a man, who perfectly knew the way to heaven, a man most sincerely aspiring to salvation. What doth he to succeed? What we have said; he accounted all he had done nothing, while there remained any thing more to do. After he had carried virtue to its highest pitch, after he had made the most rapid progress, and obtained the most splendid triumphs in the road of salvation, still he ran, still he fought, he undertook new mortifications, always fearing lest lukewarmness and indolence should frustrate his aim of obtaining the prize which had always been an object of his hope; "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

St. Paul lives no more. This valiant champion hath already conquered. But you, you christians, are yet alive; like him, the race is open before you, and to you now, as well as to him formerly, a voice from heaven crieth, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21. Happy, if animated by his example, you share with him a prize, which loses nothing of its excellence, by



the number of those who partake of it! Happy, if you be able one day to say with him, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing!" 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

Let us first make one general remark on the expressions of the text; they are a manifest allusion to the games which were celebrated among the heathens. Fable, or history, tells us, that Pelops invented them, that Hercules and Atreus brought them to perfection, that Iphitus restored them; all which signify very little to us. What is certain is, that these games were celebrated with great pomp. They were so solemn among the Greeks, that they made use of them to mark memorable events and public eras, that of consuls at Rome, of archons at Athens, of priestesses at Argos. They passed from Greece to Italy, and were so much in vogue at Rome, that an ancient author said, two things were necessary to the Roman people—bread and public shews. It is needless to repeat here what learned men have collected on this subject, we will remark only what may serve to elucidate our text, all the ideas of which are borrowed from these exercises.

1. In these games the most remarkable object was the course. The ground, on which the games were celebrated, was marked out with great exactness. In some places lines were drawn, and the place of combat railed, and when he who ran went beyond

the line, he ran to no purpose. It was dangerous to ramble, especially in some places, as in Greece, where the space was bounded on one side by the river Alpheus, and on the other by a sort of chevaux de frise ; as at Rome, where before the construction of the circus, which was afterwards built on purpose for spectacles of this sort, an area was chosen, on one side of which was a chevaux de frise, and on the other the Tiber, so that the combatant could not pass the bounds prescribed to him without exposing himself to the danger either of being wounded by the spikes, or drowned in the waves. This is the first emblem, which our apostle uses here ; *I run*, alluding to the course in general ; *I do not run uncertainly*, in allusion to such combatants as, by passing the boundaries, lost the fruit of their labour.

2. Among other games were those of wrestling and boxing. Address in these combats consisted in not aiming any blow which did not strike the adversary. He who had not this address, was said to *beat the air* ; and hence came the proverb *to beat the air*, to signify labouring in vain\*. This is the second allusion of St. Paul, *I fight, not as one that beateth the air*.

3. The combatants observed a particular regimen, to render themselves more active and vigorous. The time, the quantity, and the nature of their aliments were prescribed, and they punctually complied with the rules. They laid aside every thing likely to enervate them. "Would you obtain a

\* Eustat. in Homer. Iliad.

prize in the Olympic games? said a pagan philosopher, a noble design! But consider the preparations and consequences. You must live by rule, you must eat when you are not hungry, you must abstain from agreeable foods, you must habituate yourself to suffer heat and cold; in one word, you must give yourself up entirely to a physician.”\* By these means the combatants acquired such health and strength, that they could bend with the greatest ease such bows as horses could hardly bend; hence the *health of a champion* was a common proverb† to express a strong hale state. As this regimen was exact, it was painful and trying. It was necessary not only to surmount irregular desires, but all those exercises must be positively practised which were essential to victorious combatants: It was not sufficient to observe them a little while, they must be wrought by long preparation into habits, without which the agility and vigour acquired by repeated labours would be lost; witness that famous champion, who, after he had often and gloriously succeeded, was shamefully conquered, because he had neglected the regimen for six months, during which time a domestic affair had obliged him to reside at Athens.‡ This is the third allusion which our apostle makes in the text, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*

Let us observe, by the way, that these expressions

\* Epict. cap. 36. Voi. Plat. de legibus lib. 8.

† Hor. Art. Poet. Julian de Laud. Const. Orat. i.

‡ Baudelot De Dairval. Hist. de Ptolémée Auletes, pag. 61. c. 9.

of our apostle have been abused to absurd though devotional purposes ; and, to omit others, it was an abuse of these expressions which produced the extravagant sect of the Flagellants.† All Italy in the thirteenth century was seized with a panic, which ended in the birth of this sect. The next century, the Germans being afflicted with a plague, it filled all Germany ; and the folly of Henry III. king of France, joined to that mean complaisance which induces courtiers to go into all the caprices of their masters, introduced it into that kingdom, and into that kingdom it went with so much fury, that Charles, cardinal of Lorrain, actually killed himself by adhering too closely to its maxims during a rigorous winter.‡

What a wide field opens here to our meditation, were it necessary to shew the absurdity of such devotions!

We might shew, that they owe their origin to paganism. Plutarch says, that in the city of Lacedæmon, they were sometimes pursued even to death in honour of Diana.‖ Herodotus speaks to the same purpose concerning the festival of the great goddess in Egypt.§ In like manner Philostratus speaks of the devotions performed in honour of the Scythian Diana.\*\* Thus also Apuleius concerning the priests of the goddess of Syria;\* and thus authors more

† Hospinian. Hist. Monach. Boileau. Hist. des Flagellans.

‡ De Thou, Hist. liv. 59.

‖ Plutarch Vit. Lycurg.

§ Eutrop. liv. ii. ch. 41.

\*\* De Vit. Apollon. lib. vi. c. 20

~ L'Anc d'Or, liv. viii.

credible, I mean the writers of the Book of Kings, concerning the priests of Baal.

We might shew the weakness of the arguments on which such practices are founded; as fabulous miracles, and, among many others, a letter brought by an angel from heaven to Jerusalem, which declared, that the blessed virgin having implored pardon for the guilty, God had replied, that their pardon should be granted on condition they whipped themselves in this manner.†

We might produce the weighty reasons which many of the Roman communion, and among others Gerson and De Thou, urged against such practices, and the testimonies of our scriptures, which expressly forbid them; but we will content ourselves with observing, that the words of our text have nothing that can serve even for a plausible pretence for these superstitions. We said St. Paul alluded to the regimen observed by combatants; combatants observed that kind of life, which was most proper to fit them for their profession; in like manner, St. Paul observed what fitted him for his. Were it possible to prove, that mortifications and macerations were necessary to this purpose, we should not then have a right to determine that the apostle had his eye on such services here. For our parts, we think, he intended all acts of repentance prescribed in scripture, and exemplified by the saints; as silence, retirement, fasting, abstinence from criminal pleasures, and so on.

† Bosius Annal. under the year 1349.

4. Further, there were persons who presided over the Pagan games. They were called heralds. The name given them in the Greek language is precisely the same which in our language is rendered *preacher*. Their office was expressed by a word which signifies to *preach*. It consisted in proclaiming the game, directing the combatants, encouraging the weak, animating the valiant, exposing the prize to public view, and giving it to the victor. This is the fourth allusion of our apostle, *lest when I have preached to others*. The original word which we have translated *preached*, is the very word which is used to describe the office of such as presided at the games; and St. Paul, by using this term, gives us a beautiful idea of the apostleship, and, in general, of the gospel ministry. What is the office of a minister of the gospel? We publish the race, we describe the *good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them*: we animate you by often saying, *run with patience the race that is set before you*: we lift up to public view the prize, and in the name of God we cry, *so run that you may obtain*. Happy if you all attend to this voice, and if, while a few are eagerly and constantly running the race set before them, others do not run more eagerly cross the space, like those unhappy people just now mentioned, who were wounded with iron spikes or drowned in the waves.

5. In fine, The last remark we make on pagan games regards the different destiny of the combatants. The conquered derived no advantage from their pains; but the victors were covered with hon-

ours and advantages: they were distinguished in all public assemblies; they were called by the high sounding name of Olympian; they were crowned with great ceremony; statues were erected to their honour, and breaches were made in the walls of cities to admit them with the greater pomp. This is the fifth allusion which the apostle here makes to the games, *lest I should be a cast-away*. A *cast-away*; the heathens applied this word to such combatants as entered the lists but did not obtain the prize.

Such were the games celebrated through all Greece, and in particular at the city of Philippi, where St. Paul wrote this epistle, and in that of Corinth, to which it is addressed. The believer is a stranger on earth, he sees there a thousand delights, of which he doth not partake. The eyes of Paul, at Philippi, more properly his ears, (for St. Paul hardly attended public amusements,) were struck with the fame and magnificence of these games. The Corinthians were in the same condition. How hard is it to live in a country, and to be excluded from the pleasures of the inhabitants! St. Paul strengthens the Corinthians and himself against these temptations; he rises from sensual to spiritual pleasures, and says, he hath also an area, a race, a crown, a triumph. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

We have explained the terms and allusions of the apostle. His meaning is sufficiently clear. *I keep*

*under my body*, and so on, does not mean, as some interpreters have it, I halt between hope of salvation, and fear of destruction; an interpretation directly opposite to that assurance which St. Paul expresses in many parts of his epistles, and particularly in this famous passage, which we have elsewhere explained, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God," Rom. viii. 38, 39. But *I keep under my body*; and the rest means, whatever progress I have made in a career of virtue, all my past efforts would be useless, should I spend the rest of my life in idleness and indifference, and I could not expect, even by the assistance of grace, to arrive at glory.

Let us now justify this disposition of our apostle, and let us prove this general truth, that there is no point fixed, at which a christian may stop; that each portion of life hath its task; that to what degree soever we have carried our sanctification, unless we carry it further, go on and persevere, we should act contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel. This is the principal design of this discourse.

1. Let us first examine the example of St. Paul. St. Paul did not think that if he lived hereafter in indolence without endeavouring to make new advances, he had any right to expect the benefits of the gospel: No christian, therefore, living in indolence, and making no new advances, ought to flatter him-



self that he is entitled to the blessings of the gospel. In order to perceive this consequence, form a just notion of the virtues of our apostle, and consider Paul as a zealot, Paul as a proselyte, Paul as an apostle, and Paul as a martyr, and you will allow he was a great character, a christian of the highest order, and that if, with all his eminent virtues, he thought himself obliged to acquire yet more eminent virtue, every christian ought to form the same idea of his own duty.

Consider Paul as a *zealot*. Perhaps you may be surprised at our passing an encomium on this part of his life. Certainly we shall not undertake to make an apology for that cruel and barbarous zeal which made use of fire and blood, and which put racks for arguments, and gibbets for demonstrations. But the purest life hath its blots; and the most generous heart its frailties. In that fatal necessity of imperfection which is imposed on all mankind, there are some defiled streams, so to speak, which flow from pure springs, some people, and the apostle was one, who sin from an excess of virtue. What idea then must we form of this man, and what shall we say of his virtues, since his vices were effects of such an excellent cause? This odious part of his life, which he wished to bury in oblivion, that barbarity and madness, that industry to inflame the synagogue, and to stir up all the world, all this, strictly speaking, and properly explained, was worthy of praise. He maintained error. Why? Because he thought it was truth, and respected it accordingly. He persecuted, because he loved; he was mad, because he

was zealous ; zeal, as I said just now, misguided, but zeal, however ; a criminal indiscretion indeed, but an indiscretion, which in a moral abstraction may be considered as a virtue.

Consider Paul as a *proselyte*. A man educated in opinions opposite to christianity, infatuated with popular errors, prejudiced with ideas of a temporal Messiah, accustomed to consider Jesus Christ as an impostor, and his religion as a plot concerted by knaves, this man changes his ideas, and his whole system of religion, and worships the crucified Jesus, who was *to the Jew a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. The first lesson from heaven persuades him, the first knock at the door of his heart opens it, his conversion is effected in a moment. *I went not up to Jerusalem*, said he ; *I conferred not with flesh and blood*, Gal. i. 16, 17. What a fund of virtue instantly had this man in his heart ! Of all characters in life there are few so respectable as that of a real proselyte. A man who changes his religion on pure principles, hath a greatness of soul above common men. I venture to advance this general maxim, that a man who changes his religion, must be consummate either in virtue or vice. If he be insincere, he is a wretch ; if he be not a wretch, he is a hero. He is a hero if his virtue be sincere, if he makes generous efforts to correct errors imbibed in his earliest youth, if he can see without trembling that path of tribulation which is generally opened to such as forsake their religion, and if he can bear all the suppositions which are generally made against them who renounce

the profession of their ancestors ; if, I say, he can do all this, he is a hero. On the contrary, none but a wretch can embark in such an undertaking, if he be destitute of the dispositions necessary to success. When such a man forsakes his former profession of religion, there is reason to suppose that human motives have done what love of truth could not do ; and that he embraceth his new religion, not because it appears to him more worthy of his attention and respect, but because it is more suitable to his interest. Now to embrace a religion for worldly interest is almost the highest pitch of wickedness. Our maxim admits of very few exceptions, and most proselytes are either men of eminent virtue or abandoned wretches ; and as we are happy to acknowledge there are several of the first kind in this age, so with sorrow we are obliged to allow, that there are a great number of the latter. Let St. Paul be judged by the utmost rigour of this maxim. He was a hero in christianity. The principle that engaged him to embrace the gospel, diffused itself through all his life, and every one of his actions verified the sincerity of his conversion.

St. Paul was born for great things ; he it was whom God chose for an *apostle* to the gentiles. He did not stop in the porch of the Lord's house, he quickly passed into the holy place ; he was only a very short time a catechumen in the school of Christ ; he soon became a master, a minister, an apostle ; and in all these eminent offices he carried virtue to a higher pitch than it had ever been carried before him, and perhaps beyond what it will be ever practised after

him. In effect, what qualities ought a minister of the gospel to possess which St. Paul did not possess in the highest degree? Is it assiduity? "Ye remember, brethren," said he, "our labour and travel, for labouring night and day we preached unto you the gospel of God," 1 Thess. ii. 9. Is it gentleness? "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God," chap. ii. 7, 11, 12. Is it prudence? "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are without law as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 2 Cor. ix. 20, 22. Is it charity? "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren," Rom. ix. 3. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you," 2 Cor. xii. 15. Is it courage? He resisted St. Peter, and "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," Gal. ii. 11. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," before Felix and Drusilla, Acts xxiv. 25. Is it disinterestedness in regard to the world? "We sought not glory of men, neither of you, nor yet of others. We speak the gospel not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts," 1 Thess. ii. 6, 4. Is it zeal? His spirit was stirred in him at Athens, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, Acts xvii. 16. Then, like the prophet of old, he became "very jealous for the Lord of hosts," 1 Kings xix. 10. Is it to support the honour of his

ministry? "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ," 1 Cor. iv. 1. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," 2 Cor. v. 20. "It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void," 1 Cor. ix. 15. Jesus Christ was the model, by which St. Paul formed himself: "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," chap. xi. 1. When students turn their attention to the christian ministry, models of such as have distinguished themselves in this office are proposed to their imitation. The imagination of one, the judgment of another, the gravity of a third, and the learning of a fourth are set before them, and from good originals very often we receive bad copies. St. Paul chose his pattern. His master, his model, his original, his all was Jesus Christ, and he copied every stroke of his original, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

But, though it is always commendable to discharge this holy office well, yet it is particularly so in some circumstances; and our apostle was in such, for he officiated when the whole world was enraged against christians. Consider him then on the stage of *martyrdom*. What would now be our glory was then his disgrace; assiduity, gentleness, zeal, and all the other virtues just now mentioned, drew upon him the most envenomed jealousy, accusations the most atrocious, and persecutions the most cruel. It was in this light, God set the ministry before him at first, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Acts ix. 16. Shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake! What a motive

to engage a man to undertake an office ! Now-a-days, in order to give a great idea of a church, it is said, it hath such and such advantages, so much in cash, so much in small tithes, and so much in great tithes. St. Paul saw the ministry only as a path full of thorns and briars, and he experienced, through all the course of his life, the truth of that idea which was given him of his office. Hear the catalogue of his sufferings. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods ; once was I stoned ; thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often ; in perils of waters ; in perils of robbers ; in perils by mine own countrymen ; in perils by the heathen ; in perils in the city ; in perils in the wilderness ; in perils in the sea ; in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness ; in watchings often ; in hunger and thirst ; in fastings often ; in cold and nakedness," 2 Cor. xi. 24—27. Good God ! What a salary for a minister, hunger, thirst, fastings, nakedness, peril, persecution, death ! In our case, we can die but once, and virtue considers the proximity of the crown of righteousness, which, being suspended immediately over the head of the martyr, supports him under the pains of martyrdom ; but the ministry of St. Paul was a perpetual martyrdom, his life was a continual death. "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," 1 Cor. iv. 9.

Here we finish the eulogium of our apostle, and,

by uniting the parts of this slight sketch, we obtain a just portrait of the man. Do you know a greater than St. Paul? Can you conceive virtue in a more eminent degree? Behold a man fired with zeal, making what he thought the cause of God his own cause, God's enemies his enemies, the interest of God the interest of himself. Behold a man, who turns his attention to truth, and, the moment he discovers it, embraces, and openly avows it. Behold a man who, not content to be an ordinary christian, and, to save himself alone, aspiring at the glory of carrying through the whole world, for public advantage, that light which had illuminated himself. Behold a man preaching, writing; what am I saying? Behold a man suffering, dying, and sealing with his own blood the truths he taught. An ardent zealot, a sincere convert, an accomplished minister, a bleeding martyr, learned in his errors, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, regular in his mistakes, and virtuous even in his crimes. Shew me in the modern or primitive church a greater character than St. Paul. Let any man produce a christian who had more reason to be satisfied with himself, and who had more right to pretend that he had discharged all his duties. Yet this very man, this Paul, *forgot those things which were behind!* This very Paul was *pressing forward!* This is the man who feared he should *be a cast-away!* And you *smoking flax*, you *bruised reed*, you who have hardly taken root in the christian soil, you who have hardly a spark of love to God, do you think your piety sufficient? Are you the man to leave off endeavouring to make new advances?

Perhaps you may say, the text is not to be taken literally, it is the language of humility, and resembles what St. Paul says in another place ; I am the *chief of sinners* ; agreeably to his own direction, that *each christian should esteem another better than himself*, and which he calls, very justly, *lowliness of mind*. No such thing, my brethren ; you will be convinced of the contrary, by the following reflections.

2. We ground the necessity of progressive religion on the great *end* of christianity. Form, if it be possible, a just notion of christianity. I say if it be possible ; for we have a wonderful reluctance to understand our own religion. We have all a strange propensity to disguise the character of a true christian, and to keep ourselves ignorant of it. We have the holy scriptures, and in them the gospel plan of redemption before our eyes every day, and every day we throw over them a variety of prejudices, which suppress the truth, and prevent us from seeing its beauty. One forms of christianity an idea of indolence and relaxation, and, under pretence that the gospel speaks of mercy and grace, persuades himself that he may give a loose to all his natural evil dispositions. Another imagines the gospel a body of discipline, the principal design of which was to regulate society, so that provided we be pretty good parents, tolerable magistrates, and as good subjects as other people, we ought all to be content with ourselves. A third thinks, to be a christian is to defend with constant heat certain points which he elevates into capital doctrines, essential to holiness here, and to salvation hereafter.



A fourth, more unjust than all the rest, supposes the first duty of a christian is to be sure of his own salvation. Each wanders after his own fancy.

It should seem, however, that the more we consult the gospel, the more fully shall we be convinced, that its design is to engage us to aspire at perfection, to transform man, to render him as perfect as he was when he came out of the hands of his Creator, to *renew him after the image of him that created him*, to make him approach the nature of glorified saints, and, to say all in one word, to transform him into the divine nature. This is christianity. This it is to be a christian, and consequently a christian is a man called to be *perfect, as his father which is in heaven is perfect*; to be *one* with God, as Jesus Christ is one with God.

This definition of a christian and of christianity is justified by all we see in the gospel. For why does it every where propose perfection for our end, heaven to our hope, God for our model? Why doth it teach us to consider the good things of the world as evils, and the evils of the world as benefits, human virtues as vices, and what men call vice as virtue? Why all this? All beside the matter, unless the gospel proposes to renew man, to transform him, and to make him approach the perfect being.

From these principles we conclude thus. Since the gospel requires us to endeavour to be *perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*, we ought never to cease endeavouring till we are as *perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*. Since the gospel requires us to labor to become, by a trans-

formation of our being, *one* with God, as Jesus Christ is one with God, we ought never to give over our endeavours till we do become one with God. Moreover, as we shall never in this life carry our virtue to so high a degree as to be perfect as our Father is perfect, holy as God is holy, one with God as Jesus Christ is one with God, it follows to a demonstration, that in no period of our life will our duty be finished; consequently we must make continual progress, if we would answer our engagements; and consequently there is no point fixed in the career of virtue, in which it would be allowable to stop; and consequently St. Paul ought to be understood literally, when he says of himself, "I count not myself to have apprehended: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," Phil. iii. 13. and consequently, of all the excuses, of all the pretexts, of all the sophisms, which were ever invented to palliate that slowness, with which we walk in the way of virtue, there are none more frivolous than these, we are not saints, we cannot be perfect, we cannot put off human nature: for it is because you are *not* saints, it is because you are *not* perfect, it is because you cannot *put off* human nature, it is on this account, that you ought to make a continual progress in christian virtue, that the sincerity, and so to speak, the obstinacy of your efforts may make up for your imperfections.

3. Our third class of proofs is taken from the fatal consequences of a cessation of our efforts, a suspension of our religious endeavours. Were it literally true that we could arrive at that state of perfection which the gospel requires of us; could we actually finish the morality of religion, it would still follow, that we must make new efforts during our residence in this world, and that without these our past labours would be useless. A man employed in a mechanical art prepares his materials, sets about his work, and carries it on to a certain degree. He suspends his labour for a while; his work doth not advance, indeed, but our artist hath at least this advantage over us, when he returns to his labour, he finds his work in the same forwardness in which he left it. Heavenly exercises are not of this kind. Past labour is often lost for want of perseverance, and, it is a certain maxim in religion, that not to proceed is to draw back.

Vice is closely connected with human propensities. Virtue, on the contrary, is directly opposite. As soon as you cease to endeavour to retain what opposes your propensities, nature takes its course. You carry within you, so to speak, a worker of iniquity, who constantly labours at the fatal work of your depravity. This workman is the old man. He every day gets forward, every day confirms you in sin, every day strengthens your attachment to sensible objects, every day ties you with fresh bands to earthly things. If you do not oppose labour against labour, reflection against reflection, me-

tive against motive, progress against progress, you will be defeated.

In these observations we find an answer to an objection, constantly repeated when we condemn that perpetual dissipation, that excessive gaming, and those reiterated amusements, which consume the greatest part of your lives. You perpetually complain, that we overstrain matters, that we aggravate things, that the *yoke* of Christ is *easy*, and his *burden is light*, and that we make the one uneasy, and the other heavy. You constantly allege, that religion is not intended to put man on the rack, but to conduct him to reason; that the gospel is not contrary to a thousand pleasures which society offers us, and that, after all, the things we condemn are indifferent. I grant, religion doth not condemn pleasures. I grant more, the pleasures you refer to are indifferent in their nature, that they have no bad influence, no treachery, no calumny in your conversation; no fraud, no swearing, no sordid interest in your gaming, no lax maxims, no profaneness, no immodesty in your amusements; I grant all this: Yet, after all, it is a fact, that, as the new man suspends his work, the old man advances his. It is always true, for example, that when a sermon hath made some impressions on your hearts, when the lukewarm are aroused, when the impenitent are terrified, those other objects efface these impressions, and, though they may not lead you into the commission of fresh crimes, yet they make you relapse into that first state of depravity from which you seemed to be emerging.

4. A fourth source of proofs in favour of the necessity of progress is, *the advances* themselves which are made in the path of holiness. The science of salvation in this respect resembles human sciences. In human sciences we see a very singular phenomenon. A man of great and real learning is humble, he always speaks with caution, he pronounces always with circumspection, he determines a point trembling, and his answers to difficult questions are not unfrequently confessions of his ignorance. On the contrary, a pedant assumes the state of a superior genius; he knows every thing, and undertakes to elucidate and determine every thing. Both these men are in earnest, both are sincere. The learned man speaks very sincerely; for, as he hath made great advances in literature, he knows the extent of it; he knows that nature hath difficulties, providence depths, religion mysteries: Such a man becomes humble as he becomes able, and the more he acquires, the more he feels the need of acquiring. On the contrary, a pedant doth not even know what learning is, he stops on the beach, sees a little way, takes that little for the whole, and easily persuades himself that he knows all.

Thus in the science of salvation, a man of little religion, who hath only a languishing regard for God, and a few superficial ideas of virtue, soon flatters himself that he hath done all his duty, employed all his love, and carried fervour to its highest degree. A man of lively and vigorous religion doth not stop on the shore, he goes aboard a fast sailor, weighs anchor, and sets sail on that ocean of truth which re-

ligion sets before him, and he soon finds immense spaces before him ; or, to speak without a figure, he finds his own virtues so few in number, so limited in degree, so obstructed in their course, and so mixed in their exercise, that he easily comes into a well grounded judgment, that all he hath attained is nothing to what lies before him. As he meditates on his sins, he finds them so great, so numerous, so odious, so dangerous, that he cannot comprehend how it is that his heart doth not break, and his eyes become *fountains of tears*. As he meditates on the nature of this world, he finds it so vain in its occupations, so puerile in its pleasures, so void in its amusements, its friendship so deceitful, and its duration so short, that he cannot comprehend what should detain him in the world. As he meditates on the felicity of heaven, he finds it so substantial and pure, so splendid and satisfactory, that he cannot conceive what should detain him, and prevent his losing sight of the world and ascending to heaven. As he meditates on the Creator, he find him so wise, so just, so good, so lovely, that he cannot imagine why his heart doth not always burn with flames of love to him.

Such is the effect of perseverance in a path of virtue ! Accordingly we find the greatest saints the most eminent for humility. Abraham durst not “take upon him to speak unto the Lord, because he was only dust and ashes,” Gen. xviii. 27. Job, “though he were righteous, yet would not answer, but made supplication to his judge,” chap. ix. 15. David could not “stand, if the Lord should mark iniqui-

ties," Psal. cxxx. 3. St. Paul did not think he had *attained*, Phil. iii. 12. To say all in one word, celestial intelligences, who were never embodied, seraphims placed immediately opposite the throne of God, with two wings, ready to fly at the command of the Creator, have also four wings to cover their feet and faces, to express that their zeal, how fervent and flaming soever, cannot equal what that God merits, whom they incessantly admire and adore.

5. Our fifth class of proofs is taken from the excellence of the *ministry*. St. Paul was not an ordinary christian; he was a minister of the gospel, and the greatness of his character was to him a ground of humility and diffidence.

Although the duties of ministers, and the duties of hearers are essentially the same; though there are not two ways to heaven, one for the pastor, and another for the flock, yet, it is certain, ministers have more motives to holiness than other men.

What would the people say, if the minister of the pulpit, and the minister of society were two men? If the minister of the pulpit, declaimed against the vanities of the world, and the minister of society were worldly? If the minister of the pulpit were a man grave, severe, fervent as a seraph, and the minister of society were a man loose, and full of worldly vices? Certainly people would say, we sported with their credulity, and many a mouth would thunder in our ears this cutting reproach, "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal,

dost thou steal? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Rom. ii. 21.

Beside, a minister hath two works to do in regard to salvation, his own soul to save, and the souls of his people to save. Each of these becomes a reason for his own sanctification. "For their sakes I sanctify myself," said the Saviour of the world, "that they also might be sanctified," John xvii. 19. Interpreters understand by this *sanctification* that separation, which Jesus Christ made of himself for the salvation of his church: but may we not understand the word *sanctify* in the first part of the proposition as we understand the same word in the second? *For their sakes I sanctify myself*, is as much as to say, I obey thee, not only because being a creature I owe thee an inviolable fidelity, but because, being the master and teacher of thy church, I ought to influence it by my own example.

Further, a minister of the gospel hath extraordinary assistance, he is always with God, virtue is constantly before his eyes, and though almost all other employments in society have connected with them particular temptations to vice, the profession of a merchant to self-interest, that of a soldier to cruelty, that of a magistrate to pride, yet the ministry is itself an inducement to virtue. Such being the importance of our engagements, and the eminence of our character, who can flatter himself with having discharged all his duties? Who can venture to lift up his eyes to heaven? Who is not annihilated under a sense of his imperfections and frailties? "O



Lord enter not into judgment with thy servant,"  
Psal. cxliii. 2.

Finally, The necessity of progressive sanctification appears by the *end* which God proposed in placing us in this world. We are often troubled to conceive why God lodged man, a creature so noble, in a theatre of vanity and uncertainty. What is our life of thirty, forty, or fourscore years, to the immense duration of eternity? How can we reconcile the part we act here, with the wisdom of him who placed us here, and, if I may speak so, the littleness of the world with the grandeur of its inhabitants? What destination do you assign man? What end do you attribute to his Creator? Why did he place him in this world? Was it to make him happy? But what! can he be made happy among objects so very disproportional to his faculties? Are not his fortune and reputation, his health and his life, a prey to all human vicissitudes? Was it to make him miserable? But how can this agree with the divine perfections, with that goodness, liberality, and beneficence which are essential to God? Was it to enable him to cultivate arts and sciences? But what relation is there between an occupation so mean and a creature so noble? Beside, would life then have been so short? Alas! we hardly make any progress in arts and sciences, before they become useless to us! Before we have well passed out of infancy and novitiate, death puts a period to our projects, and takes away from us all the fruits of learning and labour. Before we have well learned languages, death condemns us to eternal silence.

Before we well know the world, we are obliged to quit it, and we die when we are just learning to live. If the famous Theophrastus, at the age of one hundred and seven years, regretted life, because he just then began to live wisely, what lamentations must other men make? What then was the design of God in placing us here? Was it that we should form and refine society? But how can a society, composed of creatures transient and imperfect, be considered as a real and substantial body of bliss? If it hath some solidity and reality, when considered abstractly, yet what is it in itself? What is it to you? What is it to me? What is it to any individual member? Doth not one law reduce all to dust?

My brethren, there is only one way out of this labyrinth. One single answer is sufficient for all these questions. This world is a place of exercise, this life is a time of trial, which is given us that we may choose either eternal happiness or endless misery.

To this belong all the different ideas which the holy Spirit gives us of life. Sometimes it is a state of traffic, in which eternal reward is given for a *cup of cold water only*. Sometimes it is a state of tribulation, in which *light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Sometimes it is a passage way, in which we behave as *strangers and pilgrims*. Sometimes it is an economy of *visitation*, in which *riches of goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering, are opened to us*. Sometimes it is a *race*, in which *all*

*run, but one receiveth the prize.* Sometimes it is a *fight*, in which we cannot hope to conquer, unless we fight with courage and constancy.

To this subject belongs the scriptural estimation of life. Sometimes it speaks of life as mean and contemptible; and at other times, on the contrary, as great and invaluable. Sometimes it heaps expression upon expression, image upon image, emblem upon emblem, to make us consider it with contempt. It is *a shadow, a vanity, a flower, grass, a vapour, a dream, a tale, a vain shew, nothing* before God. And yet this *vain shadow*, this *flower*, this *grass*, this *vapour*, this *dream*, this *tale*, this *shew*, this *nothing*, the scriptures teach us to consider as a time for us to *redeem*, as an *acceptable time*, as a *day of salvation*, as a time after which there will be *time no longer*. Why this different estimation? If you consider life in regard to itself, and with a view to the connections we form, the pleasures we relish, the temporal occupations we follow: if you consider it in regard to sceptres and thrones, crowns and establishments the most pompous and solid, you cannot under-rate life. On the contrary, if you consider it in regard to the great design of the Creator, in regard to the relation it hath to eternity, in regard to that idea which we have given you of it, you cannot value it too highly. This world then is a place of exercise, life is a time of trial, given us that we might choose eternal happiness or endless misery.

This principle being allowed, our doctrine is supported by a new class of arguments; for be it granted that you remember nothing in your past life contra-

ry to your profession of christianity ; be it that you resemble St. Paul in all his excellencies after conversion, and in none of the crimes which he committed before that happy period ; the only conclusion which you have a right to draw is, that you have performed a part of your task, but not that there remains nothing more for you to do. You are nearer the end than they who have not run so fast in the race as you have, but you have not yet obtained the prize. You have discharged the duties of youth, and the duties of manhood, now the duties of old age remain to be discharged. You have discharged all the duties of health, now the duties of sickness and dying remain to be discharged. This world is a place of exercise ; while you are in it your exercise is not finished ; life is a time of trial ; as long as you live, your trial remains.

Let us conclude. Were we to act rationally, we should always fix our minds on these truths ; we should never end a day without putting this question to ourselves, What progress have I made in virtue ? Have I this day approached the end of my creation ? And as the time of my abode here diminishes, do I advance in proportion to the time that remains ? We should require of ourselves an exact account of every day, every hour, every instant of our duration ; but this is not the gospel of most christians. What we have been proposing, seem to most hearers mere maxims of the preacher, more proper to adorn a public discourse, than to compose a system of religion.

Why are not ecclesiastical bodies as rigid and severe against heresies of practice, as they are against heresies of speculation? Certainly there are heresies in morality, as well as in theology. Councils and synods reduce the doctrines of faith to certain propositional points, and thunder anathemas against all who refuse to subscribe them. They say, Cursed be he who doth not believe the divinity of Christ; cursed be he who doth not believe hypostatical union, and the mystery of the cross; cursed be he who denies the inward operations of grace, and the irresistible efficacy of the holy Spirit. I wish they would make a few canons against moral heresies! How many are there of this kind among our people? Among our people we may put many who are in another class. Let me make canons. In the first I would put a heresy too common, that is, that the calling of a christian consists less in the practice of virtue, than in abstaining from gross vices; and I would say, if any man think that he sufficiently answers the obligations of christianity, by not being avaricious, oppressive, and intemperate, if he do not allow that he ought to be zealous, fervent, and detached from the world, let him be accursed. In a second canon, I would put another heresy, equally general, and equally dangerous, and which regards the delay of conversion; and I would say, If any one imagine that, after a life spent in sin, a few regrets, proceeding more from a fear of death and hell, than from a principle of love to God, are sufficient to open the gates of heaven, let him be accursed. In a third canon I would put . . . . . fill up the list

yourselves, my brethren, and let us return to our subject. To confine one's self to a certain circle of virtues, to stop at a fixed point, to be satisfied with a given degree of piety, is an error ; it is a heresy, which deserves as many anathemas, and ecclesiastical thunders, as all the other which have been unanimously denounced by all christians.

My brethren, let us rectify our ideas, in order to rectify our conduct. *Let us run with patience the race set before us*, let us go on till we can say with St. Paul, *I have finished my course*. Be not terrified at this idea of progressive religion. Some great efforts must have been made by all holy men in this place to arrive at that degree of virtue which they have obtained ; but the hardest part of the work is done, henceforward what remains is easy. The way to heaven is narrow at the entrance, but it widens as we go on. The yoke of Christ is heavy at first, but it weighs little when it hath been long worn.

After all, there is a way of softening all the pains to which we are exposed, by continuing our efforts. St. Paul practised this art with great success ; it consists in fixing the eye on the end of the race. At the end of the race he saw two objects :—The first the prize. How easy to brave the enemies of salvation, when the eye is full of the prospect of it ! How tolerable appear the pains of the present state, when the *sufferings of the present time are compared with*, and weighed against *the glory* that follows. Next, St. Paul saw Jesus Christ at the end of the race, another object which animated him. He was animated by the example of Christ, to finish his course

with joy ; he was animated by the assistances which supported him ; he was animated by the promise of Christ telling him, *He that overcometh shall sit down in my throne* ; he was animated by the mercy, which he knew, how weak soever his efforts might be, would be approved at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, provided they were sincere, for Jesus himself conquered for him, and himself acquired that prize for the apostle at which he aspired ; in a word, he was animated by his love ; Jesus Christ is at the end of the race, and Paul loved Jesus Christ, and longed to be with him. I said, he saw two objects, the prize of victory, and Jesus Christ ; but these make only one object. St. Paul's prize is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Paul's paradise. According to him, Christ is the most desirable part of celestial felicity : " Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ; we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 6, 8. " I desire to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. " I press toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," chap. iii. 14. This thought, that every step he took brought him nearer to Jesus Christ, this thought rendered him insensible to all the fatigue of the race, and enabled him to redouble his efforts to arrive at the end.

O flames of divine love ! Shall we never know you except by the examples of the primitive christians ! O flames of divine love, which we have so often described, shall we never feel you in our own souls !

Fire us, inflame us with your ardour, and make us understand that all things are easy to the man who sincerely loves God! God grant us this grace! To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



# SERMON XIII.

*The Moral Martyr.*



PSALM cxix. 46.

*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

MY BRETHREN,

**I**T is not only under the reign of a tyrant, that religion involves its disciples in persecution, it is in times of the greatest tranquillity, and even when virtue seems to sit on a throne. A christian is often subject to punishments different from wheels and racks. People united to him by the same profession of religion, having received the same baptism, and called with him to aspire at the same glory, not unfrequently press him to deny Jesus Christ, and prepare punishments for him, if he have courage to confess him. Religion is proposed to us in two different points of view, a point of speculation, and a point of practice. Accordingly, there are two sorts of martyrdom; a martyrdom for doctrine, and a martyrdom for morality. It is for the last that the prophet prepares us in the words of the text, and to the same end I dedicate the sermon which I am going to address to you to-day. I come into this place, that affords a happy asylum for confessors

and martyrs, to utter in your hearing these words of Jesus Christ, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels," Mark viii. 38.

In order to animate you with a proper zeal for morality, and to engage you, if necessary, to become martyrs for it, we will treat of the subject in five different views.

I. We will shew you the authors, or, as they may be justly denominated, the executioners, who punish men with martyrdom for morality.

II. The magnanimity of such as expose themselves to it.

III. The horrors that accompany it.

IV. The obligation which engages men to submit to it.

V. The glory that crowns it.

We will explain these five ideas contained in the words of the psalmist, *I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed*: and we will proportion these articles, not to that extent to which they naturally go, but to the bounds prescribed to these exercises.

I. The *authors*, or as we just now called them, the *executioners* who inflict this punishment, are to be considered. The text calls them *kings*; *I will speak of thy testimonies before kings*. What kings does the psalmist mean? Saul, to whom piety was become odious? or any particular heathen prince, to whom the persecutions of Saul sometimes drove

our prophet for refuge? The name of the God of the Hebrews was blasphemed among these barbarians; his worship was called superstition by them; and it would have been difficult to profess to fear him and avoid contempt.

It is not easy to determine the persons intended by the psalmist, nor is it necessary to confine the words to either of the senses given; they may be taken in a more extensive sense. The word *king* in the eastern languages, as well as in those of the western world, is not confined to kings properly so called; it is sometimes given to superiors of any rank. Ask not the reason of this, every language hath its own genius, and custom is a tyrant who seldom consults reason before he issues orders; and who generally knows no law but self-will and caprice. If you insist on a direct answer to your inquiry concerning the reason of the general use of the term, I reply, the same passion for despotism which animates kings on a throne, usually inspires such individuals as are a little elevated above people around them; they consider themselves as sovereigns, and pretend to regal homage. Authority over inferiors begins this imaginary royalty, and vanity finishes it. Moreover, such as are called *petty gentry* in the world are generally more proud and absolute than real kings; the last frequently propose nothing but to exercise dominion, but the first aim both to exercise dominion and to make a parade of the exercise, lest their imaginary grandeur should pass unnoticed.

I understand, then, by the vague term *kings*, all who have any pre-eminence over the lowest orders

of men, and these are they who exercise tyranny, and inflict the martyrdom for which the prophet in the text prepares us. In order to comprehend this more fully, contrast two conditions in the life of David. Remark first the state of mediocrity, or rather happy obscurity in which this holy man was born. Educated by a father, not rich, but pious, he was religious from his childhood. As he led a country life, he met with none of those snares among his cattle which the great world sets for our innocence. He gave full scope without restraint to his love for God, and could affirm, without hazarding any thing, that God was supremely lovely. What a contrast! This shepherd was suddenly called to quit his sheep and his fields, and to live with courtiers in the palace of a prince. What a society for a man accustomed to regulate his conversation by the laws of truth, and his conduct by those of virtue! What a place was this for him to propose those just and beautiful principles which the Holy Spirit teaches in the Scriptures, and which are many of them to be found in the writings of the psalmist! "I have seen the wicked in power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: I sought him, but he could not be found. Surely men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity.—I said, ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most High; but ye shall die like men.—Put not your trust in a prince, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. He that ruleth his

spirit, is better than he that taketh a city. My son, the son of my womb, the son of my vows, give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink, lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." How would these maxims be received at some of your courts? They were not very pleasing at that of Saul; David was, therefore, censured by him and his courtiers for proposing them. Hear how he expressed himself in this psalm. "O Lord! remove from me reproach and contempt. Princes did sit, and speak against me, because thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law," Psal. cxix. 22, 23, 51.

II. Let us pass to the second article, and consider the *magnanimity* of such as expose themselves to this martyrdom. This is naturally included in the former remark, concerning the executioners who inflict the punishment. My brethren, it is impossible to speak of the testimonies of God before the tyrants in question without being accused either of a spirit of rebellion, aversion to social pleasures, or rusticity and pedantry; three dispositions which the great seldom forgive.

The martyr for morality is sometimes taxed with a spirit of *rebellion*. Perhaps you may have thought I spoke extravagantly, when I affirmed, that most men consider themselves as kings in regard to their inferiors. I venture, however, to affirm a greater

paradox still; that is, they consider themselves as gods, and demand such homage to be paid to their fancied divinity as is due to none but the true God. I grant, great men do not all assume the place of God with equal arrogance. There are not many Pharoahs who adopt this brutal language, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Exod. v. 2. There are but few Sennacheribs who are so extravagant as to say to the people of God, "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?" Isa. xxxvi. 18, 19.

But, though the great men of the world do not always assume the place of God with so much brutal insolence, yet they do assume it. Though they do not say to their inferiors in so many words, *Obey us, rather than God*, yet do they not say it in effect? Is it possible to oppose their fancies with impunity? Is it safe to establish the rights of God in their presence? What success had Elijah at the court of Ahab? Micaiah at that of Jehoshaphat? John the baptist at that of Herod?

We need not go back to remote times. What success have we had among you, when we have undertaken to allege the rights of God in some circumstances? For example, when we have endeavoured to convince you, that to aspire to the office of a judge, without talents essential to the discharge of it, is to incur the guilt of all the unjust sentences that may be pronounced; that to dull the under-

standing by debauchery, to drown reason in intemperance, to dissipate the spirits by sensual pleasures, when going to determine questions which regard the lives and fortunes of mankind, is to rob men of their property, and to plunge a dagger into their bosoms; that to be so absorbed in forming public treaties, and in the prosperity of the state, as to lose sight of the interests of religion, is equal to placing hope in the present life, and renouncing all expectation of a life to come; that to render one's self inaccessible to the solicitations of widows and orphans, while we fill offices created for their service, is to usurp honours for the sake of emoluments; that to suffer the publication of scandalous books, and the practice of public debauchery, under pretence of toleration and liberty, is to arm God against a state, though states subsist only by his protection. Let us not repeat forgotten grievances, let us not, by multiplying these objects, run the hazard of increasing the number of arguments which justify our proposition. *To speak of the testimonies of God before kings*, is to expose one's self to a charge of rebellion, and to such punishments as ought to be reserved for real incendiaries and rebels.

2. As the great men of the world would have us respect their rank, so they are equally jealous of their *pleasures*; and, most men forming maxims of pleasure more or less lax according as their rank is more or less eminent, licentiousness grows along with credit and fortune. A man, who made a scruple of being absent from an exercise of religion, when he could hardly provide bread for the day,

hath not even attended the Lord's supper since he became master of a thousand a year. A man whose conscience would not suffer him to frequent some companies, when he walked a-foot, is become a subscriber to public gaming houses now he keeps a carriage. A man who would have blushed at immodest language in private life, keeps, without scruple, a prostitute, now he is become a public man. Lift your eyes a little higher, lift them above metaphorical kings, and look at kings properly so called. Adultery, incest, and other abominations more fit for beasts than men; what am I saying? abominations to which beasts never abandon themselves, and of which *men* only are capable, are not these abominations considered as sports in the palaces of some princes? This is what I said, licentiousness increases with credit and fortune. The maxims which men form concerning pleasures, are more or less loose, according as their rank is more or less eminent. In general, that detachment from the world which religion proposes to produce in our hearts, that spirit of repentance with which it aims to inspire us, those images of death which it perpetually sets before us, those plans of felicity disengaged from matter, to which it invites us; all these ideas are tasteless to the great; we cannot propose them amidst their intoxicating pleasures without being considered as enemies of pleasure, as scourges to society.

3. When we speak of the *testimonies of God*, before the great, we are taxed with rusticity and pedantry. There is among men, a misnamed science, without which we cannot appear in the great world;



it is called *politeness*, or good breeding. This science consists in adopting, at least in feigning to adopt, all the passions and prejudices of the great, in taking such forms as they like, in regulating ideas of right and wrong by their caprice, in condemning what they condemn, and in approving what they approve. In one word politeness, in the style of the great, is that suppleness which keeps a man always prepared to change his system of morality and religion according to their fancies. Not to have this disposition, to have invariable ideas, and invariable objects of pursuit, to be inconvertible in religion, to have the laws of God always before our eyes, or, as the scripture speaks, to *walk before him*, is, in style of people of the world, to have no breeding, to be a bad courtier, to be possessed with that kind of folly which renders it proper for us, though not to be confined with lunatics, yet to be banished from the company of people of birth and quality, as they call themselves, and to be stationed in closets and cells.

III. Thus we have seen both the executioners, who punish morality with martyrdom, and the magnanimity which exposes a man to the punishment; and these are sufficient to expose our third article, the *horrors* that accompany it. I have no ideas sufficiently great of the bulk of my auditors to engage me to be very exact in expounding this third article. I fear, were I to enlarge on this part of my subject, I should raise insurmountable obstacles to the end which I should propose in opening the subject. Forgive an opinion so inglorious to your piety, but too well adjusted to the imperfections of it. We dare

not form such a plan for you as Jesus Christ formed for St. Paul, when speaking of this new proselyte to Ananias, he told him, "I will shew him, how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Acts ix. 16. Martyrdom for doctrines, I grant, seems at first more shocking than martyrdom for morality; but, taken all together, it is perhaps less insupportable. To die for religion is not always the worst thing in the calling of a christian. Virtue wakes up into vigour in these circumstances, and renders itself invincible by its efforts. Even worldly honour sometimes comes to embolden. That kind of heroism which is attributed to a man making such a splendid sacrifice, supports under exquisite torments.

There is another kind of suffering, longer and more fatiguing, and therefore more difficult. It is a profession, a detail, a trade of suffering, if I may express myself so. To see one's self called to live among men whom we are always obliged to contradict upon subjects for which they discover the greatest sensibility; to be excluded from all their pleasures; never to be admitted into their company, except when they are under afflictions and restraints; to hear one's looks and habits turned into ridicule, as they said of the prophet Elisha, "He is an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins," 2 Kings i. 8. What a punishment! Men who have withstood all the terrors of racks and dungeons, have yielded to the violence of this kind of persecution and martyrdom. We will not be insensible of the frailty of our auditors, and, therefore, we will omit a

discussion of the acute and horrid pains of this kind of martyrdom.

IV. We are to treat, fourthly, of the *obligation* of speaking of the *testimonies of God* before kings. We ground this on the nature of this duty. You have heard, that it consists in urging the rights of God before great men; and, though it be at the hazard of all the comforts and pleasures of life, in professing to respect the moral part of religion. We do not mean an unseasonable and indiscreet manner of doing so. The duty of confessing Jesus Christ before tyrants, in regard to his doctrines, hath its bounds; and so hath that of confessing his morality. There was more enthusiasm than true zeal in such ancient confessors as voluntarily presented themselves before persecutors, and intrigued for the glory of martyrdom. So, in regard to the present subject, in our opinion, it is not requisite we should intrude into the company of the great to reprove them, when we have reason to believe our rebukes would be injurious to ourselves, and contribute nothing to the glory of religion. All the actions of a christian should be directed by prudence. We only expect you should never blush for the precepts of your great Lawgiver, never contribute, by mean adulation, or profound silence, to the violation of them; in short, that you would openly profess to fear God always when your profession is likely to convince a sinner, or to convert a saint.

This duty carries its own evidence along with it. Let us here compare the doctrines of religion with the precepts of it. The precepts of religion are as

essential as the doctrines; and religion will as certainly sink if the morality be subverted, as if the theology be undermined. Moreover, doctrines are absolutely useless without morality, and the doctrines of religion are only proposed to us as grounds of the duties of it. The first doctrine of religion, the foundation of all the rest, is, that there is only one God; but why doth God require us to admit the doctrine of his unity? It is that we may not divide supreme love, the character of supreme adoration, between the supreme Being and creatures; for on this subject it is said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.* Now were I to deny this second proposition, we ought not to divide between God and any creature that love which is the essence of supreme adoration, should I be a less odious apostate than if I denied the first? One of the most essential points of our divinity is, that there is a future state. But why doth God require us to believe a future state? It is that we should regard the present life as the least considerable period of our duration. If then I deny this practical proposition, the present life is the least considerable part of our duration, am I an apostate less odious than if I deny this proposition of speculation, there is a future state? We say the same of all other doctrines.

If it be the duty of a christian to confess the doctrines of religion, and if a simple genuflexion, and the offering of one grain of incense, be acts of denial of these truths of speculation, I ask, Are not one act of adulation, one smile of approbation, one gesture of acquiescence, also acts of denial in regard to practical truths? Most certainly. In times

of persecution it was necessary to lift up the standard of Jesus Christ, to confess him before Herod and Pilate, and before all who took these persecutors of the church for their examples. In like manner, while the church enjoys the most profound peace, if innocence be oppressed, if we see modesty attacked, if we hear the sophisms of sin, we must learn to say, each in his proper sphere, I am a christian, I hate calumny, I abhor oppression, I detest profaneness and licentiousness, and so on.

The further you carry this comparison of martyrdom for doctrines with martyrdom for duties, the more fully will you perceive, that the same reasons which establish the necessity of the first, confirm that of the last, and that apostates from morality are no less odious than those from divinity. Let us for a moment examine what makes the first martyrdom necessary, I mean that for doctrines. Some reasons regard the *believers* themselves. Our attachment to the religion of Jesus Christ may be doubtful to ourselves, before we suffer for it. Martyrdom is a trial of this attachment. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," 1 Pet. iv. 12. Some regard the *spectators*, in whose presence God calls his children to suffer for religion. Christians have made more disciples to the true religion, by suffering persecution, than tyrants have taken from it by persecuting. This is a second view of martyrdom. A martyr may say, with his divine Master, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," John xii. 32. Some of these reasons regard the honour of *religion*, for which God calls us to

suffer. What can be more glorious for it than that peace, and joy, and firmness, with which it inspires its martyrs? How ravishing is this religion, when it supports its disciples under the most cruel persecutions! How truly great doth it appear, when it indemnifies them for the loss of fortune, rank, and life; when it makes them see, through a shower of stones, the object of their hope, and impels them to exclaim with St. Stephen, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" Acts vii. 56. This is a third view of martyrdom, and it would be as easy to increase the list as it is to make the application. Let us apply to martyrdom for duties, what we have said concerning martyrdom for doctrines, and we shall be obliged to conclude, that the same reasons establish the necessity of both.

Let us not pass lightly over this article. If there be a martyrdom of morality, how many apostates have we among us? How often have we denied our holy religion? How often when it hath been jeeringly said to us, *Thou also wast with Jesus*, have we sneakingly replied, *I know not what thou sayest*?

V. We come to our last article, the *crown* of moral martyrdom. Here a new order of objects present themselves to our meditation. Pardon me, if I cannot help deploring the loss, or the suspension of that voice with which for three and twenty years I have announced the testimonies of God so as to be clearly heard at the remotest parts of this numerous auditory. However, I will try to present to you at least a few of the truths, which I dare not undertake to speak of in their utmost extent.

The martyrdom of morality! A man who can say to God, as our prophet said, *I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed*, finds a rich reward, first in the ideas which a sound reason gives him of shame and glory; secondly, in the testimony of his own conscience; thirdly, in the approbation of good people; and lastly, in the prerogatives of martyrdom. These, if I may so express myself, are four jewels of his crown.

1. *Notions of shame and glory* are not arbitrary, they are founded on the essence of those things to which they are related; on these relations they depend, and not on the caprice of different understandings. My first relation is that which I have to God, it is the relation of a creature to his Creator. The duty of this relation is that of the most profound submission. My glory is to discharge this duty, and it is my shame to violate it. My second relation is that which I have to men, a relation between beings formed in the same image, subject to the same God, and exposed to the same miseries. The duty of this relation is that of treating men as I wish they would treat me; or, to use the words of Jesus Christ, "of doing to them whatsoever I would they should do to me," Matt. vii. 12. It is my glory to discharge this duty, and my shame to violate it; and so of the rest. These ideas are not arbitrary, they are founded in the nature of things. No mortal, no potentate hath a right to change them. If then, the great regard me with disdain, when I answer to my relations, and discharge the duties of them, I will not be ashamed. The contempt which this conduct brings upon me, falls back upon my despiser, because shame is a ne-

cessary consequence of violating these duties, and because glory is a necessary consequence of practising them.

2. The martyrdom of morality is rewarded by the testimony of *conscience*, and by the ineffable joys with which the heart is overwhelmed. While the tribunals of the great condemn the christian, an inward judge absolves him; and the decrees of the former are reversed by the latter. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience. I suffer; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed," 2 Cor. i. 12. 2 Tim. i. 12.

3. The moral martyr is rewarded by the approbation of *good people*. Indeed, suffrages will never be unanimous. There will always be in the world two opposite systems, one of virtue, another of sin. The partizans of a system of sin will always condemn the friends of virtue, as the friends of virtue will always condemn the partizans of sin. You cannot be considered in the same light by two such different classes of judges. What the first account infamous, the last call glory; and the last will cover you with glory for what the first call your shame. If you be obliged to choose one of the two parties to judge you, can you possibly hesitate a moment on which to fix your choice? The prophet indemnified himself by an intercourse with the people of God, for the injury done him by the great. *I am, said he, a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts*, Psal. cxix. 63. Suffer me to sanctify here the profane praise which Lucan gave Pompey;\* *The gods are for Cæsar, but Cato is for Pom-*

\* *Victrix Causa Deis Placuit: sed Victa Catoni.*



*pey.* Yes, the approbation of Cato is preferable to that of the gods! I mean those imaginary gods who frequently usurp the rights of the true God.

In fine, The martyr for morality is rewarded by the *prerogatives* of martyrdom. It would be inconvenient, in the close of a sermon, to discuss a question that would require a whole discourse; I mean that concerning degrees of glory; but that, if there be degrees of glory, the highest will be bestowed on martyrs, will admit of no dispute. This I think, may be proved from many passages of scripture. St. John seems to have taken pains to establish this doctrine in the Revelation: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken into shivers," chap. ii. 26, 27. This regards martyrs, and this seems to promise them pre-eminence. "Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God," chap. iii. 11, 12. This regards martyrs, and this seems to promise them pre-eminence. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the

throne of God," chap. vii. 13, 14, 15. This regards martyrs, and this also seems to promise them pre-eminence.

Christians, perhaps your minds are offended at the gospel of this day. Perhaps you are terrified at the career which we have been opening to you. Perhaps you are inwardly murmuring at this double martyrdom. Ah! rather behold *the great cloud of witnesses* with which you are compassed about, and congratulate yourselves that you fight under the same standard, and aspire at the same crown. Above all, *look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself;* and who, as the same apostle Paul speaks, not only *endured the cross, but also despised the shame.* Hark! he speaks to you from the goal, and in this animating language addresses you, "If any man hear my voice, I will come in to him. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 20, 21. Happy you, if you be accessible to such noble motives! Happy we, if we be able to say to God, in that solemn day in which he will render to every one according to his works, *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation, I have not concealed thy loving kindness! Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord!* God grant us this grace. Amen.

AN  
ESSAY  
ON THE  
CONDUCT OF DAVID  
AT THE  
COURT OF ACHISH KING OF GATH,  
IN A  
LETTER OF MR. DUMONT,  
*Pastor of the French Church at Rotterdam, and Professor of the  
Oriental Languages, and Ecclesiastical History,*  
TO  
MR. SAURIN AT THE HAGUE.

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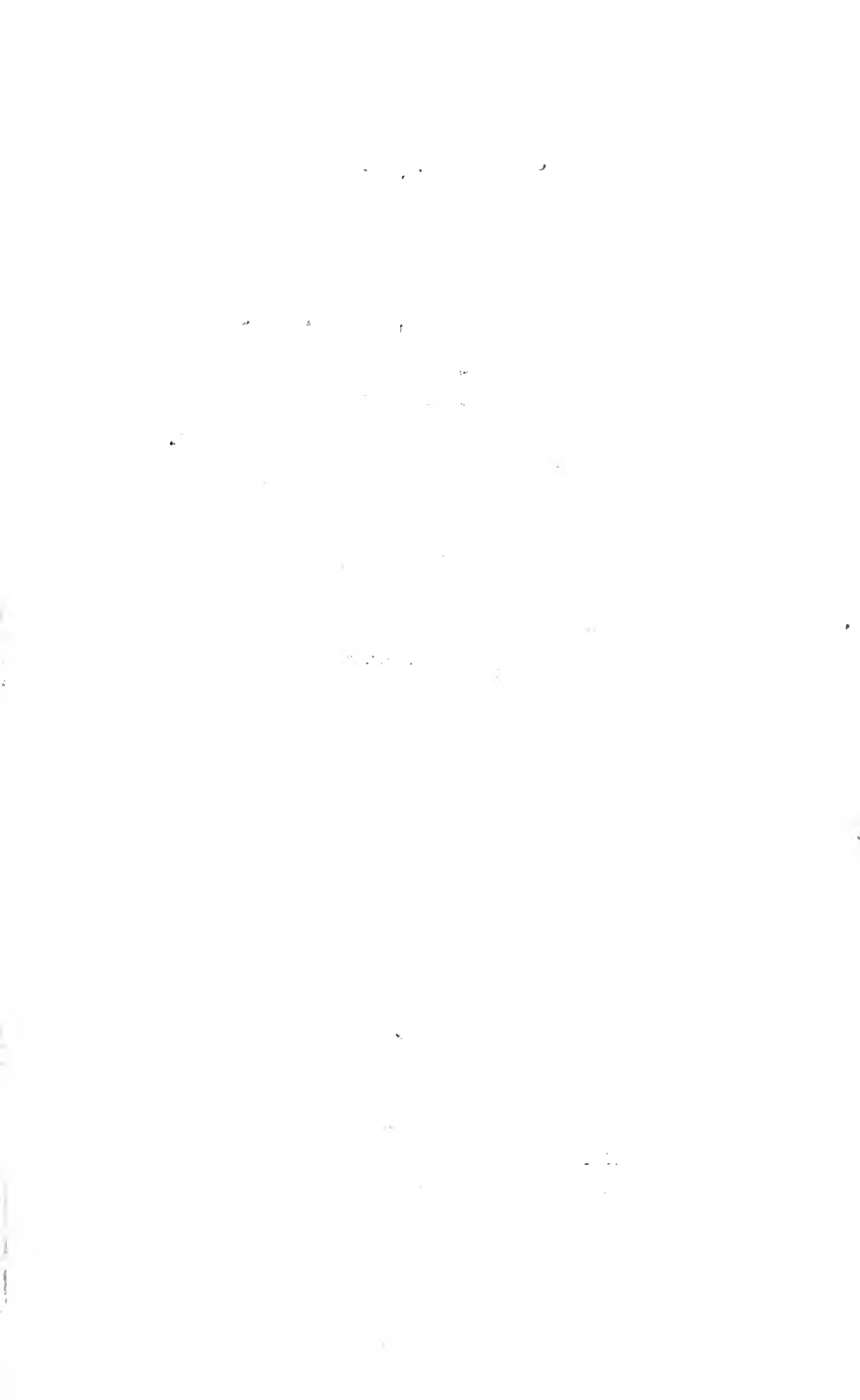
TRANSLATED BY  
ROBERT ROBINSON.

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*SCHENECTADY :*  
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM J. M'CARTEE.  
*E. & E. Hosford—Printers—Albany.*

—♦—  
1813.



## ADVERTISEMENT.



GABRIEL DUMONT, author of the following essay, was born at Crest, in Dauphiny, August 19th, 1680, and died at Rotterdam, January 1st, 1748. He was a refugee for religion, and was pastor of the Waloon church at Rotterdam, and professor of the Oriental languages and Ecclesiastical history. He published nothing himself during his life ; but, after his decease, Mr. Superville, his colleague, published, with a short preface, one volume of his sermons, containing twelve discourses, the most plain, artless, and edifying that I have ever had the happiness of reading ; not so disputatious as those of Amyraut, not so grave as those of Superville, not so stiff as those of Torne and Bourdaloue, not so far-fetched and studied as those of Massillon, nor so charged with colouring as those of Saurin ; but placid, ingenious, gentle, natural, and full of evidence and pathos : just as *wisdom from above* should be, *pure, peaceable, mild—full of mercy and good fruits—sown in peace to make peace*, James iii. 17, 18. The public owe this volume to Mademoiselle de Heuqueville, the pious patroness and friend of the author, who had, as it were, extorted them from him before his death.

Mr. Saurin, who published this essay in his dissertations on the Bible, says, “ I follow our version, and the general sense of interpreters. A learned man, (Mr. Dumont) has investigated the subject at large, and if he doth not furnish us with demonstrations in favour of the system he proposes, yet his conjectures are so full of erudition, and so very probable, that we cannot help admiring them, while we feel an inclination to dispute them.”

For my part, I own, if I may venture a conjecture, I think Mr. Dumont has placed his opinion in a light both beautiful, and, in a very high degree probable. To sum up his meaning, he would read the passage thus :

## 1 SAMUEL, chap. xxi.

Ver. 10. And David fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish, the king of Gath.

11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David, the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

12. And David was struck to the heart with these words, and was sore afraid of Achish, king of Gath.

13. And he changed countenance before them, and fell convulsed into their hands, and he hurt and marked himself against the posts of the gate, and he frothed on his beard.

14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, you see the man is epileptic: wherefore then have ye brought him unto me?

15. Have I need of epileptics, that ye have brought this man to fall into convulsions in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?

AN  
ESSAY  
ON  
THE CONDUCT OF DAVID  
AT THE COURT OF  
ACHISH KING OF GATH.



SIR,

I MAY venture to call the letter I have the honour to write you, "An apology for the conduct of David at the court of king Achish," for my design is to prove three things: First, That if David had counterfeited madness on the occasion mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Samuel, he would not have committed any sin. Secondly, That David did not feign himself mad, as is generally supposed. And thirdly, That this heir apparent to the crown of Israel, had not, at the court of Gath, the least degree of madness, either real or feigned.

I. If you were a man who decided a point of morality by human authority, I might allege, in favour of this first article, the following distich of Cato,

*Insipiens esto, cum tempus postulat, aut res ;  
Stultitiam simulare loco, prudentia summa est. (1)*

(1) *Disticha de moribus, lib. ii. Dist. 18.*

Independently of this author, of whom we hardly know either the true name, the religion, the country, or the age, every body will allow that there is a good deal of wisdom required to play the fool properly. Madness is no sin, it is a disease of the mind, or rather of the brain. David, it is to be observed, during his pretended madness, said nothing criminal. He did a few apparent acts of a person insane. Why might he not be allowed to free himself from imminent danger by this prudent dissimulation? To treat of this question fully and accurately, it would be necessary to go to the bottom of the subject, and examine the grounds and principles of the obligations men are under to speak and act sincerely to one another. It might not be improper to investigate this matter by enquiring, whether, in this reciprocal engagement, there be any difference between deceiving by words known and agreed on between mankind, and misleading, by actions, the natural signs of the sentiments of our hearts. Particularly, it should be examined, whether there be no cases in which this kind of contract is in a sort suspended, and whether David were not in one of these cases, in which he was not obliged so to act, as to convey to king Achish his true and real sentiments. But as I know, sir, you have examined this subject in the case of Samuel, I will confine myself to two arguments, supported by a few facts, relative to the conduct attributed to David, in order to justify him.

First, His life was in danger; and will not a man give all that he hath for his life? Have we not a right to do every thing except sin to avoid death? Blame



and welcome, the cruel policy of Dionysius of Sicily (2), who sometimes spread a report that he was sick, and sometimes that he had been assassinated by his soldiers, with a design to discover, by the unguarded conversation of his subjects, how they stood affected to his government, that he might have a pretence for proscribing such as were ill affected to his despotism. Censure, if you please, the king of Ithaca, and the astronomer Meton (3) for pretending to have lost their senses, the first for the sake of continuing with his dear Penelope, and the last to avoid accompanying the Athenians in an expedition against Sicily. Pity, if you will, the two monks Simeon and Thomas (4), who affected to play the fool, lest the extraordinary holiness of their lives should not be perceived. I freely give up these tyrants and hypocrites to the most severe criticism; and I am inclined to be of the opinion of Cicero (5), who calls the finesse of Ulysses, *non honestum consilium*, a disingenuous conduct. Form, if you think proper, the same opinion of the stratagem of the famous St. Ephraim (6), who, understanding that he was chosen bishop, and that they were going to force him to be ordained, ran into a public place, walked irregularly, let fall his robe, went eating along the streets, and did so many actions of this kind, that every body thought he had lost his senses. He watched his op-

(2) Polyænus Stratag. l. v. cap. 2. S. 15, 16

(3) *Ælian variar. historiar. lib. xiii. cap. 12.*

(4) Evagrius. *Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. 34.*

(5) *Cic. de officiis. lib. iii. cap. 26.*

(6) Sozomen *Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 16.*

portunity, fled and concealed himself, and continued to do thus till they had nominated another bishop. I will not pretend to say whether this proceeded from his contempt of vain glory, as Sozomen (7) pretends, or from his great love of retirement, for he was *νευχίας εις αγαθ εραστης*. For my part, I make no scruple to say of this artifice, as well as of the trick he played Apollinaris (8), *non honestum consilium*. But you, sir, who are such a good citizen, will you condemn the wise Solon (9) for counterfeiting distraction, in order to divert his fellow-citizens of Athens from their resolution to abandon Salamin his country to the inhabitants of Megara? You, sir, who are no enemy to prudence, will you disapprove the opinion given of Lucius Junius Brutus (10),

Brutus erat stulti sapiens imitator.

He affected to be stupid, lest he should become suspected by Tarquin the proud, who had put to death his father and his eldest brother, for the sake of seizing their great wealth. It should seem, that on supposition David acted a part when he was in danger of his life, in a place where he had fled for refuge, it would be a sufficient justification of his character to say, that he thought he might innocently make use of such a stratagem.

2. If the danger of losing his life be not sufficient, let it be observed further, that the deception was di-

(7) Sozomen *ibid*.

(8) Greg. de Nyssen Paneg. de S. Ephr.

(9) Diogenes Laert lib. i. in Solone.

(10) Dion. Halicarn. Antiquitat. Roman. lib. iv

rected to the Philistines, with whom the Israelites were then at war. This is a second argument to justify the conduct of David. When was it ever unlawful to use stratagems in war? Did not God himself order the Israelites to *lie in ambush* and to *flee* before the inhabitants of Ai, in order to *draw them from the city*? Is there any less evil in affecting cowardice than there is in pretending to be deprived of reason? Where is the general, who would not be glad to take cities at the same price as Callicratidas of Cyrene (11) took the fort of Magnesia, by introducing four soldiers, who pretended to be sick? You have observed, sir, in Buchanan's excellent history of Scotland (12), the manner in which king Duncan defeated the army of Swen king of Norway, who was besieging him in Perth. He sent the besiegers a great quantity of wine and beer, in which some herbs of noxious qualities had been infused, and while this soporific was taking effect, he went into the camp, and put the whole army to the sword, except the prince of Norway, and ten soldiers, who had suspected the present made them by the enemy, and had not tasted the beverage. The herb is supposed to be the *solanum*, or *strychnos* of Pliny (13), the *night-shade*, which in a certain quantity stupifies, in a greater quanti-

(11) Polyænus Stratag. lib. ii. cap. 27, S. 1.

(12) Buchanani Hist. Scotica.—Rem. This tale is not credited by some historians, and indeed it appears highly improbable in itself. Mr. Guthrie calls it an infamous and improbable story.—Hist. of Scot. Vol. I. p. 234.

(13) Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. xxi. cap. 31.—Salmas. ad Solin. p. 1086.

ty distracts, and if more than two drachms, causes death. For these two reasons, then, I conclude that my first proposition is sufficiently clear. I said, if David had counterfeited madness, and played the fool, he would not have committed any sin ; first, because his life was in danger ; and secondly, because the Philistines were at war with his country.

II. If any continue obstinately to maintain, that the dissimulation of David was criminal, and opposite to sincerity and good faith, I have another string to my bow, to defend this illustrious refugee. I affirm, that David did not play the fool, and act a part ; but that, being seized with extreme fear at hearing the conversation of the ministers of state, in the court of king Achish, he fell under a real absence of mind, and behaved, in a few instances, like a man disordered in his senses. Sebastian Schmidt (14), a celebrated Lutheran divine, proposed as a kind of problem, whether providence might not permit David to be terrified into a momentary delirium, in order to effect his deliverance. Mr. John Christian Ortlob, a learned man of Leipsic (15) published a dissertation, in 1706, *on the delirium of David before Achish*, in which he shews, that the whole of the sacred text in Samuel naturally leads us to judge that David was so struck with the fear of sudden death, that for a few moments his understanding was absent. As this thesis is little known in this country, and as it is curious in itself, you will not be displeased, Sir, if I give you here a sketch of what he says.

(14) D. Sebast. Schmidius in 1 Sam. xxi.

(15) Davidis delirium coram Achis. Lipsiæ. 1706. 4. pag. 24.

1. Mr. Ortlob shews, that dissimulation was impracticable in David's condition. Either he affected to play the fool the moment he was seized by the servants of the king, or only while he was in the presence of Achish. The text is contrary to the first, for it expressly assures us that this madness of David was in consequence of the conversation that passed between Achish and his officers in the presence of David. The second supposition is not at all likely, for it would have been very imprudent for him to begin to act his part in the presence of Achish, his officers would have discovered the artifice, and would have informed their master: beside, it is inconceivable that David should continue from his being first taken to that moment as mute as a fish, in order to conceal a design which required a state of mind more tranquil than that of David could be, in a danger so imminent.

2. Next, Mr. Ortlob proceeds to prove, that David had a true and natural alienation of mind.

The first proof is, his fear of danger. David, says the twelfth verse, *laid up the words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.* The terror that seized his soul affected the organs of his body, and disconcerted the fibres of his brain. There are many examples of persons affected in like manner with sudden fear. Our learned author relates the case of a girl of ten years of age (16), who was so terrified with thunder and lightning in a furious tempest, that she was seized with violent convul-

(16) Ephem. Med. Phys. Germ. Academiæ curiosorum, An. 8. Observ. 71.

sions in her left arm and her left leg. Though she did not lose her senses, yet she was constrained to flee on the other foot along the wainscot of the chamber, and the company could not stop her.

The next proof is taken from the expressions of the inspired writer, which, simply and literally explained, signify a real madness.

David *changed his behaviour*. It is in the Hebrew his *taste*, that is his reason, for reason is, in man, what taste is in regard to aliments.

*And he became mad*. The Hebrew verb *halal*, in the conjugation *hithpael*, as it is here, always signifies in scripture real, and not feigned madness; and there is nothing in the text which obliges us to depart from a sense that perfectly agrees with the simplicity of the history. The French and English versions render it, he *feigned* himself mad; but they are wrong, for the original says nothing about *feigning*.

*He scabbled on the doors of the gate*. Cornelius a Lapide thinks he wrote the letter *tau* to form the figure of the cross. Rabbi Schabtai, in a German book entitled *Esrin verba* (17,) was better informed, and he says David wrote on the gates of the palace, *The king owes me a hundred thousand gilders, and his kingdom, fifty thousand*. Mr. Ortlob, learned as he is, does not know so much as the Rabbi and the Jesuit. He contents himself with observing, that David, all taken up with his delirium, and having no instrument in his hand to write, scratched the gate with his fingers, like people in a malignant fever. He observes also, that the indecent manner in which

David *let his spittle fall down upon his beard* is a natural and usual consequence of a delirium.

His third proof is taken from the connection of the whole history, which supposes and indicates real madness. *David changed his behaviour* ; the sacred author explains first in what this change consisted, it was in becoming mad in the presence of the king and his officers ; and he adds two actions of madness, the one scratching and writing on the gates with his fingers, and the other driveling on his beard.

The last proof our author takes from the consequences. Achish gives David his life and liberty, as a man beneath his resentment. He was angry with those who brought a madman to him. David, on his side, escaped the danger, recovered his spirits, and became himself. There is no reason to question whether he observed the precept given by himself in the thirty-fourth psalm, which he composed, as well as the fifty-sixth, to praise God for his deliverance, *keep thy lips from speaking guile*, ver. 13.

My second proposition was, that David did not feign himself mad, as is usually supposed ; and Mr. Ortlob, in this treatise, hath justified David from the charge of every kind of dissimulation, and so far it gives me pleasure to follow him ; for this is an opinion more tolerable than the former, but I must beg leave to dissent from this learned writer, and to state in the next place my own opinion, for I do not think, as Mr. Ortlob does, that David had any degree of madness.

III. I think the whole passage ought to be understood of an epilepsy, a convulsion of the whole bo-

dy, with a loss of sense for the time. Judge, Sir, of the reasons on which I ground this third proposition.

1. My first reason is taken from the original terms, which perfectly agree with an epilepsy. This is not easy to discover in our modern versions; but it is very plain in the Septuagint, and in the old Latin version, which our interpreters often very injudiciously despise. The authors of both these versions were in a better condition than we are, to understand the force and the real signification of Hebrew words and idioms. I am fully persuaded we ought to prefer these versions in the present case.

*David*, said the sacred historian, *changed his behaviour*, or his *taste*. The Septuagint reads it *ηλλοιωσε το προσωπον αυτου*, and the Vulgate, *immulavit os suum*, *he changed his countenance*. I think this translation is better than that of Mr. Orlob, *his reason was changed*; because it is added, *before them*, or *in their sight*, and in the thirty-fourth psalm, *before Abimelech*, or in his presence. It is well known, that the countenance of a person taken with an epilepsy is suddenly changed. But should we retain the word *reason*, we might with equal justice say, that the reason or the taste is changed in an epileptic fit, because for a few moments reason is absent.

2. Our version adds, *he feigned himself mad in their hands*. The Septuagint seems to me to have rendered the words much better, *παραφερετο εν ταις χειρσιν αυτων*, *He struggled*, or *tossed himself in their hands*. (For I think the preceding words in this version, *in that day he feigned*, is one of those interpolations, which passed from the margin to the text; and that the words,



και εηυμπανιζεν επι ταις θυραις της πολεως, are of some other version, and have got into the text as the former.) The Hebrew word *halal*, is a general term, which signifies to agitate one's self, to shake, either by twinkling like the stars, or by applauding some one, or by boasting of any thing of our own, which the Latins call *jactare*, *jactare se*; or by moving ourselves involuntarily, as a paralytic man does, or a madman, or a person in convulsions, or one in excessive joy. The Septuagint could not translate the word here better than by *παραφερεισθαι*, because *παραφορος* among the Greeks (18) is put for a distracted person, a demoniac, and because a body irregularly and involuntarily agitated is said *παραφερεισθαι*. Aristotle (19) uses it in the same sense. Having said that there seems something in the soul of an intemperate man beside reason, and opposite to it, he adds, he is like a paralytic body, the patient aims to move the right hand or the right foot, and the left hand and the left foot move *τρονανλιον εις τα ωρισερα παραφερεισθαι*. The only difference is, we perceive irregular motions of the body, whereas those of the soul are invisible. The Vulgate translates in a manner more favourable still to my opinion, *et collabebatur inter manus eorum, he fell into their hands*. The term *collabi*, as well as *cadere*, and *corruere*, are applied to the epilepsy, which the Hebrews, like us, called the *falling sickness*. All these Latin words may be seen in this

(18) Phavorinus in voce *παραφορος*.

(19) Aristot. *Ethicor. ad Nicomachum*, lib. i. cap. 13.

sense in the first apology of Apuleius (19.) He addresses himself to Æmilianus, his adversary, to justify himself from the accusation of having bewitched one Thallus, who was fallen extremely ill with an epilepsy. Imo si verum velis, Æmiliane, tu potius *caducus* qui jam tot calumniis, cecidisti, neque enim gravius est corpore quam corde *collabi*, pede potius quam mente *corruere*, in cubiculo despui, quam in isto splendidissimo cætu detestari.

3. *And he marked the posts of the gates.* This is the version of the late Mr. Martin, but allow me to lay aside all the versions of our modern divines, and even those of the most celebrated Rabbies, and to abide by my Septuagint and Vulgate. The Septuagint renders it *και επιπλεν επι της θυρας της πυλης*, and the Vulgate saith, *et impingebat in ostia portæ*, and he *hurt himself*, or he *dashed himself against the posts of the gate*. Munster (20) pretends indeed that the Latin interpreter first wrote, *et pingebat in ostia portæ*, and that it was afterwards changed into *impingebat*; but though this ingenious conjecture hath been adopted by able critics, yet it seems to me futile, because on the one hand the Vulgate evidently follows the Septuagint, and on the other, because the Latin interpreter would have contradicted himself, *collabebatur inter manus eorum, et pingebat in ostia portæ*, if he fell into their hands how could he write, or scratch with his fingers on the gate or the door? Nor is it necessary with the celebrated Lewis Cape! (21) to sup-

(19) Apuleius Apol. pro se ipso prima.

(20) Munsterus in h. l. in criticis magnis.—See Bayle. Achish. Rem. C.

(21) L. Capellus criticæ sacræ libro. iv. cap. 5. S. 35.

pose the change of a letter, and to say that the Septuagint reads *vajatoph*, instead of *vajetau*. The verb *tava* signifies to *mark*, to make an impression or some print with the hand, or an instrument, and to shake, and make the body tremble where the mark is imprinted. David was violently hurt against the posts of the gate, so that marks were left in his flesh. This signification of the verb is agreeable to the Chaldean language, in which *teva* signifies to tremble, to shiver, and in the Arabic, where the same root signifies to be troubled or astonished.

4. King Achish uses another word, which modern translations render *fool*, *madman*. *Lo, you see the man is mad. Have I need of madmen*, and so on. The Septuagint, which I follow step by step, and the authors of which understood Hebrew better than we, translates it, *ιδου ιδετε ανδρα επιληπτοι* and so on: *Why have you brought this man? Do you not see that he is attacked with an epilepsy? Have I need of epileptics, that you have brought him to fall into convulsions in my presence? This single testimony of the Septuagint ought to determine this question.*

2. My second class of arguments is taken from the scope of the place, and I think, even supposing the original terms were as favourable to the idea of folly or madness as they are to that of an epilepsy, yet we should be more inclined to the latter sense than to the former.

1. First, If there be some examples of persons frightened into folly or madness, there are more of persons terrified into an epilepsy. Among the various causes of this sickness, the author of a book on the

subject, supposed to be Hippocrates (22) hath given sudden fright as one. It would be needless to multiply proofs when a sorrowful experience daily gives us so many! but I recollect one instance of the zeal of St. Barnard (23), which deserves to be related, I do not say to be applauded. William the Xth Duke of Aquitain, and Count of Thoulouse, declared himself against Innocent the IIId in favour of Peter de Leon, an anti-pope, who had taken the name of Anacletus the IIId. The Duke had driven the Bishops of Poitiers, and of Limoges, from their sees. St. Barnard was sent into Guienne to engage him to reconcile himself to the holy see, and to re-establish the two bishops, but he could not prevail with him to be reconciled to the bishop of Poitiers. While they were talking at the church gate, St. Barnard went up to the altar and said mass. Having consecrated the host, and pronounced the benediction on the people, he took the body of the Lord in a patine, and going out with a countenance on fire, and with

(22) Hippocrates *περι ιερας νοσων*. T. ii. S. xi. page. 336.

(23) Vita Sancti Bernardi. lib. ii. cap. 6. n. 38. Rogavimus te, et sprevisi nos, supplicavit tibi in altero, quam jam tecum habuimus, conventu servorum Dei ante te adunata multitudo, et contempsisti. Ecce ad te processit filius virginis, qui est caput et Dominus ecclesie, quam tu persequeris. Adest Judex tuus, in cujus nomine omne genu curvatur caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum. Adest vindex tuus, in cujus manu illa anima tua deveniet. Nunquid et ipsum spernes? Nunquid et ipsum sicut servos ejus contemnes?

Elevatus a militibus, rursus, in faciem ruit, nec quippiam alieni loquens, aut intendens in aliquem, *salivis in barbam defluentibus*, cum profundis cfflatis gemitibus, *epilepticus* videbatur.

eyes in a flame, he addressed with a threatening air these terrible words to the Duke: "We have intreated you, but you have despised us. In a former interview a great number of the servants of God besought you, and you treated them with contempt. Behold, now the Son of the Virgin comes to you, the head and lord of the church you persecute. Behold your judge, at whose name every knee in heaven, earth, and hell, bow. Behold the avenger of your crimes, into whose hand, sooner or later, your stubborn soul shall fall. Have you the hardiness to despise him? And will you contemn the master as you have done the servants?" The spectators were all dissolved in tears, and the count himself, unable to bear the sight of the abbot, who addressed him with so much vehemence, and who held up to him all the while the body of the Lord, fell, all shaking and trembling, to the earth. Being raised up by his soldiers, he fell back again, and lay on his face, saying nothing and looking at nobody, but uttering deep groans, and letting his spittle fall down on his beard, and discovering all the signs of a person convulsed in an epilepsy. St. Barnard approached, pushed him with his foot, commanded him to rise, and to stand up and hear the decree of God. "The bishop of Poitiers, whom you have driven from his church, is here; go and reconcile yourself to him; and by giving him a holy kiss of peace become friendly, and reconduct him yourself to his see. Satisfy the God you have offended, render him the glory due to his name, and recal all your divided subjects into the unity of faith and love. Submit yourself to pope Innocent; and

as all the church obeys him, resign yourself to this eminent pontiff chosen by God himself." At these words the count ran to the bishop, gave him the kiss of peace, and re-established him in his see.

2. I return, sir, from this digression, which is not quite foreign to my subject, to observe, in the second place, that the sacred historian attributes to David the three characteristical marks of the falling sickness, falling, convulsion, and frothing: *Falling*, for it is said he fell *into the hands* of the officers of the king; *convulsion*, for he hurt himself against the *posts of the gate*: and *frothing*, for he let fall his *spittle upon his beard*. These are symptoms, which Isidore of Seville gives of an epilepsy (24), *cujus tanta vis est, ut homo valens concidat, spumetque*. We may see the cause, or at least what physicians say of it, in the work of Hippocrates just now quoted, in the posthumous works of Mr. Manjot, and in all treatises of pathological physic. The manner in which Hippocrates explains the symptom of froth seems very natural, *αφρου δε εκ του σωματος, &c.* The froth, that comes out of the mouth, proceeds from the lungs, which, not receiving any fresh air, throw up little bubbles, like those of a dying man.

3. The horror of king Achish concerning the condition of David, is a third reason, which confirms our opinion. *You see*, said this prince to his officers, *this man is epileptic, shall such a man come into my house. And he drove him away*, as it is said in the title of the thirty-fourth psalm. According to the

(24) Isidor, Hispaliensis originum lib. iii. cap. 7. De chronicis morbis, voce Epilepsia, p. 58. Col. A. lit. c. Hippocrat. ut supra.

common opinion, David feigned himself a natural, a fool, not a madman: he did actions of imbecility, and silliness, not of madness and fury. Now the ancients, far from having any aversion to this sort of fools, kept them in their palaces to make diversion. Tarquin the proud kept Lucius Junius Brutus in his family less as a relation, of whom he meant to take care, than as a fool to please his children by absurd discourses and ridiculous actions. Anacharsis, who lived about three hundred years after David, could not bear this custom of the Greeks. This wise Scythian said, "Man was a thing too serious to be destined to a usage so ridiculous (25)." Seneca in one of his letters to Lucilius speaks of a female fool, whom his wife had left him for a legacy, and who had suddenly lost her sight (26). She did not know she was blind, and she was always asking to be let out of a house where she could see nothing. Seneca says that he had a great dislike to this kind of singularities; that if ever he should take it into his head to divert himself with a fool, he need not go far in search of one, that he would make a fool of himself: and he agreeably compares mankind with their defects to Harpasta the fool of his wife. Every body knows, adds this philosopher (27), ambition is not my vice, but we cannot live otherwise at Rome. I dislike luxury, but to live at a great expence is essential to living in this great city; and so on. Pliny the younger, writing to one of his friends complain-

(25) Apud Eustathium in Homerum.

(26) Seneca. Epist. 30.

(27) Hoc, quod in illa videmus, omnibus nobis accidere liqueat tibi.—Plin. Ep. lib. ix. 17.

ed of having misspent his time at an elegant supper through the impertinence of these fools, who interrupted conversation: he says, that every one had his own whim; that he had no relish for such absurdities; but that some complaisance was necessary to the taste of our acquaintances.

It was not the same with madmen, and particularly epileptics. Every body carefully avoided them, and thought, to meet them was a bad omen. Dion Cassius says, the Roman senate always broke up, when any one of them happened to be taken with an epilepsy, for which reason it was called *morbus comitialis*, (28), witness these verses of Serenus Samonicus:

Est subiti species morbi, cui nomen ab illo est,  
 Quod fieri nobis suffragia justa recusat:  
 Sæpe etenim membris acri languore caducis,  
 Consilium populi labes horrenda diremit.

Pliny the elder, (29), who relates the same thing, informs us of another custom, that was, to spit at the sight of an epileptic: *Despuimus comitiales morbos, hoc est, contagia regerimus; simili modo et fascinationes repercutimus, dextræque clauditis accursum.* There was then as much superstition in this custom as aversion to the illness. Accordingly Theophrastes hath not forgotten, in his character of a superstitious man, to represent him seized with horror, and spitting at meeting a madman, or an epileptic (30). This was so common, and so much con-

(28) Dio Cassius. lib. 37.

(29) Plin. lib. xxviii. cap. 4.

(30) Theophrastes Charact. *περι δεισιδαιμονίας.*



ined to an epilepsy, that it was frequently called the *sickness to be spitted at*: Thus Plautus, in the comedy of the Captives, where Tyndarus, to prevent Hegio from staying with Aristophontes, accuses him of being subject to the illness that is spit at (31).

In this custom of spitting at the sight of an epileptic, I think I have formed a very probable conjecture on another famous passage of scripture; but, Sir, I shall do myself the honour to treat of this in a future letter to you. At present, I avail myself of this custom to explain why Achish discovered so much indignation against his courtiers, and so much disdain for David, and why he drove him so quickly from his palace.

4. In fine, I think, it is easy to see in the thanksgiving psalms, which David composed after he had escaped this imminent danger, several indications of the nature of the illness that had seized him so suddenly. It is agreed that he composed the thirty-fourth and the fifty-sixth on this occasion, as the titles assure us, and to them I add the thirty-first and the hundred and sixteenth, concerning which I beg leave to make two remarks.

First, that the hundred and sixteenth hath so much connection with the fifty-sixth, and the thirty-first with the hundred and sixteenth, that it is very evident these three psalms were composed at the same time, and in view of the same deliverance; with this difference however, that in the fifty-sixth David con-

(31) Plaut. Capt. Act iii. Scen. 4. ver. 15, &c. morbus qui insputatur.

fines himself to the malignity of his enemies, to the punishment they might expect, and to his own confidence in God, who engaged him to despise all their efforts; whereas in the thirty-first he expresses more clearly the terror which had been excited in him by the conversation of Achish and his officers, and the prayers which he had addressed to the Lord in his distress. In the hundred and sixteenth he attends more to the success of these prayers, and to the gratitude he felt for deliverance from his great danger, and to the profound impression which his late situation had made on his mind. A bare parallel of these three hymns discovers a great resemblance both in sentiment and expression. Compare Psal. lvi. verses 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14—with cxvi. 8, 12, 13, 17, 14, 18, 3, 9—and cxvi. 1, 2, 3, 11, 16—with xxxi. 23, 24, 3, 10, 11, 23, 17.

The second observation I make on the thirty-first and hundred and sixteenth psalm is, that they perfectly agree with the occasion of the two other psalms, and that some passages seem to refer to the supposed epileptic fit. The cause is remarked Psalm xxxi. 10, 11, 14. The effects and consequences are spoken of in the same Psalm, ver. 12, 13. The condition to which the illness had reduced David is described, Psalm cxvi. 11.—Psalm xxxi. 23, (22 in the English version) *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes. All men are liars.* However the Hebrew word rendered *in my haste* be translated, either with the Septuagint *in my ecstacy*, or with Symmachus *in my swoon* or *fainting fit*, or with the old Italian version, *in my great dread*, or with St. Jerom

in my stupefaction (32), either of the senses supposes and confirms my opinion. Suidas explains the word *ecstasy*, which the Septuagint uses here by *θανυμασμος και αλλοιωσις*. This last word is the same as that in the title of the thirty-fourth psalm, where David is said to have *changed countenance*, for so I think it should be translated.

In regard to the two psalms before mentioned, which were always understood to be composed on this occasion, they both of them furnish a great deal to establish our opinion.

In the fifty-sixth psalm, there is a verse, the seventh I mean, which modern interpreters seem not to have well understood. David there, speaking of his enemies, saith, according to our version, *Shall they escape by iniquity? In thine anger cast down the people, O God.* I think the words may be rendered, without violence to the original, *O God, because of their iniquity spue them out, and cast down the people in thine anger* (33); because the Hebrew word *palleth*, which in the conjugation *kal* signifies to *escape*, when it is in the conjugation *piel* signifies to *vomit*, to *reject*; so the celebrated Rabbi David Kimchi says. Indeed the Chaldee paraphrast (34) uses it in two places in this sense, Lev. xviii. 28, 25. "The land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants—That the land spue not you out also, as it spued out the nations before you." Jon. ii. 10. "The fish vomited out Jonah." This word is used in the Talmud, which

(32) Hierom, in Epist. 135.

(33) Hammond's Annotations on Psal. lvi. 7.

(34) Mag. Lex. Chaldaic. Thalm. et Rabbiniicum Buxtorf. in verb. *palleth*.

forbids a disciple ever to vomit in the presence of his master; for, according to this Rabinnical code of law, he who spits before his master, is worthy of death. According to Mr. d'Arvieux (35), the Arabians religiously observe this custom to this day. Among them no man ever spits before his superior, it would be considered as treating them with disrespect and contempt. The Chaldee paraphrast understood this psalm in this sense, and rendered the passage thus, *Because of the falsehood that is in their hands, spit them, or vomit them out.* Now, sir, would it be improper to apply this verse to my explication, and to affirm, that David here manifestly alludes to two of the symptoms of an epilepsy, which he himself had lately experienced? This holy man prays to God that his enemies might be treated in a manner which had some resemblance to the illness they had caused him; that as he had frothed and cast out his spittle, so God would spit or vomit them out of his mouth; and as he fell to the ground through their hands, so they might be degraded and cast out. The former image is used by an inspired writer, Rev. iii. 16. "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Perhaps, sir, you will think another observation which I am going to make, not sufficiently solid. David saith, while he is celebrating the deliverance God hath granted him, Psal. xxxiv. 20. that "the Lord keepeth all the bones of the righteous man, not one of them is broken." It is not worth while to refute the Jews on this article, for they quote these words in proof of a little bone, which they call *luz*,

(35) La Roque Voyage dans la Palestine. p. 145

and which they place in the form of a small almond at the bottom of the back bone. They pretend that David had this bone in view; that nothing, neither fire, nor water, nor time, can destroy it, and that it is the germ of the resurrection of the body. Probably it was from this Jewish tradition that Peter Lombard (36), the master of the sentences, derived his little piece of flesh, which every man inherits from the flesh of Adam, and which renders us all corrupt, and on account of which we are called the children of Adam. Much less will I pretend to dispute the application which St. John makes of this oracle to our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was both predicted and prefigured, that not one of his bones should be broken, chap. xix. 36. Exod. xii. 46. Numb. ix. 12. Nothing hinders our taking this verse in its literal sense. David here blesses his God for watching so marvellously to prevent him, that in spite of his violent epileptic fit, and of the fall, that might have broke all his bones, especially as he was so hurt by falling against the posts of the gate, as to receive marks or scars in his flesh, yet not one of his bones was broken.

For the rest, if any one should think proper to take occasion, from this one convulsion fit, to dispute the inspiration of the excellent psalms of David, or only to diminish our esteem for the works or the person of this prince, the following considerations may set aside such a frivolous objection:

1. As soon as this malady is over, the mind recov-

(36) Pet. Lomb. lib. ii. Distinct. 30. N. p. m. 218. Transmisit Adam *modicum quid* de substantia sua, in corpore filiorum, quando eos procreavit, &c.

ers its freedom and firmness, and is presently as well as before.

2. Even supposing frequent attacks to enfeeble the mind, yet this would not affect David, for he had only one fit.

3. Great men have been subject to this illness, but they have not been the less esteemed on that account : as for example a Julius Cæsar (37), who was held by his army in more than admiration ; Plotinus too, that celebrated Platonic philosopher, to whom, after his death, altars were erected in divers places.

4. Far from deriving from my explication a consequence so unreasonable, we ought, on the contrary, naturally to conclude, that there is a good and wise providence, which knows how to deliver its children by means unthought of, and even when their ruin seems certain. A christian, now afflicted with this sad disorder, may find in our sentiment a solid ground of consolation. The man after God's own heart had an epileptic fit ; but he was not the less esteemed of God, and so a christian may reason, believing himself to be beloved of God, and an heir of his kingdom, though afflicted all his days with this malady, provided he imitate the zeal and piety of David. I submit, sir, all my conjectures to the penetration of your judgment, and I have the honour to be, with all imaginable respect,

Sir,

Your most humble and most obedient servant.

Rotterdam,

DUMONT.

September 2, 1725.

(37) Plutarch in Cæsare, T. i. f. 715. Suidas in voce.

