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SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN.



VOL. VIII.

BY JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.

SERMONS

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

BY JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.

VOLUME VIII.

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS:

WITH

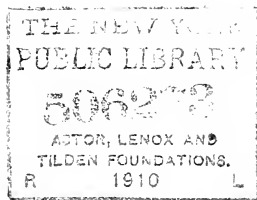
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1816.



TO
THE QUEEN
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.



Madam,

I FLATTER myself that your Majesty will condescend to permit me to present to you these last works of my late father. The protection with which your Majesty honoured him, the favors you conferred upon him, excuse what appears to me presumption in affixing your August Name at the head of this volume. What other more happy occasion could I have of testifying to your Majesty, my profound and lively gratitude? a book which has avowedly for its object, the making of our most holy religion more beloved and obeyed, cannot fail of pleasing your Majesty, who so loves this religion as to make for it the most generous sacrifices, who protects it, and who consecrates the supreme elevation, in which God has placed you, to promote the happiness and comfort of the persecuted poor.

In giving your Majesty these public testimonials of my devotion and zeal, I follow the steps of my late father. And may I presume to hope, Madam, that the same goodness, which your Majesty deigned to confer upon him, shall be conferred on me, and on my family? I ask most respectfully of your Majesty, the continuance of your royal protection. May God himself, Madam, be the remunerator of your benefits, conferring more and more on your Majesty, the choicest of his favors, and shed them down with the same abundance on your August House! These are the vows of him, who is with the most respectful veneration,

Madam,
Your Majesty's
Most humble, grateful,
And obedient servant,
PHILIP SAURIN.

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OF THE
EIGHTH VOLUME.



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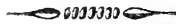
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SERMON I.

On the Sorrow for the Death of Relatives and Friends.



1 THESS. iv. 13—18.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

THE text we have now read, may, perhaps, be contemplated under two very different points of view.—The enterpreter must here discover his acumen, and the preacher display his powers. It is a difficult text:

it is one of the most difficult in all the epistles of St. Paul. I have strong reasons for believing, that it is one of those St. Peter had in view, when he says, *that there are some things in the writings of St. Paul, hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned wrest—to their own destruction.* 2 Pet. iii. 16. In this respect, it requires the erudition of the interpreter. It is a text fertile in instructions for our conduct: it illustrates the sentiments with which we should be inspired in all the afflictive circumstances through which Providence may call us to pass in this valley of misery, I would say, when we are called to part with those who constitute the joy of our life. In this respect, it requires the eloquence of the preacher. In attending to both those points, bring the dispositions without which you cannot derive the advantages we design. Have patience with the interpreter, though he may not be able fully to elucidate every inquiry you may make on a subject obscure, singular, and in some respects impenetrable. Open also the avenues of your heart to the preacher. Learn to support separations; for which you should congratulate yourselves, when they break the ties which united you to persons unworthy of your love; and which shall not be eternal, if those called away by death were the true children of God. May the anguish of the tears shed for their loss, be assuaged by the hope of meeting them in the same glory.

We have said that this text is difficult; and it is really so in four respects. The *first* arises from the doubtful import of some of the terms in which it is couched. The *second* arises from its reference to cer-

tain notions peculiar to Christians in the apostolic age, and which to us are imperfectly known. The *third* is, that it revolves on certain mysteries, in regard of which the scriptures are not very explicit, and of which inspired men had but an imperfect knowledge. The *fourth* is the dangerous consequences it seems to involve ; because by restricting the knowledge of the sacred authors, it seems to level a blow at their inspiration. Here is an epitome of all the difficulties which can contribute to encumber a text with difficulties.

I. The first is the least important, and cannot arrest the attention of any, but those who are less conversant than you, with the scriptures. You have comprehended, I am confident, that by those who sleep, we understand those who are dead ; and by those who sleep in the Lord, we understand those in general who have died in the faith, or in particular those who have sealed it by martyrdom. The sacred authors in adopting, have sanctified the style of paganism. The most ordinary shield the pagans opposed to the fear of death, was to banish the thought, and to avoid pronouncing its name. But as it is not possible to live on earth without being obliged to talk of dying, they accommodated their necessity to their delicacy, and paraphrased what they had so great a reluctance to name by the softer terms of *a departure, a submission, destiny, and a sleep.*—Fools ! as though to change the name of a revolting object would diminish its horror. The sacred authors, as I have said, in adopting this style have sanctified it. They have called death a *sleep*, by which they understand

a repose : *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord : For they rest from their labours.* Rev. xiv. 13. In adopting the term, they had a special regard to the resurrection which shall follow. If the terms require further illustration, they shall be incorporated in what we shall say when discussing the subjects.

II. We have said, that this text is difficult, because it refers to certain notions peculiar to Christians in the apostolic age, which to us are imperfectly known. The allusion of ancient authors to the peculiar notions of their time, is a principal cause of the obscurity of their writings ; it embarrasses the critics, and often obliges them to confess their inadequacy to the task. It is astonishing that the public should refuse to interpreters of the sacred books, the liberty they so freely grant to those of profane authors. Why should a species of obscurity, which has never degraded Plato, or Seneca, induce us to degrade St. Paul, and other inspired men ? But how extraordinary soever, in this respect, the conduct of the enemies of our sacred books may be, it contains nothing that should astonish us ; but there is cause to be astonished at those divines who would be frequently relieved by the solution of which we speak, that they should lose sight of it in their systems, and so often seek for theological mysteries in expressions which simply require the illustration of judicious criticism. On how many allusions of the class in question, have not doctrines of faith been established ? *Let him who readeth understand.* We will not disturb the controversy.

We have said that there is in the words of the text, probably some allusion to notions peculiar to the

apostolic age. St. Paul not only designed to assuage the anguish excited in the breast of persons of fine feelings by the death of their friends; he seems to have had a *peculiar* reference to the Thessalonians. The proof we have of this is, that the apostle not merely enforces the general arguments that Christianity affords to all good men in those afflictive situations, such as the happiness which instantly follows the death of saints, and the certainty of a glorious resurrection: he superadds a motive wholly of another kind; this motive, which we shall now explain, is thus expressed; *We which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep, &c.*

What was the opinion, peculiar to the Christians of that age, which could be assuaged by this motive? Among the conjectures it has excited, this appears to me the most rational:—It was a sentiment generally received in the apostolic age, and from which we cannot say that the apostles themselves were wholly free, that the last day was just at hand. Two considerations had contributed to establish this opinion.

The ancient rabbins had affirmed, that the second temple would not long subsist after the advent of the Messiah; and believing that the Levitical worship should be co-eval with the world, they believed likewise that the resurrection of the dead, and the consummation of the ages, should speedily follow the coming of Christ. Do not ask how they associated those notions with the expectation of the Messiah's temporal kingdom; we know that the rabbinical sys-

tems are but little connected ; and inconsistency is not peculiar to them.

But secondly : the manner in which Jesus Christ had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, might have contributed to persuade the first Christians, that the last day was near. He had represented it in the prophetic style, as an universal dissolution of nature, and of the elements. In that day *the sun shall be darkened ; the moon shall be turned to blood ; the stars shall fall from heaven ; the powers of heaven shall be shaken ; and the Son of man himself as coming on the clouds, and sending his angels with the sound of a trumpet to gather together his elect from the four winds.* Matt. xxiv. 29. 31. These oriental figures, whereby he painted the extirpation of the Jewish nation, and the preaching of the apostles, concerning which St. Paul has the words of the Psalmist, *That their sound went forth to the ends of the earth* : these ideas had persuaded many of the primitive Christians, that the coming of the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world must follow one another in speedy succession : and, the more so, as the Lord had subjoined to those predictions, that *this generation should not pass away until all these things be fulfilled ; that is, the men then alive.* This text is of the same import with that in the xvith of St. Matthew : *Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.* ver. 28.

These are the considerations which induced many of the first Christians to believe that the last day would soon come. And as the Lord, the more strikingly to

represent the surprise that the last day would excite in men, had compared it to the approach of a thief at midnight, the primitive Christians really thought that Jesus Christ would come at midnight; hence some of them rose at that hour to await his coming, and St. Jerome relates the custom of never dismissing the people before midnight during the vigils of Easter.

But what should especially be remarked for illustration of the difficulty proposed, is, that the idea of the near approach of Christ's advent was so far from exciting terror in the minds of the primitive Christians, that it constituted the object of their hope. They regarded it as the highest privilege of a Christian to behold his advent. The hope of this happiness had inflamed some with an ardour for martyrdom; and induced to deplore the lot of those who had died before that happy period.

This is the anguish the apostle would assuage when he says, *I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others; that is, as the heathens, who have no hope.*

III. But the consolation he gives, to comfort the afflicted, constitutes one of the difficulties in my text, because it is founded on a doctrine concerning which the scriptures are not very explicit, and of which inspired men had but imperfect knowledge. This is the third point to be illustrated.

The consolation St. Paul gave the Thessalonians must be explained in a way assortable to their affliction, and drawn from the reasons that induced them to regret the death of the martyrs, as being deprived of the happiness those would have who shall be alive,

when Christ shall descend from heaven to judge the world. St. Paul replies, that those who should then survive would not have any prerogative over those that slept, and that both should enjoy the same glory: this, in substance, is the sense of the words which constitute the third difficulty we would wish to remove. *This we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* On these words we shall ask several questions essential for their illustration.

1. What did St. Paul mean when he affirmed, that what he said was by the word of the Lord? You will understand it by comparing the expression with those of the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 51, where discussing the same subject, he speaks thus; *Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed.* These words, *Behold I show you a mystery*, and those of my text, are of the same import. Properly to understand them, let it be observed, that besides the gift of inspiration, by which the sacred authors knew and taught the things essential to salvation, there was one peculiar to some privileged Christians; it was a power to penetrate certain secrets, without which they might be saved, but which, nevertheless, was a glorious endowment

wherever conferred. Probably St. Paul spake of this privilege, when enumerating the gifts communicated to the primitive church, in the xiith chapter of the above epistle. *To one, he says, is given by the same Spirit, the word of knowledge.* This word of knowledge, he distinguishes from another, called just before, *The word of wisdom.* The like distinctions occur, chapter xiiiith and xivth, in the same epistle.— Learned men, who think that by the word of wisdom we must understand inspiration, think also, that by *the word of knowledge,* we must understand an acquaintance with the mysteries of which I have spoken. Many mysteries are mentioned in the sacred writings. The mystery of the restoration of the Jews; the mystery of iniquity; and the mystery of the beast. The passages to which I allude are known to you, and time does not allow me more than a recital.

2. Why does St. Paul, when speaking of those who shall be found on earth when Christ shall descend from heaven, add, *We which are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord?* Did he flatter himself to be of that number? Some critics have thought so: and when pressed by those words in the second epistle to Timothy, *The time of my departure is at hand; I am ready to be offered up;* they have replied, that St. Paul had changed his ideas, and divested himself of the illusive hope that he should never die!

But how many arguments might I not adduce to refute this error, if it required refutation, and did not refute itself? How should St. Paul, who had not only the gift of inspiration, but who declared that what he said was by the word of the Lord, or according to

his miraculous gift, fall into so great a mistake in speaking on this subject? How do they reconcile this presumption with what he says of the resurrection in his epistles, written prior to this, from which we have taken our text? Not to multiply arguments; there are some texts in which St. Paul seems to class himself with those who shall rise, seeing he says, *we*.— Let us next attend to that in the second epistle to the Corinthians: *God, who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also*, chap. iv. 14. But in my text he seems to associate himself in the class of those who shall not be raised, being alive when Christ shall descend from heaven; *we that are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord*. Emphasis then should not be laid on the pronoun *we*, it signifies, in general, *those who*; and it ought to be explained, not by its general import, but by the nature of the things to which it is applied, which do not suffer us to believe, that the apostle here meant to designate himself, as I think is proved.

3. In what respects does St. Paul prove, that those who die before the advent of the Son of God, shall not thereby retard their happiness; and that those who shall then survive, shall not enjoy earlier than they the happiness with which the Saviour shall invest them?

The apostle proves it from the supremacy of Christ at the consummation of the age. The instant he shall descend from heaven, he shall awake the dead by his mighty voice. The bodies of the saints shall rise, and the bodies of those that are alive shall be purified from their natural incumbrance, according to

the assertion of St. Paul, already adduced ; *we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed.* And it must also be remarked, that this change, he adds, shall be made *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye* ; that is, immediately on the coming of Jesus Christ : and after this change, the saints who shall rise, and those who shall be yet alive, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be for ever with the Lord. The survivors, therefore, shall have no prerogative over others ; so is the sense of the text : *We which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, &c.*

But this is a very extraordinary kind of consolation : St. Paul still left the Thessalonians in their old mistake, that some of them should still live to see the last day ; Why did he not undeceive them ? Why did he not say to console them in their trouble, that the consummation of the ages was, as yet, a very distant period ; and that the living and the dead should rise on the same day ! This is the *fourth*, and the most considerable difficulty in the words of my text.

IV. The apostles seem to have been ignorant whether the end of the world should happen in their time, or whether it should be at the distance of many ages ; and it seems that by so closely circumscribing the knowledge of inspired men, we derogate from their claims of inspiration.—A whole dissertation would scarcely suffice to remove this difficulty ; I shall content myself with opening the sources of its solution.

1. Ignorance of one truth is unconnected with the revelation of another truth ; I would say, it does not follow that the Holy Spirit has not revealed certain

things to sacred authors, because he has not revealed them to others. We are assured he did not acquaint them with the epoch of the consummation of the age. This epoch was not only concealed from the apostles, but also from Jesus Christ considered as man ; hence when speaking of the last day, he said, that neither the angels in heaven, nor even the Son of man, knew when it should occur ; the secret being reserved with God alone. Mark xiii. 32.

2. Though the apostles were ignorant of the final period of the world, they left the Christians of their own age in the presumption that they might survive to the end of the world, they left the point undetermined. The texts which seem repugnant to what I say, regard the destruction of Jerusalem, and not the day of judgment ; but it is not possible to examine them here in support of what I assert.

3. But though the apostles were ignorant of the final period of the world, they were confident, however, that it should not come till the prophecies, respecting the destiny of the church were accomplished. This is suggested by St. Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians : *Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us as though the day of Christ was at hand. Let no man deceive you in any way whatever ; for the day of the Lord shall not come until the revolt shall have previously happened, and till that man of sin, the son of perdition, shall be revealed ; chap. ii.*

4. In fine, the apostles leaving the question undecided respecting the final period of the world ; a question not essential to salvation, have determined the points of which we cannot be ignorant in order to be saved ; I would say, the manner in which men should live to whom this period was unknown. They have drawn conclusions the most just and certain from the uncertainty in which those Christians were placed. They have inferred, that the church being ignorant of the day in which Christ shall come to judge the world, should be always ready for that event. But brevity obliges me to suppress the texts whence the inferences are deduced.

II. Having sufficiently discharged the duties of the critic, I proceed to those of the preacher. Taking the words of St. Paul in all their extent, we see the sentiments with which we should be animated when called to survive our dearest friends, which we shall now discuss.

St. Paul does not condemn all sorts of sorrow occasioned by the loss of those we love ; he requires only that Christians should not be inconsolable in these circumstances, as those who have no hope.—Hence there is both a criminal and an innocent sorrow. The criminal sorrow is that which confounds us with those who are destitute of hope ; but the innocent sorrow is compatible with the Christian hope. On these points we shall enter into some detail.

First. The sorrow occasioned to us by the death of those we love, confounds us with those that have no hope, when it proceeds from a principle of distrust. Such is sometimes our situation on earth, that all our

good devolves on a single point. A house rises to affluence ; it acquires a rank in life ; it is distinguished by equipage ; and all its elevation proceeds from a single head : this head is the mover of all its springs : he is the protector, the father, and friend of all : this head is cut down : this father, protector and friend, expires ; and by that single stroke, all our honours, rank, pleasures, affluence, and enjoyments of life, seem to descend with him to the tomb. At this stroke nature groans, the flesh murmurs, and faith also is obscured ; the soul is wholly absolved in its calamities, and contemplating its own loss in that of others, concentrates itself in anguish. Hence those impetuous passions ; hence those mournful and piercing cries ; hence those Rachels, who will not be comforted because their children are no more. Hence those extravagant portraits of past happiness, those exaggerations of present evils, and those gloomy augurs of the future. Hence those furious howlings, and frightful distortions, in the midst of which it would seem that we were called rather as exorcists to the possessed, than to administer balm to afflicted minds.

It is not difficult to vindicate the judgment we have formed of the grief proceeding from this principle. When the privation of a temporal good casts into despair, it was obviously the object of our love ; a capital crime in the eye of religion. The most innocent connections of life, cease to be innocent when they become too strongly cemented. To fix one's heart upon an object, to make it our happiness, and the object of our hope, is to constitute it a god ; is to place it on the throne of the Supreme, and to form it into an idol.

Whether it be a father, or a husband, or a child, which renders us idolaters, idolatry is not the less odious in the eyes of God, to whom supreme devotion is due. Religion requires that our strongest passion, our warmest attachment, and our firmest support, should ever have God for their object: and being only in the life to come that we shall be perfectly joined to God, religion prohibits the making of our happiness to consist in the good things of this life. And though religion should not dictate a duty so just, common prudence should supply its place; it should induce us to place but a submissive attachment on objects of transient good. It should say, *Let those that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not, for the fashion of this world passeth away.—Put not your trust in princes, nor in great men, in whom there is no help: his soul goeth forth, he returneth to the earth, and in that very day his purposes perish.* 1 Cor. vii. 29. Psa. cxlvi. 3, 4.

Hence, when driven to despair by the occurrence of awful events, we have cause to form a humiliating opinion of our faith. These strokes of God's hand are the tests whereby he tries our faith in the crucible of tribulation, according to the apostle's idea, 1 Pet. i. 7. When in affluence and prosperity, it is difficult to determine whether it be love for the gift, or the giver, which excites our devotion. It is in the midst of tribulation that we can recognize a genuine zeal, and a conscious piety. When our faith abandons us in the trying hour, it is an evident proof that we had

taken a chimera for a reality ; and the shadow for the substance. Submission and hope are characters of a Christian.

The example of the father of the faithful here occurs to our view. If ever a mortal had cause to fix his hopes on any object, it was undoubtedly this patriarch. Isaac was the son of the promise ; Isaac was a miracle of grace ; Isaac was a striking figure of the blessed Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. God commanded him to sacrifice this son ; who then had ever stronger reasons to believe that his hopes were lost ? But what did Abraham do ? He submitted, he hoped. He submitted ; he left his house ; he took his son ; he prepared the altar, he bound the innocent victim ; he raised his arm ; he was ready to dip his paternal hands in blood, and to plunge the knife into the bosom of this dear son. But in submitting, he hoped, he believed. How did he hope ? He hoped against hope. How did he believe ? He believed what was incredible, rather than persuade himself that his fidelity would be fatal, and that God would be deficient in his promise : he believed that God would restore his son by a miracle, having given him by a miracle ; and that this son, the unparalleled fruit of a dead body, should be raised in a manner unheard of. Believers, here is your father. If you are the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. I say again, that submission and hope are the marks of a Christian. *In the mountain of the Lord he will there provide. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; yet my kindness shall not depart from thee ; neither shall the covenant*

of my peace be removed. But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me ; and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Though they slay me, yet will I trust in thee. Isa. xlix. 14. liv. 10. Psa. xxvii. 10. Job xiii. 15.

II. We have reprobated the affliction of which despondency is the principle. A man judges of the happiness of others, by the notion of his own happiness ; and estimating life as the supreme good, he regards the person deprived of it, as worthy of the tenderest compassion. Death presents itself to us under the image of a total privation. The deceased seems to us to be stripped of every comfort. Had he, by some awful catastrophe, lost his fortune ; had he lost his sight, or one of his limbs, we should have sympathised in his affliction, with how much more propriety ought we to weep, when he has been deprived of all those comforts at a stroke, and fatally sentenced to live no more ? This sorrow is appropriate to those who are destitute of hope. This is indisputable, when it has for its object those who have finished a Christian course ; and it is on these occasions more than any other, we are obliged to confess that most Christians draw improper consequences, and act in a manner wholly opposed to the faith they profess. We believe the soul to be immortal, we are confident at the moment of a happy death that the soul takes its flight to heaven ; and that the angels who have encamped around it for protection and defence, carry it to the

bosom of God. We have seen the living languish and sigh, and reach forth to the moment of their deliverance; and when they attain to this moment, we class them among the unhappy! Was I not right in saying, that there are no occasions on which Christians reason worse than on these, and act more directly opposite to the faith they profess? While the deceased were with us in this valley of tears, they were subject to many complaints. While running a race so arduous, they complained of being liable to stumble. They complained of the calamities of the church in which they were entangled. They complained when meditating on revelation, that they found impenetrable mysteries; and when aspiring at perfection, they saw it placed in so exalted a view, as to be but imperfectly attained. But now they are afflicted no more; now they see God face to face; now they *are come to mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the myriads of angels, to the assembly of the first-born.* Now, as the Holy Spirit hath said, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.* Heb. xii. 22. Psa. xvi. 11. Rev. xiv. 13.

These remarks concern those only who die the death of the righteous: but should not piety indulge her tears when we see those die impenitent to whom we are joined by the ties of nature, and shall we call that a criminal sorrow when it is the death of reprobates which excite our grief? Is there any kind of comfort against this painful thought, that my son is dead in an unregenerate state? And can any sorrow

be immoderate which is excited by the loss of a soul ? This is the question we were wishful to illustrate, when we marked in the *third* place, as a criminal sorrow, that which proceeds from a mistaken piety.

III. He answers first, that nothing is more presumptive than to decide on the eternal loss of men ; and that we must not limit the extent of the divine mercy, and the ways of Providence. A contrite heart may, perhaps, be concealed under the exterior of reprobation ; and the religion which enjoins us to live in holy fear of our own salvation, ever requires that we should presume charitably concerning the salvation of others.

But people are urgent, and being unable to find any mitigation in a doubtful case, against which a thousand circumstances seem to militate, they ask whether one ought to moderate the anguish excited by the eternal loss of one they love ? The question is highly proper in this age, where we see so great a number of our brethren die in apostacy, and in which the lives of those who surround us afford so just a ground of awful apprehensions concerning their salvation.

I confess it would be unreasonable to censure tears in a situation so afflictive ; I confess that one has need of an extraordinary confidence to repress excess, and that an ordinary piety is inadequate to the task. I contend, however, that religion forbids, even in this case, to sorrow above measure. Two remarks shall make it manifest ; and we entreat those whom God has struck in this sensible manner, to impress them deeply on their mind.

1. Our grief really proceeds from a carnal principle, and our heart disguises itself from its own judgment, when it apparently suggests that religion is the cause. If it were simply the idea of the loss of the soul ; if it were a principle of love to God, and if it were not the relations of father, and son ; in a word, if the motives were altogether spiritual, and the charity wholly pure, which excites our grief, whence is it that this one object should excite it, while so great a multitude of unhappy men are precisely in a similar case ? Whence is it that we see daily, without anxiety, whole nations running headlong to perdition ? Is it less dishonourable to God, that those multitudes are excluded from his covenant, than because it is precisely your friend, your son, or your father ?

Our second remark is, that the love we have for the creature should always approximate itself with the Creator. We ought to love our neighbours, because like us they bear the image of God, and they are called with us to the same glory. On this principle, when we see a sinner wantonly rush on the precipice, and risking salvation by his crimes, our charity ought to be alarmed. Thus Jesus Christ, placing himself in the period in which grace was still offered to Jerusalem, and in which she might accept it, groaned beneath her hardness, and deplored the abuse she made of his entreaties : *O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace.* Luke xix. 42. But when a man becomes the avowed enemy of God, when a protracted course of vice, and a final perseverance in crimes, convinces that he has no part in his covenant, then our love

should return to its centre, and associate itself with the love of our Creator. *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh. I hate them with a perfect hatred. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. If any man love father, mother, son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.* 2 Cor. v. 16. Psa. cxxxix. 22. Matt. x. 37.

This duty is, perhaps, too exalted for the earth. The sentiments of nature are, perhaps, too much entwined with those of religion to be so perfectly distinguished. It is, however, a fact, that they shall exist in heaven. If you should suppose the contrary, the happiness of heaven would be imbittered with a thousand pains: you can never conceive how a father shall be satisfied with a felicity in which his son has no share; nor how a friend shall be composed while his associate is loaded with *chains of darkness*. Whereas, if you establish the principle that perfect charity must be an emanation of divine love, you will develop the inquiry; and you will also conclude, that excessive sorrow, excited by a criminal death, is a criminal sorrow, and that if piety be its principle, it is a misguided piety.

But if there be one kind of sorrow incompatible with the hope of a Christian, there is another which is altogether congenial to it, and inseparable in its ties: and is such the sorrow which proceeds from one of the following principles:—from sympathy;—from the dictates of nature;—and from repentance. To be explicit:

I. We have said first, from sympathy. Though we have censured the sorrow excited by the loss of

our dearest friends, we did not wish to impose a rigorous apathy. The sorrow we have censured is that excessive grief, in which despondency prevailing over religion, induces us to deplore the dead, as though there was no hope after this life, and no life after death. But the submissive sorrow by which we feel our loss, without shutting our eyes against the resources afforded by Providence; the sorrow which weeps at the sufferings of our friends in the road to glory, but confident of their having attained it; this sorrow, so far from being culpable, is an inseparable sentiment of nature, and an indispensable duty of religion.

Yes, it is allowed on seeing this body, this corpse, the precious remains of a part of ourselves, carried away by a funeral procession, it is allowed to recal the tender, but painful recollections of the intimacy we had with him whom death has snatched away. It is allowed to recal the counsel he gave us in our embarrassments; the care he took of our education; the solicitude he took for our welfare; the unaffected marks of love which appeared during the whole of his life, and which were redoubled at the period of his death. It is allowed to recal the endearments that so precious an intimacy shed on life, the conversations in his last sickness, those tender adieus, those assurances of esteem, that frankness of his soul, those fervent prayers, those torrents of tears, and those last efforts of an expiring tenderness. It is allowed in weeping to show the robes that Dorcas had made.— It is allowed to the tender Joseph, on coming to the threshing floor of Atad, the tomb of his father; it is

allowed to pour out his heart in lamentations, to make Canaan resound with the cries of his grief, and to call the place Abel-mizraim, the mourning of the Egyptians. It is allowed to David to go weeping, and saying, *O my son Absalom ; my son, my son Absalom ! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son.* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. It is allowed to St. Augustine to weep for the pious Monica, his mother, who had shed so many tears to obtain the grace for him, that he might for ever live with God, to use the expression of his father. *Confess. lib. ix. c. 8, &c.*

II. A due regard to ourselves should affect us with sorrow on seeing the dying and the dead. The first reflection that a sight of the dead should suggest is, that we also must die, and that the road he has just taken, is "the way of all the earth." This is a reflection that every one makes, and no one makes it in reality. We cast on the dying and the dead, but slight and transient regards ; and if we say, in general, that this must be our final lot, we evade the particular application to our heart. While we subscribe to the sentence, "It is appointed unto men once to die," we uniformly make some sort of exception with regard to ourselves : because we never have died, it seems as though we never should die. If we are not so far infatuated, as to flatter ourselves concerning the fatal necessity imposed on us to leave the world, we flatter ourselves with regard to the circumstances ; we consider them as remote ; and the distance of the object, prevents our knowing its nature, and regarding it in a just light. We attend the dying, we lay them in the tomb, we preach their funeral discourse ; we follow

them in the funeral train ; and as though they were of a nature different from us, and as though we had some prerogative over the dead, we return home, and become candidates for their offices. We divide their riches, and enter on their lands, just as the presumptive mariner, who seeing a ship on the shore, driven by the tempest, and about to be bilged by the waves, takes his bark, braves the billows, and defies the danger, to share in the spoils of the wreck.

A prudent man, contemplates the death of his friends with other eyes. He follows them with a mind attached to the tomb ; he clothes himself in their shrouds ; he extends himself in their coffin ; he regards his living body as about to become like their corpse ; and the duty he owes to himself inspires him with a gracious sorrow on seeing in the destiny of his lamented friends, an image of his own.

But why should the thought of dying excite sorrow in a saint, in regard of whom the divine justice is disarmed, and to whom nothing is presented beyond the tomb but inviting objects ? The solution of this difficulty associates with what we said in the *third* place, that the death of persons worthy of our esteem should excite in our hearts the sentiments of repentance.

III. It is a question often agitated among Christians, that seeing Jesus Christ has satisfied the justice of the Father for their sins, why should they still die ? And one of the most pressing difficulties opposed to the evangelical system results from it, that death equally reigns over those who embrace, and those who reject it. To this it is commonly replied, that death is now no longer a punishment for our sins, but

a tempest that rolls us to the port, and a passage to a better life. This is a solid reply: but does it perfectly remove the difficulty? Have we not still a right to ask, Why God should lead us in so straight a way? Why he pleases to make this route so difficult? Why his chariots of fire do not carry us up to heaven, as they once took Elijah? For after all the handsome things one can say, the period of death is a terrible period, and death is still a formidable foe. What labours, what conflicts, what throes, prior to the moment! What doubts, what uncertainties, what labouring of thought before we acquire the degree of confidence to die with fortitude! How disgusting the remedies! How irksome the aids! How severe the separations! How piercing the final farewells! This constitutes the difficulty, and the ordinary solution leaves it in all its force.

The following remark to me seems to meet the difficulty in a manner more direct. The death of the righteous is an evil, but it is an instructive evil. It is a violent, but a necessary remedy. It is a portrait of the divine justice God requires we should constantly have in view, that we may so live as to avoid becoming the victims of that justice. It is an awful monument of the horror God has of sin, which should teach us to avoid it. The more submissive the good man was to the divine pleasure, the more distinguished is the monument. The more eminent he was for piety, the more should we be awed by this stroke of justice. Come, and look at this good man in the tomb, and in a putrid state; trace his exit in a bed of affliction to this dark and obscure abode; see how

after having been emaciated by a severe disease, he is now reserved as a feast for worms. Who was this man? Was he habitually wicked? Was he avowedly an enemy of God? No; he was a believer; he was a model of virtue and probity. Meanwhile, this saint: this friend of Christ, died: descended from a sinful father, he submitted to the sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* Gen. iii. 19. And if those remains of corruption were subjugated to a lot so severe, what shall be the situation of those in whom sin reigns? *If the righteous be saved with difficulty, where shall the wicked appear? If the judgment of God begin at his house, what shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel.* 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

The law imposed on us to die is, therefore, a requisite, but indeed a violent remedy; and to correspond with the design, we must drink the cup. The death of those who are worthy of our regret, ought to recal to our mind the punishment of sin; and to excite in us that sorrow which is a necessary fruit of true repentance.

These are the three sorts of sorrow, that the death of our friends should excite in our breast. And so far are we from repressing this kind of grief, that we would wish you to feel it in all its force. Go to the tombs of the dead; open their coffins; look on their remains; let each there recognise a husband, or a parent, or children, or brethren; but instead of regarding them as surrounding him alive, let him suppose himself as lodged in the subterraneous abode with the persons to whom he has been closely united. Look at them deliberately, hear what they say: death

seems to have condemned them to an eternal silence ; meanwhile they speak ; they preach with a voice far more eloquent than ours.

We have taught you to shed upon their tombs tears of tenderness : hear the dead, they preach with a voice more eloquent than ours. “ Have you forgotten the relations we formed, and the ties that united us ? Is it with games and diversions that you lament our loss ? Is it in the circles of gaiety, and in public places, that you commemorate our exit ? ”

We have exhorted you to shed upon their tomb tears of duty to yourselves. *Hear the dead ;* they preach with a voice more eloquent than ours. They cry, *Vanity of vanities. All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. Surely man walketh in a vain shadow.* Eccles. i. 2. Isa. xl. 6. 1 John ii. 17. Psal. xxxix. 7. They recal to your mind the afflictions they have endured, the troubles which assailed their mind and the deliriums that affected their brain. They recal those objects that you may contemplate in their situation an image of your own ; that you may be apprised how imperfectly qualified a man is in his last moments for recollection, and the work of his salvation. They tell you, that they once had the same health, the same strength, the same fortune, and the same honours as you ; notwithstanding, the torrent which bore us away, is doing the same with you.

We have exhorted you to shed upon their tombs the tears of repentance. Hear the dead ; they preach with an eloquence greater than ours : they say, “ that

sin has brought death into the world ; death which separates the father from the son, and the son from the father ; which disunites hearts the most closely attached, and dissolves the most intimate and tender ties. They say more : Hear the dead—hear some of them, who, from the abyss of eternal flames, into which they are plunged for impenitency, exhort you to repentance.

Oh ! terrific preachers, preachers of despair, may your voice break the hearts of those hearers on which our ministry is destitute of energy and effect.—Hear those dead, they speak with a voice more eloquent than ours from the depths of the abyss, from the deep caverns of hell ; they cry, *Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire ? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? Ye mountains fall on us ; ye hills cover us. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he is angry.* Isa. xxxiii. 14. Luke xxiii. 30. Heb. x. 31. Hear the father, who suffering in hell for the bad education given to the family he left on earth. Hear him by the despair of his condition ; by the chains which oppress him ; by the fire which devours him ; and by the remorse, the torments, and the anguish which gnaw him, entreat you not to follow him to that abyss. Hear the impure, the accomplice of your pleasure, who says, that if God had called you the first, you would have been substituted in his place, and who entreats to let your eyes become as fountains of repentant tears.

This is the sort of sorrow with which we should be affected for the death of those with whom it has

pleased God to connect us by the bonds of society, and of nature. May it penetrate our hearts ; and for ever banish the sorrow which confounds us with those who have no hope. Let us be compassionate citizens, faithful friends, tender fathers, loving all those with whom it has pleased God to unite us, and not regarding this love as a defect ; but let us love our Maker with supreme affection. Let us be always ready to sacrifice to him whatever we have most dear on earth. May a glorious resurrection be the ultimatum of our requests. May the hope of obtaining it assuage all our sufferings. And may God Almighty, who has educated us in a religion so admirably adapted to support in temptation, give success to our efforts, and be the crown of our hopes ; *Amen.* To whom be honour and glory, henceforth and for ever.

SERMON II.

*On the Wisdom of Solomon.**



I KINGS, iii. 5—14.

In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, ask what I shall give.— And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee, and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David, my father; and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out and come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people which cannot be numbered, nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: For who is able to judge this thy so great a

* SAURIN placed at the Hague, as first minister of the persecuted Protestants; and often attended by illustrious characters, saw it his duty to apprise them of the moral sentiments essential for an entrance on high office and extensive authority. The Abbe MAURY, in his treatise on eloquence; though hostile to SAURIN, allows this Sermon on the wisdom of SOLOMON, to be one of the best specimens of his eloquence.

people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast thou asked riches for thyself; nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: behold I have done according to thy words. Lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days."

“**W**OE to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!” In this way has the sage expressed the calamities of states conducted by men destitute of experience. But this general maxim is not without exceptions. As we sometimes see the levities of youth in mature age, so we sometimes perceive in the youth the gravity of sober years. There are some geniuses premature, with whom reason anticipates on years; and who, if I may so speak, on leaving the cradle, discover worthy of the throne. A profusion of supernatural endowments, coming to the aid of nature, exemplifies in their character, the happy experience of the prophet; “I have more understanding than all my teachers. I understand more than the ancients.” Psa. cxix. 99, 100.

Here we have an illustrious proof. Solomon, in the early periods of life, formed the correctest idea of government which had ever entered the mind of the profoundest philosophers, or the most consummate statesmen. Awed by the sceptre, he acknowledged the impotency of his arm to sway it. Of the high privilege granted of God, to ask whatever he would, he availed himself solely to ask wisdom. What an admirable choice ! How many aged men have we seen less enlightened than this youth ? On the other hand, God honoured a petition so wise, by superadding to the petitioner every other endowment ; he gave to Solomon wisdom, and, with wisdom, glory and riches ; he elevated him to a scale of grandeur, which no prince ever did, or ever shall be allowed to equal. It is to this petition so judicious, and to this reply so magnificent, that we shall call your attention, after having bestowed a moment on three important circumstances, connected with the occasion.

It occurs in the leading words of our text. In this divine communication, the *place*, the *manner*, and the *subject* claim particular attention.

1. The *place* ; it was in Gibeon ; not the city from which those Gibeonites derived their name, who, by having recourse to singular artifice, saved their lives, which they thought themselves unable to defend by force, or to preserve by compassion. That, I would say, that city of those Gibeonites, was a considerable place, and called in the book of Joshua, a royal city. The other was situate on the highest mountains of Judea, distant, according to Eusebius, and St. Jerome, about eight miles from Jerusalem.

We shall not enter into geographical discussions. What claims attention is, a circumstance of the place where Solomon was, which naturally recals to view one of the weaknesses of this prince. It is remarked at the commencement of the chapter, from which we have taken our text, that "the people sacrificed in high places." The choice was, probably, not exempt from superstition: it is certain, at least, that idolaters usually selected the highest mountains for exercise of their religious ceremonies. Tacitus assigns as a reason, that in those places being nearer the gods, they were the more likely to be heard. Lucian reasons much in the same way, and, without a doubt, less to vindicate the custom than to expose it to contempt. God himself has forbidden it in his law.

We have, however, classed this circumstance in Solomon's life among his frailties, rather than his faults. Prevention for high places was much less culpable in the reign of this prince, than in the ages which followed. In those ages, the Israelites violated, by sacrificing on high places, the law which forbade any sacrifice to be offered, except in the temple of Jerusalem: whereas, in the age of which we now speak, the temple did not exist. The people sacrificed on the brazen altar, constructed by the divine command. This altar was then in Gibeon, where it had been escorted with the tabernacle, as we read in the book of Chronicles.

2. The *manner* in which the revelation to Solomon was made, supplies a second source of reflections. It was, says the historian, in a dream. We have

elsewhere* remarked, that there are three sorts of dreams. Some are in the order of nature ; others are in the order of Providence ; and a third class are of an order superior to both.

I call dreams in the order of nature, those which ought merely to be regarded as the irregular flights of imagination, over which the will has lost, or partially lost its command.

I call dreams in the order of providence those, which, without deviation from the course of nature, excite certain instructive ideas, and suggest to the minds truths, to which we were not sufficiently attentive while awake, Providence sometimes directing our attention to peculiar circumstances in a way purely natural, and destitute of all claims to the supernatural, and much less to the marvellous.

Some dreams, however, are of an order superior to those of nature, and of providence. It was by this sort of dreams that God revealed his pleasure to the prophets : but this dispensation being altogether divine, and of which the scriptures say little, and being impossible for the researches of the greatest philosopher to supply the silence of the Holy Ghost, we shall make no fruitless efforts farther to illustrate the manner of the revelation with which Solomon was honoured.

3. A reason very dissimilar supersedes our stopping to illustrate the *subject* ; I would say, it has no need of illustration. God was wishful to put Solomon to the proof, by prompting him to ask whatsoever he would, and by engaging to fulfil it. Solo-

mon's reply was worthy of the test. His sole request was for wisdom. God honoured this enlightened prayer ; and in granting profound wisdom to his servants, he superadded riches, and glory, and long life.—It is this enlightened request, and this munificent reply, we are now to examine. We shall examine them jointly, placing, at the same time, the harmony of the one with the other, in a just and proper view. *Four* remarks demand attention in Solomon's request to God, and *four* in God's reply.

I. Consider in Solomon's request, the recollection of past mercies : “Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy :” and mark in the reply, how pleasing this recollection was to God.

II. Consider, in Solomon's request, the aspect under which he regarded the regal power. He considered it solely with a view to the high duties on which it obliged him to enter. “Thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people which cannot be numbered, nor counted for multitude. Who is able to judge this thy so great a people ?” And in God's reply, mark the apposite seal, with regard to this idea of the supreme authority.

III. Consider, in Solomon's request, the sentiments of his own weakness, and the consciousness of his insufficiency : “I am but as a little child, and know not how to go out, and to come in :” and in God's reply, mark, how highly he is delighted with humility.

IV. In Solomon's request, consider the wisdom of his choice ; “Give, therefore, unto thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people :” and in God's reply, mark how Solomon's prayer was heard,

and his wisdom crowned. Four objects, all worthy of our regard.

I. Consider in Solomon's request, the recollection of mercies. It was the mercies of David, his father. Solomon made this reference as a motive to obtain the divine mercies and aids his situation required. He aspired at the blessings which God confers on the children of faithful fathers. He wished to become the object of that promise in which God stands engaged to "show mercy to thousands of generations of those that love him." *Exod. xx. 6.*

This is the first object of our discourse. The privilege of an illustrious birth, I confess, is sometimes extravagantly panegyrised. This kind of folly is not novel in the present age; it was the folly of the Hebrew nation. To most of the rebukes of their prophets, they opposed this extraordinary defence: "We are Abraham's seed: we have Abraham to our father." *Matt. iii. 9.* What an apology! Does an illustrious birth sanction low and grovelling sentiments? Do the virtues of our ancestors excuse us from being virtuous? And has God for ever engaged to excuse impious children, because their parents were pious? You are the children of Abraham; you have an illustrious descent; your ancestors were the models and glory of their age. Then you are the more inexcusable for being the reproach of your age: then you are the faithless depositaries of the nobility with which you have been entrusted: then you have degenerated from your former grandeur: then you shall be condemned to surrender to nature a corrupted blood,

which you received pure from those to whom you owe your birth.

It is true, however, all things being weighed, that, in tracing a descent, it is a singular favour of Heaven to be able to cast our eyes on a long line of illustrious ancestors. I am not about to offer incense to idols of distinguished families : the Lord's church has more correct ideas of nobility. To be accounted noble in the sanctuary, we must give proof of virtue, and not of empty titles, which often owe their origin to the vanity, the seditions, and the fawning baseness of those who display them with so much pride. To be noble in the language of our scriptures ; and to be impure, avaricious, haughty, and implacable, are opposite ideas. But charity, but patience, but moderation, but dignity of soul, and a certain elevation of mind, place the happy above the world, and its maxims. These are characteristics of the nobility of God's children.

In this view, it is a high favour of Heaven, in tracing descent, to be able to cast the eye on a long line of illustrious ancestors. How often have holy men availed themselves of these motives to induce the Deity, if not to bear with the Israelites in their course of crimes, at least, to pardon them after the crimes have been committed? How often have they said, in the supplications they opposed to the wrath of Heaven, "O God, remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants!" How often has God yielded to the strength of these arguments? How often has he, for the sake of the patriarchs, for the

sake of David, heard prayer in behalf of their children?

Let these maxims be deeply imprinted on the heart. Our own interest should be motive sufficient to prompt us to piety. But we should also be excited to it by the interest of our children. The recollection of our virtues is the best inheritance we can leave them after death. These virtues afford them claims to the divine favours. The good will of Heaven, is, in some sort, entailed on families who fear the Lord. Happy the fathers, when extended on the bed of death, who can say, "My children, I am about to appear before the awful tribunal, where there is no resource for poor mortals, but humility and repentance. Mean while, I bless God, that notwithstanding my defects, which I acknowledge with confusion of face, you will not have cause to blush on pronouncing the name of your father. I have been faithful to the truth, and have constantly walked before God, "in the uprightness of my heart." Happy the children who have such a descent! I would prefer it to titles the most distinguished, to riches the most dazzling, and to offices the most lucrative. "O God, thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart!" Here is the recollection of past mercies, the recollection of which God approves, and the first object of our discourse.

II. Consider secondly, in the prayer of Solomon, the aspect under which he contemplated the regal power. He viewed it principally with regard to the

high duties it imposed. "Thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen ; who is able to judge this thy so great a people, which cannot be numbered?" The answer of God is a correspondent seal to this idea of supreme authority. And what we here say of the regal power, we apply to every other office of trust and dignity. A man of integrity must not view them with regard to the emoluments they produce, but with regard to the duties they impose.

What is the end proposed by society on elevating certain men to high stations? Is it to augment their pride? Is it to usher them into a style of life the most extravagant? Is it to flatter their arrogance and ambition? Is it to aggrandise their families by the ruin of the widow and the orphan? Is it to adore them as idols? Is it to become their slaves? Potentates and magistrates of the earth, ask those subjects, to whom you are indebted for the high scale of elevation you enjoy. Ask, Why those dignities were conferred? They will say, it was to entrust you with their safety and repose ; it was to procure fathers and protectors ; it was to find peace and prosperity under the shadow of your tribunals. To induce you to enter on those awful duties, they have accompanied them with those inviting appendages which sooth the cares, and alleviate the weights of office. They have conferred titles ; they have sworn obedience ; and ensured revenue. Entrance then on a high duty is to make a contract with the people, over whom you proceed to exercise it : it is to make a compact, by which certain duties are required on certain conditions. To

require the emoluments, when the conditions of the engagements are violated, is an abominable usurpation: it is an usurpation of honour, of homage, and of revenue. I speak literally, and without a shadow of exaggeration; a magistrate who deviates from the duties of his office, after having received the emolument, ought to come under the penal statutes, as those who take away their neighbour's goods. These statutes require restitution. Before restitution, he is liable to this anathema, "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his own, and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay: for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Hab. ii. 6. 11. Before restitution he is unworthy of the Lord's table; and included in the curse we denounce against thieves, whom we repel from the holy eucharist. Before restitution, he is unable to die in peace, and he is included in the list of those "who shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

But into what strange reflections do these considerations involve us? What awful ideas do they excite in our minds? And what alarming consequences do they draw on certain kings?—Ye Moseses; ye Elijahs; ye John Baptists; faithful servants of the living God, and celebrated in every age of the church for your fortitude, your courage, and your zeal; you, who knew not how to temporise, nor to tremble, no, neither before Pharaoh, nor before Ahab, nor before Herod, nor before Herodias, why are you not in this pulpit? Why do you not to-day supply our place, to communicate to the subject all the energy

of which it is susceptible? "Be wise, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth." Psa. ii. 10.

III. We have remarked, thirdly, in the prayer of Solomon, the sentiments of his own weakness; and in God's reply, the high regard testified towards humility. The character of the king whom Solomon succeeded, the arduous nature of the duties to which he was called, and the insufficiency of his age, were to him three considerations of humility.

1. The character of the king to whom he succeeded. "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in the uprightness of his heart; and thou hast given him a son to sit upon his throne." How dangerous to succeed an illustrious prince! The distinguished actions of a predecessor, are so many sentences against the faults of his successor. The people never fail to make certain oblique contracts between the past and the present. They recollect the virtues they have attested, the happiness they have enjoyed, the prosperity with which they have been loaded, and the distinguished qualifications of the prince, whom death has recently snatched away. And if the idea of having had an illustrious predecessor is on all occasions a subject of serious consideration for him who has to follow, never had prince a juster cause to be awed than Solomon. He succeeded a man who was the model of kings, in whose person was united, the wisdom of a statesman, the valour of a soldier, the experience of a marshal, the illumination of a pro-

phet, the piety of a good man, and even the virtues of a saint of the first rank.

2. The extent of the duties imposed on Solomon, was the second object of his humility. "Who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" Adequately to judge a great nation, a man must regard himself as no more his own, but wholly devoted to the people. Adequately to judge a great nation, a man must have a consummate knowledge of human nature, of civil society, of the laws of nature, and of the peculiar laws of the people over whom he has to preside. Adequately to judge a nation, he must have his house and his heart ever open to the solicitations of those over whom he is exalted.—Adequately to judge a people, he must recollect, that a small sum of money, that a foot of land is as much to a poor man, as a city, a province, and a kingdom are to a prince.—Adequately to judge a people, he must habituate himself to the disgust excited by listening to a man, who is quite full of his subject, and who imagines that the person addressed ought to be equally impressed with its importance.—Adequately to judge a people, a man must be exempt from vice: nothing is more calculated to prejudice the mind against the purity of his decisions, than to see him captivated by some predominant passion.—Adequately to judge a people, he must be destitute of personal respect: he must neither yield to the entreaties of those who know the way to his heart, nor be intimidated by the high tone of others, who threaten to hold up as martyrs the persons they obstinately defend.—Adequately to judge a people, a man must

expand, if I may so speak, all the powers of his soul, that he may be equal to the dignity of his duty, and avoid all distraction, which, on engrossing the capacity of the mind, obstruct its perception of the main object. And “who is sufficient for these things? who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” 2 Cor. ii. 16.

3. The snares of youth form a third object of Solomon’s awe, and a third cause of his humility. “I am but a little child, I know not how to go out and come in.” Some chronologists are of opinion that Solomon, when he uttered these words, “I am but a little child,” was only twelve years of age, which to us seems insupportable: for besides its not being proved by the event, as we shall explain, it ought to be placed in the first year of this prince’s reign: and the style in which David addressed him on his investiture with the reins of government sufficiently proves, that he spake not to a child. He calls him *wise*, and to this wisdom he confides the punishment of Joab, and of Shemei.

Neither do we think that we can attach to these words, “I am but a little child,” with better grace, a sense purely metaphorical, as implying nothing more than Solomon’s acknowledgement of the infancy of his understanding. The opinion most probable in our apprehension, (and we omit the detail of the reasons by which we are convinced of it,) is, that of those who think that Solomon calls himself a little child, much in the same sense as the term is applied to Benjamin, to Joshua, and to the sons of Eli.

It was, therefore, I would suppose, at the age of twenty, or of twenty-six years, that Solomon saw himself called to fill the throne of the greatest of kings, and to enter on those exalted duties of which we have given but an imperfect sketch. How disproportioned did the vocation seem to the age! It is then, that we give scope to presumption, which has a plausible appearance, being as yet unmortified by the recollection of past errors. It is then, that a jealousy of not being yet classed by others among great men, prompts a youth to place himself in that high rank. It is then, that we regard counsels as so many attacks on the authority we assume to ourselves. It is then, that we oppose an untractable disposition as a barrier to the advice of a faithful friend, who would lead us to propriety of conduct. It is then, that our passions hurry us to excess, and become the arbitrators of truth and falsehood, of equity and injustice.

Presumptuous youths, who make the assurance with which you aspire at the first offices of state, the principal ground of success, how can I better impress you with this head of my discourse, than by affirming that the higher notions you entertain of your own sufficiency, the lower you sink at the bar of equity and reason. The more you account yourselves qualified to govern, the less you are capable of doing it. The sentiment Solomon entertained of his own weakness, was the most distinguished of his royal virtues. The profound humility with which he asked God to supply his inability, was the best disposition for obtaining the divine support.

IV. We are come at length to the last, and to the great object of the history before us. We shall show you, on the one hand, our hero preferring the requisite talents, to pomp, splendour, riches, and all that is grateful to kings ; and from the vast source opened by Heaven, deriving but wisdom and understanding. We shall show on the other hand, that God, honouring a prayer so enlightened, accorded to Solomon, the wisdom and understanding he had asked, and with these, riches, glory, and long life.

Who can forbear being delighted with the first object, and who can sufficiently applaud the magnanimity of Solomon ? Place yourselves in the situation of this prince. Imagine, for a moment, that you are the arbitrators of your own destiny, and that you hear a voice from the blessed God, saying, “ Ask what I shall give thee.” How awful would this test prove to most of our hearers ! If we may judge of our wishes by our pursuits, what strange replies should we make to God ! What a choice would it be ! Our privilege would become our calamity, and we should have the awful ingenuity to find misery in the very bosom of happiness. Who would say, Lord, give me wisdom and understanding ; Lord, help me worthily to discharge the duties of the station with which I am entrusted ? This is the utmost of all my requests ; and to this alone I would wish thy munificence to be confined. On the contrary, biassed by the circumstance of situation, or swayed by some predominant passion, one would say, Lord, augment my heaps of gold and silver, and in proportion as my riches shall increase, diminish the desire of expendi-

ture : another, Lord, raise me to the highest scale of grandeur, and give me to trample under foot the men who shall have the assurance to become my equals, and whom I regard as the worms of earth. How little, for the most part, do we know ourselves in prosperity ! How incorrect are our ideas ! Great God, do thou determine our lot, and save us from the reproach of making an unhappy choice, by removing the occasion. Solomon was incomparably wiser. Filled with the duties of his high station, and awed by its difficulties, he said, “ Lord, give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad.”

But if we applaud the wisdom of Solomon’s prayer, how much more should we applaud the goodness and munificence of God’s reply ? “ Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast thou asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies. But hast asked understanding to discern judgment. Behold, I have done according to thy word. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart ; and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days.”

How amply was this promise fulfilled, and how did its accomplishment correspond with the munificence of him by whom it was made ! In virtue of this promise, “ I have given thee an understanding heart.” We see Solomon carrying the art of civil government to the highest period it can ever attain. Witness the profound prudence by which he discerned

the real from the pretended mother. “Bring me a sword.—Divide the living child into two parts, and give half to the one, and half to the other.” 1 Kings, iii. 24, 25. Witness the profound peace he procured for his subjects, and which made the sacred historian say, that “Judah, and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree.” iv. 25. Witness the eulogium of the sacred writings on this subject, “that it excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt; that he was wiser than Ethan, than Herman, than Chalcop, and Darda;” that is to say, he was wiser than every man of his own age. Witness the embassies from all the kings of the earth to hear his wisdom. Witness the acclamation of the queen, who came from the remotest kingdom of the earth to hear this prodigy of wisdom. “It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy wisdom, and behold, the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are these thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.” 1 Kings, x. 6, 7, 8.

And in virtue of this other promise, “I have given thee glory and riches;” we see Solomon raise superb edifices, form powerful alliances, and sway the sceptre over every prince, from the river even unto the land of the Philistines; that is from the Euphrates to the eastern branch of the Nile, which separates Palestine from Egypt, and making gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. 2 Chron. ix. 26. 1 Chron. i. 15.

It would be easy to extend these reflections, but on confining to this alone, I should fear being charged with having evaded the most difficult part of the subject to dwell on that which is sufficiently plain. The extraordinary condescension which God evinced towards Solomon; the divine gifts with which he was endowed, the answer to his prayer, "I have given thee an understanding heart," collectively involve a difficulty of the most serious kind. How shall we reconcile the favours with the events? How could a man so wise commit those faults, and perpetrate those crimes which stained his lustre at the close of life? How could he follow the haughty license of oriental princes, who displayed a harum crowded with concubines? How in abandoning his heart to sensual pleasure, could he abandon his faith and his religion? And after having the baseness to offer incense to their beauty, could he also offer incense to their idols? I meet this question with the greater pleasure, as the solution we shall give will demonstrate, *first*, the difficulties of superior endowments; *secondly*, the danger of bad company; *thirdly*, the peril of human grandeur; and *fourthly*, the poison of voluptuousness; four important lessons by which this discourse shall close.

First, the difficulties attendant on superior talents. Can we suppose that God, on the investiture of Solomon with superior endowments, exempted him from the law which requires men of the humblest talents to improve them? What is implied in these words, "I have given thee understanding?" Do they mean, I take solely on myself the work of thy salvation, that

thou mayest live without restraint in negligence and pleasure? Brave the strongest temptations; I will obstruct thy falling? Open thy heart to the most seductive objects; I will interpose my buckler for thy preservation and defence?

On this subject, my brethren, some ministers have need of a total reform in their creed, and to abjure a system of theology, if I may so dare to speak, inconceivably absurd. Some men have formed notions of I know not what grace, which takes wholly on itself the work of our salvation, which suffers us to sleep as much as we choose in the arms of concupiscence and pleasure, and which redoubles its aids in proportion as the sinner redoubles resistance. Undeceive yourselves. God never yet bestowed a talent without requiring its cultivation. The higher are our endowments, the more are our difficulties augmented. The greater efforts grace makes to save us, the more should we labour at our salvation. The more it watches for our good, the more we are called to the exercise of vigilance. You—you who surpass your neighbour, in knowledge, tremble; an account will be required of that superior light. You—you who have more of genius than the most of men, tremble; an account will be required of that genius. You—you who have most advanced in the grace of sanctification, tremble; an account will be required of that grace. Do you call this truth in question? Go—go see it exemplified in the person of Solomon. Go, and see the abyss into which he fell by burying his talents. Go, and see this man endowed with talents superior to all

the world. Go, and see him enslaved by seven hundred wives, and prostituted to three hundred concubines. Go, see him prostrated before the idol of the Sidonians, and before the abomination of the Ammonites; and by the awful abyss into which he was plunged by the neglect of his talents, learn to improve yours with sanctifying fear.

Our *second* solution of the difficulty proposed, and the second caution we would derive from the fall of Solomon, is the danger of bad company; and a caution rendered the more essential by the inattention of the age. The contagious disease which extends its ravages for a thousand miles around us, excites in our mind terror and alarm. We use the greatest precaution against the danger. We guard the avenues of the state, and lay vessels on their arrival in port under the strictest quarantine: we do not suffer ourselves to be approached by any suspected person. But the contagion of bad company gives us not the smallest alarm. We respire without fear an air the most impure and fatal to the soul. We form connections, enter into engagements, and contract marriages with profane, sceptical, and worldly people, and regard all those as declaimers and enthusiasts who declare, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." But see;—see indeed, by the sad experience of Solomon, whether we are declaimers and enthusiasts when we talk in this way. See into what a wretched situation we are plunged by contracting marriages with persons whose religion is idolatrous, and whose morals are corrupt. Nothing is more contagious than bad example. The sight, the presence,

the voice, the breath of the wicked is infected and fatal.

The danger of human grandeur is a new solution of the difficulty proposed, and a *third* caution we derive from the fall of Solomon. Mankind, for the most part, have a brain too weak to bear a high scale of elevation. Dazzled at once with the rays of surrounding lustre, they can no longer support the sight. You are astonished that Solomon, this prince, who reigned from the river even to the land of the Philistines; this prince, who made gold in his kingdom as plentiful as stones; this prince, who was surrounded with flatterers and courtisans; this prince, who heard nothing but eulogy, acclamation, and applause: you are astonished that he should be thus intoxicated with the high endowments God had granted him for the discharge of duty, and that he should so far forget himself as to fall into the enormities just described. Seek in your own heart, and in your life the true solution of this difficulty. We are blinded by the smallest prosperity, and our head is turned by the least elevation of rank. A name, a title, added to our dignity; an acre of land added to our estate, an augmentation of equipage, a little information added to our knowledge, a wing to our mansion, or an inch to our stature, and here is more than enough to give us high notions of our own consequence, to make us assume a decisive tone, and wish to be considered as oracles: here is more than enough to make us forget our ignorance, our weakness, our corruption, the disease, which consumes us, the tomb which awaits us, the death which pursues us, treading on our heels,

the sentence already preparing, and the account which God is about to require. Let us distrust ourselves in prosperity: let us never forget what we are: let us have people about us to recall its recollection: let us request our friends constantly to cry in our ears, remember that you are loaded with crimes; that you are but dust and ashes; and in the midst of your grandeur, and your rank, remember that you are poor, frail, wretched, and abject.

4. In short, the beguiling charms of pleasure are the first solution of the difficulty proposed, and the last instruction we derive from the fall of Solomon. The sacred historian has not overlooked the cause of the fall of this prince. "Solomon loved many strange women, and they turned away his heart from the Lord." 1 Kings xi. 1. 3. I am here reminded of the wretched mission of Balaam. Commanded by powerful princes, allured by magnificent rewards, his eyes and heart already devoured the presents which awaited his services. He ascended a mountain, he surveyed the camp of the Israelites, he invoked by turns the power of God's Spirit, and the power of the devil. Finding that prophecy afforded him no resource, he had recourse to divination and enchantment. Just on the point of giving full effect to his detestable art, he felt himself fettered by the force of truth, and exclaimed, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, there is no divination against Israel." Numb. xxxiii. 23. He temporised: yes, he found a way to supersede all the prodigies which God had done and accomplished for his people.—This way was pleasure. It was, that they should no more attack the Israelites

with open force, but with voluptuous delights ; that they should no more send among them wizards and enchanters, but the women of Midian, to allure them to their sacrifices, then this people, before invincible, I will deliver into your hands !!!

Of the success of this advice, my brethren, you cannot be ignorant. But why fell not every Balaam by the sword of Israelites ! Numb. xxxi. 8. Why were the awful consequences of this counsel restricted to the unhappy culprits, whom the holy hands of Phinehas and Eleazar, sacrificed to the wrath of Heaven ! David, Solomon, Samson, and you, my brethren ; you who may yet preserve, at least, a part of your innocence. Let us arm then against voluptuousness. Let us distrust enchanting pleasure. Let us fear it, not only when it presents its horrors ; not only when it discovers the frightful objects which follow in its train, adultery, incest, treason, apostacy, with murder and assassination : but let us fear it, when clothed in the garb of innocency, when authorized by decent freedoms, and assuming the pretext of religious sacrifices. Let us exclude it from every avenue of the heart. Let us restrict our senses. Let us mortify our members which are on the earth. Let us crucify the flesh with its concupiscence. And by the way prescribed in the gospel ; the way of retirement, of silence, of austerity, of the cross, and of mortification, let us attain happiness, and immortal bliss. May God grant us the grace. To him be honour, and glory, for ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

Preached November 20, 1720.



The Voice of the Rod.



MICAH vi. 9.

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

AWFUL indeed was the complaint which Jeremiah once made to God against Israel: *O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock.* Jer. v. 3. Here is a view of the last period of corruption; for however insuperable the corruption of men may appear, they sin less by enmity than dissipation. Few are so consummately wicked as to sin solely through the wantonness of crime. The mind is so constantly attached to exterior objects, as to be wholly absorbed by their impression; and here is the ordinary source of all our vice. Have we some real, or some imaginary advantage? The idea of our superiority engrosses our whole attention; and here is the source of our pride. Are we in presence of an object congenial to our cupidity? The sentiment of

pleasure immediately fills the whole capacity of the soul ; and here is the source of our intemperance : it is the same with every vice. Have you the art of gaining the minds of men, of recalling their wandering thoughts ; and of reclaiming them to duty ; you will acknowledge, that the beings you had taken for monsters, are really men, who, as I said, sin less by malice than dissipation.

But of all the means calculated to produce the recollection so essential to make us wise, adversity is the most effectual. How should a man delight his heart with a foolish grandeur ; how should he abandon himself to pride, when all around him speaks his meanness and impotency ; when appalled by the sight of a Sovereign Judge, and burdened by his heavy hand : he has no resource but humility and submission ? How should he give up himself to intemperance when afflicted with excruciating pains, and oppressed with the approaches of death ? When, therefore, adversity is unavailing ; when a people equally resist the terrific warnings of the prophet, and the strokes of God's hand, for whom he speaks ; when their corruption is proof against mortality, against the plague, against famine ; what resource remains for their conversion ? This was, however, the degree of hardness to which the Jews, in Jeremiah's time, had attained. *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.*

O Lord, thou hast stricken them. My brethren, the first part of our prophet's words is now accomplished

in our country, and in a very terrific manner. Some difference the mercy of God does make between us, and those neighbouring nations, among whom the plague is making so dreadful a progress ; but though our horizon is not yet infected, though the breath of our hearers is not yet corrupt, and though our streets present not yet to our view heaps of dead, whose mortal exhalations threaten the living, and to whose burial, those who survive are scarcely sufficient, we are nevertheless under the hand of God ; I would say, under his avenging hand ; his hand already uplifted to plunge us into the abyss of national ruin. What else are those plagues which walk in our streets ? What is this mortality of our cattle which has now continued so many years ? What else is this suspension of credit, this loss of trade, this ruin of so many families, and so many more on the brink of ruin ? *O Lord, thou hast stricken them.* The first part then is but too awfully accomplished in our country.

I should deem it an abuse of the liberty allowed me in this pulpit, were I to say, without restriction, that the second is likewise accomplished ; *But they have not grieved.* The solemnity of the day ; the proclamation of our fast ; the whole of these provinces prostrated to-day at the feet of the Most High ; so many voices crying to heaven, *O thou sword of the Lord, intoxicated with blood, return into thy scabbard ;* all would convict me of declamation, if I should say, *O Lord thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved.*

But, my brethren, have we no part in this reproach? Have we felt as we ought, the calamities that God hath sent? Come to-day Christians; come and learn of our prophet to hearken to the voice of God. What voice? The voice strong and mighty; the voice which lighteneth with flames of fire; the loud voice of his judgments. *Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it.*

My brethren, on the hearing of this voice, what sort of requests should we make? Should we not say, as the ancient people, *Let not the Lord speak to us lest we die?* No, let us not adopt this language.—O great God, the contempt we have made of thy staff, when thy clemency caused us to repose in green pastures, renders essential the rod of thy correction. Now is the crisis to suffer, or to perish. Strike, strike, Lord, provided we may be converted and saved. Speak with thy lightning; speak with thy thunder; speak with thy flaming bolts; but teach us to hear thy voice. *Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear.* And you, my brethren, *Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it. Amen.*

This, in substance, is,

I. To feel the strokes of God's hand :

II. To trace their consequences and connections :

III. To examine their origin and cause :

IV. To discover their resources and remedies.

This is to comply with the exhortation of Micah; this is to shelter ourselves from the charge of Jeremiah; this is especially to comply with the design of this solemnity. If we feel the strokes of God's hand, we shall shake off a certain state of indolence in which

many of us are found, and be clothed with the sentiments of humiliation : this is the *first* duty of the day. If we trace the consequences and connection of our calamities, we shall be inspired with the sentiments of terror and awe : this is the *second* disposition of a fast. If we examine their origin and cause, we shall be softened with sentiments of sorrow and repentance : this is the *third* disposition of a fast. If we, lastly, discover the remedies and resources, we shall be animated with the sentiments of genuine conversion : this is the *fourth* disposition of a fast. It is by reflections of this kind that I shall close these solemn duties, and make, if I may so speak, the application of those energetic words addressed to us by the servants of God on this day.

I. *Hear ye the rod* : feel the strokes with which you are already struck. There is one disposition of the mind which may be confounded with that we would wish to inspire. The sensation of these calamities may be so strong in a soul, as to overspread the mind with a total gloom and dejection. The soul of which we speak, feasts on its grief, and is wholly absorbed in the causes of its anguish. The privation of a good once enjoyed, renders it perfectly indifferent as to the blessings which still remain. The strokes which God has inflicted, appear to it the greatest of all calamities. Neither the beauties of nature, nor the pleasures of conversation, nor the motives of piety, have charms adequate to extinguish, nor even to assuage anguish which corrodes and consumes the soul. Hence those torrents of tears ; hence those deep and frequent sighs ; hence those loud and bitter com-

plaints ; hence those augurs of disaster and ruin. To feel afflictions in this way, is a weakness of mind which disqualifies us for supporting the slightest reverses of life. It is an ingratitude which obstructs our acknowledging the favours of that God, who, "in the midst of wrath, remembers mercy," and who never so far afflicts his creature, as to deprive him of reviving hope.

The insensibility we wish to prevent, is a vice directly opposed to that we have just decried. It is the insensibility of the man of pleasure. He must enjoy life : but nothing is more strikingly calculated to subvert the principle, and derange the system of present pleasure than this idea. The sovereign of the universe is irritated against us : his sword is suspended over our heads : his avenging arm is making awful havock around us : thousands have already fallen beneath his strokes on our right, and ten thousand on our left. Psal. xci. 7. We banish these ideas : but this being difficult to do, we repose behind entrenchments which they cannot penetrate ; and by augmenting the confusion of the passions, we endeavour to divert our attention from the calamities of the public.

The insensibility we wish to prevent, is a philosophical apathy. We brave adversity. We fortify ourselves with a stoical firmness. We account it wise to be unmoved by the greatest catastrophes. We enshroud the mind in an ill-named virtue ; and we pique ourselves on the vain glory of being unmoved, though the universe were dissolved.

The insensibility we wish to prevent is that which arises from a stupid ignorance. Some men are naturally more difficult to be moved than the brutes destitute of reason. They are resolved to remain where they are, until extricated by an exterior cause; and these are the very men who resist that cause. They shut their eyes against the avenues of alarm; they harden their hearts against calamities by the mere dint of reason, or rather by the mere instinct of nature, because if seriously regarded, some efforts would be required to avert the visitation.

But whether God afflict us in love; whether he afflict us in wrath; whether he afflict us for instruction; or whether he afflict us for correction, our first duty under the rod is to acknowledge the equity of his hand.

Does he afflict us for the exercise of our resignation and our patience? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must each say, It is true, my fortune is afloat, my credit is injured, and my prospects are frustrated; but it is the great Disposer of all events who has assorted my lot; it is my lord and ruler. O God, *thy will be done, and not mine. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because it was thy doing.* Matt. xxvi. 39. Psal. xxxix. 9.

Does he afflict us in order to put our love to the proof? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must learn to say, "I think that God has made us a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most

miserable." O God! *though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.* 1 Cor. iv. 9. xv. 19. Job xiii. 15.

Does he afflict us in order to detach us from the world? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. It is requisite that this son should die, who constitutes the sole enjoyment of our life; it is requisite that we should feel the anguish of the disease to which we are exposed; it is requisite this health should fail, without which the association of every pleasure is insipid and obtrusive, that we may learn to place our happiness in the world to come, and not establish our hopes in this valley of tears.

Does he afflict us to make manifest the enormity of vice? To correspond with his design, we must acknowledge the equity of his hand. We must acknowledge the horrors of the objects our passions had painted with such beguiling tints. Amid the anguish consequent on crimes, we must put the question to ourselves St. Paul put to the Romans; *What fruits had you then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.* Sensibility of the strokes God has already inflicted by his rod, was the first disposition of mind, which Micah, in his day, required of the Jews.

If you ask what those strokes were with which God afflicted the Israelites, it is not easy to give you satisfaction. The correctest researches of chronology do not mark the exact period in which Micah delivered the words of my text. We know only that he exercised his ministry under the reign of three kings, under Jotham, under Ahaz, under Hezekiah; and that

under each of these kings, God afflicted the kingdom of Judah, and of Israel with severe strokes.—And the solemnities of the present day excuse me from the laws, binding to a commentator, of illustrating a text in all the original views of the author. We must neither divert our feelings, nor divide our attention, between the calamities God sent on Judah and Israel, and those he has sent on us. We exhort you to sensibility concerning the visitations of Providence : and four ministers of the God of vengeance, address you with a voice more loud and pathetic than mine. These ministers are the tempest ; the murrain ; the plague ; and the spirit of indifference.

The first minister of the God of vengeance is the tempest. Estimate, if you are able, the devastations made by the tempests during the last ten years ; the districts they have ravaged ; the vessels they have wrecked ; the inundations they have occasioned ; and the towns they have laid under water. Would you not have thought that the earth was about to return to its original chaos ; that the sea had broke the bounds prescribed by the Creator ; and that the earth had ceased to be *balanced on its poles* ? Job xxxviii. 6.

The second minister of the God of vengeance, exciting alarm, is the mortality of our cattle. The mere approaches of this calamity filled us with terror, and became the sole subjects of conversation. Your sovereign appointed public prayers, and solemn humiliations to avert the scourge. Your preachers made extraordinary efforts, entreating you to enter into the design of God, who had sent it upon us. But to what may not men become accustomed ? We

sometimes wonder how they can enjoy the least repose in places where the earth often quakes ; where its dreadful jaws open ; where a black volume of smoke obscures the light of heaven ; where mountains of flame, from subterraneous caverns, rise to the highest clouds, and descend in liquid rivers on the houses, and on whole towns. Let us seek in ourselves the solution of a difficulty suggested by the insensibility of others. We are capable of accustoming ourselves to any thing. Were we to judge of the impressions future judgments would produce by the effects produced by those God has already sent, we should harden our hearts against both pestilence and famine : we should attend concerts, though the streets were thronged with the groans of dying men, and form parties of pleasure in presence of the destroying angel sent to exterminate the nation.

The third minister of God's vengeance, exciting us to sensibility, is the plague, which ravages a neighbouring kingdom. Your provinces do not subsist of themselves ; they have an intimate relation with all the states of Europe. And such is the nature of their constitution, that they not only suffer from the prosperity, but also from the adversity of their enemies. But what do I say? from their enemies! The people whom God has now visited with this awful scourge, are not our enemies : they are our allies ; they are our brethren ; they are our fellow-countrymen. The people on whom God has laid his hand in so terrible a manner, is the kingdom, which gave some of us birth, and which still contains persons to whom we are united by the tenderest ties. Every stroke this

kingdom receives, recoils on ourselves, and it cannot fall without involving us in its ruins.

The fourth minister of the God of vengeance, which calls for consideration, is the spirit of slumber. It would seem that God had designated our own hands to be our own ruin. It would seem that he had given a demon from the depths of hell a commission like that granted to the spirit mentioned in the first book of Kings. *The Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And there came forth a spirit, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said, yea, thou shalt persuade him, and prevail.* xxii. 20, 22. Yea, a spirit who has sworn the overthrow of our families, the ruin of our arts and manufactures, the destruction of our commerce, and the loss of our credit, this spirit has fascinated us all. He seizes the great and the small, the court, and the city. But I abridge my intentions on this subject; I yield to the reasons which forbid my extending to farther detail. To feel the strokes of God's hand, is therefore the first duty he requires. *Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

II. This rod requires us, *secondly*, to trace the causes and the origin of our calamities. Micah wished the Jews to comprehend that the miseries under which they groaned were a consequence of their crimes. We would wish you to form the same judgment of yours. But here the subject has its difficulties. Under a pretence of entering into the spirit of humiliation, there is danger of our falling into the puerilities of superstition. Few subjects are more fertile in er-

roneous conclusions than this subject. Temporal prosperity and adversity are very equivocal marks of the favour and displeasure of God. If some men are so wilfully blind as not to see that a particular dispensation of Providence is productive of certain punishments, there are others who fancy that they every where see a particular providence. The commonest occurrences, however closely connected with second causes, seem to them the result of an extraordinary counsel in him who holds the helm of the world. The slightest adversity, they regard as a stroke of his angry arm. Generally speaking, we should always recollect that the conduct of Providence is involved in clouds and darkness. We should form the criterion of our guilt or innocence, not by the exterior prosperity or adversity sent of God, but by our obedience or disobedience to his word : and we should habituate ourselves to see without surprise in this world, the wicked prosperous, and the righteous afflicted.

But notwithstanding the obscurity in which it has pleased God to involve his ways, there are cases, in which we cannot without impiety refuse assent, that adversity is occasioned by crimes. It is peculiarly apparent in two cases : *first*, when there is a natural connection between the crimes we have committed, and the calamities we suffer : the *second* is, when great calamities follow the perpetration of enormous crimes. Let us explain.

First, we cannot doubt that punishment is a consequence of crime, when there is an essential tie between the crime we have committed, and the calamity we suffer. One of the finest proofs of the holi-

ness of the God, to whom all creatures owe their preservation and being, is derived from the harmony he has placed between happiness and virtue. Trace this harmony in the circles of society, and in private life. 1. In private life. An enlightened mind can find no solid happiness but in the exercise of virtue. The passions may indeed excite a transient satisfaction; but a state of violence cannot be permanent. Each passion offers violence to some faculty of the soul, to which that faculty is abandoned. The happiness procured by the passions, is founded on mistake: the moment the soul recovers recollection, the happiness occasioned by error is dissipated. The happiness ascribed to avarice is grounded on the same mistake: it is couched in this principle, that gold and silver are the true riches: and the moment that the soul which established its happiness on a false principle becomes enlightened; the moment it investigates the numerous cases in which riches are not only useless, but destructive, it loses the happiness founded on mistake. We may reason in the same manner concerning the other passions. There is then in the soul of every man a harmony between happiness and virtue, misery and crime.

2. This harmony is equally found in the great circles of national society. I am not wholly unacquainted with the maxims which a false polity would advance on the subject. I am not ignorant of what Hobbes, Machiavel, and their disciples, ancient and modern, have said. And I frankly confess that I feel the force of the difficulties opposed to this general theses, of the happiness of nations being inseparable

from their innocence. But notwithstanding all the difficulties of which the theses is susceptible, I think myself able to maintain, and prove, that all public happiness founded on crime, is like the happiness of the individual just described. It is a state of violence, which cannot be permanent. From the source of those same vices, on which a criminal polity would found the happiness of the state, proceeds a long train of calamities which are evidently productive of total ruin.

Without encumbering ourselves with these discussions, without reviving this controversy, the better to keep in view the grand objects of the day, I affirm, that the calamities under which we groan are the necessary consequence of our crimes: and in such sort, that though there were no God of vengeance who holds the helm of the universe; no judge ready to execute justice, our degeneracy into every vice would suffice to involve our country in misery.

Under what evils do we now groan? Is it because our name is less respected? Is it because our credit is less established? Is it because our armies are less formidable? Is it because our union is less compact? But whence do these calamities proceed? Are they the mysteries of a *God, who hideth himself*? Are they strokes inflicted by an invisible hand? Or are they the natural effects and consequences of our crimes? Does it require miracles to produce them? If so, miracles would be requisite to prevent them. Men of genius, profound statesmen, you who send us to our books, and to the dust of our closets, when we talk of providence, and of plagues inflicted by an avenging

God, I summons your speculation and superior information to this one point ; *our destruction is of ourselves* : and the Judge of the universe has no need to punish our crimes but by our crimes.

I have said in the *second* place, that great calamities following great crimes, ought to be regarded as their punishment. And shall we refuse in this day of humiliation, ascribing to this awful cause the strokes with which we are afflicted? Cast your eyes for a moment on the nature of the crimes which reproach these provinces. All nations have their vices, and vices in which they resemble one another; all nations afford the justest cause for reprehension. Read the various books of morality; consult the sermons delivered among the most enlightened nations, and you will every where see that the great are proud; the poor impatient, the aged covetous, the young voluptuous, and so of every class. Meanwhile all sorts of vice have not a resemblance. Weigh a passage in Deuteronomy in which you will find a distinction between sin and sin, and a distinction worthy of peculiar regard. *Their spot*, says Moses, *is not the spot of the children of God.* xxxii. 5. There is then a spot of the children of God, and a spot which is not of his children. There are infirmities found among a people dear to God, and there are defects incompatible with his people. To receive the sacrament of the eucharist, but not with all the veneration required by so august a mystery; to celebrate days of humiliation, but not with all the deep repentance we should bring to these solemnities; these are great spots; but they are spots common to the children of God. To fall, however,

as the ancient Israelites, whose eyes were still struck with the miracles wrought on their leaving Egypt ; *to change the glory of God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass ; and to raise a profane shout. These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,* is a spot, but not the *spot of the children of God.* Exod. xxxii. 8.

Now, my brethren, can you cast your eyes on these provinces, without recognizing a number of sins of the latter class ? In some families, the education of youth is so astonishingly neglected that we see parents training up their children for the first offices of the republic, for offices which decide the honour, the fortune, and the lives of men, without so much as initiating them into the sciences, essentially requisite for the adequate discharge of professional duties. Profaneness is so prevalent, and indifference for the homage we pay to God is so awful, that we see people passing whole years without ever entering our sanctuaries ; mechanics publicly follow their labour on the Sabbath ; women in the polished circles of society choose the hour of our worship to pay their visits, and expose card-tables, if I may so speak, in the sight of our altars. Infidelity is so rife, that the presses groan with works to immortalise blasphemies against the being of God, and to sap the foundation of public morals. How easy would it be to swell this catalogue ! My brethren, on a subject so awful, let us not deceive ourselves ; “ These are not the spots of the children of God ;” they are the very crimes which bring upon nations the malediction of

God, and which soon or late occasion their total overthrow.

III. To feel the calamities under which we now groan, and to trace their origin is not enough : we must anticipate the future : the third sort of regard required for the strokes with which we are struck, is to develope their consequences and connections. Some calamities are less formidable in themselves than in the awful consequences they produce. There are *deeps which call unto deeps at the noise of God's water-spouts* ; Psalm xlii. 8. and to sum up all in one word, there are calamities whose distinguished characteristic is to be the fore-runners of calamities still more terrible. Such was the character of those inflicted on the kingdom of Judah and of Israel in Micha's time, as is awfully proved by the ruin of both.

Is this the idea we should form of the plagues with which we are struck ? Never was question more serious and interesting, my brethren ; and, at the same time, never was question more delicate and difficult. Do not fear, that forgetting the limits with which it has pleased God to circumscribe our knowledge, we are about with a profane hand to raise the vail which conceals futurity, and pronounce with temerity awful predictions on the destiny of these provinces. We shall merely mark the signs by which the prophet would have the ancient people to understand, that the plagues God had already inflicted were but harbingers of those about to follow. Supply by your own reflections, the cautious silence we shall observe on this subject : examine attentively what connection may exist between the calamities we now suffer, and

those which made the ancient Jews expect a total overthrow. And those signs of an impending calamity are less alarming in themselves, than the dispositions of the people on whom they are inflicted.

1. One calamity is the fore-runner of a greater, when the people whom God afflicts have recourse to second causes instead of the first cause; and when they seek the redress of their calamities in political resources, and not in religion. This is the portrait which Isaiah gives of Sennacherib's first expedition against Judea. The prophet recites it in the twenty-second chapter of his book. *He discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the house of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls, for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither have ye had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to plucking of the hair, and to girding with sackcloth, 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.*

It belongs to you to make the application of this passage; it belongs to you to enquire what resem-

blance our present conduct may have to that of the Jews in a similar situation. Whether it is to the first cause you have had recourse for the removal of your calamities, or whether you have solely adhered to second causes? whether it is the maxims of religion you have consulted, or the maxims of policy? whether it is a barrier you have pretended to put to the war, to the pestilence, and famine; or whether you have put one to injustice, to hatred, to fornication, and to fraud, the causes of those calamities?

2. One calamity is the forerunner of greater calamities, when instead of humiliation on the reception of the warnings God sends by his servants, we turn those warnings into contempt. By this sign, the author of the second Book of Chronicles wished the Jews to understand that their impiety had attained its height. *The Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people: but they mocked the messengers of God; they despised his word, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, so that there was no remedy.* xxxvi. 15, 16.

My brethren, it is your duty to enquire how far you are affected by this doctrine. It is your duty to examine whether your present desolating calamities are characterised as harbingers of greater evils. Do you discover a teachable disposition towards the messengers of God who would open your eyes to see the effects of his indignation; or, do you revolt against their word? Do you love to be reprov'd and correct'd, or do you resemble the incorrigible man of whom

the prophet says, *thou hatest instruction*. Psalm l. 17. What a humiliating subject, my brethren, what an awful touchstone of our misery!

3. One calamity is the forerunner of greater calamities, when the anguish it excites proceeds more from the loss of our perishable riches than from sentiments of the insults offered to God. This sign, the prophet Hosea gave to the inhabitants of Samaria. *Though I have redeemed them*, says he, speaking for God, *they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds. It was for corn and wine, that they cut themselves when they assembled together*; or as might be better rendered, *when they assembled for devotion*.* Examine again, or rather censure a subject which presents the mind with a question less for inquiry than for the admission of a fact already decided. We would interrupt our business; we would suspend our pleasures; we would shed our tears; we would celebrate fasts on the recollection of our crimes, provided we could be assured that God would remit the punishment? *We cut ourselves; we assemble to-day for wine and wheat*; because commerce is obstructed; because our repose is interrupted in defiance of precaution; because the thunderbolts fallen on the heads of our neighbours threaten us, and our friends, our brethren, and our children; or is it because that those paternal regards of God are obscured, which should constitute our

* The original word is so translated in the French bibles, Psalm lvi. 7. lix. 4. The French version, in regard to the former phrase, *they cut themselves*, seems to harmonize better with the scope of the passage than the English, *They rebel*, because it follows, *Though I have bound and strengthened their arms*, meaning their wounded arms.

highest felicity, and all our joys? I say again, this is a subject already decided rather than a question of investigation.

4. Not wishful to multiply remarks, but to comprise the whole in a single thought, one plague is the forerunner of greater plagues when it fails in producing the reformation of those manners it was sent to chastise. Weigh those awful words in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus. "If ye will not hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary also unto you in fury; and I, even I will chastise you seven times for your sins." The force of these words depends on those which precede. We there find a gradation of calamities whose highest period extends to the total destruction of the people against whom they were denounced. *If you will not hearken*, Moses had said in behalf of God, verse 14. *I will even appoint over you terror, the consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.* Immediately he adds, *If ye will not yet for all this hearken*, and these words occur at the eighteenth verse, *If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then will I punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass. And if ye walk contrary to me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. And I will send the wild beasts against you, and they shall rob you of*

your children, and make you few in number, and your high ways shall be desolate. Then he denounces a new train of calamities, after which the words I have cited immediately follow. If ye will not be reformed by all these things, but will walk contrary unto me. Then will I also walk contrary unto you in fury, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcase upon the carcases of your idols. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuary unto desolation.

Make, my brethren, the most serious reflections on these words of God to his ancient people. If in the strictest sense, they are inapplicable to you, it is because your present calamities require less than sevenfold more to effectuate your total extermination. Do I exaggerate the subject? Are your sea-banks able to sustain sevenfold greater shocks than they have already received? Are your cattle able to sustain sevenfold heavier strokes? Is your commerce able to sustain a sevenfold greater depression? Is there then so wide a distance between your present calamities, and your total ruin?

IV. Let us proceed to other subjects. Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have endeavoured to open your eyes, and fix them stedfastly on dark and afflictive objects; we have solicited your attention but for bitter reproaches, and terrific menaces. We have sought the way to your hearts, but to excite terror and alarm. The close of this day's devotion shall be more conformable to prayers we offer for you, to the goodness

of the God we worship, and to the character of our ministry. We will no longer open your eyes but to fix them on objects of consolation; we will no longer solicit your attention to hear predictions of misery: we will seek access to your hearts solely to augment your peace and consolation. *Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it:* and amid the whole of your calamities, know what are your resources, and what are your hopes. This is the *fourth* part.

One of the most notorious crimes of which a nation can be guilty when heaven calls them to repentance, is that charged on the Jews in Jeremiah's time. The circumstance is remarkable. It occurs in the sixteenth chapter of this prophet's revelations. His mission was on the eve of their approaching ruin: its object was to save by fear the men whom a long course of prosperity could not instruct. He discharged those high duties with the firmness and magnanimity which the grandeur of God was calculated to inspire, whose minister he had the glory to be. *Because your fathers have forsaken me, he said in the name of the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped before them; and because ye have done worse than your fathers, therefore will I cast you out of this land, into a land which neither ye, nor your fathers know.* v. 11, 12, 13.

Lest the apprehension of ruin without resource should drive them to despair, God made to Jeremiah a farther communication; he honoured him with a vision saying, *Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.* The prophet obeyed; he went to the potter's house;

the workman was busy at the wheel. He formed a vase, which was marred in his hand ; he made it anew, and gave it a form according to his pleasure. This emblem God explained to the prophet, saying, Go, and speak these words to the house of Israel. *O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter ? saith the Lord, Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it : if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways.* What effects might not this mission have produced ? But the incorrigible depravity of the people was proof against this additional overture of grace ; those abominable men, deriving arguments of obduracy even from the desperate situation of their nation, replied to the prophet, *There is no hope, we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* xviii. 1—12.

Revolted at those awful dispositions, we are, my brethren, invested with the same commission as Jeremiah. God has said to us as well as to this prophet, *Go, down to the potter's house ; see him marr, and form his vessels anew, giving them a form according to his pleasure. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation against whom I have*

pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. The foundation of these hopes is stronger than all that we can ask.

In particular, we found our hope on the love which God has uniformly cherished for this republic. Has not God established it by a series of miracles, and has he not preserved by a series of miracles still greater? Has he not all times surrounded it as with a wall of fire, and been himself the buckler on the most pressing occasions? Has he not inverted the laws of nature, and of the elements for its defence?

We found our hopes on the abundant mercies with which God has loaded us during the time of visitation. With the one hand he abases, with the other he exalts. With the one hand he brings the pestilence to our gates, and with the other he obstructs it from entering; from desolating our cities, and attacking our persons.

We found our hope on the resources he has still left the state to recover, and to re-establish itself in all the extent of its glory, and prosperity.—We found our hopes also on the solemnities of this day; on the abundance of tears which will be shed in the presence of God, on the many prayers which will be offered to heaven, and on the numerous purposes of conversion, which will be formed.—Frustrate not these hopes by a superficial devotion, by forgetfulness of promises, and violation of vows. Your happiness is in your own hands. *Return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your doings.* Here is the law, here is the condition. This law is general; this condition concerns you all.

Yes, this law concerns you ; this condition is imposed on all. High and mighty lords : it is required of you this day to lay a new foundation for the security of this people : Return ye then, my lords, from your evil ways, and be converted. In vain shall you have proclaimed a fast, if you set not the fairest example of decency in its celebration. In vain shall you have commanded pastors to preach against the corruption which predominates among us, if you lend not an arm to suppress it ; if you suffer profaneness and infidelity to lift their head with impunity ; if you suffer the laws of chastity to be violated in the face of the sun, and houses of infamy to be open as those of temples consecrated to the glory of God ; if you suffer public routs and sports to subsist in all their fury ; if you abandon the reins to mammon, to establish its maxims, and communicate its poison, if possible, to all our towns and provinces. Have compassion then on the calamities of our country. Be impressed with its sighs. Place her under the immediate protection of Almighty God. May he deign in clothing you with his grandeur and power, to clothe you also with holiness and equity. May he deign to give you the spirit of Esdras, of Nehemiah, of Josiah, of Hezekiah, princes distinguished in the sacred scriptures, who brought their nation back to reformation and piety, and thereby to happiness and glory.

This law concerns you, this condition, pastors, is imposed on you. "Return from your evil ways, and amend." The ministry with which God has invested you ; this ministry at all times weighty and difficult, is particularly so in this age of contradiction and

universal depravity. You are appointed to censure the vices of the people, and every one is enraged against you, the moment you cast an eye on his particular crimes. They will treat you as enemies when you tell them the truth. No matter. Force your hearers to respect you. Testify to them by your generosity and disinterestedness, that you are ready to make every sacrifice to sustain the glory of your ministry. Give them as many examples as precepts ; and then ascend the pulpit with a mind confident and firm. You have the same right over the people, as the Isaiahs, as the Micahs, and as the Jeremiahs, had over Israel and Judah. You can say like them, The Lord hath spoken. And may the God who has invested you with the sacred office you fill, may he grant you the talents requisite for its faithful discharge ; may he assist you by the most intimate communications in the closet, to bear the crosses laid upon you by the public ; may he deign to accept the purity of your intentions, to have compassion on your weakness, and enable you to redouble your efforts by the blessings he shall shed on your work !

This law, concerns you, this condition, is imposed on you, rebellious men : on you sinners, who have excelled in the most awful courses of vice, in fighting, in hatred, in brutality, in profaneness, in insolence, and every other crime which confounds the human kind with demons. It is you, chiefly you who have uplifted the arm of vengeance which pursues us ; it is you who have dug those pits which are under our feet. But, *return from your evil ways, and amend.* Let your reformation have some proportion to your

profligacy, and your repentance to your crimes. And may the God who can of these stones raise up children unto Abraham, and make rush from the hardest rocks fountains of living water, may he deign to display on you the invincible power he has over the heart ; may he penetrate the abyss of your souls, and strike them in places the most tender and susceptible of anguish, of shame, and of repentance.

This law, concerns you, it is imposed on you, believers ; and believers even of the first class. How pure soever your virtues may be, they are still mixed with imperfections : how firm soever the fabric of your piety may be, it still requires support ; and how sincere soever your endeavours may be, they must still be repeated. It is on you, that the salvation of the nation devolves. It is your piety, your fervour, and your zeal, which must for the future sustain this tottering republic. May there be ten righteous persons in our Sodom, lest it be consumed by fire from heaven ; may there still be a Moses, who knows how to stay the arm of God, and to say, O Lord, pardon this people ; *and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.* Exod. xxxii. 32. O how glorious to magnify this mission ! O how glorious to be in a republic, if I may venture so to speak, the stay of the state, and the cause of its existence ! May he who has chosen to those exalted duties, assist you to discharge them with fidelity. May he purify all your yet remaining defects and imperfections ! May he make you the salt of the earth, and enable you to shine as lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, and cause you to find in the delights which

piety shall afford, the first rewards of all the advantages it procures.

This law, concerns us all, this condition is imposed on each. *Let us return from our evil ways, and amend.* Why would we delay conversion? Why would we delay disarming the wrath of heaven till overwhelmed with its vengeance? Why should we delay our supplications till God shall *cover himself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass through?* Lam. iii. 44. Why should we delay till wholly enveloped in the threatened calamities? To say all in a single word, why should we delay till Holland becomes, as Provence, and the Hague as Marseilles?

Ah! what word is that we have just pronounced? what horrors does it not oblige us to retrace? O consuming fire, God of vengeance, animate our souls; and may the piercing and awful ideas of thy judgments induce us to avert the blow. O dreadful times, where death enters our houses with the air we breathe, and with the food we eat; every one shuns himself as death; the father fears the breath of his son, and the son the breath of his father. O dreadful times, already come on so many victims, and perhaps ready to come on us, exhibit the calamities in all their horrors! I look on myself as stretched on my dying bed, and abandoned by my dearest friends; I look on my children as entreating me to help them; I am terrified by their approach, I am appalled by their embraces, and receive the contagion by their last adieu!

My brethren, the throne of mercy is yet accessible. The devotion of so many saints, who have besieged

it to-day, have opened it to us. Let us approach it with broken and contrite hearts. Let us approach it with promises of conversion, and oaths of fidelity. Let us approach it with ardent prayers for the salvation of this republic ; for the prosperity of the church ; for the peace of Europe ; and for the salvation of those victims, which the Divine justice is ready to sacrifice. Let us prostrate before God as David at the sight of the destroying angel, and may we like that prince succeed in staying the awful executions. May this year, hitherto filled with alarms, with horror, and carnage, close with hope and consolation. May this day, which has been a day of fasting, humiliation, and repentance, produce the solemnities of joy and thanksgiving. Amen. God grant us the grace. To whom be honour, and glory for ever.



SERMON IV.

Difficulties of the Christian Religion.



I COR. xiii. 9.

We know in part.

THE systems of Pagan theology, have in general affected an air of mystery : they have evaded the lustre of fair investigation ; and favoured, by I know not what charm of sacred obscurity, they have given full effect to error and immorality. On this subject, the enemies of Christianity have had the presumption to confound it with the Pagan superstition. They have said, that it has, according to our own confession, impenetrable mysteries ; that it is wishful to evade investigation and research ; and that they have but to remove the veil to discover its weakness. It is our design to expose the injustice of this reproach by investigating all the cases, in which mysteries can excite any doubts concerning the doctrines they contain, and to demonstrate on this head, as on every other, that the religion of Jesus Christ is superior to every other religion in the world. It is solely in this point of view, that we proceed to contemplate this avowal of our apostle, and in all its principal bearings. *We know in part.*

There are chiefly four cases in which mysteries render a religion doubtful.

I. When they so conceal the origin of a religion that we cannot examine whether it has proceeded from the spirit of error, or from the spirit of truth. For example, Mahomet, secluded himself from his followers ; he affected to hold conversations with God, concealed from the public, and he has refused to adduce the evidence. In this view, there is nothing mysterious in the Christian religion : it permits you to trace its origin, and to weigh the authenticity of its proofs.

II. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when they imply an absurdity. For example, the Roman Catholic religion establishes one doctrine which avowedly revolts common sense, and annihilates every motive of credibility. But the mysteries of our faith have nothing which originated in the human mind, and which our frail reason can in equity reject.

III. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when they tend to promote a practice contrary to virtue, and to purity of morals. For example, the Pagan theology had mysteries of iniquity ; and under the sanction of religious concealment, it favoured practices the most enormous, and the foulest of vices. But the mysteries of the gospel, are *mysteries of godliness*. 1 Tim. iii. 15.

IV. In a word, mysteries should render a religion doubtful when we find a system less encumbered with difficulties than the one we attack : but when the difficulties of the system we propose surpass those of

our religion, then it ought still to have the preference. For example, the system of infidelity and of atheism, is exempt from the difficulties of Christianity; but, its whole mass is a fertile source of incomprehensible absurdities, and of difficulties which cannot be resolved.

The whole of these propositions, my brethren, claim the most careful investigation. If heaven shall succeed our efforts, we shall have a new class of arguments for the support of our faith. We shall have a new motive to console ourselves within the limits God has prescribed to our knowledge, and await with ardour and patience, the happy period, till *that which is perfect shall come*; till *that which is in part shall be done away*; till *we shall behold the Lord with open face, and be changed into glory by his Spirit*. So be it. Amen.

I. Mysteries should render a religion doubtful when we cannot examine whether that religion proceed from the spirit of truth, or from the spirit of error. Mankind neither can, nor ought to receive any religion as divine, unless it bear the marks of divine authority, and produce its documents of credibility.

For example, if you should require Mahomet to produce the proofs of his mission, he would say* that it had a peculiar character, and a singular sort of privilege; that till his call, all the sent of God were obliged to prove the divinity of their mission; that the prophets gave signs by which they might be known;

* See the Alcoran, chap. on the lin. of Joach. chap. on gratifications. chap. on Jonah. chap. on thunder. chap. on the nocturnal journey: chap. on the Creator. chap. on the spider.

that Jesus Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead : but on his part, he had received authority to consign over to eternal torments every one who shall dare to doubt the truth of his doctrine ; and anticipating the punishment, he put every one to the sword who presumed to question the divine authority of his religion. But if you require of Jesus Christ the proofs of his mission, he will give you evidence the most obvious and satisfactory. *Though ye believe not me, believe the works. If I had not come and spoken unto them ; if I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. But now are they without excuse. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.* John x. 25, 38. xv. 22, 24.

If you ask the followers of Mahomet, how they know that the Alcoran was really transmitted by the prophet, they will confess that he knew neither how to read nor write ; and that the name of prophet is often assumed by men ignorant of letters : but they will add, that he conversed for twenty years with the angel Gabriel ; that this celestial spirit revealed to him from time to time certain passages of the Alcoran ; that Mahomet dictated to his disciples* the subjects of his revelation ; that they carefully collected whatever dropped from his lips ; and that the collection so made constitutes the subject of the Alcoran. But, if you wish to penetrate farther, and to trace the book to its source, you will find that after the death of Mahomet, his pretended revelations, were preserved merely on fugitive scrolls, or in the recollection of

* See Maraccio on the Alcoran, page 36.

those who had heard him; that his successor, wishful to associate the scattered limbs in one body, made the collection more with presumption than precision; that this collection was a subject of long debate among the Mehometsans, some contending that the prince had omitted many revelations of the prophets; and others, that he had adopted some which were doubtful and spurious. You will find, that those disputes were appeased solely by the authority of the prince under whom they originated, and by the permanent injunctions of those who succeeded him on the throne.—Consequently, it is very doubtful, whether the impostures of Mahomet really proceeded from himself, or were imputed to him by his followers.

Some even of Mahomet's disciples affirm, that of the three parts which compose the Alcoran, but one is the genuine production of the prophet. Hence, when you show them any absurdity in the book, they will reply, that it ought to be classed among the two spurious parts which they reject.*

But if you ask us how we know that the books, containing the fundamentals of our faith, were composed by the holy men to whom they are ascribed, we readily offer to submit them to the severest tests of criticism. Let them produce a book whose antiquity is the least disputed, and the most unanimously acknowledged to be the production of the author whose name it bears; let them adduce the evidences of its authenticity; and we will adduce the same evidences in favour of the canon of our gospels.

* See Joseph of St. Maria on the expedition to the East Indies.

If you ask the followers of Mahomet to show you in the Alcoran, some characteristics of its divine authenticity, they will extol it to the skies, and tell you “that it is an uncreated work ; the truth by way of excellence ; the miracle of miracles ; superior to the resurrection of the dead ; promised by Moses and the apostles ; intelligible to God alone ; worthy to be received of all intelligent beings, and constituted their rule of conduct.”* But when you come to investigate the work of which they have spoken in such extravagant terms, you will find a book destitute of instruction, except what its author has borrowed from the books of the Old and New Testament ; concerning the unity of God ; the reality of a future judgment ; the certainty of the life to come ; and those various maxims, that *we must not give alms in ostentation ; that God loveth a cheerful giver that all things are possible to him ; and that he searches the heart.* You will find a book in many places directly opposed to the maxims of the sacred authors, even when it extols the Deity, as in the laws it prescribes respecting divorce ; in the permission of a new marriage granted to repudiated women ; in the liberty of having as many wives as we please, a liberty of which Mahomet availed himself ; in what he recounts of Pharaoh’s conversion : of Jesus Christ’s speaking in the cradle with the same facility as a man of thirty or of fifty years of age ; in what he advances concerning a middle place between heaven and hell, where those must dwell who have done neither good nor evil, and those whose good and evil are equal ; in

* Maraccio on the Alcoran, chap. vi.

what he says concerning Jesus Christ's escape from crucifixion, having so far deceived the Jews that they crucified another in his place, who very much resembled him.*

You will find a book replete with fabulous tales. Witness what he says of God having raised a mountain, which covered the Israelites with its shadow.† Witness the dialogue he imagined between God and Abraham. Witness the puerile proofs he adduces of the innocence of Joseph. Witness the history of the seven sleepers. Witness what he asserts that all the devils were subject to Solomon.‡ Witness the ridiculous fable of the ant that commanded an army of ants, and addressed them with an articulate voice. Witness the notions he gives us of paradise and hell.|| —Whereas, if you require of Christians the characteristic authorities of their books, they will adduce sublime doctrines, a pure morality, prophecies punctually accomplished, and at the predicted period, a scheme of happiness the most noble and the most assortable with the wants of man that ever entered the mind of the most celebrated philosophers.

If you ask the sectarians of Mahomet what signs God has wrought in favour of their religion, they will tell you, that his mother bore him without pain; that the idols fell at his birth; that the sacred fires of Persia were extinguished; that the waters in Lake Sava diminished; that the palace of Cosroes fell to the ground.§ They will tell you, that Mahomet himself performed a great number of miracles, that he

* Chap. on Women. † Preface, page 14. ‡ Chap. on truth. || Chap. of orders. § See Maraccio's Life of Mahomet, page 10.

made water proceed from his fingers ; that he cut the moon, and made a part of it fall into his lap.* They will tell you, that the stones, and the trees saluted him, saying, *peace, peace, be to the ambassador of God.*† They will tell you, that the sheep obeyed his voice ; that an angel having assumed the figure of a dragon, became his guardian. They will tell you, that two men of enormous stature grasped him in their hands, and placed him on the top of a high mountain, opened his bowels, and took from his heart a black drop, the only evil satan possessed in his heart : having afterwards restored him to his place, they affixed their seal to the fact.‡ Fabulous tales, adduced without proofs, and deservedly rejected by the more enlightened followers of Mahomet.

But, if you require of the Christians miracles in favour of their religion, they will produce them without number. Miracles wrought in the most public places, and in presence of the people ; miracles the power of which was communicated to many of those who embraced Christianity ; miracles admitted by Zosimen, by Porphyry, by Julian, and by the greatest enemies of the gospel ; miracles which demonstrate to us the truth by every test of which remote facts are susceptible ; miracles sealed by the blood of innumerable martyrs, and rendered in some sort still visible to us by the conversion of the Pagan world, and by the progress of the gospel, and which can find no parallel in the religion of Mahomet, propagated with the sword, as is confessed by his followers, who

* Simon's Hist. Crit. of the Faith of the Nations of the Levant. † Ma-
raccio, preface page 14 col. 2.

‡ Ibid. page 13.

say, that he fought sixty battles, and called himself *the military prophet*. Whereas Christianity was established by the prodigies of the Spirit, and by force of argument. The mysteries of the gospel are not therefore in the first class, which render a religion suspected. They do not conceal its origin. This is what we proposed to prove.

II. Mysteries should expose a religion to suspicion, when they imply an absurdity. Yes, and if Christianity notwithstanding the luminous proofs of its divine authority; notwithstanding the miracles of its founder; notwithstanding the sublimity of its doctrines; notwithstanding the sanctity of its moral code, the completion of its prophecies, the magnificence of its promises; notwithstanding the convincing facts which prove that the books containing this religion were written by men divinely inspired; notwithstanding the number and the grandeur of its miracles; notwithstanding the confession of its adversaries, and its public monuments; if it was possible, notwithstanding all this, should the Christian religion include absurdities, it ought to be rejected. Because,

Every character of the divinity here adduced, is founded on argument. Whatever is demonstrated to a due degree of evidence ought to be admitted without dispute. The proofs of the divine authority of religion are demonstrated to that degree; therefore the Christian religion ought to be received without dispute. But were it possible that a contradiction should exist; were it possible that a proposition, appearing to us evidently false, should be true, evidence would no longer then be the character of truth;

and if evidence should no longer be the character of truth, you would have no farther marks by which you could know that a religion is divine. Consequently, you could not be assured, that the gospel is divine. To me, nothing is more true than this proposition, *a whole is greater than a part*. I would reject a religion how true soever it might appear, if it contradicted this fact; because, how evident soever the proofs might be alleged in favour of its divinity, they could never be more evident than the rejected proposition, that *a whole is greater than a part*. Our proposition is therefore confirmed, that mysteries ought to render a religion suspected when they imply absurdities. We wish you to judge of the Christian religion according to this rule.

Now if there be in our gospels a doctrine concerning which a good logician has apparent cause to exclaim, it is this; a God, who has but one Essence, and who nevertheless has three Persons; the Son, and the Holy Spirit who is God; and these three are but one. The Father, who is with the Son, does not become incarnate, when the Son becomes incarnate. The Son, who is with the Father, no longer maintains the rights of justice in Gethsemane, when the Father maintains them. The Holy Spirit, who is with the Father, and the Son proceeds from both in a manner ineffable: and the Father and the Son, who is with the Holy Spirit, do not proceed in this manner. Are not these ideas contradictory? No, my brethren.

If we should say, that God has but one essence, and that he has three essences, in the same sense that we maintain he has but one; if we should say, that

God is three in the same sense he is one, it would be a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the faith of a divine book, that God is one in the sense to which we give the confused name of *essence*. We believe that he is three in a sense to which we give the confused name of *persons*. We determine neither what is this *essence*, nor what is this *personality*. That surpasses reason, but does not revolt it.

If we should say, that God in the sense we have called *Essence*, is become incarnate, and at the same time this notion is not incarnate, we should advance a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the faith of a divine book, that what is called the *person* of the Son is the Godhead, and of which we confess that we have not a distinct idea, is united to the humanity in a manner we cannot determine, because it has not pleased God to reveal it. This surpasses reason, but does not revolt it.

If we should advance, that God, (the Spirit,) in the sense we have called *Essence*, proceed from the Father and the Son, while the Father and the Son do not proceed, we should advance a contradiction. But this is not our thesis. We believe on the credit of a divine book, that what is called the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, and of which we confess we have no distinct idea, because it has not pleased God to give it, has procession ineffable, while what is called the Father and the Son, differing from the Holy Spirit in that respect, do not proceed. This surpasses reason but does not revolt it.

We go even farther. We maintain not only that there is no contradiction in those doctrines, but that a contradiction is impossible. What is a contradiction in regard to us? It is an evident opposition between two known ideas. For instance, I have an idea of this pulpit, and of this wall. I see an essential difference between the two. Consequently, I find a contradiction in the proposition, that this wall, and this pulpit are the same being.

Such being the nature of a contradiction, I say, it is impossible that any should be found in this proposition, that there is one divine Essence in three Persons: to find a contradiction, it is requisite to have a distinct idea of what I call *essence*, and of what I call *person*: and, as I profess to be perfectly ignorant of the one, and the other, it is impossible I should find an absurdity. When therefore I affirm, that there is a divine Essence in three Persons, I do not pretend to explain either the nature of the unity, or the nature of the Trinity. I pretend to advance only that there is something in God which surpasses me, and which is the basis of this proposition; *viz.* there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit.

But though the Christian religion be fully exculpated for teaching doctrines which destroy themselves, the church of Rome cannot be justified, whatever efforts her greatest geniuses may make, in placing the doctrine of the Trinity, on a parallel with the doctrine of transubstantiation, and in defending it against us, with the same argument with which we defend the other against unbelievers.

Were we, I allow to seek the faith of the church of Rome in the writings of some individual doctors, this doctrine would be less liable to objections. Some of them have expressed themselves, on this subject, in an undetermined way; and have avoided detail. They say in general, that the body of Christ is in the sacrament of the eucharist, and that they do not presume to define the manner.

But we must seek the faith, (and it is the method which all should follow who have a controversy to maintain against those of that communion;) we must, I say, seek the faith of the church of Rome in the decisions of her general councils, and not in the works of a few individuals. And as the doctors of the council of Trent lived in a dark age, in which philosophy had not purified the errors of the schools, they had the indiscretion, not only to determine, but also to detail this doctrine; and thereby committed themselves by a manifest contradiction. Hear the third canon of the third session of the council of Trent. *If any one deny, that in the venerable sacrament of the eucharist, the body of Christ is really present in both kinds, and in such sort that the body of Christ is wholly present in every separate part of the Host, let him be anathematized.*

Can one fall into a more manifest contradiction? If you should say, that the bread is destroyed, and that the body of Christ intervenes by an effect of Divine Omnipotence, you might perhaps shelter yourselves from the reproach of absurdity; you might escape under the plea of mystery, and the limits of the human mind. But to affirm that the substance of the

bread is destroyed, while the kinds of bread, which are still but the same bread, modified in such and such a manner, subsists, is not to advance a mystery, but an absurdity. It is not to prescribe bounds to the human mind, but to revolt its convictions, and extinguish its knowledge.

If you should say, that the body of Christ, which is in heaven, passes in an instant from heaven to earth, you might perhaps shelter yourself from the reproach of absurdity, and escape under the plea of mystery, and of the limits of the human mind. But to affirm, that the body of Christ, while it is wholly in heaven, is wholly on earth, is not to advance a mystery, but to maintain a contradiction. It is to revolt all its convictions, and to extinguish all its knowledge.

If you should say, that some parts of the body of Jesus Christ are detached, and mixed with the symbols of the holy sacrament, you might perhaps avert the charge of contradiction, and escape under the plea of mystery, and the limits of the human mind. But to affirm, that the body of Christ is but one in number, and meanwhile, that it is perfect and entire in all the parts of the host which are without number, is not to advance a mystery, it is to maintain a contradiction. It is not to prescribe bounds to the human mind, but to revolt all its convictions, and to extinguish all its knowledge.

So you may indeed conclude, my brethren, from what we said at the commencement of this article. A Roman Catholic, consonant to his principles, has no right to believe the divine authority of the Christ-

ian religion, for the evidences of Christianity terminate on this principle, that evidence is the character of truth. But if the doctrine of transubstantiation be true, palpable absurdities ought to be believed by the Roman Catholic, evidence, in regard to him being no longer the character of truth. If evidence in regard to him be no longer the character of truth, proofs the most evident in favour of Christianity, can carry no conviction to him, and he is justified in not believing them.

I go farther still ; I maintain to the most zealous defender of the doctrine of transubstantiation, that properly speaking, he does not believe the doctrine of transubstantiation. He may indeed verbally assert his faith, but he can never satisfy his conscience ; he may indeed becloud his mind by a confusion of ideas, but he can never induce it to harmonize contradictory ideas : he may indeed inadvertently adhere to this proposition, *a body having but a limited circumference, is at the same time in heaven, and at the same on earth, with the same circumference.* But no man can believe this doctrine, if by believing, you mean the connecting of distinct ideas ; for no man whatever can connect together both distinct and contradictory.

III. We have said in the third place, that mysteries should render a religion suspected, when they hide certain practices contrary to virtue and good manners. This was a characteristic of Paganism. The Pagans for the most part affected a great air of mystery in their religious exercises. They said, that mystery conciliated respect for the gods. Hence,

dividing their mysteries into two classes, they had their major and their minor mysteries. But all these were a covert for impurity! Who can read without horror the mysteries of the god Apis, even as they are recorded in Pagan authors? What infamous ceremonies did they not practise in honour of Venus, when initiated into the secrets of the goddess? What mysterious precautions did they not adopt concerning the mysteries of Ceres in the city of Eleusis? No man was admitted without mature experience, and a long probation. It was so established, that those who were not initiated, could not participate of the secrets. Nero did not dare to gratify his curiosity on this head;* and the wish to know secrets allowed to be disclosed only by gradual approach, was regarded as a presumption. It was forbidden under the penalty of death to disclose those mysteries, and solely, if we may believe Theodoret, and Tertulian, to hide the abominable ceremonies, whose detail would defile the majesty of this place. And if the recital would so deeply defile, what must the practice be?

The mysteries of Christianity are infinitely distant from all those infamous practices. The gospel not only exhibits a most hallowing morality, but whatever mysteries it may teach, it requires that we should draw from their very obscurity motives to sanctity of life. If we say, that there are three persons who participate in the divine Essence, it is to make you conceive, that all which is in God, if I may so speak, is interested for our salvation, and to enkindle our efforts by the thought. If we say, that the Word was

* Life of Nero by Suetonius, chap. 54.

made flesh, and that the son of God expired on the cross, it is to make you abhor sin by the idea of what it cost him to expiate it. If we say, that grace operates in the heart, and that in the work of our salvation, grace forms the design and the execution, it is with this inference, that we should *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*. If we teach even the doctrines of God's decrees, it is *to make our calling sure*. Phil. ii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 10.

IV. We have lastly said, that mysteries should render a religion doubtful, when we find, a system, which on rejecting those mysteries, is exempt from greater difficulties than those we would attack. We make this remark as a compliment to unbelievers, and to the impure class of brilliant wits. When we have proved, reasoned, and demonstrated; when we have placed the arguments of religion in the clearest degree of evidence they can possibly attain; and when we would decide in favour of religion, they invariably insinuate, that "religion has its mysteries; that religion has its difficulties;" and they make these the apology of their unbelief.

I confess, this objection would have some colour, if there were any system, which on exempting us from the difficulties of religion, did not involve in still greater. And whenever they produce that system, we are ready to embrace it.

Associate all the difficulties of which we allow religion to be susceptible. Associate whatever is incomprehensible in the doctrine of the Trinity, and in the ineffable manner in which the three Persons subsist, who are the object of our worship. Add thereto

whatever is supernatural in the operations of the Holy Spirit, and in the mysterious methods he adopts to penetrate the heart. Neither forget the depths into which we are apparently cast by the doctrines of God's decrees, and make a complete code of the whole.

To these difficulties which we avow, join all those we do not avow. Join all the pretexts you affect to find in the arguments which nature affords of the being of a God, and the reality of a providence. Join thereto whatever you shall find the most forcible against the authenticity of our sacred books, and what has been thought the most plausible against the marks of Divine authority exhibited in those Scriptures. Join to these all the advantages presumed to be derived from the diversity of opinions existing in the Christian world, and in all its sects which constantly attack one another. Make a new code of all those difficulties. Form a system of your own objections. Draw the conclusions from your own principles, and build an edifice of infidelity on the ruins of religion. But for what system can you decide which is not infinitely less supportable than religion ?

Do you espouse that of Atheism ? Do you say, that the doctrine of the being of a God owes its origin to superstition, and the fears of men ? And is this the system which has no difficulties ? Have rational men need to be convinced, that the mysteries of religion are infinitely more defensible than the mysteries of Atheism ?

Do you espouse the part of irreligion ? Do you allow with Epicurus, that there is a God ; but that the sublimity of this Majesty obstructs his stooping to

men, and the extension of his regards to our temples, and our altars? And is this the system which has no difficulties? How do you reply to the infinity of objections opposed to this system? How do you answer this argument, that God having not disdained to create mankind, it is inconceivable he should disdain to govern them? How do you reply to a second, the inconceivableness that a perfect being should form intelligences, and not prescribe their devotion to his glory? And what do you say to a third, that religion is completely formed, and fully proved in every man's conscience?

Do you take the part of denying a divine revelation? And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? Can you really prove that our books were not composed by the authors to whom they are ascribed? Can you really prove that those men have not wrought miracles? Can you really prove that the Bible is not the book the most luminous, and the most sublime that ever appeared on earth? Can you really prove, that fishermen, publicans, and tent-makers, and whatever was lowest among the mean populace of Judea; can you prove, that people of this description, have without Divine assistance, spoken of the origin of the world; of the perfections of God; of the nature of man, his constitution, and his duties in a manner more grand, noble, and better supported than Plato, than Zeno, than Epicurus, and all the sublime geniuses, which render antiquity venerable, and which still fill the universe with their fame?

Do you espouse the cause of Deism? Do you say with the Latitudinarian, that if there be a religion, it

is not shut up in the narrow bounds which we prescribe? Do you maintain, that all religions are indifferent? Do you give a false gloss to the apostle's words, that *in all nations he that feareth God is accepted of him*? Acts x. 35. And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? How, superseding the authority of the Bible, will you maintain this principle? How will you maintain it against the terrors God denounces against the base, *and the fearful*: Rev. xxi. 8. against the injunction *to go out of Babylon*: against the duty prescribed of confessing him in presence of all men: Isa. xlviii. 20. Matt. x. 32. and with regard to the fortitude he requires us to display on the rack, and when surrounded with fire and faggots, and when called to brave them for the sake of truth? How will you maintain it against the care he has taken to teach you the truth without any mixture of lies?

Do you take the part of believing nothing? Do you conclude from these difficulties, that the best system is to have none at all? Obstinate Pyrrhonian, you are then resolved to doubt of all? And is this the system which is exempt from difficulties? When you shall be agreed with yourself; when you have conciliated your singular system with the convictions of your mind, with the sentiments of your heart, and with the dictates of your conscience, then you shall see what we have to reply.

What then shall you do to find a light without darkness, and an evidence to your mind? Do you take the part of the libertine? Do you abandon to colleges the care of religion, and leaving the doctors to waste

life deciding who is wrong, and who is right, are you determined as to yourself to rush head foremost into the world? Do you say with the profane, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*? Do you enjoy the present without pursuing uncertain rewards, and alarming your mind with fears of miseries which perhaps may never come? And is this the system destitute of mysteries? Is this the system preferred to what is said by our *apostles*, our *evangelists*, our *doctors*, our *pastors*, and by all the holy men God has raised up *for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry*? But though the whole of your objections were founded; though the mysteries of the gospel were a thousand times more difficult to penetrate; though our knowledge were incomparably more circumscribed; and though religion should be infinitely less demonstrated than it is; should this be the part you ought to take? The sole probability of religion, should it not induce us, if not to believe it, yet at least, so to act, as if in fact we did believe it? And the mere alternative of an eternal happiness, or an eternal misery, should it not suffice to restrict us within the limits of duty, and to regulate our life, in such sort, that if there be a hell, we may avoid its torments?

We conclude. Religion has its mysteries: we acknowledge it with pleasure. Religion has its difficulties; we avow it. Religion is shook (we grant this for the moment to unbelievers, though we detest it in our hearts :) religion is shook, and ready to fall, by brilliant wits. But after all, the mysteries of the gospel are not of that cast which should render a re-

ligion doubtful. But after all, Christianity all shook, all wavering, and ready to fall, as it may appear to the infidel, contains what is most certain, and the wisest part a rational man can take, is to adhere to it with an inviolable attachment.

But how evident soever these arguments may be, and however strong this apology for the difficulties of religion may appear, there always remains a question on this subject, and indeed an important question, which we cannot omit resolving without leaving a chasm in this discourse. Why these mysteries? Why these shadows? And why this darkness? Does not the goodness of God engage to remove this stumbling block, and to give us a religion radiant with truth, and destitute of any obscuring veil? There are various reasons, my brethren, which render certain doctrines of religion impenetrable to us.

The first argument of the weakness of our knowledge is derived from the limits of the human mind. It is requisite that you should favour me here with a little more of recollection than is usually bestowed on a sermon. It is not requisite to be a philosopher to become a Christian. The doctrines of our religion, and the precepts of our moral code, are sanctioned by the testimony of an infallible God: and not deriving their origin from the speculations of men, it is not from their approbation that they derive their authority. Meanwhile, it is a felicity, we must confess, and an anticipation of the happy period when our faith shall be changed to sight, to find in sound reason the basis of all the grand truths religion reveals, and to convince ourselves by experience, that the

more we know of man, the more we see that religion was made for man. Let us return to our first principle. The narrow limits of the human mind shall open one source of light on the subject we discuss ; they shall convince us, that minds circumscribed, as ours, cannot before the time penetrate far into the adorable mysteries of faith.

We have elsewhere distinguished three faculties in the mind of man, or rather three class of faculties which comprise whatever we know of this Spirit ; the faculty of *thinking* ; the faculty of *feeling* ; and the faculty of *loving*. Examine these three faculties, and you will be convinced that the mind of man is circumscribed within narrow bounds : they are so closely circumscribed, that while attentively contemplating a certain object, they cannot attend to any other.

You experience this daily with regard to the faculty of thinking. Some persons, I allow, extend attention much beyond common men ; but in all it is extremely confined. This is so received an opinion, that we regard as prodigies of intellect, those who have the art of attending closely to two or three objects at once ; or of directing the attention, without a glance of the eye, on any game, apparently less invented to unbend than to exercise the mind. Meanwhile, this power is extremely limited in all men. If the mind can distinctly glance on two or three objects at once, the fourth or the fifth confounds it. Properly to study a subject, we must attend to that alone ; be abstracted from all others, forgetful of what we do, and blind to what we see.

The faculty of feeling is circumscribed as that of thinking. One sensation absorbs or diminishes another. A wound received in the heat of battle ; in the tumult ; or in the sight of the general whose approbation we seek, is less acute than it would be on a different occasion. For the like reason the same pain we have borne during the day, is insupportable in the night. Violent anguish renders us insensible of a diminutive pain. Whatever diverts from a pleasing sensation diminishes the pleasure, and blunts enjoyment ; and this is done by the reason already assigned ; that while the faculty is attentive to one object, it is incapable of application to another.

It is the same with regard to the faculty of loving. It rarely happens that a man can indulge two or three leading passions at once : *No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.* So is the assertion of Jesus Christ, who knew the human heart better than all the philosophers put together. The passion of avarice, for the most part, diminishes the passion of glory ; and the passion of glory, diminishes that of avarice. It is the same with the other passions.

Besides, not only an object engrossing a faculty, obstructs its profound attention to any other object related to that faculty ; but when a faculty is deeply engrossed by an object, all others, if I may so speak, remain in solitude and slumber ; the capacity of the soul being wholly absorbed. A man who concentrates himself in research, in the illustration of a difficulty, in the solution of a problem, in the contem-

plation of a combined truth ; he loses for the moment, the faculty of feeling, and becomes insensible of sound, of noise, of light. A man, on the contrary, who freely abandons himself to a violent sensation, or whom God afflicts accutely, loses for the time, the faculty of thinking. Speak, reason, and examine, draw consequences ; and all that is foreign to his point : he is no longer a thinking being ; he is a feeling being, and wholly so. Thus the principle we establish is an indisputable axiom in the study of man, that the human mind is circumscribed, and inclosed in very narrow limits.

The relation of this principle to the subject we discuss, obtrudes itself on our regard. A slight reflection on the limits of the human mind will convince us, that men who make so slow a progress in abstruse science, can never fathom the deep mysteries of religion. And it is the more evident, as these limited faculties can never be wholly applied to the study of truth. There is no moment of life, in which they are not divided ; there is no moment in which they are not engaged in the care of the body, in the recollection of some fugitive ideas, and on objects which have no connection with those to which we would direct our study.

A second reason of the limits of our knowledge arises from those very mysteries which excite obscurity, astonishment, and awe. What are those mysteries ? Of what do they treat ? They treat of what is the most elevated and sublime : they concern the essence of the Creator : they concern the attributes of the Supreme Being : they concern whatever has

been thought the most immense in the mind of eternal wisdom : they concern the traces of that impetuous wind, *which blows where it listeth*, and which moves in one moment to every part of the universe. And we, insignificant beings ; we altogether obstructed, confounded, and absorbed, we affect an air of surprise because we cannot fathom the depths of those mysteries ! It is not merely while on earth that we cannot comprehend those immensities ; but we can never comprehend them in the other world ; because God is always unlimited, always infinite, and always above the reach of circumscribed intelligences ; and because we shall be always finite, always limited, always creatures circumscribed. Perfect knowledge belongs to God alone. *Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do ? deeper than hell, what canst thou know ?* Job xi. 7, 8. *Where wast thou when he laid the foundations of the earth ? When he shut up the sea with doors ? When he made the clouds the garments thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it. When he subjected it to his laws, and prescribed its barriers, and said, hitherto shalt thou come, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed ?* xxxviii. 4, 9, 10, 11. *Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ? Or who hath first given him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* Rom. xi. 33, 34, 35. Let us adore a Being so immense ; and let his incomprehen-

sibility serve to give us the more exalted ideas of his grandeur : and seeing we can never know him to perfection, let us, at the least, form the noble desire of knowing him as far as it is allowable to finite intelligences. And as Manoah who after receiving the mysterious vision recorded Judges chap. xiii. prayed the angel of the Lord, saying, *Tell me, I pray thee, thy name ;* and received the answer, *It is wonderful ;* so should we say with this holy man, *I pray thee, tell me thy name,* give me to know this *wonderful name.* Let us say with Moses, *Lord, let me see thy glory.* Exod. xxxiii. 18. And with the prophet, *Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the marvels of thy law.* Psalm cxix. 18.

The *third* cause of the obscurity of our knowledge is, that truths the most simple, and objects the least combined, have however certain depths and abysses beyond the reach of thought ; because truths the most simple, and objects the least combined have a certain tie with infinity, that they cannot be comprehended without comprehending this infinity. Nothing is more simple, nothing is less combined, in regard to me, than this proposition ; there are certain exterior objects which actually strike my eyes, which excite certain emotions in my brain, and certain perceptions in my mind. Meanwhile, this proposition so simple ; and so little combined, has certain depths and obscurities above my thought, because it is connected with other inquiries concerning this infinity, which I cannot comprehend. It is connected with this ; Cannot the perfect Being excite certain perceptions in my mind, and emotions in my brain without the aid of

exterior objects? It is connected with another, will the goodness and truth of this perfect Being suffer certain perceptions to be excited in the mind, and emotions in the brain, by which we forcibly believe that certain exterior objects exist, when in fact, they do not exist? It is connected with divers other inquiries of like nature, which involve us in discussions which absorb and confound our feeble genius. Thus, we are not only incapable of fathoming certain inquiries which regard infinity, but we are equally incapable of fully satisfying ourselves concerning those that are simple, because they are connected with the infinite. Prudence therefore requires that men should admit, as proved, the truths which have, in regard to them the characters of demonstration. It is by these characters they should judge. But after all, there is none but the perfect Being, who can have perfect demonstration; at least, the perfect Being alone can fully perceive in the immensity of his knowledge, all the connections which finite beings have with the infinite.

A fourth reason of the obscurity of our knowledge, is the grand end God proposed when he placed us upon the earth: this end is our sanctification. The questions on which religion leaves so much obscurity, do not devolve on simple principles, which may be comprehended in a moment. The acutest mathematician, he who can make a perfect demonstration of a given number, cannot do it in a moment, if that number is complicated: and the tardy comprehension of him to whom a complicated problem is demonstrated, requires a still greater length of time. He must

comprehend by a succession of ideas what cannot be proved by a single glance of the eye. A man, posted on an elevated tower, may see at once the whole of a considerable army in motion; but he at the base of this tower, can see them only as they present themselves in succession. God is exalted above all creatures: he sees the whole by a single regard. He has but, if I may so speak, to apply his mind, and all are seen at once. But we, poor abject creatures, we are placed in the humblest point of the universe. How then can we during the period of fifty, or if you please, a hundred years of life, destined to active duties, how can we presume to make a combination of all the Creator's perfections and designs, though he himself should deign in so great a work to be our guide. Great men have said, that all possible plans were presented to the mind of God when he made the universe, and that, comparing them one with another, he chose the best. Let us make the supposition without adopting it; let us suppose that God, wishful to justify to our mind the plan he has adopted, should present to us all his plans; and comparison alone could ensure approbation: but does it not imply a contradiction, that fifty, or a hundred years of life, engrossed by active duties, should suffice for so vast a design? Had God encumbered religion with the illustration of all abstruse doctrines, concerning which it observes a profound silence; and with the explication of all the mysteries, it imperfectly reveals; had he explained to us the depths of his nature and essence; had he discovered to us the immense combination of his attributes; had he qualifi-

ed us to trace the unsearchable ways of his Spirit in our heart ; had he shown us the origin, the end, and arrangement of his counsels ; had he wished to gratify the infinite inquiries of our curiosity, and to acquaint us with the object of his views during the absorbing revolutions prior to the birth of time, and with those which must follow it ; had he thus multiplied to infinity speculative ideas, what time should we have had for practical duties ? Dissipated by the cares of life, occupied with its wants, and sentenced to the toils it imposes, what time would have remained to succour the wretched, to visit the sick, and to comfort the distressed ? Yea, and what is still more, to study and vanquish our own heart ?—O how admirably is the way of God, in the restriction of our knowledge, worthy of his wisdom ! He has taught us nothing but what the most intimate connection with our duties, that we might ever be attentive to them, and that there is nothing in religion which can possibly attract us from those duties.

5. The miseries inseparable from life, are the ultimate reason of the obscurity of our knowledge both in religion, and in nature. To ask why God has involved religion in so much darkness, is asking why he has not given us a nature like those spirits which are not clothed with mortal flesh. We must class the obscurity of our knowledge with the other infirmities of life, with our exile, our imprisonment, our sickness, our perfidy, our infidelity, with the loss of our relatives, of separation from our dearest friends. We must answer the objection drawn from the darkness which envelopes most of the objects of sense, as we

do to those drawn from the complication of our calamities. It is, that this world is not the abode of our felicity. It is, that the awful wounds of sin are not yet wholly healed. It is, that our soul is still clothed with matter. We must lament the miseries of a life in which reason is enslaved, in which the sphere of our knowledge is so confined, and in which we feel ourselves obstructed at every step of our meditation and research. We have a soul greedy of wisdom and knowledge ; a soul susceptible of an infinity of perceptions and ideas ; a soul to which knowledge and intelligence are the nourishment and food : and this soul is localized in a world : but in what world ? In a world, where we do but imperfectly know ourselves : in a world, where our sublimest knowledge, and profoundest researches resemble little children who divert themselves at play. The idea is not mine ; it is suggested by Saint Paul, in the words subsequent to our text. *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.* The contrast is not unjust. Literally, all this knowledge, all these sermons, all this divinity, and all those commentaries are but as the simple comparisons employed to make children understand exalted truths. They are but as the types, which God employed in the ancient law to instruct the Jews, while in a state of infancy. How imperfect were those types ! What relation had a sheep to the victim of the new covenant ! What proportion had a priest to the Sovereign Pontiff of the church ! Such is the state of man while here placed on the earth.

But a happier period must follow this of humiliation. *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Charming thought, my brethren, of the change that death shall produce in us ; it shall supersede the puerilities of infancy ; it shall draw the curtain which conceals the objects of expectation. How ravished must the soul be when this curtain is uplifted ! Instead of worshipping in these assemblies, it finds itself instantly elevated to the choirs of angels, *the ten thousand times ten thousand before the Lord.* Instead of hearing the hymns we sing to his glory, it instantly hears the *hallelujahs* of celestial spirits, and the dread shouts of *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of thy glory.* Instead of listening to this frail preacher, who endeavours to develop the imperfect notions he has imbibed in a confined understanding, it instantly hears the great head of the church, *who is the author and the finisher of our faith.* Instead of perceiving some traces of God's perfections in the beauties of nature, it finds itself in the midst of his sublimest works ; in the midst of *the heavenly Jerusalem, whose gates are of pearl, whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose walls are of jasper.*—Do we then still fear death ! And have we still need of comforters when we approach that happy period ? And have we still need to resume all our constancy, and all our fortitude to support the idea of dying ! And is it still necessary to pluck us from the earth, and to tear us by force to the celestial abode, which shall consummate our felicity ! Ah ! how the prophet

Elisha, who saw his master ascend in the chariot of fire, ploughing the air on his brilliant throne and crossing the vast expanse which separates heaven from earth ; how Elisha regretted the absence of so worthy a master, whom he now saw no more, and whom he must never see in life ; how he cried in that moment, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.* These emotions are strikingly congenial to the sentiments of self-love, so dear to us.— But Elijah himself—Elijah, did he fear to soar in so sublime a course? Elijah already ascended to the middle regions of the air, in whose eyes the earth appeared but as an atom retiring out of sight ; Elijah, whose head already reached to heaven ; did Elijah regret the transition he was about to complete! Did he regret the world, and its inhabitants!—O soul of man ; regenerate soul—daily called to break the fetters which unite thee to a mortal body, take thy flight towards heaven. Ascend this fiery chariot, which God has sent to transport thee above the earth where thou dwellest. See the heavens which open for thy reception ; admire the beauties, and estimate the charms already realized by thy hope. Taste those ineffable delights. Anticipate the perfect felicity, with which death is about to invest thee. Thou needest no more than this last moment of my ministry. Death himself is about to do all the rest, to dissipate all thy darkness, to justify religion, and to crown thy hopes.



SERMON V.

Consecration of the Church at Voorburgh, 1726.



EZEK. xi. 16.

Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

THE cause of our assembling to-day, my brethren, is one of the most evident marks of God's powerful protection, extended to a multitude of exiles whom these provinces have encircled with a protecting arm. It is a fact, that since we abandoned our native land we have been loaded with divine favours. Some of us have lived in affluence ; others in the enjoyments of mediocrity, often preferable to affluence ; and all have seen this confidence crowned, which has enabled them to say, while living even without resource, *In the mountain of the Lord, it shall be seen ; in the mountain of the Lord, he will there provide.*

But how consoling soever the idea may be in our dispersion of that gracious providence, which has never ceased to watch for our welfare, it is not the principal subject of our gratitude. God has corresponded more directly with the object with which we

were animated when we were enabled to bid adieu, perhaps an eternal adieu, to our country : what prompted us to exile was not the hope of finding more engaging company, a happier climate, and more permanent establishments. Motives altogether of another kind animated our hearts. We had seen the edifices reduced to the dust, which we had been accustomed to make resound with the praises of God ; we had heard *the children of Edom*, with hatchets in their hand, shout against those sacred mansions, *down with them ; down with them, even to the ground.*—May you, ye natives of these provinces, among whom it has pleased the Lord to lead us, ever be ignorant of the like calamities. May you indeed never know them, but by the experience of those to whom you have so amply afforded the means of subsistence. We could not survive the liberty of our conscience ; we have wandered to seek it, though it should be in dens and deserts. Zeal gave animation to the aged, whose limbs were benumbed with years. Fathers and mothers took their children in their arms, who were too young to know the danger from which they were plucked : each was content *with his soul for a prey*, and required nothing but the precious liberty he had lost. We have found it among you, our generous benefactors ; you have received us as your brethren, as your children ; and have admitted us into your churches. We have communicated with you at the same table ; and now you have permitted us, a handful of exiles, to build a church to that God whom we mutually adore. You wish also to partake with us in our gratitude, and to join your homages

with those we have just rendered to him in this new edifice.

But alas ! those of our fellow-countrymen, whose minds are still impressed with the recollection of those former churches, whose destruction occasioned them so much grief, cannot taste a joy wholly pure. The ceremonies of this day will associate themselves, with those celebrated on laying the foundation-stone of the second temple. The priests officiated indeed in their pontifical robes ; the Levites, sons of Asaph, caused their cymbals to resound afar ; one choir admirably concerted its response to another ; all the people raised a shout of joy, because the foundation of the Lord's house was laid. But the chiefs of the fathers, and the aged men, who had seen the superior glory of the former temple, wept aloud, and in such sort that one could not distinguish the voice of joy from the voice of weeping.

Come, notwithstanding, my dear brethren, and let us mutually praise the God, who *in the midst of wrath remembers mercy*. Hab. iii. 2. Let us gratefully meditate on this fresh accomplishment of the prophecy I have just read in your presence ; *Though I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come*. These are God's words to Ezekiel : to understand them, and with that view I attempt the discussion, we must trace the events to their source, and go back to the twenty-ninth year of king Josiah, to form correct ideas of the end of our prophet's ministry. It was in this year,

that Nabopolassar king of Babylon, and Astyages king of Media, being allied by the marriage of Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar with Amytis daughter of Astyages, united their forces against the Assyrians, then the most ancient and formidable power, took Nineveh their capital, and thus by a peculiar dispensation of providence, they accomplished, and without thinking so to do, the prophecies of Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah, against that celebrated empire.

From that period the empire of Nineveh and of Babylon formed but one, the terror of all their neighbours, who had just grounds of apprehension soon to experience a lot like that of Nineveh.

This induced Pharaoh Nechoh, king of Egypt, who of all the potentates of the east, was the best qualified to resist those conquerors, to march at the head of a great army, and make war with a prince, who for the future, to use the expression of a prophet, was regarded as *the hammer of all the earth*. Jer. l. 32. Pharaoh took his route through Judea, and sent ambassadors to king Josiah, to solicit a passage through his kingdom. Josiah's reply to this embassy even to this day astonishes every interpreter; he took the field, he opposed the designs of Nechoh, which seemed to have no object but to emancipate the nations Nebuchadnezzar had subjugated, and to confirm those that desponded through the fear of being loaded with the same chain. Josiah, unable to frustrate the objects of Nechoh, was slain in the battle, and with him seemed to expire whatever remained of piety and prosperity in the kingdom of Judah.

Pharaoh Nechoh defeated the Babylonians near the Euphrates, took Carchemish, the capital of Mesopotamia, and augmenting the pleasure of victory by that of revenge, he led his victorious army through Judea, deposed Jehoahaz son of Josiah, and placed Eliakim his brother on the throne, whom he surnamed Jehoiakim. 2 Kings xxiii.

From that period, Jehoiakim regarded the king of Egypt as his benefactor, to whom he was indebted for his throne and his crown. He believed that Pharaoh Nechoh whose sole authority had conferred the crown, was the only prince that could preserve it. The Jews at once followed the example of their king; they espoused the hatred which subsisted in Egypt against the king of Babylon, and renewed with Nechoh an alliance the most firm which had ever subsisted between the two powers.

Were it requisite to support here what the sacred history says on this subject, I would illustrate at large a passage of Herodotus, who when speaking of the triumph of Pharaoh Nechoh, affirms, that after this prince had obtained a glorious victory in the fields of Meggido, he took a great city of Palestine, surrounded with hills, which is called *Cadytis*: there is not the smallest doubt but this city was Jerusalem, which in the scriptures is often called *holy* by way of excellence; and it was anciently designated by this glorious title. Now, the word *holy* in Hebrew is *Keduscha*, and in Syriac *Kedutha*. To this name Herodotus affixed a Greek termination, and called *Kadytis* the city that the Syrians, or the Arabs call *Kedutha*, which

correspondent to my assertion, was the appellation given to Jerusalem.

Resuming the thread of the history; this alliance, which the Jews had contracted with Egypt, augmented their confidence at a time when every consideration should have abated it; it elated them with the presumptuous notion, of being adequate to frustrate the designs of Nebuchadnezzar, or rather those of God himself, who had declared that he would subjugate all the east to this potentate. He presently retook from Pharaoh Nechoh Carchemish, and the other cities conquered by that prince. He did more; he transferred the war into Egypt, after having associated Nebuchadnezzar his son in the empire; and after various advantages in that kingdom, he entered on the expedition against Judea, recorded in the xxxvith chapter of the second book of Chronicles: he accomplished what Isaiah had foretold to Hezekiah, that the Chaldeans *should take his sons, and make them eunuchs in Babylon*. He plundered Jerusalem; he put Jehoiakim in chains, and placed his brother Jehoiachin on the throne, who is sometimes called Jeconiah, and sometimes Coniah; and who availed himself of the grace he had received, to rebel against his benefactor. This prince quickly revenged the perfidy; he besieged Jerusalem, which he had always kept blockaded since the death of Jehoiakim, and he led away a very great number of captives into Babylon, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was raised up of God to prophecy to the captive Jews, who constantly indulged the reverie of returning to Jerusalem, while Jeremiah prophesied to

those who were yet in their country, on whom awaited the same destiny. They laboured unanimously to persuade their countrymen to place no confidence in their connection with Egypt; to make no more unavailing efforts to throw off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar; and to obey the commands of that prince, or rather the commands of God, who was wishful by his ministry to punish the crimes of all the east.

Our prophet was transported into Jerusalem; he there saw those Jews who at the very time while they continued to flatter them with averting the total ruin of Judea, hastened the event, not only by continuing, but by redoubling their cruelties, and their idolatrous worship. At the very crisis while he beheld the infamous conduct of his countrymen in Jerusalem, he heard God himself announce the punishments with which they were about to be overwhelmed; and saying to his ministers of vengeance, *Go through the city; strike, let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children; and women. Defile my house, and fill the courts with the slain.* ix. 5, 6, 7. But while God delivered a commission so terrible with regard to the abominable Jews, he cast a consoling regard on others: he said to a mysterious person, *Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for the abominations committed in the midst thereof.* I am grieved for the honour of our critics, who have followed the vulgate version in a reading which disfigures the text; *set the letter than on the foreheads of those that sigh.* To how many puerilities has this reading given birth? What

mysteries have they not sought in the letter *thau*? But the vulgate is the only version which has thus read the passage. The word *thau* in Hebrew implies a sign; to write this letter on the forehead of any one, is to make a mark; and to imprint a mark on the forehead of a man, is, in the style of prophecy, to distinguish him by some special favour. So the seventy, the Arabic, and the Syriac have rendered this expression. You will find the same figures employed by St. John in the Revelation.

The words of my text have the same import as the above passage; they may indeed be restricted to the Jews already in captivity; I extend them however to the Jews who groaned for the enormities committed by their countrymen in Jerusalem. The past, the present and the future time, are sometimes undistinguished in the holy tongue; especially by the prophets, to whom the certainty of the future predicted events, occasioned them to be contemplated, as present, or as already past. Consonant to this style, *I have cast them far off among the heathen*, may imply, I will cast them far off; I will disperse them among the nations, &c.

To both those bodies of Jews, of whom I have spoken, I would say, those already captivated in Babylon when Ezekiel received this vision, and those who were led away after the total ruin of Jerusalem, that however afflictive their situation might appear, God would meliorate it by constant marks of the protection he would afford. *Though I may or have cast them far off among the heathen; and among the countries: though I may disperse them among strange nations;*

yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come.

This is the general scope of the words we have read. Wishful to apply them to the design of this day, we shall proceed to draw a parallel between the state of the Jews in Babylon, and that in which it has pleased God to place the churches whose ruin we have now deplored for forty years. The dispersion of the Jews had three distinguished characters,

- I. A character of horror ;
- II. A character of justice ;
- III. A character of mercy.

A character of horror ; this people were dispersed among the nations ; they were compelled to abandon Jerusalem ; and to wander in divers countries.—A character of justice ; God himself ; the God who makes *judgment and justice the habitation of his throne*. Psalm. lxxxix. 15. was the author of those calamities : *I have cast them far off among the heathen ; and dispersed them among the countries.*—In fine, a character of mercy : *though I have cast them far off among the heathen, I have been, or as we may read, I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come.* These are the three similarities between the dispersed Jews, and the reformed, to whom these provinces have extended a compassionate arm.

I. The dispersion of the Jews, connected with all the calamities which preceded and followed, had a character of horror : let us judge of it by the lamentations of Jeremiah, who attested, as well as predicted the awful scenes.

1. He deploras the carnage which stained Judea with blood: *The priests and the prophets have been slain in the sanctuary of the Lord. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and the young men are fallen by the sword: thou hast slain; thou hast killed, and hast not pitied them in the day of thine anger. Thou hast convened my terrors, as to a solemn day.* chap. ii. 20, 21, 22.

2. He deploras the horrors of the famine which induced the living to envy the lot of those that had fallen in war: *The children and the sucklings swoon in the streets; they say to their mothers, when expiring in their bosom, where is the corn and the wine?—They that be slain with the sword are happier than they that be slain with hunger. Have not the women eaten the children that they suckled? Naturally pitiful, have they not baked their children to supply them with food?* chap. ii. 11, 12, 20. iv. 9, 10.

3. He deploras the insults of their enemies: *All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, is this the city called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?* chap. ii. 15.

4. He deploras the insensibility of God himself, who formerly was moved with their calamities, and ever accessible to their prayers: *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud that our prayers should not pass through: and when I cry and shout, he rejecteth my supplication.* chap. iii. 44, 8.

5. He deploras the favours God had conferred, the recollection of which served but to render their grief the more poignant, and their fall the more insupport-

able : *Jerusalem in the days of her affliction, remembered all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. How doth the city sit in solitude that was full of people? How is she that was great among the nations become a widow, and she that was princess among the provinces become tributary?* chap. i. 7, 1.

6. Above all, he deploras the strokes levelled against religion : *The ways of Zion do mourn because none comes to the solemn feast: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh; her virgins are afflicted. The heathen have entered into her sanctuary; the heathen, concerning whom thou didst say, that they should not enter into thy sanctuary.* chap. i. 4, 10.

These are the tints with which Jeremiah paints the calamities of the Jews; and making those awful objects an inexhaustible source of tears, he exclaims in the eloquence of grief; *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. For this cause I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with tears, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. Zion spreadeth her hands, and there is none to comfort her. Mine eyes fail with tears: whom shall I take to witness for thee; to whom shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; to whom shall I equal thee to console thee, O daughter of Zion, for thy breach is great?—O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest, let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the*

watches pour out thine heart like water before the Lord.
chap. i. 12, 16, 17. chap. ii. 11, 13, 18, 19.

But is all this a mere portrait of past ages, or did the Spirit of God designate it as a figure of ages yet to come? Are those the calamities of the Jews that Jeremiah has endeavoured to describe, or are they those which for so many years have ravaged our churches? Our eyes, accustomed to contemplate so many awful objects, have become incapable of impression. Our hearts, habituated to anguish, are become insensible. Do not expect me to open the wounds that time has already closed; but in recalling the recollection of those terrific scenes which have stained our churches with blood, I would inquire whether the desolations of Jerusalem properly so called, or those of the mystic Jerusalem be most entitled to our tears? May the sight of the calamities into which we have been plunged excite in the bosom of a compassionate God, emotions of mercy! May he in crowning the martyrs, confer forgiveness on those that occasioned their death.

I am impelled to the objects which the solemnities of this day recal to your minds, though I should even endeavour to dissipate the idea; I would say, to the destruction of our churches, and to the strokes which have been levelled against our religion. The colours Jeremiah employed to trace the calamities of Jews, cannot be too vivid to paint those which have fallen on us. One scourge has followed another for a long series of years. *Deep has called unto deep at the noise of his water spouts.* Psalm xlii. 7. A thousand and a thousand strokes were aimed at our unhappy

churches prior to that which razed them to the ground; and if we may so speak, one would have said that those armed against us were not content with being spectators of our ruin; they were emulous to effectuate it.

Sometimes they published edicts against those who foreseeing the impending calamities of the church, and unable to avert them, sought the sad consolation of not attesting the scenes.* Sometimes against those who having had the baseness to deny their religion, and unable to bear the remorse of their conscience had recovered from their fall.† Sometimes they prohibited pastors from exercising their discipline on those of their flock who had abjured the truth.‡ Sometimes they permitted children at the age of seven years to embrace a doctrine, in the discussion of which they affirm, that even adults were inadequate to the task.§ At one time they suppressed a college, at another they interdicted a church.|| Sometimes they envied us the glory of converting infidels and idolaters; they required that those unhappy people should not renounce one kind of idolatry but to embrace another, far less excusable, as it dared to show its front amid the light of the gospel. They envied us the glory also of confirming those in the truth whom we had instructed from our infancy. Sometimes they prohibited the pastors from exercising the ministerial functions for more than three years in the same place.¶ Sometimes they forbade us to print

* The Edict of August, 1689. † Declaration against the relapsed, May, 1679. ‡ June, 1680. § June, 1681. || January, 1683. ¶ August, 1684.

our books;* and sometimes seized those already published.† Sometimes they obstructed our preaching in a church: sometimes from doing it on the foundations of one that had been demolished; and sometimes from worshipping God in public. At one time they exiled us from the kingdom; and at another, forbade our leaving it on pain of death.‡ Here you might have seen trophies prepared for those who had basely denied their religion; there you might have seen dragged to the prisons, to the scaffold, or to the gallies, those who had confessed it with an heroic faith: Yea, the bodies of the dead dragged on hurdles for having expired confessing the truth. In another place you might have seen a dying man at compromise with a minister of hell, on persisting in his apostacy, and the fear of leaving his children destitute of bread; and if he made not the best use of those last moments that the treasures of providence, and the long-suffering of God yet afforded him to recover from his fall. In other places, fathers and mothers tearing themselves away from children, concerning whom the fear of being separated from them in eternity made them shed tears more bitter than those that flowed on being separated in this life. Elsewhere you might have seen whole families arriving in protestant countries with hearts transported with joy, once more to see churches, and to find in Christian communion, adequate sources to assuage the anguish of the sacrifices they had made for its enjoyment. Let us draw the curtain over those affecting scenes. Our calamities, like those of the Jews,

* July 9th, 1685.

† September 6th, 1685.

‡ July 30th, 1680.

have had a character of horror ; this is a fact ; this is but too easy to prove. They have had also a character of Justice, which we proceed to prove in our second head.

II. That public miseries originate in the crimes of a chastened people, is a proposition that scarcely any one will presume to deny when proposed in a vague and general way ; but perhaps it is one of those whose evidence is less perceived when applied to certain private cases, and when we would draw the consequences resulting from it in a necessary and immediate manner : propose it in a pulpit, and each will acquiesce. But propose it in the cabinet ; say that the equipment of fleets, the levy of armies and contraction of alliances are feeble barriers of the state, unless we endeavour to eradicate the crimes which have enkindled the wrath of heaven, and you would be put in the abject class of those *good and weak sort of folks* that are in the world. I do not come to renew the controversy, and to investigate what is the influence of crimes on the destiny of nations, and the rank it holds in the plans of providence. Neither do I appear at the bar of philosophy the most scrupulous and severe, and at the bench of policy the most refined and profound, to prove that it is not possible for a state long to subsist in splendour which presumes to derive its prosperity from the practice of crimes. For,

Who is he that will dare to exclaim against a proposition so reasonable, and so closely connected with the grand doctrines of religion ; and which cannot be renounced without a stroke at the being of a God,

and the superintendance of a Providence? A man admitting those two grand principles, and presuming to make crimes subservient to the support of society, should digest the following propositions. There is indeed a God in heaven, who has constituted society to practise equity; to maintain order; and to cherish religion: he has connected its prosperity with these duties; but by the secrets of my policy, by the depths of my counsels, by the refinement of my wisdom, I know how to elude his designs, and avert his denunciations. God is indeed an Almighty Being whose pleasure has a necessary connection with its execution; he has but to blow with his wind on a nation, and behold it vanishes away; but I will oppose power to power; I will *force his strength*;* and by my fleets, my armies, my fortress, I will elude all those ministers of vengeance. God has indeed declared, that he is *jealous of his glory*; that soon or late he will exterminate incorrigible nations; and that if from the nature of their vices there proceed not a sufficiency of calamities to extirpate them from the earth, he will superadd those unrelenting strokes of vengeance which shall justify his providence: but the state over which I preside, shall be too small, or perhaps too great to be absorbed in the vortex of his commanding sway. It shall be reserved of providence as an exception to this general rule, and made to subsist in favour of those very vices, which have occasioned the sackage of other nations. My brethren, there is, if I may presume so to speak, but a front of iron and

* The versions vary very much in reading; Isaiah xxvii. 5, *Vide Poli Synopsi Crit. in loc.*

brass that can digest propositions so daring, and prefer the system of Hobbs and of Machiavel to that of David and of Solomon.

But what awful objects should we present to your view, were we wishful to enter on a detail of the proofs concerning the equity of the strokes with which God afflicted the Jews; and especially were we wishful to illustrate the conformity found in this second head, between the desolations of those ancient people, and those of our own churches?

To justify what we have advanced on the first head, it would be requisite to investigate many of their kings, who were monsters rather than men; it would be requisite to describe the hardness of the people who were wishful that the ministers of the living God, sent to rebuke their crimes, might contribute to confirm them therein; and who, according to the expression of Isaiah, *said to the seer, see not; and to those who had visions, see no more visions of uprightness; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceit. Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.* xxx. 10, 11. It would be requisite to exhibit the connivance of many of their pastors, who, as Jeremiah says, *healed the hurt of his people slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there was no peace:* vi. 14. and who were so far from suppressing the licentiousness of the wicked, as to make it their glory to surpass them! It would be requisite to describe the awful security which in the midst of the most tremendous visitations infatuated them to say, *We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agree-*

ment. Isaiah xxviii. 15. It would be requisite to trace those sanguinary deeds, which occasioned that just rebuke, *In the skirts of thy robe is found the blood of the innocent poor.* Jer. ii. 34. It would be requisite to exhibit those scenes of idolatry, which made a prophet say, *Lift up thine eyes on the high places, and see where thou hast been lien with. O Juda, thy gods are as many as thy cities.* ii. 28. iii. 2. It would be requisite to speak of that paucity of righteous men, which occasioned God himself to say, *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek ye in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.* v. i.

But instead of retracing those awful recollections, and deducing from them the just application of which they are susceptible, it would be better to comprise them in that general confession, and to acknowledge when speaking of your calamities what the Jews confessed when speaking of theirs: *The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him. Certainly thou art righteous in all the things that have happened, for thou hast acted in truth, but we have done wickedly.—Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and to thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them.* Lam. i. 18. Neh. ix. 34.

III. But it is time to present you with objects more attractive and assortable with the solemnities of this day. The calamities which fell upon the Jews, and those which have fallen on us; those calamities which

had a character of justice ; yea, even a character of horror, had also a character of mercy ; and this is what is promised the Jews in the words of my text ; *Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and among the countries ; yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come.* Whether you give these, as a little sanctuary, a vague, or a limited signification, all resolves to the same sense. If you give them a limited import, they refer to the temple of Jerusalem, which the Chaldeans had destroyed, and which was the emblem of God's presence in the midst of his people. *I have dispersed them among the heathen ;* I have deprived them of their temple, but I will grant them supernaturally the favours, I accorded to their prayers once offered up in the house, of which they have been deprived. In this sense St. John said, that he *saw no temple in the new Jerusalem, because God and the Lamb were the temple thereof.* Rev. xxi. 22. If you give these words an extended import, they allude to the dispersion. *Although I have cast them off among the heathen, and put them far away from the place of their habitation ; yet I will be myself their refuge.*—Much the same is said by the author of the xcth Psa. *Lord, thou hast been our retreat, our refuge, from one generation to another.* But without a minute scrutiny of the words, let us justify the thing.

1. Even amid the carnage which ensued on the taking of Jerusalem, many of the principal people were spared. It appears from the sacred history, that Jeremiah was allowed to choose what retreat he

pleased, either to remain in Babylon,* or to return to his country. He chose the latter; he loved the foundations of Jerusalem, and of its temple, more than the superb city; and it was at the sight of those mournful ruins, that he composed those Lamentations, from which we have made many extracts, and in which he has painted in the deepest tints, and described in the most pathetic manner, the miseries of his nation.

2. While some of the Jewish captives had liberty to return to their country, others were promoted in Babylon to the most eminent offices in the empire. The author of the second book of Kings says, that Evil-merodach *lifted up the head of Jehoiachin out of prison—and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon.* Jeremiah repeats the same expressions of this author; *2 Kings* xxv. 28. *Jer.* lii. 32. and learned men have thence concluded, *that Jehoiachin reigned in Babylon over his own dispersed subjects.* Of Daniel we may say the same; he was made governor of the province of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, *and chief of the governors over all the wise men.* *Dan.* ii. 48. Darius conferred many years afterwards the same dignities on this prophet; and Nehemiah was *cup-bearer* to Artaxerxes.

3. How dark, how impenetrable soever the history of the seventy years may be, during which time the Jews were captive in Babylon, it is extremely obvious, that they had during that period some form of

* It appears below, that Saurin thought Jeremiah and others returned from Babylon!

government. We have explained ourselves elsewhere concerning what is meant by the *Æchmalotarks*; that is, the chiefs or princes of the captivity. We ought also to pay some attention to the book of *Susanna*: I know that this work bears various marks of reprobation, and that St. Jerome, in particular, regarded it with so much contempt as to assure us, in some sort, that it would never have been put in the sacred canon had it not been to gratify a brutish people. Mean while, we ought not to slight what this book records concerning the general history of the Jews: now we there see, that during the captivity, they had elders, judges, and senators; and if we may credit Origen, too much prejudiced in favour of the book of *Susanna*, it was solely to hide the shame of the princes of their nation that the Jews had suppressed.

4. God always preserved among them the ministry, and the ministers. It is indubitable that there was always prophets during the captivity; and though some of the learned have maintained, that the sacred books were lost during the captivity; though one text of scripture seems to favour this notion; and though Tertullian and Eusebius presume to say that *Esdras* had retained the sacred books in memory, and wrote them in the order in which they now stand; notwithstanding all this, we think ourselves able to prove that the sacred trust never was out of their hands. It appears that *Daniel* read the prophets. The end of the second book of *Chronicles*, which has induced some to think that *Cyrus* was a proselyte, leaves not a doubt of this prince having read the xlvth and xlvi

chapters of Isaiah, where he is expressly named, and to this knowledge alone we can attribute the extraordinary expressions of his first edict. *The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he has charged me to build him a temple in Jerusalem.* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23.

5. God wrought prodigies for the Jews, which made them venerable in the eyes of their greatest enemies. Though exiles; though captives; though slaves of the Chaldeans, they were distinguished as the favourites of the Sovereign of the universe. They made the God of Abraham to triumph in the midst of idols; and aided by the prophetic Spirit, they pronounced the destiny of those very kingdoms in the midst of which they were dispersed. Like the captive Ark, they hallowed the humiliations of their captivity by symbols of terror. Witness the flames which consumed their executioners. Witness the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and of Belshazzar interpreted by Daniel, and realized by Providence: witness the praises rendered to God by idolatrous kings: witness the preservation of Daniel from the fury of the lions; and his enemies thrown to assuage the appetites of those ferocious beasts.

6. In a word, the mercy of God appeared so distinguished in the deliverance accorded to these same Jews, as to convince the most incredulous, that the same God who had determined their captivity, was he also who had prescribed its bounds. He moved in their behalf the hearts of pagan princes! We see Darius, and Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, become, by the sovereignty of Heaven over the heart of kings, the

restorers of Jerusalem, and of its temple ! Xenophon reports, that when Cyrus took Babylon, he commanded his soldiers to spare all who spake the Syrian tongue ; that is to say, the Hebrew nation ; and no one can be ignorant of the edicts issued in favour of this people.

Now, my brethren, nothing but an excess of blindness and ingratitude can prevent the seeing and feeling in our own dispersion those marks of mercy, which shone so bright in the dispersion of the Jews. How else could we have eluded the troops stationed on the frontiers of our country, to retain us in it by force, and to make us either martyrs, or apostates ?

What else could excite the zeal of some protestant countries, whose inhabitants you saw going to meet your fugitives, guiding them in the private roads, and disputing with one another who should entertain them ; and saying, *Come, come into our houses, ye blessed of the Lord ?* Gen. xxiv. 31.

Whence proceeds so much success in our trade ; so much promotion in the army ; so much progress in the sciences ; and so much prosperity in the several professions of many of us, who, according to the world, are more happy in the land of their exile, than they were in their own country ?

Why has God been pleased to signalize his favours to certain individuals of the nations, that have extended to us a protecting arm ? Why, when indigence and exiles seemed to enter their houses together, have we seen affluence, benediction, and riches emanate, if we may so speak, from the bosom of charity and beneficence ?

By what miracle have so great a number of our confessors and martyrs been liberated from their tortures and their chains?

From what principle proceeds the extraordinary difference, God has put between those of our countrymen, who, without consulting *flesh and blood*, have followed Jesus Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach, and those who have wished to join the interests of mammon with those of heaven? *Gal. i. 16. Heb. xiii. 13.*

We are masters of whatever property it pleased Providence to invest us on our departure; but our brethren cannot dispose of theirs but with vexatious restrictions, and imposts.

We have over our children the rights which nature has given us, and which have been sanctioned by society and religion; we can promise both to ourselves and to them the protection of the laws, while we shall continue to respect the laws, which we teach them to do. But our countrymen, on leaving their houses for a few hours, know not on their return, whether they shall find those dear parts of themselves, or whether they shall be dragged away to confinement in a convent, or thrown into a jail.

Whenever the sabbaths and festivals of the church arrive, we go with our families to render homage to the Supreme; we rise up in a throng with a song of triumph in the house of our God; we make it resound with hymns; we hear the scriptures; we offer up our prayers; we participate of his sacraments; we anticipate the eternal felicities. But our countrymen have no part in the joy of our feasts; they are

to them days of mourning ; it is with difficulty in an obscure part of their house, and in the mortal fear of detection, that they celebrate some hasty act of piety and religion.

We, when conceiving ourselves to be extended on the bed of death, can call our ministers, and open to them our hearts, listen to their gracious words, and drink in the sources of their comfort. But our countrymen are pursued to the last moments of their life by their enemies, and having lived temporizing, they die temporizing.

We find then as the captive Jews, the accomplishment of the prophecy in my text ; and we enjoy, during the years of our dispersion, favours similar to those which soothed the Jews during their captivity.

But can we promise ourselves that ours shall come to a similar close ? The mercy of God on our behalf has already accomplished the promise in the text, *I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come.* But when shall we see the accomplishment of that which follows ? *I will gather you from among the people ; and assemble you from the countries where ye have been scattered.* When is it that so many Christians, who, degenerate as they are, still love religion ; when is it that they shall repair the insults they have offered to it ? When is it, that so many children who have been torn from their fathers, shall be restored ; or rather, when shall we see them restored to the church, from whose bosom they have been plucked ? When is it that we shall see in our country what we see at this day, Christians

emulous to build churches, to consecrate them, there to render God the early homage due to his Majesty, and to participate in the first favours he there accords? *Oh! ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Isaiah lxii. 5, 6. *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us.* Psa. lxxx. 1, 2. *O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? ver. 4. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy on Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in stones, and favour the dust thereof. Then the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion; when he shall regard the prayer of the destitute, this shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord; for he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary.* Psa. cii. 13, &c. May this be the first subject of the prayers we shall this day offer to God in this holy place.

But asking of him favours so precious, let us ask with sentiments which ensure success. May the purity of the worship we render to God in the churches he has preserved, and in those he has also allowed to build, obtain the re-edification of those that have been demolished. May our charity to brethren, the companions of our exile, obtain a reunion with the breth-

ren, from whom we have been separated by the calamities of the times. And while God shall still retard this happy period, may our respect for our rulers, may our zeal for the public good, may our punctuality in paying the taxes, may our gratitude for the many favours we have received in these provinces, which equalize us with its natural subjects; and compressing in my exhortations and prayers, not only my countrymen, but all who compose this assembly, may the manner in which we shall serve God amid the infirmities and miseries inseparable from this valley of tears, ensure to us, my brethren, that after having joined our voices to those choirs which compose the militant church, we shall be joined to those that form the church triumphant, and sing eternally with the angels, and with the multitude of the redeemed of all nations, and languages, the praises of the Creator. God grant us the grace. To whom be honour and glory henceforth and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VI.

On Festivals, and on the Sabbath-Day.



ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight ; the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

WHEN will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ? This was the language that the prophet Amos put into the mouth of profane men in his own time. It is less expressive of their presumptive speeches, than of the latent wickedness of their hearts. Religion and politics were closely connected in the Hebrew nation. The laws inflicted the severest penalties on those that violated the exterior of religion. The execrable men, of whom the prophet speaks, could not profane the solemn festivals with impunity ; but they

worshipped with constraint ; they regretted the loss of their time ; they reproached God with every moment wasted in his house ; they ardently wished the feasts to be gone, that they might return, not only to their avocations, but also to their crimes : they said in their hearts, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ?* Amos viii. 5.

Against this disposition of mind, God has denounced by the ministry of this same prophet, those most awful judgments, which he has painted in the deepest shades. The Lord hath sworn :—*I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.—Behold the day cometh, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land ; not a famine of bread, not a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east ; they shall run to and fro to hear the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*

My brethren, are you not persuaded, that the impious men, of whom the prophet speaks, have had imitators in succeeding times ? Whence is it then that some among us have been struck precisely with the same strokes, if they have not been partakers of the same crimes ? Whence comes this famine of God's word, my dear countrymen, with which we have been afflicted ? Whence comes the necessity imposed upon us to wander from sea to sea, to recover this divine pasture, if we have not slighted it in places where it existed in so much abundance and unction ? Whence comes the awful catastrophe that have changed our

solemn feasts into mourning, if we celebrated them, when it was in our power, with a grateful temper? Whence come those lamentations heard in one part of the church for forty years, and which awful melody has latterly been renewed, if we sung our sacred hymns with the devotion that the praises of the Creator require of the creature? *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces. The Lord is righteous, though we have rebelled against him.* Dan. ix. 7. 9. Happy those who groan under the strokes for the sins they have committed, provided the school of adversity make them wise. Happy those of you, my brethren, who are simply the spectators of those calamities, provided you abstain from the sins which have occasioned them, and become wise at the expense of others.

This is the design of my discourse, in which I must address you on the respect due to the solemn feasts, and to the Sabbath-day in particular, leaving conscience to decide whether it be caprice, or necessity, which prompts us to the choice; whether it be inconsideration, or mere incident; or whether it has been compulsion, through the dreadful enormities into which we are plunged, in regard of the profanation of religious festivals, and of the Sabbath-day in particular, that people have for so long a time justly branded us with reproach: profaneness alone, unless we make efforts to reform it, is sufficient to bring down the wrath of God on these provinces. May Heaven deign to avert those awful presages! May he engrave on our hearts the divine precept inculcated to-day, that we may happily inherit the favours he

has promised ! May he enable us so to make the *Sabbaths our delight*, that we may be made partakers of the *heritage of Jacob* ; I would say, that of the *finisher of our faith*. Amen.

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then, thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. This is our text, and here is our design. We shall consider the words,

I. With regard to the Jewish church ;

II. With regard to the Christian church ; or, to be more explicit, God has made two very different worlds, the world of nature, and the world of grace. Both these are the heritage of the faithful, but in a different way. The Jews, contemplating the world of grace as a distant object, had their imagination principally impressed with the kingdom of nature. Hence, in their form of thanksgiving, they said, " Blessed be God who hath created the wheat ; blessed be God who hath created the fruit of the vine." Christians, on the contrary, accounting themselves but strangers in this world, place all their glory in seeing the marvels of the world of grace. Hence it is so often their theme of gratitude to say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus*

Christ from the dead. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Thus it was in point of order that the difference of dispensations was apparent in the two churches. The Jew, in his Sabbath, celebrated the marvels of nature; but the Christian, exalted to sublimer views, celebrated the marvels of grace; and this memorable day of the Saviour's resurrection, the day in which he saw the work of redemption finished, and the hopes of the church crowned; these are the two objects to which we shall call your attention.

I. We shall consider the words of the text with regard to the Jews. With that view we shall state, 1. The reasons of the institution of the Sabbath; 2. The manner in which the prophet required it to be celebrated; 3. The promises made to those who worthily hallow the Sabbath-day.

Four considerations gave occasion for the institution of the Sabbath-day. God was wishful to perpetuate two original truths on which the whole evidence of religion devolves; the first is, that the world had a beginning; the second is, that God is its author. You feel the force of both these points, without the aid of illustration, because, if the world be eternal, there is some being coeval with the Godhead; and if there be any being coeval with the Godhead, there is a being which is independent of it, and which is not indebted to God for its existence: and if there be any being which is not dependant on God, I no longer see in him all the perfection which constitutes his essence: our devotion is unfairly addressed; it ought to be divided between all the beings which participate of his perfections.

2. But if the world has not God for its author, it is requisite to establish the one or the other of these suppositions, either that the world itself has a superintending intelligence, or that it was formed by chance. If you suppose the world to have been governed by an intelligence peculiar to itself, you fall into the difficulty you wish to avoid. You associate with God a being, that, participating of his perfections, must participate also of his worship. On the contrary, if you suppose, it was made by chance, you not only renounce all the light of reason, but you sap the whole foundation of faith : for, if chance has derived us from nothing, it may reduce us to nothing again ; and if our existence depend on the capricious fortune, the immortality of soul is destitute of proof, infidelity obtains a triumph, religion becomes a pun, and the hopes of a life to come are a chimera.—It was therefore requisite, that there should remain in the church this monument of the creation of the universe.

The second reason was to prevent idolatry. This remark claims peculiar attention, many of the Mosaic precepts being founded on the situation in which the Jews were placed. Let this general remark be applied to the subject in hand. The people, on leaving Egypt, were separated from a nation that worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. I might prove it by various documents of antiquity. A passage of Diodorus of Sicily, shall suffice : “The ancient Egyptians, (he says,) struck with the beauty of the universe, thought it owed its origin to two eternal divinities, that presided over all the others : the one

was the sun, to whom they gave the name of Osiris ; the other was the moon, to whom they gave the name of Isis." God, to preserve his people from these errors, instituted a festival which sapped the whole system, and which avowedly contemplated every creature of the universe, as the production of the Supreme Being. And this may be the reason, why Moses remarked to the Jews on leaving Egypt, that God renewed the institution of the Sabbath. The passage I have in view is in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. *Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out, therefore he commandeth thee to keep his Sabbath.*

We must consequently regard the Sabbath-day as a high avowal of the Jews of their detestation of idolatry, and of their ascribing to God alone the origin of the universe. An expression of Ezekiel is to the same effect : he calls the Sabbath a sign between God, and his people : *I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.* Ezek. xx. 12. It is for this very reason, that the prophets declaim so strongly against the violation of the Sabbath : it is for the same reason that God commanded it to be observed with so high a sanction : it is for the same reason that the Sabbath-breakers were so rigorously punished, even that one for gathering a bundle of sticks, was stoned by the people. The law expressly enjoins that those who profane the festival shall be awfully anathematized. The passage is very remarkable. *Ye shall therefore keep the Sabbath ; for*

it is holy unto you : every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death ; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people. Exod. xxxi. 14. This expression asserts with the great anathema, which was always followed by death. But whence proceed so many cautions, so many rigours, so many threatenings, so many promises ? You cannot account for them, if the Sabbath be displaced from the positive injunctions of the Hebrew code.

3. God was wishful to promote humanity. With that view he prescribed repose to the servants and handmaids ; that is, to domestics and slaves. Look on the situation of slaves : it is as oppressive as that of the beasts. They saw no termination of their servitude but after the expiration of seven years : and it might happen, that their masters seeing the servitude about to expire, would become more rigorous, with a view to indemnify themselves beforehand for the services they were about to lose. It was requisite to remind them, that God interests himself for men whose condition was so abject and oppressive. This reminds me of a fine passage in PLATO, who says, “ that the gods, moved by the unhappy situation of slaves, have instituted the sacred festivals to procure them relaxation from labour.”* And CICERO says “ that the festivals are destined to suspend the disputes between freemen, and the labours of slaves.”† For the motives of humanity, it is subjoined in the precept, *Thou shalt do no manner of work, neither thou, nor thine ox, nor thine ass.*

* De legibus lib. 2.

† De legibus.

I may here put the same question that St. Paul once put to the Corinthians, *Doth God take care for oxen?* No; but there is a constitutional sympathy, without which the heart is destitute of compassion. So is the import of a text in St. John. *No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfect in us.—If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* There is here an apparent defect in the argumentation, because the faults we may see in our brother, may obstruct our attachment, which cannot be the case with regard to God. But the apostle's meaning was, that if an object striking the senses, as our brother, does not excite affection, we cannot love an object that is abstract as the Divine Nature. Now, those are habitually cruel to animals, are generally less tender, and they insensibly lose that constitutional sympathy which produces the affection of the heart and the mind. This constitutional sympathy excites in us a painful impression, that on seeing a wounded man, we are spontaneously moved to succour the afflicted. This sympathy is excited not only by the sight of a man, but also by the sight of a beast when treated with cruelty. Hence, on habituating ourselves to be cruel to animals, we do violence to our feelings, harden the heart, and extinguish the sympathy of nature. Ah! how suspicious should we be of virtues merely rational, and unconnected with the heart. They are more noble indeed, but they are not so sure. We may also remark, that those employed

in slaughtering animals, are often wanting in tenderness and affection. And this very notion illustrates several of the Mosaic laws, which appear at first destitute of propriety, but which are founded on what we have just said. Such is the law which prohibits *eating of things strangled*; such is the law on finding a bird's nest, which forbids our taking the dam with the young: such also is that where God forbids our *seething a kid in his mother's milk*. Gen. ix. 4. Deut. xxii. 6, 7. Exod. xxiii. 19. In the last, some have thought that God was wishful to fortify the Jews against a superstitious custom of the heathens, who, after having gathered the fruits of the vine, seethed a kid in his mother's milk, and then sprinkled the milk to Bacchus, that he might cruelly kill this animal which presumes to brouse on the vine consecrated to the God. But I doubt, whether from all the ancient authors they can adduce a passage demonstrative that this species of superstition was known to subsist in the time of Moses. This difficulty is obviated by the explication I propose: besides, it excites humanity by enjoying compassion to animals; a duty inculcated by the heathens. The Phrygians were prohibited from killing an ox that trod out the corn. The judges of the Areopagus exiled a boy, who had plucked out the eyes of a living owl; and they severely punished a man who had roasted a bull alive. The duty of humanity is consequently the *third* motive of the institution of the Sabbath. Hereby God recalled to the recollection of the Jews the situation in which they had been placed in the land of Egypt. *The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,—*

that thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee thence, through a mighty hand and outstretched arm : therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath-day. Deut. v. 14, 15.

4. In a word, the design of God in the institution of the Sabbath, was to recal to the minds of men the recollection of their original equality : he requires masters and servants alike to abstain from labour, so as in some sort to confound the diversity of their conditions, and to abate that pride, of which superior rank is so common a source.

There was among the heathens one festival very singular, which they call the *Saturnalia*. It was one of the most ancient festivals of paganism. MACROBIUS affirms, that it was celebrated in Greece long before the foundation of Rome. The masters gave the servants a treat ; they placed them at their own table, and clothed them in their own raiment. The heathens say, that this festival was instituted by King JANUS, to commemorate the age of Saturn, when men were equal, and unacquainted with the distinctions of rank and fortune. The institution was highly proper, being founded on fact, and it may serve as an illustration of our text.

God, in recalling to men the original equality of their condition, apprised them in what consisted the true excellence of man. It is not in the difference of rank, or what is called fortune. It consists in being men : it consists in the image of God, after which

we were made : and consequently, the humblest of men made in his image, are entitled to respect.

This important reflection, I would inculcate on imperious masters, who treat their domestics as the brutes destitute of knowledge. We must not, I grant, disturb the order of society : the scriptures suppose the diversity of conditions. Hence they prescribe the duties of masters to their servants, and the duties of servants to their masters. But rank cannot sanction that haughty and distant carriage. Do you know what you do in mauling those in whom certain advantages has placed in your power ? You degrade yourselves ; you renounce your proper dignity ; and in assuming an extraneous glory, you seem but lightly to esteem that which is natural. I have said, that the glory of man does not consist in riches, nor in royalty, but in the excellence of his nature, in the image of God, after which he was made, and in the immortality to which he aspires. If you despise your servants, you do not derive your dignity from these sources, but from your exterior condition ; for, if you derived it from the sources I have noticed, you would respect the persons committed to your care.—This may suffice for the reasons of the institution of the Sabbath, let us say a word on the manner in which it must be celebrated.

2. On this subject, the less enlightened rabbins have indulged their superstition more than on any other. Having distorted the idea of the day, they would ascribe to the Sabbath the power of conferring dignity on inanimate creatures : they even assign this reason, that God prohibited their offering him any

victim not a week old ; and circumcising their children till that time ; they assign, I say, this reason, that no creature could be worthy to be offered to him, till he had first been consecrated by a Sabbath !

They have distorted also the obligation imposed upon them of ceasing from labour. The rabbins have reduced to thirty-nine heads whatever they presume to be forbidden on that day. Each of those heads includes the *minutiæ*, and not only the *minutiæ*, and things directly opposed to the happiness of society, but also to the spirit of the precept. Some have even scrupled to defend their own lives on that day against their enemies. Ptolomy Lagus, and Pompey after him, at the seige of Jerusalem, availed themselves of this superstition. Antiochus Epiphanes perpetrated an action still more cruel and vile. He pursued the Jews to the caves, whither they had fled to hide from his vengeance. There, on the Sabbath-day, they suffered themselves to be slaughtered as beasts, without daring either to defend themselves, or even to secure the entrance of their retreat.

Some others, the Dositheans, a branch of the Samaritans, imposed a law of abiding the whole day in whatever place they were found by the Sabbath. We recollect the story of the Jew, who having fallen into an unclean place, refused to be taken out on the Sabbath-day ; as also the decision of the Bishop of Saxony on that point, who, after knowing his scruple, condemned him to remain there the whole of the Sunday also, it being just that the Christian Sabbath should be observed with the same sanctity as he had observed the Jewish.

They have likewise cast a gloom on the joy which the faithful should cherish on this holy day. It is a fact, that some of them fasted to the close of the day: to this custom the Emperor Augustus alludes, when having remained a whole day without meat, he wrote to Tiberias, that a Jew did not better observe the fast of the Sabbath, than he had observed it that day. But the greater number espoused the opposite side, and under a presumption that the prophet promised the divine approbation to those that *make the Sabbath their delight*, they took the greater precaution to avoid whatever might make them sad. They imposed a law to make three meals that day. They regarded fasting the day which preceded, and followed the Sabbath, as a crime, lest it should disturb the joy. They allowed more time for sleep than on the other days of the week; they had fine dresses for the Sabbath; they reserved the best food, and the most delicious wines to honour the festival: this is what they called *making the Sabbath a delight!* This induced Plutarch to believe that they celebrated this festival in honour of Bacchus, and that the word Sabbath was derived from the Greek *sabazein*, a word appropriate to the licentious practices indulged in the festivals of this false god. They affirm, on not attaining the sublime of devotion, that the cause is a deficiency of rejoicing. They even presume, that this joy reaches to hell, and that the souls of Jews condemned to its torments, have a respite on the Sabbath-day. Evident it is, that all those notions and licentious customs have originated from an imaginary superstition, and not from the word of God.

Instead of the whimsical notions they had imbibed, God required a conduct consonant to the injunctions of his law. The import of the phrase, *doing thy own pleasure on my holy day*; is, that thou follow not thy own caprice in the notions thou hast formed of religion, but what I myself have prescribed.

Instead of the imaginary excellence they attributed to the Sabbath, God required them to reverence it because it was a sign of communion with him; because in approaching him on this day, they became more holy; because they then renewed their vows, and became more and more detached from idolatry; and in fine, because on this day they became devoted to his worship in a peculiar manner. This is the import of the expression, *it is holy to the Lord*; I would say, it is distinguished, it is separated from the other days of the week, for the duties of religion.

Instead of this rigorous Sabbath, God required a cessation from all kinds of labour, which would tend to interrupt their meditations on all the marvels he had wrought for their country. He especially required that they should abstain from travelling long journies; so is the gloss which some have given to the words, *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath*, though, perhaps, withdrawing the foot from the Sabbath is a metaphorical expression for *ceasing to profane it*. But withal, they were allowed to do works of mercy, whether divine, or for the preservation of life. Hence the maxim of their wiser men, that *the dangers of life superseded the Sabbath*. And the celebrated Maimonides has decided the lawfulness of the Jews besieging and defending cities on

the Sabbath-day. We see likewise in the history of the Maccabees, that Matthias and his sons defended themselves with resolution on that day. Besides, they were always allowed to walk what is called a *Sabbath-day's journey*; that is, two thousand cubits, the distance between the camp and the tabernacle, while they were in the desert: every Jew being obliged to attend the divine service, it was requisite that this walk should be allowed.* This was the divine worship, which above all objects must engross their heart, and especially, the reading of God's word. This, perhaps, is the import of the phrase, which excites a very different idea in our version, *nor speaking thine own words*, which may be read, *that thou mayest attach thyself to the word*.

3. It remains to consider the promise connected with the observation of the Sabbath. *Then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*. This promise is susceptible of a double import, the one literal, the other spiritual.

The literal refers to temporal prosperity; it is couched in figures consonant to the oriental style, and particularly to the prophetic. The high places of the earth, are those of Palestine; so called, because it is a mountainous country. The idea of our prophet coincides with what Moses has said in the xxxi^d chapter of Deuteronomy. *He has made him to ride*

* From the centre, the place of the Tabernacle, to the extremities of a camp of three millions of people could not be less than four or five miles. Hence the prohibition of journeys of pleasure, and unholy diversions, seems to have been the object of the precept.

upon the high places of the earth : or to ride on horse-back, as in our text, which implies the surmounting of the greatest difficulties. Hence, God's promise to those who shall observe his Sabbath, of riding on the high places of the earth, imports that they should have a peaceful residence in the land of Canaan.

Plenty is joined to peace in the words which follow : *I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.* Here is designated the abundance which the descendants of the patriarch should enjoy in the promised land. Some presume that the name of Jacob is here mentioned in preference of Abraham, because Jacob had a peculiar reverence for the Sabbath-day. They say, that Isaiah here refers to an occurrence in the patriarch's life. It is recorded in the xxxiii^d of Genesis, that Jacob, coming from Padan-aram, encamped before the city of Shechem : and they contend, that it was to hallow the Sabbath, which intervened during his march. Reverie of the rabbins. The promises made to Abraham, and Isaac, respecting the promised land, were renewed to Jacob ; hence it might as well be called *the heritage of Jacob*, as the heritage of Abraham. This is the literal sense of my text.

It has also a spiritual sense, which some interpreters have sought in this phrase, *the high places of the earth.* They think it means the abode of the blessed. Not wishful to seek it in the expression, we shall find it in the nature of the object. What was this *heritage of Jacob* ? Was it only Canaan properly so called ? This St. Paul denies in the xith chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of the

faith of the patriarchs, he positively asserts, that the promised land was not its principal object. The *heritage of Jacob*, according to the apostle, is a country better than that which the patriarchs had left ; *that is, a heavenly country*. This is the heritage of which the expiring patriarch hoped to acquire the possession ; and of which he said in his last moments, *O God, I have waited for thy salvation*. Gen. xlix. 18. This Jerusalem, the apostle calls a high place, the *Jerusalem which is above*, not because it is situate on the mountains, but because it really is above the region of terrestrial things. This is the Jerusalem which is the mother of us all, and to which the claims of Christians are not less powerful than the Jews.

This induces us, my brethren, to consider the text in regard to Christians, as we have considered it in regard to Jews. Perhaps you have secretly reproached us, during the course of this sermon, with having consumed, in less instructive researches, the limits of our time. But, my brethren, if you complain of the remote reference which the subject has to your state, I fear, I do fear, you will murmur against what follows, as touching you too closely. I said in the beginning, that it was the dreadful excess into which we are plunged ; the horrible profanation of the Sabbath, a profanation which has so long and so justly reproached us, which determined me on the choice of this text. We proceed therefore to some more pointed remarks, which shall close this discourse.

II. The whole is reduced to two questions, in which we are directly concerned. *First*, are Christians obliged to observe a day of rest ; and *secondly*, in these provinces, in this church, is that day celebrated, I do not say with all the sanctity it requires, but only, is it observed with the same reverence as in the rest of the Christian world, and even in places the most corrupt ?

1. Are Christians obliged to observe a day of rest? This question was debated in the primitive church, and the subject has been resumed in our own age. Some of the ancient and of the modern divines have maintained, not only that the obligation is imposed on Christians, but that the fourth commandment of the law ought to be observed in all its rigour. Hence, in the first ages, some have had the same respect for Saturday as for Sunday. Gregory Nyssianzen calls these two days two companions, for which we should cherish an equal respect. The constitutions of Clement enjoin both these festivals to be observed in the church; the Sabbath-day in honour of the creation, and the Lord's-day, which exhibits to our view the resurrection of the Saviour of the world.

We have no design, my brethren, to revive those controversies, this part of our discourse being designed for your edification. You are not accused of wanting respect for the Saturday, but for the day that follows. Your defect is not a wish to observe two Sabbaths in the week, but a refusal to observe one. It is then sufficient to prove, that Christians are obliged to observe one day in the week, and that day is the first.

This is apparent from *four* considerations I proceed to name.

First, from the nature of the institution. It is a general maxim, that whatever morality was contained in the Jewish ritual ; that whatever was calculated to strengthen the bonds of our communion with God, to reconcile us to our neighbour, to inspire us with holy thoughts, was obligatory on the Christian ; and more so than on the Jews, in proportion as the New Covenant surpasses the Old in excellence. Apply this maxim to our subject. The precept under discussion has a ceremonial aspect, assortable to the circumstances in which the ancient church were placed. The selection of the seventh day, the rigours of its sanctity, and its designs to supersede the idolatrous customs of Egypt, were peculiar to the ancient church, and purely ceremonial ; and in that view, not binding to the Christian. But the necessity of having one day in seven consecrated to the worship of God, to study the grand truths of religion, to make a public profession of faith, to give relaxation to servants, to confound all distinction of rank in our congregations, to acknowledge that we are all brethren, that we are equal in the sight of God who there presides ; all these are not comprised in the ritual, they are wholly moral.

2. We have proofs in the New-Testament, that the first day of the week was chosen of God to succeed the seventh. This day is called in the Revelation *the Lord's-day*, by way of excellence. chap. i. 10. It is said in the xxth chapter of the book of Acts, that the apostles *came together on the first day*

of the week to break bread. And St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians to lay by on the first day of the week what each had designed for charity, sanctions the Sunday to be observed instead of the Saturday, seeing the Jews, according to the testimony of Philo, and Josephus, had been accustomed to make the collections, and receive the tenths in the synagogues to carry to Jerusalem.*

3. On this subject, we have likewise authentic documents of antiquity. Pliny, the younger, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan concerning the Christians, says, that they set apart one day for devotion, and it is indisputable that he means the Sunday. Justin Martyr in his Apologies, and in his letter to

* SAURIN is here brief on the reasons assigned for the change of the Sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week. The reader, however, may see them at large in the second volume of Dr. Lightfoot's works, and in the works of Mr. Mede. They are in substance as follow; that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath; and the Supreme Lawgiver of his church. He has not only changed the Old Covenant for the New, but he has superseded the shadows of the ritual law for the realities; baptism for circumcision, and the holy supper for the passover. The Sabbath was first instituted to commemorate the creation; and the redemption is viewed at large as a new creation. *Isa. lxxv.* The institution was renewed to commemorate the emancipation from Egypt; how much more then should it be enforced to commemorate the redemption of the world? To disregard it would apparently implicate us in a disbelief of this redemption. Moses, who renewed the Sabbath, was faithful as a servant, but Christ, who changed it, is the Son, and Lord of all. The Sabbath was the birth-day of the Lord of Glory: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." *Psa. ii.* It was not less so the birth-day of our hope: God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. *1 Pet. i. 3.* And this was the day in which he began his glorious reign. He then affirmed, that *All power was given unto him in heaven and earth,* *Matt. xxviii. 18.* And how could the church rejoice while the Lord was enveloped in the tomb? But on the morning of the resurrection, it was said by the Father to the Son, *Thy dead men shall live.*—The Son replies, *Together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust.* *Isa. xxvi. 19.* This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. *Psa. cxviii. 24.*

Denis, pastor of Corinth, bears the same testimony. The Emperor Constantine made severe laws against those who did not sanctify the Sabbath. These laws were renewed by Theodosius, by Valentinian, by Arcadius ; for, my brethren, these Emperors did confine their duties to the extension of trade, the defence of their country, and to the establishment of politics as the supreme law ; they thought themselves obliged to maintain the laws of God, and to render religion venerable ; and they reckoned that the best barriers of a state were the fear of God, and a zeal for his service. They issued severe edicts to enforce attendance on devotion, and to prohibit profane sports on this day. The second council of Maçon,* held in the year 585, and the second of Aix-la-Chapelle, held in 836, followed by their canons the same line of duty.

But the grand reason for consecrating one day in seven arises from ourselves, from the infinity of dissipations which waste the ordinary course of life. Tax your conscience with the time you spend in devotion when alone. Do we not know ; do we not see ; do we not learn on all sides, how your days are spent ? Do we not know how those grave men live, who, from a notion of superior rank, think themselves excused from examining their conscience, and attending to the particulars of religion ? Do we not know how that part of mankind live, who apparently have abandoned the care of their soul to care for their body, to dress and undress, to visit and receive visits, to

* Maçon, *Matisco*, is situate 40 miles north of Lyons, and was a depot of the Romans.

play both night and day, and thus to render diversions, some of which might be innocent as recreations, if used with moderation, to render them, I say, criminal by the loss of time? Is it solitude, is it reading God's word which excite those reveries which constantly float in your brain; and those extravagancies of pleasures whereby you seem to have assumed the task of astonishing the church by the amusement you afford to some, and the offence you give to others? It was, therefore, requisite that there should be one day destined to stop the torrent, to recal your wandering thoughts, and to present to your view those grand truths, which so seldom occur in the ordinary pursuits of life.

These remarks may suffice for the illustration of the *first question*, whether Christians are obliged to observe one day in seven: our *second inquiry is*, whether this day is celebrated in these provinces, I do not say as it ought; but, at least, is it celebrated with the same decency as in the most corrupt parts of the Christian world?

Ah! my brethren, must every duty of Christianity suggest occasion to complain of your conduct, and furnish impeachments for your condemnation? I look round for one trait in morality, of which we have nothing but applause to bestow, and of which we may say, go on, go on; that is well done. *Blessed is that servant, whom when his Lord cometh he shall find so doing.* I look for one period in your life in which I may find you Christians in reality, as you are in name. I watch you for six days in the bustle of business, and I find you haughty, proud, voluptuous, selfish,

and refractory to every precept of the gospel.—Perhaps on this hallowed day you shall be found irreproachable ; perhaps, satisfied with giving to the world the six days of the week, you will consecrate to the Lord the one which is so peculiarly devoted to him. But, alas ! this day, this very day is spent as the others ; the same pursuits, the same thoughts, the same pleasures, the same employments, the same intemperance !

In other places, they observe the exterior, at least. The libertine suspends his pleasures, the workmen quit their trades, and the shops are shut : and each is accustomed to attend some place of worship. But how many among us, very far from entering into the spirit and temper of Christianity, are negligent of its exterior decencies !

How scandalous to see on the Sabbath, the artificer publicly employed at his work, profaning this hallowed festival by his common trade ; wasting the hours of devotion in mechanical labours ; and defying, at the same time, both the precepts of religion, and the institutions of the church !

How scandalous to see persons of rank, of age, of character, be, I do not say whole weeks, I do not say whole months, but whole years, without once entering these churches, attending our devotion, and participating of our sacraments !

How scandalous that this Sabbath is the very day marked by some for parties, and festivity in the highest style ! How scandalous to see certain concourses of people ; certain doors open ; and certain flambeaux lighted : those who have heard a report that you are

Christians, expect to find you in the houses of prayer : but what is their astonishment to see that those houses are the rendezvous of pleasure !

And what must we think of secret devotion, when the public is so ill discharged ? How shall we persuade ourselves that you discharge the more difficult, duties of religion when those that are most easy are neglected ? Seeing you do not sufficiently reverence religion to forego certain recreations, how can we think that you discharge the duties of self-denial, of crucifying the old man, of mortifying concupiscence, and of all the self-abasement, which religion requires ?

What mortifies us most, and what obliges us to form an awful opinion on this conduct is, that we see its principle.—Its principle, Do you ask, my brethren ? It is, in general, that you have very little regard for religion ; and this is the most baneful source, from which our vices spring. When a man is abandoned to a bad habit ; when he is blinded by a certain passion ; when he is hurried away with a throng of desire, he is then highly culpable, and he has the justest cause of alarm, if a hand, an immediate hand be not put to the work of reformation. In this case, one may presume, that he has, notwithstanding, a certain respect for the God he offends. One may presume, that though he neglect to reform, he, at least, blames his conduct ; and that if the charm were once dissolved, truth would resume her original right, and that the motives of virtue would be felt in all their force. But when a man sins by principle ; when he slights religion ; when he regards it as a matter of indifference ; what resource of salvation

have we then to hope? This, with many of you, is the leading fault. The proofs are but too recent, and too numerous. You have been often reproached with it, and if I abridge this point, it is not through a deficiency, but a superabundance of evidence which obliges me to do it. And mean while, What, alas! is this fortune; what is this prosperity; what is the most enviable situation in life; what is all this that pleases, and enchants the soul, when it is not religion which animates and governs the whole?

Ah! my brethren! to what excess do you extend your corruption? What then is the time you would devote to piety? When will you work for your souls? We conjure you by the bowels of Jesus Christ, who on this day finished the work of your salvation, that you return to recollection. When we enforce, in general, the necessity of holiness, we are lost in the multitude of your duties, and having too many things to practise, you often practise none at all. But here is one particular point; here is a plain precept, *Remember the Sabbath-day.*

A mournful necessity induces us, my brethren, to exhort you to estimate the privilege God affords you of coming to his house, of pouring out your souls into his bosom, and of invigorating your love.

Ah! poor Christians, whom Babylon encloses in her walls, how are you to conduct yourselves in the discharge of those duties! O that God, wearied with the strokes inflicted upon you, would turn away from his indignation! O that the barriers which prohibit your access to these happy climates were removed! O that your hopes, so often illusive, were but gratifi-

ed. I mean to see you, running in crowds : I seem to see the fallen rise again ; and our confessors, more grateful for their spiritual, than their temporal liberty, come to distinguish their zeal. But these are things as yet, *hid from your eyes*.

O my God ; and must thy church still be a desolation in all the earth ? Must it in one place be ravaged by the tyrant, and in another seduced by the tempter, an enemy more dangerous than the tyrants, and more cruel than the heathen ? Must our brethren at the gallies still be deprived of the Sabbath, and must we, by the profanation of this day, force thee to visit us, as thou hast visited them ? Let us prevent so great a calamity ; let us return to ourselves ; let us hallow this august day ; let us reform our habits ; and let us *make the Sabbath our delight*.

It is requisite that each should employ the day in contemplating the works of nature ; but especially the works of grace ; and like the cherubim inclined toward the ark, that each should make unavailing efforts to see the bottom, and trace the dimensions, *the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love of God, which passeth all knowledge*. Eph. iii. 19.

It is requisite, that our churches should be crowded with assiduous, attentive, and well-disposed hearers ; that God should there hear the vows, that we are his people, his redeemed, and that we wish the Sabbath to be a *sign between us and him*, as it was to the Israelites.

It is requisite, on entering this place, that we should banish from our mind all worldly thoughts.—Business, trade, speculations, grandeur, pleasure,

you employ me sufficiently during the week, allow me to give the Sabbath to God. Pursue me not to his temple ; and let not the flights of incommoding birds disturb my sacrifice.

It is requisite at the close of worship, that each should be recollected, that he should meditate on what he has heard, and that the company with whom he associates should assist him to practise, not to eradicate the truths from his mind.

It is requisite that the heads of houses should call their children, and their servants together, and ask them, What have you heard ? What have you understood ? What faults have you reformed ? What steps have you taken ? What good resolutions have you formed ?

It is requisite wholly to dismiss all those secular cares and servile employments which have occupied us during the week ; not that holiness consists in mere abstinence, and in the observance of that painful minutiae ; but in a more noble and exalted principle. It is, no doubt, the obtrusion of a galling yoke, that we who are made in the image of God, and have an immortal soul, should be compelled, during the whole of this low and groveling life, to follow some trade, some profession, or some labour by no means assortable with the dignity of man. So is our calamity. But it is requisite, at least, it is highly requisite that one day in the week we should remember our origin, and turn our minds to things which are worthy of their excellence. It is requisite, that one day in the week we should rise superior to sensible objects ; that we should think of God, of heaven, and

of eternity ; that we should repose, if I may so speak, from the violence which must be done to ourselves to be detained on earth for six whole days. O blessed God, when shall *the times of refreshing come*, in which thou wilt supersede labour, and make thy children fully free ? *Acts iii. 21.* When shall *we enter the rest that remaineth for thy people ?* *Heb. iv. 9.* in which we shall be wholly absorbed in the contemplation of thy beauty, we shall resemble thee in holiness and happiness, because *we shall see thee as thou art*, and thou thyself shalt *be all in all ? Amen.*

SERMON VII.

The Calamities of Europe.



LUKE xiii. 1—5.

There were present at that season, one that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. On those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

I HAVE cut off the nations, I have made their towers desolate, I have sapped the foundation of their cities; I said, surely thou shalt receive instruction, so that thy dwelling shall not be cut off. Zeph. iii. 6, 7. This instructive caution God once published by the ministry of Zephaniah. And did it regard that age alone, or was it a prophecy for future times? Undoubtedly, my brethren, it regarded the Jews in the prophet's time. They saw every where around them extirminated nations, fortresses in ruins, villages deserted,

and cities sapped to the foundation. The judgments of God had fallen, not only on the idolatrous nations, but the ten tribes had been overwhelmed. The Jews, instead of *receiving instruction*, followed the crimes of those whom God had cut off, and involved themselves in the same calamities.

And if these words were adapted to that age, how strikingly, alas! are they applicable to our own! What do we see around us? Nations exterminated, villages deserted, and cities sapped to the foundation. The visitations of God are abroad in Europe; we are surrounded with them; and are they not intended, I appeal to your conscience, for our instruction? But let us not anticipate the close of this discourse. We propose to show you in what light we ought to view the judgments which God inflicts on the human kind. You have heard the words of our text. We shall stop but a moment to mark the occasion, and direct the whole of our care to enforce their principal design. After having said a word respecting *the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices*; and respecting the dreadful fall of this tower which crushed *eighteen persons* under its ruins, we shall endeavour to examine,

I. The misguided views with which mankind regard the judgments God openly inflicts upon their neighbours.

II. The real light in which those judgments ought to be considered. The first of these ideas we shall illustrate on the occasion of the tragic accidents mentioned in the text, which was reported to Jesus Christ. The second, we shall illustrate on occasion

of the answer of Jesus Christ himself; *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? Suppose ye that those eighteen were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Considering the text in this view, we shall learn to avert the judgments of God from falling on our own heads, by the way in which we shall consider his visitations on others. God grant it. Amen.

What was the occasion of Pilate's cruelty, and of the vengeance he inflicted on those Galileans? This is a question difficult to determine. The most enlightened commentators assure us, that they find no traces of it either in Jewish, or in Roman history. The wary Josephus, according to his custom on those subjects, is silent here; and, probably, on the same principle which induced him to make no mention of the murder of the infants committed by the cruel Herod.

Pilate you know in general. He was one of those men, whom God, in the profound secrets of his providence, suffers to attain the most distinguished rank, to execute his designs, when they have no view but to gratify their own passions. He was a man, in whom much cruelty, joined to extreme avarice, rendered proper to be a rod in God's hand; and who, following the passions which actuated his mind, sometimes persecuting the Jews to please the heathens; and sometimes the Christians to please the Jews, sacrificed the finisher of our faith, and thus after troubling the synagogue, he became the tyrant of both the churches.

Perhaps, the vengeance he executed on the Galileans was not wholly without a cause. Here is what some have conjectured upon this narrative. Gaulon* was a town of Galilee; here a certain Judas was born, who on that account was surnamed the Gaulonite, of whom we have an account in the fifth chapter of the book of the Acts.† This man was naturally inclined to sedition. He communicated the spirit of revolt to his family, from his family to the city, from the city to the province, and from the province to all Judea. He had the art of catching the Jews by their passions, I would say, by their love of liberty. He excited them to assert their rights, to maintain their privileges, to throw off the yoke the Romans wished to impose, and to withhold the tribute. He succeeded in his designs; the Jews revered him as a patriot. But to remedy an inconsiderable evil, he involved them in a thousand disgraces. It has been conjectured that those whose blood was mingled with their sacrifices, were some of the seditious who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and of whom Pilate wished to make an example to intimidate others.

What we said of Pilate's cruelty, suggested by the subject, is wholly uncertain; we say the same of the tragic accident immediately subjoined in our text; I would say, the tower of Siloam, which crushed eighteen people under its ruins. We know in general, that there was a fountain in Jerusalem called Siloam, mentioned in the ninth chapter of St. John, and in the eighth chapter of Isaiah. We know that this

* Joseph. Antiq. lib. 13. c. 1.

† Theudas, *verse* 36.

fountain was at the foot of mount Zion, as many historians have asserted. We know that it had five porches, as the gospel expressly affirms. We know several particulars of this fountain, that it was completely dried up before the arrival of the Emperor Titus; and that it flowed not again till the commencement of the seige of Jerusalem: so we are assured by Josephus.* We know likewise, that the Empress Helena embellished it with various works, described by Nicephorus.† We know likewise various superstitions to which it has given birth; in particular, what is said by Geoffroy de Viterbus, that there was near it another fountain called the Holy Virgin, because, they say, this blessed woman drew water from it to wash the linen of Jesus Christ, and of her family. We are told also that the Turks have so great a veneration for it as to wash their children in the same water, and to perform around it various rituals of superstition.‡ But what this tower was, and what the cause of its fall was, we cannot discover, nor is it a matter of any importance.

Let us make no more vain efforts to illustrate a subject, which would be of little advantage, though we could place it in the fullest lustre. Let us turn the whole of our attention to what is of real utility. We have proposed, conformably to the text, to inquire, *first*, into the erroneous light in which men view the judgments God inflicts on their own species; and, *secondly*, the real light in which they ought to be considered. Here is in substance the subject of

* Wars of the Jews, lib. v. cap. 26.

† Eccles. Hist. lib. viii. cap. 20.

‡ See Jesuit Eusebius Nieremberg de Lerrapromis, cap. 43.

our discourse. Mankind regard the judgments God inflicts on their own species, 1. With a spirit of indifference ; but Jesus Christ would thereby excite in them a disposition of thought and reflection. 2. They regard them with a spirit of blindness ; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a spirit of instruction and knowledge. 3. They regard them with a spirit of rigour to others, and preference of themselves ; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a compassionate and humble temper. 4. They regard with an obdurate spirit ; but Jesus Christ would excite in them a spirit of reformation and repentance. These are terms, to which we must attach distinct ideas, and salutary instructions. If we shall sometimes recede from the words of Jesus Christ, it shall be to approximate ourselves more to the situation in which Providence has now placed us. And if we shall sometimes recede from the circumstances in which Providence has now placed us, it shall be to approach the nearer to the views of Jesus Christ.

The *first* characteristic of the erroneous disposition with which we regard the judgments God inflicts on other men, is stupor and inattention. I do not absolutely affirm, that they are not at all affected by the strokes of Providence. The apathy of the human mind cannot extend quite so far. How was it that this unheard of cruelty, could scarce impress the mind of those who were present ? Here are men who came up to Jerusalem, who came to celebrate the feast with joy, who designed to offer their victims to God ; but behold, they themselves become the victims of a tyrant's fury, who mixed their blood with that of the

beasts they had just offered ! Here are eighteen men employed in raising a tower, or perhaps accidentally standing near it ; and behold, they are crushed to pieces by its fall ! Just so, wars, pestilence, and famine, when we are not immediately, or but lightly involved in the calamity, make indeed a slight, though very superficial impression on the mind. We find, at most, in these events, but a temporary subject of conversation ; we recite them with the news of the day, *There were present at that season, some who told him of the Galileans ;* but we extend our inquiries no farther, and never endeavour to trace the designs of Providence. There are men who feel no interest but in what immediately affects them, provided their property sustain no loss by the calamity of others ; provided their happiness flow in its usual course ; provided their pleasures are not interrupted, though the greatest calamities be abroad in the earth, and though God inflict before our eyes the severest strokes, to them, it is of no moment. Hence the first mark of the misguided disposition with which men regard the judgments of the Lord on others, is stupor and inattention.

But how despicable is this disposition ! Do men live solely for themselves ? Are they capable of being employed about nothing but their own interests ? Are they unable to turn their views to the various bearings under which the judgments of God may be considered ? Every thing claims attention in these messengers of the divine vengeance. The philosopher finds here a subject of the deepest speculation. What are those impenetrable springs, moved of God,

which shake the fabric of the world, and suddenly convulse the face of society? Is it the earth, wearied of her primitive fertility, which occasions barrenness and famine? Or, is it some new malediction, supernaturally denounced by him who renders nature fruitful in her ordinary course? Is it the exhalations from the earth which empoison the air; or are there some pernicious qualities formed in the air which empoison the earth? By what secret of nature, or phenomenon of the Creator does the contagion pass with the velocity of lightning from one climate to another, bearing on the wings of the wind the infectious breath of one people to another? The statesman admires here the catastrophes of states, and the vicissitudes of society. He admires how the lot of war in an instant raises him who was low, and abases him who was high. He sees troops trained with labour, levied with difficulty, and formed with fatigue; he sees them destroyed by a battle in an hour; and what is more awful still, he sees them wasted by disease without being able to sell their lives, or to dip their hands in the enemies' blood. The dying man sees, in the calamities of others, the image of his own danger. He sees death armed at every point, *and him that hath the power of death,** moving at his command the winds, the waves, the tempests, the pestilence, the famine, and war. The Christian here extending his views, sees how terrible it is *to fall into the hands of the living God.†* He adores that Providence which directs all events, and without whose permission a hair cannot fall from the head: he sees

* Heb. ii. 14.

† x. 31.

in these calamities, messengers of the God, *who makes flames of fire his angels, and winds his ministers.** He *hears the rod, and who hath appointed it.†* Fearing to receive the same visitations, he *prepares to meet his God.‡* He *enters his closet, and hides himself till the indignation be overpast.* He *saves himself before the decree bring forth.§* He cries as Israel once cried, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God.||* Such are the variety of reflections and of emotions which the calamities of Providence excite in an enlightened mind. Truths which we proceed to develope, and which we enumerate here solely to demonstrate the stupidity of this first disposition, and to oppose it by a spirit of recollection and seriousness, implied in our Saviour's answer, and which he was wishful to excite in us.

2. We have marked, in the second place, a spirit of blindness, and our wish to oppose it by an enlightened and well-informed disposition. When we speak of those who have a spirit of blindness, we do not mean men of contracted minds, who having received it from nature, are incapable of reflection; men who think merely to adopt phantoms, and who talk merely to maintain absurdities. We attack those who pique themselves on a superiority; who, under a pretence of emancipating the mind from error and prejudice, and of rising *above* the vulgar, so immerse themselves in error and prejudice, as to sink *below* the vulgar. Persons who have knowledge indeed; but *professing themselves to be wise, they become*

* Heb. i. 7. † Mic. vi. 9. ‡ Amos iv. 12. § Zeph, ii, 2. || Mic. vi. 6.

fools ;* and are so much the more blind, to speak as the scripture, *because they say, we see.*† They treat those as weak-headed, whom the visitations of heaven prompt to self-examination, who recognise the hand of God, and who endeavour to penetrate his designs in the afflictions of mankind. More occupied with Pilate than with him whose counsel has determined the conduct of Pilate ; more occupied with politics, than with him who holds the reins of politics, and more attentive to nature than to the God of nature, they refer all to second causes, they regard nature and politics as the universal divinities, and the arbitrators of all events. This is what we call a spirit of blindness. And as nothing can be more opposite to the design of this text, and the object of this discourse, we ought to attack it with all our power, and demonstrate another truth supposed by Jesus Christ in the text, not only that God is the author of all calamities, but that in sending them, he correctly determines their end. This shall appear by a few plain propositions.

Proposition first. Either nature is nothing, or it is the assemblage of the beings God has created ; either the effects of nature are nothing, or they are the products and effects of the laws by which God has arranged, and by which he governs beings ; consequently, whatever we call natural effects, and the result of second causes, are the work of God, and the effects of his established laws. This proposition is indisputable. One must be an Atheist, or an Epicurean to revoke it in doubt. For instance, when you

* Rom. i. 22.

† John ix. 41.

say that an earthquake is a natural effect, and that it proceeds from a second cause : do you know that there are under our feet subterraneous caverns, that those caverns are filled with combustible matter, that those substances ignite by friction, expand, and overturn whatever obstructs their passage ? Here is a natural effect ; here is a second cause. But I ask ; who has created this earth ? Who has formed those creatures susceptible of ignition ? Who has established the laws of expansive force ? You must here confess, that either God, or chance is the author. If you say chance, atheism is then on the throne ; Epicurus triumphs ; the fortuitous concourse of atoms is established. If you say God, our proposition is proved, and sufficiently so ; for those that attack us here, are not Atheists and Epicureans ; hence, in refuting them, it is quite sufficient to prove, that their principle tends to the Epicurean and the Atheistical system.

Proposition second. God, in forming his various works, and in the arrangement of his different laws, knew every possible effect which could result from them. If you do not admit this principle, you have no notion of the perfect Being ; an infinity of events would happen in the world independent of his pleasure ; he would daily learn ; he would grow wiser with age ; and become learned by experience ! These are principles which destroy themselves, and combine by their contradiction to establish our second proposition, that God, in creating his works, and in prescribing the laws of motion, was apprised of every possible effect.

Proposition third. God, foreseeing all those effects, has approved of them, and determined each to an appropriate end. It is assortable to the nature of a wise Being to do nothing but what is consonant to wisdom, nothing but what is connected with some design; and to make this the distinguishing characteristic of the smallest, as well as of the greatest works. The wisest of men are unable to follow this law, because circumscribed in knowledge, their attention is confined to a narrow sphere of objects. If a prince, wishful to make his subjects happy, should endeavour to enter into all the minutiae of his kingdom, he could not attend to the main design; and his measures would tend to retard his purpose. But God, whose mind is infinite, who comprises in the immense circle of his knowledge an infinity of ideas without confusion, is directed by his wisdom to propose the best design in all his works. Consequently the works of nature which he has created, and the effects of nature which he has foreseen, all enter into his eternal counsels, and receive their destination. Hence, to refer events to second causes, not recognizing the designated visitations of Providence by the plague, by war, and famine; and under a presumption, that these proceed from the general laws of nature, not perceiving the Author and Lord of nature, is to have a spirit of blindness.

Moreover, all these arguments, suggested by sound reason, are established in the clearest and most indisputable manner in the scriptures, to which all wise men should have recourse, to direct their judgment. Does Joseph arrive in Egypt after being sold by his

brethren? It was God that sent him thither, according to his own testimony. Gen. xlv. 5. *Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life.* Do kings arrange their counsels? *Their heart is in the hands of God; he turneth them as the rivers of water.* Prov. xxi. 1. Does Assyria afflict Israel? *He is the rod of God's anger.* Isa. x. 5. Do Herod and Pilate persecute Jesus Christ? They do that which God had previously *determined in counsel.* Acts iv. 27. Does a hair fall from our head? It is not without the permission of God. Luke xii. 7. If you require particular proof that God has designs in chastisements, and not only with regard to the chastised, but to those also in whose presence they are chastised, you have but to remember the words at the opening of this discourse; *I have cut off nations, I have made their towers desolate, and said, surely thou shalt receive instruction;* you have but to recollect the words of Ezekiel, *As I live, saith the Lord, surely because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with thy detestable things, a third part of you shall die with the pestilence, and another part shall fall by the sword; and a third part shall be scattered: and thou shalt be a reproach, and a taunt, and an instruction.* Ezek. v. 11—15. Pay attention to this word, *an instruction.* My brethren, God has therefore designs, when he afflicts other men before our eyes; and designs in regard to us; he proposes *our instruction.* Hence his visitations must be regarded with an enlightened mind.

3. Men regard with a spirit of severity and of preference, the judgments which God inflicts on others ; but Jesus Christ was wishful to excite in them a disposition of tenderness and humiliation ; he apprises them, that the most afflicted are not always the most guilty. So is the import of these expressions, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? Suppose ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay.*

The Jews had much need of this caution. Many of them regarded all the calamities of life, as the punishment of some sin committed by the afflicted. The mortifying comforts of Job's friends, and all the rash judgments they formed of his case, were founded upon this principle : you find likewise some of our Saviour's disciples, on seeing a man born blind, asking this question ; *Lord, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* John ix. 2. How could they conceive that a man, blind from his birth, could have committed a crime to superinduce the calamity? This corresponds with our assertion : they were persuaded that all calamities were the result of some crime ; and even in this life, that the most calamitous were the most culpable ; and they even preferred the supposition of sins committed in a pre-existent state, to the ideas of visitations not preceded by crime. They admitted for the most part the doctrine of metempsychosis, and supposed the punishments sustained in one body, were the result of sins committed in other bodies. This sentiment, the Jews of Alexandria had communicated to their brethren in

Judea ; but we suppress, on this head, a long detail of proofs from Philo, Josephus, and others.* They had also another notion, that children might have criminal thoughts while slumbering in the womb. It is probable that those who, in the text, reported to Jesus Christ the unhappy end of the Galileans, were initiated into this opinion. This is the spirit of severity and of preference by which we regard the calamities of others. This is what the Lord attacks : *Suppose ye that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem ? I tell you, nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

This is the most afflicted man in all the earth ; therefore he is more wicked than another who enjoys a thousand comforts. What a pitiful argument !

To reason in this way is to *limit the Holy One of Israel*. Ps. lxxviii. 41. and not to recognise the diversity of designs an infinite Intelligence may propose in the visitations of mankind. Sometimes he is wishful to prove them : *Now I know that thou lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.* Gen. xxii. 12. Sometimes he designs to be glorified by their deliverance. Thus the opening of the eyes of the man born blind was designated, to make manifest *the works of God* ; and the sickness of Lazarus was to *glorify the Son of God*. Sometimes he proposes to make their faith conspicuous ; this was the end of Job's affliction.

* Philo on the Giants ; and on Dreams : Joseph. Wars of the Jews, book ii. cap. 12.

To reason in this way, is to revolt against experience, and to prefer the worst of sinners to the best of saints, Herod who is on the throne, to Jesus Christ who is driven to exile ; Nero who sways the world, to St. Paul who is reckoned *the filth and off-scouring of the earth.*

To reason in this way, is to disallow the turpitude of crime. If God sometimes defer to punish it on earth, it is because the punishments of this life are inadequate to the enormity of sin.

To reason in this way, is to be inattentive to the final judgment which God is preparing. If this life were eternal ; if this were our principle period of existence, the argument would have some colour. But if there be a life after death ; if this is but a shadow which vanisheth away ; if there be a precise time when virtue shall be recompensed, and vice punished, which we cannot dispute without subverting the principles of religion, and of reason, then this conjecture is unfounded.

To reason in this way, is to be ignorant of the value of afflictions. They are one of the most fertile sources of virtue, and the most successful means of inducing us to comply with the design of the gospel. If the calamities which mortals suffer in this life were allowed to form a prejudice, it should rather be in favour of God's love, than of his anger : and instead of saying, this man being afflicted, he is consequently more guilty than he who is not afflicted, we should rather say, this man having no affliction, is, in fact, a greater sinner than the other who is afflicted.

In general, there are few wicked men to whom the best of saints, in a comparative view, have a right of preference. In the life of a criminal, you know at most but a certain number of his crimes ; but you see an infinite number in your own. Comparing yourselves with an assassin about to be broken on the wheel, you would no doubt find a preference in this point. But extend your thoughts ; review the history of your life ; investigate your heart ; examine those vain thoughts, those irregular desires, those secret practices of which God alone is witness ; and then judge of vice and virtue, not by the notions that men form of them, but by the portrait exhibited in God's law ; consider that anger, envy, pride, and calumny, carried to a certain degree, are more odious in the eyes of God, than those notorious crimes punished by human justice ; and on investigating the life of the criminal, you will be obliged to confess that there is nothing more revolting than what is found in your own.

Besides, a good man is so impressed with his own faults, that the sentiment extenuates in his estimation the defects of others. This was the sentiment of St. Paul : *I am the chief of sinners ; but I obtained mercy.* This was his injunction ; *In lowliness of mind, let each esteem another better than himself.* Phil. ii. 5. 1 Tim. i. 15. But is this avowal founded on fact ? Is the maxim practicable ? It is, my brethren, in the sense we have just laid down. But the Jews, whom our Saviour addressed, had no need of those solutions : their lives realized his assertions ; and would to God that ours, compared with the multitude of

victims which this day cover the earth, might not suggest the same reflection ! *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans ? Suppose ye that those eighteen were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem ? Do you suppose that those whose dead bodies are now strewed over Europe ? Do you suppose that the people assailed with famine, and those exempt from famine, but menaced with the plague and pestilence, are greater sinners than the rest of the world ? I tell you, nay.*

IV. Lastly : mankind regard the judgments which God obviously inflicts on others with an obdurate disposition ; but Jesus Christ is wishful to reclaim them by a spirit of reformation and repentance. This is the design of his inference, which is twice repeated ; *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

One of the designs God proposed in permitting the cruelty of Pilate to those Galileans, and the fall of the tower of Siloam, on eighteen of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was to give others an idea of the punishment which awaited themselves, in case they persisted in sin, and thereby of exciting them to repentance. He has now the same designs in regard to us, while afflicting Europe before our eyes.

That this was his design with regard to the Jews, we have a proof beyond all exception, and that proof is experience. The sentence pronounced against that unhappy nation ; *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, was literally executed, and in detail. Yes, literally did the Jewish nation perish as the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacri-

fices, and as the others on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

Read what happened under Archelaus, on the day of the passover. The people were assembled from all parts, and thought of nothing but of offering their sacrifices. Archelaus surrounded Jerusalem, placed his cavalry without the city, caused his infantry to enter, and to defile the temple with the blood of three thousand persons.*

Read the sanguinary conduct of those cruel assassins, who in open day, and during their most solemn festival in particular, caused the effects of their fury to be felt, and mingled human gore with that of the animals slain in the temple.

Read the furious battle fought by the zelotes in the same temple, where without fear of defiling the sanctity of religion, to use the expression of the Jewish historian, "they defiled the sacred place with their impure blood."†

Read the pathetic description of the same historian concerning the factions who held their sittings in the temple. "Their revenge," he says, "extended to the altar; they massacred the priests with those that offered sacrifices. Men who came from the extremities of the earth to worship God in his holy place, fell down slain with their victims, and sprinkled their blood on the altar, revered, not only by the Greeks, but by the most barbarous nations. The blood was seen to flow as rivers; and the dead bodies, not only of natives, but of strangers, filled this holy place."‡

* Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 11.

† Joseph. Wars of the Jews, book iv,

ch. 14.

‡ Ibid, book v.

Read the whole history of that siege, rendered for ever memorable by the multitude of its calamities. See Jerusalem swimming with blood, and entombed in its own ashes. Mark how it was besieged, precisely at the time of their most solemn festival, when the Jews were assembled from all parts of the world to celebrate their passover. See how the blood of eleven hundred thousand persons was mingled with their sacrifices, and justified the expression in the text, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were more culpable? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* See how the walls of Jerusalem, in the same seige, sapped by the Roman ram, and by a thousand engines of war, fell down, and buried the citizens in their ruins, literally accomplishing this other part of the prophecy; *Suppose ye, that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem; I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

God has the same designs in regard to us, while afflicting Europe before our eyes. This is the point at which we must now stop. We must leave the Jews, from whom the means of conversion were ultimately removed, to profit by their awful example; and especially, from the consideration of their impenitency, to derive the most serious motives for our own conversion.

Conclusion.

There is then so perfect a conformity between us, my brethren, and those who came to report to Jesus

Christ the calamity of the poor Galileans, that one must be wilfully blind not to perceive it. 1. The Jews had just seen examples of the divine vengeance, and we have just seen them. 2. Those Jews had been spared, and we also are spared. 3. Those Jews were likewise as great offenders as those that had fallen under the strokes of God ; and we are as great offenders as those that now suffer before our eyes. 4. Those Jews were taught by Jesus Christ what disposition of mind they should in future assume ; and we are equally instructed. 5. Those Jews hardened their hearts against his warning, and were ultimately destroyed ; (O God, avert this awful augur!) we harden our hearts in like manner, and we shall experience the same lot, if we continue in the same state.

1. We ourselves, like the Jews who were present at that bloody scene, have seen examples of the divine vengeance. Europe is now an instructive theatre, and bespangled with tragic scenes. The destroying angel armed with the awful sword of celestial vengeance, goes forth on our right hand, and on our left, distinguishing his route by carnage and horror. *The sword of the Lord, intoxicated with blood.* Jer. xlvii. 6. refuses to return to its scabbard, and seems wishful to make the whole earth a vast sepulchre. Our Europe has often been visited with severe strokes ; but I know not whether history record a period in which they were so severe, and so general. God once proposed to David a terrible choice of pestilence, of war, or of famine. The best was awful. But now God does not propose ; he inflicts them. He does not propose any one of three ; he inflicts the

whole at once. On what side can you cast your regards, and not be presented with the like objects ; To what voice can you hearken which does not say, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?* Hear the people whose unhappy countries have for many years become the theatre of war, who hear of nothing *but wars and rumours of wars*, who see their harvest cut down before it is ripe, and the hopes of the year dissipated in a moment. These are instructive examples ; these are loud calls, which say, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Hear those people over whose heads the heavens are as brass, and under whose feet the earth is as iron, who are consumed by scarcity and drought : these are instructive examples ; these are loud calls which say, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Hear those people among whom death enters with the air they breathe, who see fall down before their eyes, here an infant, and there a husband, and who expect every moment to follow them. These are awful examples ; these are loud calls, which say, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Thus our first parallel is correct ; we, like the Jews, have seen examples of the divine vengeance.

2. We, like the Jews, are still spared ; and whatever part we may have hitherto had in the calamities of Europe, thank God, we have not fallen. *He has covered us with his feathers, and given us refuge under his wings.* We have not been struck with *terror by night*, nor with *the arrow that flieth by day*, nor with *the pestilence that walketh in darkness*, nor with *the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.* A thousand

have fallen at our side, and ten thousand on our right hand; but the destruction has not come nigh to us. Psal. xci. 4—7. Our days of mourning and of fasting have ever been alleviated with joy; and this discourse which recalls so many gloomy thoughts, excites recollections of comfort. The prayers addressed to heaven for so many unhappy mortals precipitated to peril, are enlivened with the voice of praise, inasmuch as we are still exempt from the scourge. We weep between the porch and the altar, with joy and with grief at the same instant; with grief, from a conviction that our sins have excited the anger of God against Europe; with joy, because his fury has not as yet extended to us; and if we say, with a contrite heart, *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face: O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servants; O Lord, pardon the iniquity of thy people*, we shall make these walls resound with our thanksgiving. We shall say with Hezekiah, *A great bitterness is come upon me, but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption*. We shall say with the prophet Jonah, *Thy billows and thy waves have passed over me: then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple*; and with Jeremiah, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not: they are new every morning*. Our second parallel is therefore correct; we, like the Jews, are still spared. Dan. ix. 7. Joel ii. 17. Isa. xxxviii. 17. Jon. ii. 3. Lam. iii. 22, 23.

3. Like the Jews, we are not less guilty than those who fall before our eyes under the judgments of God.

What a revolting proposition, you will say? What? the men whose hands were so often dipped in the most innocent blood, the men who used their utmost efforts to extinguish the lamp of truth, the men who are rendered for ever infamous by the death of so many martyrs, are they to be compared to us? Can we say of their calamities, what the Lord said to the Jews concerning the calamities named in the text, *Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans? Think ye that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay.* We would wish you, my brethren, to have as much patience in attending to the parallel, as we have had ground for drawing it. Who then, in your opinion, is the greater sinner, he who opposes a religion he believes to be bad, or he who gives himself no sort of concern to cherish and extend a religion he believes to be good? He, who for the sake of his religion, sacrifices the goods, the liberty, and the lives of those that oppose it, or he who sacrifices his religion to human hopes, to a sordid interest, and to a prudence purely worldly? He who enters with a lever and a hatchet into houses he believes profane, or he who feels but languor and indifference when called upon to revive the ashes he accounts holy, and to raise the foundations he believes sacred? A glance on the third parallel, is, I presume, sufficient to induce you to acknowledge its propriety.

Amid so many dissipations, and this is the *fourth* point of similarity, Jesus Christ still teaches us the same lessons he once taught the Jews. He renders

us attentive to Providence. He proves that we are concerned in those events. He opens our eyes to the war, the pestilence, and famine by which we are menaced. He exhibits the example of the multitude who fall under those calamities. He says, *surely thou shalt receive instruction*. He avers that the same lot awaits us. He speaks, he presses, he urges. *He hews us by his prophets, and slays us by his word*, to use an expression of Hosea, vi. 5. To all these traits, our situation perfectly coincides. What then can obstruct our application of the latter, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?*

And shall events so bloody leave no impression on your mind? *Ye shall all likewise perish?* What would your situation be, if this prophecy were about to be accomplished? If our lot were about to be like that of the Galileans? If on a fast-day, a sacramental day, a day in which our people hold an extraordinary assembly, a cruel and ferocious soldiery, with rage in their hearts, with fury in their eyes, and murderous weapons in their hands, should rush and confound our devotion with carnage, sacrificing the father before the eyes of the son, and the son before the eyes of the father, and make this church swim with the blood of the worshippers? What would your situation be, if the foundations of this church were about to be shook under our feet, if these walls which surround us were about to fall, and to make us like *the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell?* And what would our situation be, if the curses on those ancient people, and which are this day accomplished in so many parts of Europe, should fall upon us? *The Lord*

shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he consume thee from off the land. Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies. And because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, thou shalt serve in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in want, an enemy which shall put a yoke upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters which the LORD thy God shall give thee. Deut. xxviii. 21, 23, 25, 47, 48, 53.

My brethren, let us not contend with God ; let us not arm ourselves with an infatuated fortitude. Instead of braving the justice of God, let us endeavour to appease it, by a speedy recourse to his mercy, and by a genuine change of conduct.

This is the duty imposed on this nation, this is the work of all the faithful assembled here. But permit me to say it, with all the respect of a subject who addresses his masters, and, at the same time, with all the frankness of a minister of the gospel who addresses the subjects of the King of kings, this is peculiarly your work, high and mighty Lords of these Provinces, fathers of this people. In vain do you adopt the measures of prudence to avert the calamities with which we are threatened, unless you endeavour to purge the city of God of the crimes which attract them. The languishing church extends to you her arms. The ministry, rendered useless by the profligacy of the age, has need of your influence to maintain itself, and to be exercised with success ; to

put a period to the horrible profanation of the sabbath, which has so long and so justly become our reproach ; to suppress those scandalous publications which are ushered with insolence, and by which are erected before your eyes, with impunity, a system of Atheism and irreligion ; to punish the blasphemers ; and thus to revive the enlightened laws of Constantine and Theodosius.

If, in this manner, we shall correspond with the designs of God in the present chastisements of men, he will continue to protect and defend us. He will dissipate the tempests ready to burst on our heads. He will confirm to us the truth of that promise he once made to the Jews by the ministry of Jeremiah ; *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation—to pull down, and to destroy it—If that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them.* xviii. 7, .8 In a word, after having rendered our own life happy, and society tranquil, he will exalt us above all clouds and tempests, to those happier regions, where there shall be *no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain ; and where all tears shall be for ever wiped from our eyes.* Rev. vii. 17. xxi. 4. God grant us the grace : to whom be honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

A Taste for Devotion.



PSALM lXiii. 5, 6.

*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips ;
when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate
upon thee in the night watches.*

It is a grand point to be acquainted with the arguments which forcibly attach us to religion. It is great to be able to arrange, with conclusive propriety, the arguments which render virtue preferable to vice. It is a high favour to be able to proceed from principle to principle, and from consequence to consequence, so as to say in one's own breast, I am persuaded that a good man is happy.

But how sublime soever this way of soaring to God may be, it is not always sufficient. Arguments may indeed impose silence on the passions ; but they are not always sufficiently cogent to eradicate them. However conclusive demonstrations may be in a book, in a school, in the closet, they appear extremely weak, and of inadequate force, when opposed to sentiments of anguish, or the attractions of pleasure. The arguments adduced to suffer for religion, lose

much of their efficacy, not to say of their evidence, when proposed to a man broken alive on the wheel, or consuming on a pile. The arguments for resisting the flesh; for rising superior to matter and sense, vanish for the most part, on viewing the objects of concupiscence. How worthy, then, is the man of pity, who knows no way of approaching God, but that of discussion and argument!

There is one way of leading us to God much more safe; and of inducing to abide in fellowship with him, whenever it is embraced: it is the way of taste and of sentiment. Happy the man, who in the conflicts to which he is exposed from the enemy of his soul, can oppose pleasure to pleasure, and joy to joy; the pleasures of piety and of converse with heaven to the pleasure of the world; the delights of recollection and solitude to those of parties, of dissipation, and of theatres! Such a man is firm in his duty, because he is a man; and because it depends not on man to refuse affection to what opens to his soul the fountains of life. Such a man is attached to religion by the same motives which attach the world to the objects of their passions, because it affords him ineffable pleasures. Such a man has support in the time of temptation, because *the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps*, so to speak, the propensities of his heart, and the divine comforts which inundate his soul, obstruct his being drawn away to sin.

Let us attend to-day to a great master in the science of salvation. It is our prophet. He knew the rational way of coming to God. *Thy word*, said he to himself, *is a lamp unto my feet, and a lantern to*

my paths. Psa. cxix. 105. But he knew also the way of taste and of sentiment. He said to God in the words of my text, not only that he was persuaded and convinced; but that religion charmed, ravished, and absorbed his soul by its comforts. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches.*—In discussing the subject,

I. We shall trace the emotions of our prophet, and to give you the ideas, if it be possible to give them, of what we understand by the piety of taste and sentiment.

II. We shall consider the words with regard to the humiliation they reflect on the most part of Christians; and inquire into the judgment we ought to form of our own state, when destitute of the piety of sentiment and taste, so consoling to a regenerate soul.

III. We shall investigate the cause of this calamity.

IV. We shall propose some maxims for the acquisition of this piety, the want of which is so deplorable; and to enable you to say with David, *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches.*

I. We must define what we understand by the piety of taste and sentiment. Wishful to compress the subject, we shall not oppose profanation to eminent piety, nor apparent piety to that which is genu-

ine. We shall oppose reality to reality ; true piety to true piety ; and the religion of the heart to that which is rational and argumentative. A few examples, derived from human life, will illustrate this article of religion.

Suppose two pupils of a philosopher, both emulous to make a proficiency in science ; both attentive to the maxims of their master ; both surmounting the greatest difficulties to retain a permanent impression of what they hear. But the one finds study a fatigue like the man tottering under a burden : to him study is a severe and arduous task : he hears because he is obliged to hear what is dictated. The other, on the contrary, enters into the spirit of study ; its pains are compensated by its pleasures : he loves truth for the sake of truth ; and not for the sake of the encomiums conferred on literary characters, and the preceptors of science.

Take another example. The case of two warriors, both loyal to their sovereign ; both alert and vigilant in military discipline, which, of all others, requires the greatest vigilance and precision ; both ready to sacrifice life when duty shall so require ; but the one groans under the heavy fatigues he endures, and sighs for repose : his imagination is struck with the danger to which he is exposed by his honour : he braves dangers, because he is obliged to brave them ; and because God will require an account of the public safety of those who may have had the baseness to sacrifice it to personal preservation : yet amid triumphs he envies the lot of the cottager, who having held the plough by day, finds the rewards at night of

domestic repose. The other, on the contrary, is born with an insatiable thirst of glory, to which nothing can be arduous: he has by nature, that noble courage, shall I call it, or that happy temerity; that amid the greatest danger, he sees no danger; victory is ever before his eyes; and every step that leads to conquest is regarded as a victory already obtained.

These examples are more than sufficient to confirm your ideas, and make you perceive the vast distinction we make between a speculative and an experimental piety, and to enable you in some sort to trace the sentiments of our prophet, *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches.* He who has a rational and a speculative piety, and he who has a piety of taste and sentiment, are both sincere in their efforts; both devoted to their duty; both pure in purpose; and both alike engaged in studying his precepts, and in reducing them to practice; but O, how different is their state!

The one prays because he is awed by his wants, and because prayer is the resource of the wretched. The other prays because the exercise of prayer transports him to another world; because it vanishes the objects which obstruct his divine reflections; and because it strengthens those ties which unite him to that God, whose love constitutes all his consolation, and all his treasure.

The one reads the word of God because his heart would reproach him for neglecting a duty so strongly enjoined, and because without the Bible he would

be embarrassed at every step. The other reads because his heart burns whenever the scriptures are opened ; and because this word composes his mind, assuages his anguish, and beguiles his care.

The one gives alms, because the doors of heaven shall be shut against the impitiable ; because without alms there is no religion ; because Jesus Christ shall one day say to those who have been insensible to the wants of others, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat ;* and because the rust of the gold and silver of *the covetous shall be a witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as a fire.* Matt. xxv. 41. James v. 3. The other gives because there is a kind of instinct and mechanical impulse, if you will excuse the phrase, which excite in his breast the most delicious sensations in the distribution of alms : he gives because his soul is formed on the model of that God, whose character is love, *who left not himself without witness, in that he did good,* and whose happiness consists in the power of imparting that felicity to others.

The one approaches the Lord's table, because the supreme wisdom has enjoined it ; he subdues his passions because the sacrifice is required ; in resuming his heart from the objects of vice, he seems to abscind his own flesh ; it would seem requisite always to repeat in his ears this text, *He that eateth this bread, and drinketh this cup unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own condemnation.* The other comes to the Lord's table as to a feast ; he brings a heart hungering and thirsting for righteousness ; he inwardly hears the gentle voice of God, saying, *Seek ye my face :* he

replies, *Thy face, Lord, I will seek. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea for the living God.* Psa. xxvii. 8. xlii. 1. The delicious sentiment he finds in the communion of Jesus Christ, prompts him to forget all the sacrifices he has made for a participation therein.

In a word, not to multiply cases, the one dies because he must die: he yields to that irrevocable sentence, *Return, ye children of men.* Psa. xc. 3. Submission, resignation, and patience are the pillars which sustain him in his agony. The other, on the contrary, meets death as one would go to a triumph. He anticipates the happy moment with aspirations, which shall give flight to his soul, he cries, he incessantly cries, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Patience, resignation, submission seem to him virtues out of season: he exercised them while condemned to live; not when he is called to die. Henceforth his soul abandons itself wholly to joy, to gratitude, and to transports.

II. Let us inquire in the second article what judgment we should pass upon ourselves when destitute of the heartfelt piety, we have just described.

There are few subjects in the code of holiness, which require greater precision, and in which we should be more cautious to avoid visionary notions. Some persons regard piety of taste and sentiment so essential to salvation, as to reprobate all those who have not attained it. Certain passages of scripture misconstrued serve as the basis of this opinion. Because the Spirit of God sheds a profusion of consola-

tions on the souls of some believers, it would seem that he must shed it on all. They presume that a man must judge of the state of his mind, less by the uprightness of his heart, and the purity of his motives than by the enjoyment, or the privation of certain spiritual comforts. A man shall powerfully wrestle with his passions, be always at war with himself, and make to God the severest sacrifices, yet if he do not feel certain transports, he must be regarded as a reprobate. A man, on the contrary, who shall be less attentive to the conditions of salvation, and less severe towards himself, must, according to the casuists I attack, banish all sorts of doubt and scruple of his salvation, provided he attain to certain transports of ecstasy and joy.

Whatever basis of solidity there may be in espousing the principles which constitute the foundation of this system, there are few that are more dangerous. It often gives occasion to certain ebullitions of passion, of which we have too many examples. It is much easier to heat the imagination than to reform the heart. How often have we seen persons who thought themselves superior to all our instructions, because they flattered themselves with having the Spirit of God for a guide, which inwardly assured them of their pardon and eternal salvation? How often have we seen persons of this description take offence because we doubted of what they presumed was already decided in their breast, by a divine and supernatural voice? How often have we seen rejected with high disdain and revolt, the strictures of which they were but too worthy? Let us not give

place to enthusiasm. Let us ever preserve our judgment. The Spirit of God guides indeed, but he does not blind. I prefer a humility destitute of transports to transports destitute of humility. The piety of taste and sentiment is certainly the privilege of some regenerate people : it is a disposition of mind to which all the regenerate should aspire ; but we must not exclude those that are weak from regeneration.*

* Saurin, in twenty places of his sermons, attacks a class of opponents, whom he calls *casuists*, or guides and directors of the soul. These were supralapsarians. That class of men, I have little doubt, were very clear in the doctrine of the Spirit. And Saurin is not only clear, but sublimely so, as will appear from this sermon. But he errs in too much restricting it to the more highly favoured class of saints. Perhaps this arose from early prejudice ; perhaps for want of seeing the work of conversion on an extended scale ; perhaps the opposition he received urged his replies beyond the feelings of his heart, and so far as to drive him to apparent contradictions of himself. We must never console the well-disposed with the doctrine of unconscious salvation, but urge them to seek it, as the scriptures do, and as our author fully does in the latter part of this discourse. The extensions are in favour of men of a nervous and dejected mind, who mostly die more happy than they lived. Now, I would ask, is a man to attain the whole Christian temper and character without the influences of the Spirit ? Can the harvest and the fruits ripen without the solar influence ? Can we be satisfied with our imperfect marks of conversion till assured that we consciously love God from a re-action of his love shed abroad in our heart ? Rom. v. 5. Did not the primitive churches walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost ? Acts ix. 31. And is there any intimation that *the witness—the seal—the unction*—and the comforts of the Holy Spirit were confined to Christians of the first age ? How are we to attain the Divine image without a divine and conscious influence ? And if God testify his frowns against all crimes by secret terrors of conscience, why may he not testify his approbation of the penitent, when he believes with the heart unto righteousness ? Why should the most gracious of all beings keep us through the fear of death all our lives subject to bondage ? Is heaven a feast of which we can have no foretaste ? Are there no consolations in Christ Jesus, exclusive of a future hope, to which our infirmities afford but a very defective title ? Hence, I cannot but lament the ignorance, or bewail the error, of ministers who ridicule the doctrine of the Spirit. Assurance, comfort, and the witness of adoption, are subjects of prayer rather than of dispute. This part of religion, according to Bp. Bull, is better understood by the heart than by the head. The reader who would wish to be adequately acquainted with the doctrine of the Spir-

And if there is danger of striking on the first rock, there is equal danger of striking on the second. Under a plea that one may be saved without the conscious comforts we have described, shall we give ourselves no inquietude about them ! Shall we give our heart, and our warmest affections to the world ; and offer to God but an exhausted, a constrained, and reluctant obedience ? Let us inquire in what case, and what respects we ought to console ourselves when deprived of conscious comfort ; and in what case, and what respects we ought to mourn when deprived of those divine favours.

1. Abstract and spiritual objects seldom make so deep an impression on the mind as those which are sensible. This is not always an effect of our depravity, but a consequence of our infirmity. A man may be able to pay a better supported attention to an exhibition than to a course of holy meditation, not that he loves an exhibition more than holy meditation ; but because the one devolves on abstract and spiritual truths, while the other presents him with sensible objects. You feel no wandering thoughts in presence of an earthly monarch who holds your life and fortune in his hands ; but a thousand distractions assail you in converse with the God, who can make you eternally happy, or eternally miserable. This is not because more exalted ideas of God's power than of the monarch's are denied ; it is because in God's power

it, may consult St. AMEROSE, St. AUGUSTINE, and MACARIUS. In our own tongue, Bp. BULL's sermons ; the sermon of Bp. SMALLRIGE, and Dr. COYNT on the Comforter : Mr. Joseph Mede and Dr. Cudworth on 1 John, ii. 3 : Dr. Owen on the Spirit : Dr. Watts' three sermons, and Mr. Wesley's sermon on the witness of the Spirit.

the object is abstract, but in the monarch's, the object is sensible; it is because the impression of sensible objects is stronger than those which are abstract. This perhaps induced St. John to say, *If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* This argument in appearance is defective. Does it follow, that because I love not my brother, whom I see, but who is full of imperfections, that I do not love God, who, though unseen, is an all-perfect being? This is not the apostle's argument. He means, that the dispositions of the soul are moved by sensible, rather than by abstract and spiritual objects. If we possessed that source of tenderness, which prompts the heart to love God, our tenderness would be moved at the sight of a man in distress, and we should instantly be led to succour him. If the sight of an afflicted man; if this sensible object make no impression upon us, the Divine perfections which are spiritual and abstract objects, will leave us lukewarm and unanimated. Let each of us, my brethren, apply this remark to the subject in hand. We sometimes want a taste and inclination for devotion; this is because the objects of piety are abstract and spiritual, and make a less impression on the mind, than the objects of sense. This is not always an effect of our corruption; it is sometimes a consequence of our natural frailty.

2. The piety of preference and of sacrifice has a peculiar excellence, and may sometimes afford encouraging marks of salvation, though unaccompanied with the piety of sentiment and taste. You do not find the same vivacity in prayer that you once

found in public diversions, but you prefer prayer to those diversions, and you sacrifice them for the sake of prayer. You do not find the same pleasure in reading books of piety you felt in reading profane books, but you sacrifice profane reading for books of devotion. You have not the same pleasure in the contemplation of death as in the prospects of life, but on being called to die, you prefer death to both health and life. You uniformly surrender your health and your life to the pleasure of heaven on being called to the crisis. You would not ransom, by the slightest violation of the divine law, this life and health how dear soever they may be to you. Console yourselves, therefore, with the testimony of a good conscience. Be assured that you are sincere in the sight of God, and that while aspiring at perfection, your sincerity shall be a substitute for perfection.

3. The holy scriptures abound with passages which promise salvation to those who use endeavours ; to those *who take up the cross* ; to those *who deny themselves* ; to those *who crucify the flesh with its lusts* ; to those who *strive, or agonize to enter in at the strait gate*. Matt. xvi. 24 ; vii. 13 : Gal. v. 24. But the scriptures no where exclude from salvation those who do not find in the exercise of piety, the joy, the transports, and the delights of which we have spoken.

4. In short, the hope of one day finding the piety of taste and sentiment, should assuage the anguish which the privation excites in the soul. God often confers the piety of taste and sentiment as a recompense for the piety of sacrifice and preference. We have no need to go and seek those comforts in the

miraculous lives, whose memory is preserved by the Holy Ghost, nor in the supernatural endowments conferred on others. If you except certain miracles which God once performed for the confirmation of religion, and religion being established, they are now no longer necessary, God still holds the same conduct with regard to his saints which he formerly held. We have seen saints who have long, and with ineffectual sighs, breathed after the comforts of the Holy Ghost; and who, in the issue, have experienced all their sweetness. We have seen the sick, who having been alarmed at the idea of dying, who having sighed at the simple idea of its pains, its anguish, its separation, its obscurity, and all the appalling presages excited by the king of terrors; we have seen them, previous to his approach, quite inundated with consolation and joy. I know we must always suspect the reveries of the imaginations, but it seems to us, that the more calm we were in our investigation, precaution, and even distrust in the scrutiny of this phenomenon, the more we were convinced it ought to be wholly ascribed to the Spirit of God. Those transformations were not the effect of any novel effort we had caused to be excited in the souls of the sick. They sometimes followed a profound stupor, a total lethargy, which could not be the effect of any pleasure arising from some new sacrifice made for God, or from some recent victory over themselves. The sick, of whom we speak, seem to have previously cherished all imaginable deference for our ministry. Nothing human, nothing terrestrial was apparent in those surprising transformations. It was the work of God.

Let us ask what we may receive. If he do not answer the first time we pray, he answers the second: if he do not open the door of mercy the second time we knock, he opens the third. Suffer not thyself then, O my soul, to be depressed and discouraged, because thou dost not yet participate in the piety of taste and sentiment. Be determined to pierce the cloud with which God conceals himself from thy sight. Though he say to thee as to Jacob, *Let me go, for the day dawneth*, answer like the patriarch, *Lord, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*. Though he affect to leave thee, as he feigned to leave the two disciples, constrain him as they did; and say with them, *Lord, stay with me; it is toward evening: the sun is on the decline*. Gen. xxxii. 26. Luke xxiv. 29.

These are the principal sources of consolation to those who have a sincere and vehement desire to please God, and who have not yet attained the piety of taste and sentiment. But though the privation of those comforts should not dispirit us, yet the defect is ever a most humiliating and deplorable consideration. So you may conclude from what you have just heard. Yes, it is very humiliating and deplorable, though we should even prefer our duty to our pleasure, when those duties abound with difficulties, and afford no consolations: and when we are merely enabled to repel attacks from the pleasures of the age with reason and argument, which persuade, it is true, but they stop in the tender part of the soul, if I may so speak, and neither warm the imagination, nor captivate the heart. Yes, it is very humiliating and de-

plorable to know by description only, *that peace of God ; that joy unspeakable and full of glory ; that white stone ; that satisfaction ; that seal of redemption ; and those ever-ravishing pleasures*, of which our scriptures give us so grand a view. Yes, it is very humiliating and deplorable that we should resemble the scripture characters, only in the drought and langour they sometimes felt, and always aspiring after a happier frame which we never attain.

Farther still : the privation of divine comfort should not only humble us, but there are occasions in which it should induce us to pass severe strictures on our destiny. There are especially two such cases of this nature.

1. When the privation is general ; when a conviction of duty, and the motives of hope and fear are ever requisite to enforce the exercises of religion ; when we have to force ourselves to read God's word, to pray, to study his perfections, and to participate of the pledges of his love in the holy sacrament. It is not very likely that a regenerate soul should be always abandoned to the difficulties and duties imposed by religion, that it should never experience those comforts conferred by the Holy Spirit, which make them a delight.

2. The privation of divine comforts should induce us to pass severe strictures on ourselves, when we do not make the required efforts to be delivered from so sad a state. To possess a virtue, or not to possess it, to have a defect, or not to have it, is not always the criterion of distinction between the regenerate man, and him who has but the name and appearance of re-

generation. To make serious efforts to acquire the virtues we have not yet attained, and to use endeavours to correct the faults to which we are still liable, is a true character of regeneration. But to see those faults with indifference; and under a plea of constitutional weakness, not to subdue them, is a distinguishing mark of an unregenerate state. Thus it is apparent, that though the privation of the piety of taste and sentiment be not always criminal, it is always an imperfection; and that alone should prompt us to reform it. I will suggest to you the remedies of this evil, after having in the third place traced the causes which produce it.

III. To accomplish my purpose, and to exhibit the true causes which deprive us of the piety of taste and sentiment, we shall make a short digression on the nature of taste and sentiment in general; we shall trace to the source certain sympathies and antipathies which tyrannise over us without our having apparently contributed to the domination.

The task we here impose on ourselves, is a difficult one. We proceed, under a conscious need of indulgence in what we propose. The causes of our inclinations and aversions are, apparently, one of the most intricate studies of nature. There is something it would seem, in the essence of our souls, which inclines us to certain objects, and which revolts us against others, when we are unconscious of the cause, and sometimes even against the most obvious reasons. The Creator has obviously given a certain impulse to our propensities, which it is not in our power to divert. Scarcely do the dawnings of genius appear

in children, before we see them biassed by peculiar propensities. Hence the diversity, and the singularity of taste apparent in mankind. One has a taste for navigation, another for trades of the most groveling kind. Virtue and vice have also their scale in the objects of our choice. One is impelled to this vice ; another to a vice of the opposite kind. One is impelled to a certain virtue, another to a different virtue. And who can explain the cause of this variety, or prescribe a remedy for the evil, after having developed the cause ?

But how impenetrable soever this subject may appear, it is not altogether impossible, at least in a partial way, to develope it. The series of propositions we proceed to establish, shall be directed to that end. But we ask beforehand your indulgence, that in case we throw not on the subject all the light you would wish, do not attribute the defect to this discourse, which may probably proceed from the difficulty of the subject, and probably from the slight attention our hearers pay to truths which have the greatest influence on life and happiness.

Proposition first. We have already intimated, that a sensible object naturally makes a deeper impression on men, than an object which is abstract, spiritual, and remote. This is but too much realised by our irregular passions. A passion which controls the senses is commonly more powerful than those which are seated in the mind. Ambition, and the love of glory, are chiefly resident in the mind ; whereas, effeminacy and sensuality have their principal seat in the senses. Passions of the latter kind do

more violence to society than the others. With the exception of those called heroes in the world, mankind seldom sacrifice their ease, their sensuality, their effeminacy, to high notions, to ambition, and the love of glory. And how often have the heroes themselves sacrificed all their laurels, their reputation, and their trophies to the charm of some sensible pleasure? How often have the charms of a Delilah stopped the victories of a Samson, and a Cleopatra those of a Cæsar and a Mark Antony?

Proposition second. The imagination captivates both the senses and the understanding. A good which is not sensible; a good even which has no existence, is contemplated as a reality, provided it have the decorations proper to strike the imagination. The features and complexion of a person do not prove that a connexion formed with her would be agreeable and happy. Meanwhile, how often have those features and tints produced a prejudice of that kind? Nothing is often more insipid than the pleasure found in conversation with the great. At the same time, nothing commonly appears so enviable. And why? Because the splendour attendant on this intercourse strikes the imagination. The retinues which follow them; the splendour of their carriages; the mansions in which they live; the multitude of people who flatter and adore them; all these are strikingly qualified to make an impression on the imagination which supersedes the operations of sense, and the convictions of the mind.

Proposition third. A present, or at least, an approximate good, excites, for the most part, more

vehement desires, than a good which is absent, or whose enjoyment is deferred to a remote period. The point where the edge of the passions is blunted, almost without exception, is, when they have to seek their object in distant epocha, and in future years.

Proposition fourth. Recollection is a substitute for presence : I would say, that a good in the possession of which we have found delight, produces in the heart, though absent, much the same desires, as that which is actually present.

Proposition fifth. A good, ascertained and fully known by experience, is much more capable of inflaming our desires, than a good of which we have but an imperfect notion, and which is known only by the report of others. A person endowed with good accomplishments, and whose conversation we have enjoyed, is more endeared to us than one known only by character ; though the virtues of the latter have been represented as far surpassing the virtues of the other.

A *sixth proposition* is, that all things being equal, we prefer a good of easy acquisition, to one which requires care and fatigue. Difficulty sometimes, I grant, inflames desire, and seduces the imagination. When we have a high opinion of a good, which we believe is in our power to acquire by incessant endeavours, our ardours become invigorated, and we redouble our efforts in proportion as the difficulty augments. It is, however, an indisputable axiom, and founded on the nature of the human mind, that things being equal, we prefer a good of easy acquisition, to one that requires anxiety and fatigue.

A *seventh proposition* is, that a good beyond our reach, a good that we do not possess, and that we have no hope so to do, does not excite any desire. Hope is the food of the passions. Men do indeed sometimes pursue phantoms ; and they frequently run after objects which they never enjoy ; but it is always in hope of enjoying them.

The *last proposition* is, that avocations fill the capacity of the soul. A mind which is empty, at leisure, and unoccupied with ideas and sentiments, is much more liable to be animated with a passion, than one which is already attracted, occupied, and absorbed by certain objects unconnected with that passion.

IV. These propositions may lead us to an acquaintance with the causes of our antipathies and our sympathies. We have laid them down with a view to assign the reasons why most people fall short of the piety of taste and sentiment. This is the point we proceed to prove. We shall also trace the sources of the evil, and prescribe the principal remedies which ought to be applied. We shall hereby make the fourth part, combined with the third, the conclusion of this discourse.

I. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment ? It is because that a sensible object naturally makes a deeper impression upon us, than an object which is abstract, invisible, and spiritual. The God we adore is a God that *hideth himself*. The lustre of the duties imposed by religion, appear so to the mind only ; they have nothing that can attract the eyes of the body. The rewards promised by Jesus Christ, are objects of faith ; they are reserved for a world to

come, which we never saw, and of which we have scarcely any conception : whereas the pleasures of this world are presented to our taste ; they dazzle the eye, and charm the ear. They are pleasures adapted to a creature which naturally suffers itself to be captivated by sensible objects. Here is the first source of the evil. The remedy to be applied is to labour incessantly to diminish the sovereignty of the senses. To animate the soul to so laudable a purpose, we must be impressed with the base and grovelling disposition of the man who suffers himself to be enslaved by sense. What ! shall the senses communicate their grossity and heaviness to our souls, and our souls not communicate to the senses their purity, their energies, and divine flame ? What ! shall our senses always possess the power, in some sort, to sensualize the soul, and our souls never be able to spiritualize the senses ? What ! shall a concert, a theatre, an object fatal to our innocence, charm and ravish the soul, while the great truths of religion are destitute of effect ? What ! do the ideas we form of the Perfect Being ; of a God eternal in duration, wise in designs, powerful in execution, magnificent in grace ; what ! does the idea of a Redeemer, who sought mankind in their abject state, who devoted himself for their salvation, who placed himself in the breach between them and the tribunal of justice ; what ! does the hope of eternal salvation, which comprises all the favours of God to man, do all these ideas still leave us in apathy and indifference ? This consideration should make a Christian blush, it should induce him to call to his aid, meditation, reading,

retirement, solitude, and whatever is calculated to enfeeble the influence of his senses, whose sovereignty produces effects so awful and alarming.

2. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because the tyranny of the senses is succeeded by the tyranny of the imagination; it is because the objects of piety are not accompanied with that sensible charm with which the imagination is struck by the objects of our passions. This is the second source of the evil, and it points out the second remedy which must be applied. A rational man will ever be on his guard against his imagination. He will dissipate the clouds with which it disguises the truth. He will pierce the thin bark with which it covers the substance. He will make appearances give place to realities. He will summon to the bar of reason all the illusive conceptions his fancy has formed. He will judge of an object by the nature of the object itself, and not by the chimeras with which they are decorated by a seductive imagination.

3. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? it is because that a present, or, at least, an approximate good, excites in us more ardent desires than a good which is absent, or whose enjoyment is deferred to a distant period. This third source of evil suggests the remedy that must be applied. Let us form the habit of anticipating the future, and of realizing it to our minds. Let us constantly exercise that *faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. Let us not look at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at the eternal things, which are not seen. Heb. xi. 5.

2 Cor. iv. Let us often launch beyond the confined sphere of objects with which we are surrounded. Our notions must be narrow indeed, if they do not carry us above the economy of present life. It may terminate with regard to you in twenty years; or in ten years: it may terminate with regard to you in a few days, or in a few hours. This is not all, we must often reflect on the awful events which must follow the narrow sphere assigned us here below. We must often think that the world *shall pass away with a great noise, and its elements shall melt with fervent heat, and its foundations shall be shaken. The mighty angel shall swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer.* 2 Pet. iii. 10. Rev. x. 6. We must often think on the irrevocable sentence which must decide the destiny of all mankind: on the joys, on the transports of those who shall receive the sentence of absolution; and on the dreadful desponding cries of those whom the Divine justice shall consign to eternal torments.

4. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment? It is because, to a certain degree, recollection is a substitute for presence. This is the *fourth* source of evil. You would yourselves, and without difficulty, prescribe the remedy, if, in this discourse which requires you to correct your taste by your reason, you did not consult your reason less than your taste. But plead for certain pleasures with all the energy of which you are capable; make an apology for your parties, your games, your diversions; say that there is nothing criminal in those dissipations against which we have so often declaimed, with so much strength

in this holy place : be obstinate to maintain that preachers and critics decry them from misconceptions of their innocence. It is certain, however, that the recollection of pleasure attracts the heart to pleasure. The man who would become more sensible of the pleasures of devotion, should apply himself to devotion ; and the man who would become less attracted by the pleasures of the age, should absent himself from the circles of pleasure.

5. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment ? It is because that a good, known and experienced, is much more capable of inflaming our desires, than that which is imperfectly conceived, and known merely by the report of others. Why do we believe that a soul profoundly composed in meditation on the glories of grace, is *satisfied as with marrow and fatness* ? We believe it on the positive testimony of the prophet. We believe it on the testimony of illustrious saints who assert the same thing. But let us endeavour to be convinced of the fact in a better way. *Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* So was the prayer of Philip to Jesus Christ. John xiv. 8. This request proceeded from the ignorance of the apostles, prior to the day of Pentecost. The request was, however, founded both on reason and truth. Philip was fully persuaded, if he could once see with his own eyes the God, whose perfections were so gloriously displayed, that he should be ravished with his beauty ; and that he should, without reluctance, make the greatest sacrifices to please him. Let us retain what is rational in the request of Philip, rejecting what is less enlightened. Let us say

to Jesus, but in a sense more exalted than this disciple, *Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* Lord, give me to know by experience the joy that results from the union of a soul reconciled to its God, and I shall ask no other pleasure ; it shall blunt the point to all others.

6. Are we destitute of the piety of taste and sentiment ? It is because all things being equal, we prefer a good, easy of acquisition, to one that requires labour and fatigue. And would to God, that we were always disposed to contrast our motives with our fatigues : the estimate would invert our whole system of life. We should find few objects in this world, to merit the efforts bestowed in their acquisition ; or to speak as the Supreme Wisdom, we should find that *we spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not.* Isa. lv. 2. Would to God, that the difficulties of acquiring a piety of taste and sentiment, were but properly contrasted with the joy it procures those who surmount them. In this view, we should realize the estimate, *that the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii. 18. Seeing then, that whatever part we espouse, whether it be the part of religion, or the part of the world, this life is invariably a life of labour, we should prefer the labours attended with a solid peace, to those which involve us in anguish and inquietude.

7. The affairs of life engross the capacity of the soul. A mind which is empty, at leisure, and unoccupied with ideas and sentiments, is much more liable

to be animated and filled with a passion, than one that is already concentrated on certain objects, which have no connection with that passion. This is the last reason assigned for our non-attainment of the consolations of religion. Let us keep to the point. Casting our eye on the crimes of men, we regard, at first view, the greater part of them as monsters. It would seem, that most men love evil for the sake of evil. I believe, however, that the portrait is distorted. Mankind are perhaps not so wicked as we commonly suppose. But to speak the truth, there is one duty, my brethren, concerning which their notions are quite inadequate; that is, recollection. There is likewise a vice, whose awful consequences are by no means sufficiently perceived; that vice, is dissipation. Whence is it, that a man who is appalled by the mere idea of death and of hell, should, nevertheless, brave them both? It is because he is dissipated; it is because his soul, wholly engrossed by the cares of life, is unable to pay the requisite attention to the idea of death and hell, and to the interests of this life.—Whence is it, that a man distinguished for charity and delicacy, shall act in a manner so directly opposite to charity and delicacy? It is because the dissipations inseparable from the office he fills, and still more so, those he ingeniously procures for himself, obstruct attention to his own principles. To sum up all in one word, whence is it, that we have such exalted views of piety, and so little taste for piety? The evil proceeds from the same source—our dissipations. Let us not devote ourselves to the world more than is requisite for the discharge of duty. Let our affec-

tions be composed ; and let us keep within just bounds the faculty of reflection and of love.

If we adopt these maxims, we shall be able to reform our taste ; and I may add, to reform our sentiment. We shall both think and love as rational beings. And when we think and love as rational beings, we shall perceive that nothing is worthy of man but God, and what directly leads to God. Fixing our eyes and our heart on the Supreme object, we shall ever feel a fertile source of pure delight. In solitude, in deserts, overtaken by the catastrophes of life, or surrounded with the shadows and terrors of death, we shall exult with our prophet, *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee in the night watches ;* and when I make thy adorable perfections the subject of my thought. May God enable us so to do : to whom be honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

On Regeneration.



JOHN iii. 1—8.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

THE transition which happened in the condition of Saul was very remarkable. Born of an obscure fa-

mily, actually employed in seeking strayed asses, and having recourse on this intricate subject to the divine light of a prophet, Saul instantly found himself anointed with a mystic oil, and declared king by the prophet, who added, *It is because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his heritage.* 1 Sam. x. 1.

To correspond with a rank so exalted, it was requisite that there should be as great a change in the person, as there was about to be in the condition of Saul. The art of government has as many amplifications as there are wants and humours in those that are governed. A king must associate in some sort in his own person, every science and every art. He must be, so to speak, at the same juncture, artificer, statesman, soldier, philosopher. Those who are become grey-headed in this art, find daily new difficulties in its execution. How then could Saul expect to acquire it in an instant? The same prophet that notified the high honour to which God had called him, discovered the source whence he might derive the supports of which he had need. *Behold,* said he, *when thou shalt come to the hill of God, where there is a garrison of the Philistines, thou shalt meet a company of prophets. Then the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy, and thou shalt be changed to another man.* 1 Sam. x. 5, 6. The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee: here is support for the regal splendor; here is grace for the adequate discharge of the royal functions.

Does it not seem, my brethren, that the sacred historian, in reciting these circumstances, was wishful to give us a portrait of the change which grace makes

in the soul of a Christian? *Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, he is by nature a child of wrath. His father is an Amorite, and his mother a Hittite; yet he is called out of darkness into marvellous light.* He is called to be a prince and a priest. But in vain would he be honoured with a vocation so high, if the change in his soul did not correspond with that of his condition. Who is sufficient for so great a work? How shall men whose ideas are low, and whose sentiments are groveling, attain to a magnanimity assortable with the rank to which they are called of God? The grace which elevates, changes the man who is called unto it. *The Spirit of God comes upon him, it gives him a new heart, and he becomes another man.*

These are the great truths which Jesus Christ taught Nicodemus in the celebrated conversation we have partly read, and which we propose to make the subject of several discourses, if God shall preserve our life, and our ministry. Here we shall discover the *nature*, the *necessity*, and the *Author* of the regeneration which Christianity requires of us.

I. The nature of this change shall be the subject of a first discourse. Here, in giving you a portrait of a regenerate man, and in describing the characters of regeneration, we shall explain to you the words of Jesus Christ, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit.*

II. The necessity of this change shall be the subject of a second discourse. Here, endeavouring to dissipate the illusions we are fond of making on the obligations of Christianity, we shall press the propo-

sition which Jesus Christ collects and asserts with so much force, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things ?*

III. The author of the change shall be the subject of a third discourse. There using our best efforts to penetrate the vast chaos with which ignorance, shall I call it, or corruption, has enveloped this branch of our theology, we shall endeavour to illustrate and to justify the comparison of Jesus Christ; *the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.*

I. In giving a portrait of the regenerate, and in tracing the characters of regeneration, (which is the duty of the present day,) we must explain the expressions of the Lord, *To be born again;—to be born of the Spirit.* Though it be not on grammatical remarks we would fix your attention, we would, however, observe, that the phrase, to be born of water and of the Spirit, is a Hebraical phraseology, importing to be born of spiritual water. By a similar expression, it is said in the third chapter of St. Matthew, *I indeed, says John Baptist, baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh after me one mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; that is, with spiritual fire.* When Jesus Christ says, that we cannot see the kingdom of God, except we are born of water and of the Spirit, he wishes to apprise us, that it is not sufficient to be

a member of his church, to be baptized, which is called *the washing of regeneration* ;* but that greater renovations must take place in the heart, than what water can produce on the surface of the body.

With regard to the other expression, *To be born again*, it is susceptible of a double sense. The original term may perhaps be so translated ; so is its import in various places which are not of moment to recite here. It may also be rendered, *born from above* ; as in the third chapter of St. James ; *The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable*. In this text, the original term is the same as that which we here translate *born again* ; but though the variation might attract the critic's attention, it ought not to divert the preacher : for, to whichever of the readings we may give the preference, the idea of our version invariably corresponds with the design of the Holy Ghost, and with the sense of the original. The uniform intention of Jesus Christ must be to distinguish our state of grace from that of nature. The state of nature is low and groveling ; that of grace is noble and sublime ; consonant to what our Saviour said unto the Jews, *Ye are from beneath, I am from above*. John viii. 23. Now for men whose birth is mean and groveling to acquire a great and noble descent, they must be born anew ; thus to be born *from above*, and to be born *again*, are the same thing ; and both these readings, how different soever they may appear,

* Our learned MEDE prefers the literal reading of Titus iii. 5. *The washing of the New Birth, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. From this distinction of St. Paul, many divines distinguish the New Birth as the entrance on regeneration.

associate in the same sense. It is of much more importance to remark on the words which follow, *Born of water, and of the Spirit*; first, that they are Hebraisms, and we have found the authorities so numerous, that we have had more difficulty in rejecting the less pertinent than in making the selection.

The Jews call the change which they presume their proselytes had experienced, *a spiritual birth*; *a new birth*; *a regeneration*. It was one of their maxims, that the moment a man became a proselyte, he was regarded as a child, once born in sin, but now born in holiness. To be born in holiness, was, in their style, to be born in the covenant: and to this mode of speaking St. Paul apparently refers in that remarkable passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, vii. 14. *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.*—*Now are they holy*; that is, they are accounted as born within the covenant. Consonant to this notion, the Jews presumed that a man on becoming a proselyte, had no longer any consanguinity with those to whom nature had joined him with indissoluble ties; and that he had a right to espouse his sister, and his mother, if they became proselytes like himself! This gave Tacitus, a Pagan historian, occasion to say, that the first lesson the Jews taught a proselyte was, to despise the gods, to renounce his country, and to regard his own children with disdain.* And Maimonides affirms, that the children with which an Egyptian woman is pregnant

* Book i. chap. 5.

at the time she becomes a proselyte, are of *the second birth*. Hence some Rabbins have had the odd and confused refinement to suppose, that there is an infinity of souls born of I know not what *ideal mass*; that those destined to the just, lodge in a certain palace; that when a Pagan embraces Judaism, one of those souls proceeds from its abode, and appears before divine Majesty, who embraces it, and sends it into the body of the proselyte, where it remains; that as an infant is not fully made a partaker of human nature, but when a pre-existent spirit is united to its substance in the bosom of its mother, so a man never becomes a true proselyte but when a new spirit becomes the substitute of that he derived from nature.*

Though it be not necessary to prove by numerous authorities the first remark we shall make on the words of Christ, *To be born of spiritual water, and to be born again*, it is proper at least to propose it; otherwise it would be difficult to account for our Saviour's reproofing Nicodemus, as being *a master in Israel, and not knowing these things*. For a doctor in the law does not seem reprehensible for not understanding a language peculiar to Jesus Christ, and till then unheard of; whereas the blame naturally devolved on this Jew for exclaiming at expressions familiar to the Rabbins. No doubt, Nicodemus was one of those men, who, according to an ancient and still existing abuse, had superadded to his rank and

* When our Saviour says, that neither the blind man, nor his parents had sinned in a pre-existent state, he obviously decides against this doctrine of Pythagoras and the Rabbins. How can a holy God send a holy soul into a sinful body? And St. Paul says, that Levi paid tithes in the loins of Abraham.

dignity, the title of Doctor, of which he was rendered unworthy by his ignorance. Hence the evangelist expressly remarks, that he was *a ruler of the Jews ; a ruler of the Jews !* here are his degrees ; here are his letters ; here is his patent.

But Jesus Christ, and this is my *second* remark, in borrowing, corrected the language of the Jews. He meant not literally what he said to Nicodemus, that to enter the kingdom of God, or according to the language of scripture and of the Jews, to be a disciple of the Messiah, one *must be born again* : he never imbibed the notion that a man on embracing Christianity, receives a new soul to succeed the one he received from nature : he had not adopted the refinement of the Jewish cabalists, concerning the pre-existence of souls. The expressions are figurative, and consequently subject to the inconveniencies of all similes, and figurative language in general. The metaphor he employs, when representing by the figure of *a new birth*, the change which must take place in the soul of a man on becoming a Christian ; this metaphor, I say, must be

1. Restricted :
2. It must be justified ;
3. It must be softened ;
4. It must be fortified.

1. The expression of Jesus Christ must be restricted. We cannot well find the import of any metaphor, unless we separate whatever is extraneous to the subject to which it is applied. The ideas of all authors whatever would be distorted, did we wish to extend their figures beyond the just bounds. What

is indisputable with regard to all authors, is peculiarly so with regard to the orientals, for excelling other nations in a warm imagination, they naturally abound in daring metaphors. Hence, the bolder the metaphors, the more is the need to restrict them; the more they would frustrate the proposed design, should we not avail ourselves of this precaution. What absurd systems have not originated from the license indulged on the comparison of Jesus Christ concerning the ties which unite us to himself, with the connection they have with the aliments which nourish us, and which by manducation, are changed, if we may so speak, into our own substance? Properly to understand this comparison, we must restrict it. We must be aware that it turns on this single point, that as food cannot nourish us, unless it be received into the body by eating; just so, the religion of Jesus Christ will be unavailing, if we content ourselves with regarding it in a superficial manner; neglect a profound entrance into all its doctrines, and a close application of its maxims to the heart. Of other similes we may say the same. How many are the insipid notions which arise from straining the comparisons between the mystical significance of the ritual law and the mysteries of the gospel? I here refer to the types; those striking figures, of which God himself is the author, and which in the first ages of the church traced the outlines of great events, which could not take place till many ages after they had been adumbrated by those figures. On contemplating those types in a judicious manner, you will find support for your faith, and indisputable proofs of the truth of your religion.

But to contemplate them in a just point of view, they must be restricted in a thousand respects, in which they can have no connection with the object they are designed to represent. Into how many mistakes should we run on neglecting this precaution; and on straining the metaphors taken from the priests, the victims, and other shadows in the ritual law? To understand those types and figures, we must restrict them; we must be aware that they bear on this single point; I would say, that as the office of high priest under the law was to reconcile God to the tribes of Israel, whose name he bore engraved on his mysterious pectoral; just so, the mediatorial office of Christ consisted in reconciling God to the men, with whose nature he was clothed.

Never had figure more need of this precaution; never had figure more need to be restricted than that employed by Jesus Christ in the words of my text. It must be restricted to the persons of the unregenerate who are not in communion with his people; and to the things which Jesus Christ requires of the unregenerate. But in what respects are those things called a *new birth*? The metaphor concentrates itself on a single point; that as an infant on coming into the world, experiences so great a change in its mode of existence in regard of respiration, of nourishment, of sight, and of all its sensations, and so very different from what was the case prior to its birth, as in some sort to seem a new creature; so indeed a man on passing from the world to the church, is a new man compared with what he was before. He has now other ideas, other desires, other propensities, other hopes, other objects of happiness. If you should not make

this restriction; but extend the metaphor, you would make very injudicious contrasts between the circumstances of the new, and of the natural birth; and you would form notions, not only unworthy of reception, but deemed unworthy of refutation in a place like this.

II. But the change here represented by the idea of a new birth, is not the less a reality, for being couched in figurative language. Hence we have said in the second place, that the expression of Jesus Christ must be justified. In what does the change required of those that would enter into fellowship with him consist? In what does this new birth consist? We have just insinuated, that it is a change of ideas; a change of desires; a change of taste; a change of hope; a change of the objects of happiness.

I. A change of ideas. An unregenerate man, unacquainted with Jesus Christ, is wishful to be the arbitrator of his own ideas. He admits no propositions but what are proved at the bar of reason; he takes no guide but his own discernment, or that of some doctor, often as blind, and sometimes more so than himself. On the contrary, the regenerate man sees solely with the eyes of his Saviour: Jesus Christ is his only guide, and if I may so speak, his sole reason, and his sole discernment.

I have no clear idea of the manner in which my soul can subsist after the ties which unite it to matter are dissolved. I do not properly know my soul by idea; I know it solely by sentiment, and by experience; and I have never thought without the medium of my brain; I have never perceived objects without the medium of my eyes; I have never heard sounds without the organs of my ears; and it does not appear

to me that these sensations can be conveyed in any other way. I believe, however, that I shall hear sounds when the organs of my ears are destroyed; I believe, that I shall perceive objects when the light of my eyes is extinguished; I believe that I shall think, and in a manner more close and sublime when my brain shall exist no more. I believe that my soul shall perform all these operations when my body shall be cold, pale, immovable, and devoured of worms in the tomb: I believe it;—but why? Because this Jesus to whom I have commended my spirit, has said to the penitent thief, and in him to every true Christian, *Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* Luke xxiii. 43.

I have no idea of this awful mystery whereby a God, a God essentially One, associates in his own essence a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost; that as the distinction with regard to Paternity, Filiation, and Spiration, is as real as the union with regard to the Godhead. These mysteries have no connection with my knowledge; yet I believe them, and why? Because I have changed my ideas, because this Jesus to whom I have yielded up my spirit, this Jesus, after preaching the doctrine of the unity of God, has decided that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God: and he has said to his apostles, *Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

[The rest of this posthumous sermon is not in the original: the loss is without remedy. The second sermon on the necessity of regeneration is founded on three classes of arguments: *first*, on the genius of the Christian religion; *secondly*, on the wants of man; and *thirdly*, on the perfections of God. But the arguments have been very much anticipated in other sermons in these eight volumes. The reader will form an adequate idea of our author's views of regeneration from the doctrine of grace in his third sermon.]

SERMON X.

On Regeneration.



JOHN iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

MY brethren, it is not in our power to discuss the subject on which we now enter, without deploring the contests it has excited in the Christian world. In our preceding discourses you have seen the nature, and the necessity of regeneration : we now proceed to address you on its Author ; and to call your attention to this part of Jesus Christ's conversation with Nicodemus ; *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* How often has this subject armed Christian against Christian, and communion against communion ? How often has it banished from the church that peace which it seems so much calculated to cherish ? No sooner had the apostles entered on their ministry, than they magnified the doctrines of grace ; but in magnifying them they seemed sent

to set the world on fire. The Jews and the philosophers, prepossessed in favour of human sufficiency, revolted at a doctrine so opposed to their pride : they presumed on making a progress in virtue, that they owed the praise to virtue itself.

No one is ignorant of the noise which the doctrine of grace excited in the ages which followed ; of the schism of Pelagius, and of the immense volumes which the ancient fathers heaped on this heretic.— The doctrines of grace have been agitated in the church of Rome : they excited in its bosom two powerful parties which have given each other alternate blows, and alike accused each other of overturning Christianity. No sooner had our reformers raised the standard, than the disputes concerning the doctrines of grace were on the point of destroying the work they had begun with so much honour and success ; and one saw in the communion they had just formed, the same spirit of division, which must have existed in the communion they had left. The doctrines of grace have caused in this republic as much confusion as in any other part of the Christian world : and what is more deplorable is, that after so many questions discussed, so many battles fought, so many volumes written ; so many anathemas launched, the public mind is not yet conciliated, and the doctrines of grace often remain enveloped in the cloud they endeavoured to dissipate ; and so much so, that the efforts they made to illustrate so interesting a subject, served merely to confuse and envelope it the more.

But how knotty soever this subject may be, it is not my design to disturb the embers, and revive your

disputes. I would endeavour, not to divide, but to conciliate and unite your minds : and during the whole of this discourse, in which the Holy Spirit is about to discover himself to you under the emblem of a wind, I shall keep in view the revelation with which a prophet was once honoured : God said to Elijah, *Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the LORD. And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD ; but the LORD was not in the wind ; and after the wind, an earthquake ; but the LORD was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake, a fire ; but the LORD was not in the fire : and after the fire, a still small voice : [a sound coy and subtle.] Then Elijah, awed with reverence at the divine presence, wrapped his face in his mantle, and recognised the token of JEHOVAH'S presence. The first emblems of this vision have been but too much realized in the controversies of the Christian church : but when shall the latter be realized ? Long enough ; yea too long have we seen *the great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks*. Long enough ; yea too long has the earthquake shook the pillars of the church : but the Lord was not in the wind ; the Lord was not in the earthquake. Yet at this very day the Vatican* kindles the fire, and with thunder-bolts in its hand,*

* The Vatican is a most magnificent palace at Rome ; the residence of the Popes, and celebrated for its library. Varro says it took its name from the answers or oracles, (called by the Latins *vaticinia*) which the Roman people received there from a god of the same name, who was said to be the author of the first sounds of infants, which is *va*, from *vagire*, to cry.

it presumes to determine, or rather to take away the laws of grace: *but the Lord was not in the fire.*

May this *still small voice*, the precursor of the Divinity, and the symbol of his presence, be heard to-day in the midst of this assembly! Excite thy hallowing accents, in these tabernacles we have built for thy glory, and in which we assemble in thy name, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of peace: may thy peace rest on the lips and heart of the preacher; may it animate all those that compose this assembly, that discord may for ever be banished from our churches, and be confined to the abyss of hell from whence it came, and that charity may succeed. *Amen.*

We must now illustrate the doctrine of the text, and state at large the ideas of the gospel respecting the aids of the Spirit of God, to which regeneration is here ascribed by Jesus Christ, and without which we might justly exclaim with Nicodemus at our Saviour's assertion, *How can these things be!* With that view, I shall propose certain maxims which shall be as so many precautions one should take when entering on this discussion, and which will serve to guide in a road that controversies have rendered so thorny and difficult. We shall afterwards include in six propositions all which seems to us a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do on this subject. This is all that remains for me to say.

Maxim 1. In the selection of passages on which you establish the doctrine of the aids of the Holy Spirit, be more cautious to choose those that are pertinent, than to amass a multitude that are inconclusive.—The rule prescribed in the beginning of this discourse,

and which we shall inviolably follow to the end, not to revive the controversy, prevents my assigning all the reasons that induced me to begin with this precaution. It is a general fault, and indeed a very delicate effort, in defending a proposition, to adopt with avidity, not only what favours it in effect ; but what seems to favour it. In the warmth of conversation, and especially in the heat of debate, we use arguments of which we are ashamed when reason returns, and when we coolly converse. Divines are not less liable to this fault than other men. By how many instances might we support this assertion? But not to involve myself in a discussion so delicate and difficult, only remark, that if there be in our scriptures an equivocal term, it is that of *spirit*. It is equivocal not only with regard to the diversity of subjects to which it is applied, but also because of the diversity to which it is applied in the same subject. And what ought to be the more carefully noticed in the subject we discuss, is, that it has significations without number when applied to the aids of the Holy Spirit which heaven accords to men. Do not imagine that every time it is said the Spirit of God is given to man, the gifts of sanctifying grace are to be understood. In very many places it signifies the gift of miracles. Select, therefore, the passages on which you would establish the doctrine of sanctifying grace ; and be less solicitous of amassing a multitude than of urging those which are pertinent and conclusive.

Maxim 2. In establishing the doctrine of the operation of grace, be cautious of overturning another not less essential to religion. When you establish

this part of our Saviour's theology, be careful not to injure his moral code ; and under the plea of rendering man orthodox, do not make him wicked. There are some authors constantly at variance with themselves. What is requisite to refute what a certain author advances in a recent publication ? We have but to adduce what he has presumed to establish in a former work. By what means may we refute what a preacher has just advanced in the last sentences of a discourse ? By adducing what he presumed to confirm but a moment before in the same discourse. Now, my brethren, there is one point of the Christian doctrine, on which this caution is very necessary ; it is that on which we speak to-day. Let us take care that we do not merit the censure which has been made on the most celebrated of the ancient advocates of grace ;* (whether correct or incorrect I do not undertake to determine,) the censure is, that when attacking the Manicheans, he favoured the cause of the Pelagians ; and when attacking the Pelagians, he favoured the cause of the Manicheans. Let us detest the maxims of certain modern preachers concerning the doctrines of grace ; that a preacher should be orthodox in the body of his sermon ; but heretic in the application. No ; let us not be heretics either in the body, or in the application of our sermons. Let us neither favour either the system of Pelagius, nor that of the Manicheans. Let us have a theology and a morality equally supported. Let us take heed not to establish the doctrine of the divine aids, in a way that attacks the other doctrines, as those men do ; for

* Augustine.

God, who is supremely holy, is not the author of sin. Let us take heed in expounding the passages which establish the doctrine of grace, not to do it in a way which makes them impugn those passages of scripture, where God *commands all men every where to repent* : Rom. ii. 4. and where it is said, that *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* : 2 Pet. iii. 9. where he declares that if we do perish, *it is of ourselves*, and only of ourselves : Hos. xiii. 9. where he calls upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem to confess, that he had taken all the proper care that his *vineyard should bring forth grapes, though it brought forth wild grapes* : Isa. v. 3, 4. where he introduces himself as addressing to mankind the most pathetic exhortations, and entreaties the most ardent, to promote their conversion, and as shedding the bitterest tears on their refusal ; as saying in the excess of his grief, *O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace*. Luke xix. 41, 42. *O that my people had hearkened unto me* : Psal. lxxxii. 13. *O that they were wise ; that they understood this ; that they would consider their latter end*. Deut. xxxii. 29.

Maxim 3. Do not abandon the doctrine of grace, because you are unable to explain all its abstruse refinements, or because you cannot reply to all the inquiries it may have suggested. There is scarcely a proposition which could claim our assent, were we to give it to those only whose several parts we can clearly explain, and to whose many questions we can fully reply. This maxim is essential to all the scien-

ces. Theology has what is common to all human sciences: and in addition, as its object is much more noble and exalted, it has more points, concerning which it is not possible fully to satisfy the mind. This is especially the case with regard to the doctrine we now discuss. I might, were it required, give you many demonstrations, that the nature of the doctrine is such that we cannot perfectly comprehend it. We know so little of the manner in which certain ideas and certain sentiments are excited in the soul; we know so little how the understanding acquiesces, and how the will determines, that it is not surprising if we are ignorant of what is requisite for the understanding to acquiesce, and the will to determine in religion: we especially know so little of the various means God can employ, when he is pleased to work on our soul, that it is really a chance to hit on the right one by which he draws us from the world: it may be by his sovereignty over our senses; it may be by an immediate operation on the substance of our souls. But without having recourse to this mode of reasoning, the doctrine of my text is quite sufficient to substantiate the maxim I advance. I presume that you ought to admit the doctrine of grace, though you can neither perfectly explain it, nor adequately answer all the questions it may have excited. This is the precise import of the comparison Jesus Christ makes between the agency of the Holy Spirit and the operations of the wind. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Maxim 4. When two truths on the doctrines of grace are apparently in opposition, and cannot be reconciled ; sacrifice the less important to that which is of greater moment. Two truths cannot in reality be in opposition. It is a fact demonstrated that two contradictory propositions cannot both be true ; but the limits of our understanding often present a contradiction where in reality there is none. I frequently hear learned men expound the gospel, but adopting different methods to attain the same end, they suggest difficulties alternately. Others enlarge on the inability of man, and on the need he has of divine assistance. The former tax the latter with giving sanction to the corruption of man ; and the latter charge the former with flattering the pride of man. The first object to the second, that in totally destroying the faculties of man, and in straining the necessity of grace, they authorise him to say, “ Seeing literally that I can do nothing, I ought not to blame myself for doing nothing ; nor to make a crime of remaining where I am.” The second charge the first, that in conferring too much honour on the powers of man, and in affording him too much reason to believe he is still the arbitrator of his own will, they throw the temptation in his way to crown himself with his own merits, and to become the worker of his own salvation. Now, supposing we were obliged to choose either to lean to the *pride* of man, or to his *corruption*, for which must we decide ? I am fully convinced that the necessity of diligence, which is imposed upon us, should not give any colour to our pride : and you will see it instantly ; you will see that

however great the application which the best of saints may have made to the work of their salvation, humility was their invariable sentiment. You will see that after having read, and thought, and reflected; that after having endeavoured to subdue their senses, and to sacrifice the passions God requires in sacrifice, they have believed it their duty to abase their eyes to the earth, and to sink into the dust from which they were made; yea, always to say with the profoundest sentiments of abasement, *O God, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us shame and confusion of face.* Dan. ix. 7. Hence if we were obliged to choose either a system which apparently favours the pride of man, or a system which apparently favours his corruption, we could not hesitate, we must sacrifice the last to the first. The reason is obvious, because in leaning to the pride of man, you do but favour *one* passion, whereas by leaning to the corruption of man, you favour every passion: you favour hatred, revenge, and obduracy: and in favouring every passion, you favour this very pride you are wishful to destroy. Now, it must be incomparably better to favour but one passion, than to favour them all in one.

Maxim 5. In pressing the laws of grace, do not impose the law of making rules so general as to admit of no exceptions. I know indeed that God is always like himself, and that there is a certain uniformity which is the grand character of all his actions; but on this occasion, as on many others, he deviates from common rules. There are miracles in grace, as in nature: so you shall presently see, my

brethren, in the use of this maxim, and in the necessity of this precaution.

II. Entering now on the doctrine of grace, and with the precautions just laid down, do not fear to follow us into this troubled sea, how dangerous soever it may appear, and how abundant soever it may be in shipwrecks. I proceed to associate practice with speculation, and to comprise in six propositions all that a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do in regard of this subject.

1. Nature is so depraved, that man, without supernatural aids, cannot conform to the conditions of his salvation.

2. That how invincible soever this corruption may be, there is a wide difference between the man who enjoys, and the man who is deprived of revelation.

3. That the aids which man can neither derive from the wreck of nature, nor from exterior revelation, are promised to him in the gospel.

4. That though man can neither draw from the wreck of nature, nor from exterior revelation, the requisite aid to fulfil the conditions of his salvation; and though the grace of the Holy Spirit be promised to him; he has no right to presume on those aids, while he obstinately resists the aids afforded him by his frail nature, and by exterior revelation.

5. That the aids of the Holy Spirit promised to man, are imparted at first by measure; hence, to abuse those he already has, is the surest way to obstruct the reception of fresh support.

6. To whatever degree one may have carried the abuse of past favours, one ought not to despair of ob-

taining fresh support, which should always be asked with fervent prayer.

These, brethren, are our six propositions, which apparently contain all that a Christian ought to know, and all he ought to do on this subject. God is my witness that I enter on the discussion in such a way as appears to me most proper to cherish among us that peace, which should ever be so dear, and to prevent all those unhappy controversies which have agitated the church in general, and this republic in particular. I shall proceed with these propositions in the same temper as I have enumerated them, and haste to make them the conclusion of this discourse.

1. Nature is so depraved, that man, without supernatural aids, cannot conform to the conditions of his salvation. Would to God that this proposition was less true! Would to God that we had more difficulty in proving it! But study your own heart. Listen to what it whispers in your ear concerning the precepts God has given in his word: listen to it on the sight of the man who has offended you. What animosity! what detestation! what revenge! Listen to it in prosperity. What ambition! what pride! what arrogance! Listen to it when we exhort you to humility, to patience, to charity. What evasions! what repugnance! what excuses!

From the study of your own heart, proceed to that of others. Examine the infancy, the life, the death of man. In his infancy you will see the fatal germ of his corruption; sad, but sensible proof of the depravity of your nature; and alarming omen of the future. You will see him prone to evil from his very

cradle, indicating from his early years the seeds of every vice, and giving from the arms of the nurses that suckle him, preludes of all the excesses into which he will fall as soon as his capacity is able to aid his corruption. Contemplate him in mature age; see what connections he forms with his associates! Connections of ambition; connections of avarice; connections of cupidity. Look at him in the hour of death, and you will see him torn from a world from which he cannot detach his heart, regretting even the objects which have constituted his crimes, and carrying to the tomb, if I may so speak, the very passions which during life, have divided the empire of his soul.

After studying man, study the scriptures: there you will see that God has pledged the infallibility of his testimony to convince us of a truth, to which our presumption scrupled to subscribe. It will say, that *you were conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity.* It will say, that *in you; that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing.* It will say, that *this flesh is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be.* It will say, that you carry within you, *a law in your members, which wars against the law of your mind: a flesh which lusteth against the spirit.* It will tell you, that man in regard to the conditions of his salvation is a stock, a stone, a nothing; that he is blind and dead. It would be easy to swell the list! It would be easy indeed, but in adducing to you those passages of scripture on which we found the sad doctrine of natural depravity, I observed the caution already laid down, of preferring, in the selection, a

small number of conclusive passages, to the production of a multitude. Nature being so far corrupted, man cannot, without the aids of grace, conform to the conditions of his salvation.

Here is the first thing you ought to know, and the first thing you ought to do is to feel your weakness and inability ; to humble and abase yourselves in presence of the holy God ; to cry from the abyss into which you are plunged, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !* Rom. vii. 24. It is to groan under the depravity of sin. O glory of primitive innocence, whither art thou fled ! O happy period in which man was naturally prompted to believe what is true, and to love what is amiable, why art thou so quickly vanished away ! Let us not deplore the curse on the ground ; the infection of air ; nor the animals destined for the service of man, that now turn their fury against him ; let us rather deplore our disordered faculties ; our beclouded reason, and our perverted will.

2. But however great, however invincible the corruption of all men may be, there is a wide difference between him who has the advantage of revelation, and him to whom it is denied. This is the *second* thing you ought to know on the subject we discuss ; and this second point of speculation is a second source of practice. Do not apply to Christians born in the church, and acquainted with revelation, portraits which the holy scriptures give solely of those who are born in Pagan darkness. I am fully aware that revelation, unattended with the supernatural aids of grace, is inadequate for a man's conversion. The

preceding article is sufficient to prove it. I know that all men are naturally *dead in trespasses and sins*. It is evident however that this death hath its degrees : and that the impotency of a man, favoured with revelation, is not of the same kind as that of him who is still in Pagan darkness. It is equally manifest, that a man, who, after having heard the doctrine of the gospel, grovels in the same sort of error and of vice into which he was impetuously drawn by his natural depravity, is incomparably more guilty than he who never heard the gospel. Hear what Jesus Christ says of those who having heard the gospel, and who had not availed themselves of its aids to forsake their error and vice ; *Had I not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin*. Here is the second thing you ought to know ; hence the second thing you ought to do, is, not to shelter yourselves, with a view to extenuate voluntary depravity, under certain passages of scripture, which exclaim not against the impotency of a Christian, but against that of a man who is still in Pagan darkness ; you must apply the general assertion of Jesus Christ to all the exterior cares that have been taken to promote your conversion : *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin*. O my soul, with what humiliating ideas should those words of the Lord strike thee ! If God had not come ; if he had not made thee to suck truth and virtue with thy mother's milk ; if he had not raised thee up masters in thy youth, and ministers in thy riper age ; if thou hadst not heard so many instructive and pathetic ser-

mons, and read so many instructive and affecting books; if thou hadst not been pressed by a thousand and a thousand calls, thou hadst not had sin : at least thou mightest have exculpated thyself on the ground of thy ignorance and natural depravity ; but now thou art *without excuse*. O unhappy creature, what years has God tutored thee in his church ! What account canst thou give of all his care ! Now thou art *without excuse*. Here is the way we should study ourselves, and not lose sight of the precaution, not to sap morality under a plea of establishing this part of our theology.

3. The aids which man is unable to draw either from the wreck of nature, or from exterior revelation, are promised to him in the gospel : he may attain them by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God, this consolatory proposition is supported by express passages of scripture ; by passages the most conclusive, according to our first precaution. What else is the import of the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah's prophecies ? *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.—This shall be the covenant that I will make with them : I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* What else is the import of the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecies ? *I will sprinkle clean water upon you ; I will give you a new heart ; I will put a new spirit within you.* What else is the import of St. James' words in the first chapter of his general epistle ? *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraid-*

eth not. And of Jesus Christ in the words of my text, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.* Hence the third thing that we should know, and the third thing that we should do, is, to bless God that he has not left us to the weakness of nature ; it is, like St. Paul, *to give thanks to God through Jesus Christ ;* Rom. i. 8. it is to ask of him those continual supports, without which *we can do nothing.* It is often to say to him, *O God, draw us, and we will run after thee. Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.* Cant. i. 8. Psal. li. 12.

4. But is it sufficient to pray ? Is it enough to ask ? We have said in the *fourth* place, that though man be unable to draw from frail nature, and from exterior revelation, the requisite aids to conform to the conditions of his salvation ; he has no right to presume on the grace of the Holy Spirit, while he obstinately resists the efforts of frail nature, and the aids of revelation. But here we seem to forget one of the maxims already laid down ; that if it is requisite for me to fulfil the conditions with which the gospel has connected salvation, how can I do otherwise than obstinately resist the efforts which frail nature, and exterior revelation afford ? This difficulty is but in appearance. To know, whether when abandoned to our natural depravity, and aided only by exterior revelation, we can conform to the conditions of the gospel, or whether when abandoned to the depravity of nature, and aided only by exterior revelation, we are invincibly impelled to every species of crime, are

two very different questions. That we cannot perform the conditions of salvation, I readily allow ; but that we are invincibly impelled to every species of crime, is insupportable. Whence then came the difference between heathen and heathen, between Fabricius and Lucullus, between Augustus and Sylla, between Nero and Titus ? Whatever you are able to do by your natural strength, and especially when aided by the light of revelation, do it, if you wish to have any well-founded hope of obtaining the supernatural aids, without which you cannot fulfil the conditions of your salvation. But the scriptures declare, you say, that without the grace of the Holy Spirit you can do nothing, and that you can have no real virtue but what participates of your natural corruption : I allow it : but practise the virtues which participate of your natural corruption, if you would wish God to grant you his divine aids. Be corrupt as Fabricius, and not as Lucullus ; be corrupt as Augustus, and not as Sylla ; be corrupt as Titus, and not as Nero, as Antonius, and not as Commodus. One of the grand reasons why God withholds from some men the aids of grace, is, because they resist the aids they might derive from their frail nature. Hear the theology of St. Paul, and the decision of that great preceptor in grace, imposes silence on every difficulty of which this point may be susceptible. Speaking of the heathens in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he says, *That which may be known of God is manifest in them ; or, as I would rather read, is manifested to them ; but because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were*

thankful.—That which may be known of God is manifested to them ; here then is the aid Pagans might draw from the ruins of nature ; they might know that there was a God ; they might have been thankful for his temporal gifts, for rain and fruitful seasons ; and instead of the infamous idolatry to which they abandoned themselves, they might have seen the invisible things of God, which are manifest by his works. And because they did not derive those aids from the ruins of nature, they became wholly unworthy of divine assistance ; God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.—They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

5. Our fifth proposition imports that the aids of the Holy Spirit promised to man are gradually imparted : hence to misapply the grace we have, is the most dangerous way to obstruct the reception of fresh support. But listen to some of our supralapsarians, and they will say, that the design of God in promising those aids is, to assure us that how much soever we shall resist one measure of grace, he will still give us a greater measure, and ever proportion the counterpoise of grace to that of a deliberate, obstinate, and voluntary enmity. So many have understood the doctrine of our church respecting irresistible grace : to judge of it consonant to their ideas, this grace redoubles its efforts as the sinner redoubles his revolts ; so that he who shall throw the greatest obstacles in its way, shall be the very man who shall have the fairest claims to its richest portion.

Poor Christians ! are these your conceptions of religion ? My God ! is it thus that thy gospel is understood ? I hope, my brethren, that not one of you shall have cause to recognize himself in this portrait ; for I am bold to aver, that of all the most heterodox opinions, and the most hostile to the genius of the gospel, the one I have just put into the mouth of certain Christians, is that which really surpasses them all. On the contrary, he who opposes the greatest obstacles to the operations of grace, is precisely the man who must expect the smallest share of it. Grace diminishes its efforts in proportion as the sinner redoubles his resistance. Obstinate revolt against its first operations, is the sure way to be deprived of the second ; and the usual cause which deprives us of it, is the want of co-operation with its true design.

6. We are now come to the last proposition, with which we shall close this discourse. However unworthy we may be of the divine assistance, and whatever abuse we may have made of it, we should never despair of its aids. We do not say this to flatter the lukewarmness of man, and to soothe his shameful delay of conversion ; on the contrary, if there be a doctrine which can prompt us to diligence ; if there be a doctrine which can induce us to devote the whole time of our life to the work of salvation, it is the one we have just announced in this discourse, and made the subject of our two preceding sermons. We have considered three points in the conversation of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus, the *nature*, the *necessity*, and the *author* of the *new birth*. And what is there in all

this which does not tend to sap the delay of conversion?

Let each of you recollect, as far as memory is able, what Jesus Christ has taught, and what we have taught after him, on the subject of regeneration.— This work does not consist in a certain superficial change which may be made in a moment: in that case, it would suffice to have a skilful physician, and to commission him to warn us of the moment when we must leave the world, that we may devote that precise moment to the work of our salvation. But the regeneration which Jesus Christ requires, is an entire transformation; a change of ideas, a change of desires, a change of hopes, a change of taste, a change in the schemes of happiness. How then does the system of delaying conversion accord with this idea? What time would you allow for this change and reformation? A month? a week? a day? the last extremity of a mortal malady? What! in so short a time would you consummate a work to which the longest life would hardly suffice? And in what circumstances would you do it? In delirium; in the agonies of death; at a time when one is incapable of the smallest application; at a time when we can scarce admit among the attendants, a friend, a child, whom we love as our own life; at a time when the smallest business appears as a world of difficulty?

But if what we have now said, after this *teacher come from God*, on the nature of regeneration, have begun to excite some scruples in your mind concerning the plan of delaying conversion, let each of you recal, as far as he is able, what Jesus Christ has said,

and what we have said, following him concerning the necessity of regeneration : for since you are obliged to confess that regeneration cannot be the work of the last moments of life, I ask, on what ground you found the system of delaying conversion ? Do you flatter yourselves that God will be so far satisfied with your superficial efforts toward regeneration, as to excuse the genuine change ? Do you hope that this general declaration of the Saviour, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*, shall have an exception with regard to you ? But the reflections we have made in our second discourse, against this chimerical notion, have they made no impression on you ? Do we preach to rational beings ? or do we preach to stocks and stones ? Have you not perceived that regeneration is founded on the genius of the gospel ; and that every doctrine of it is comprised in the proposition, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* ? It is founded on the nature of man, and on the proposed design of Jesus Christ to make him happy ; and the acquisition of this end would imply a contradiction, if man should revolt at the change and the reformation ; because, since the loss of primitive innocence, our state is become our calamity ; and it would imply a contradiction that we should be delivered from our calamity, unless we should be delivered from our state. It is founded on the nature of God himself : of the two, God must either renounce his perfections, or we must renounce our imperfections ; and, if I may dare so to

Speak of my Maker, God must either regenerate himself, or we must regenerate ourselves.

Upon what then would you found your hopes of conversion on a death-bed? Upon the aids of that grace without which you never can be converted? But does the manner in which we have just described those aids, afford you any hope of obtaining them, when you shall have obstinately and maliciously resisted them to the end?

I confirm, notwithstanding, my last proposition; I maintain that however unworthy you may have rendered yourselves of divine aid, you ought never to despair of obtaining it. Yes, though you should have resisted the Holy Ghost to the end of life; though you should have but one hour to live, devote it; call in your ministers; offer up prayers, and take the kingdom of heaven by violence. We will not deprive you of this the only hope which can remain: we will not exclude you from the avenues of grace. Perhaps your last efforts may have effect; perhaps your prayers shall be heard; perhaps the Holy Spirit will give effect to the exhortations of his ministers; and, to say all in a single word, perhaps God will work a miracle in your favour, and deviate from the rules he is accustomed to follow in the conversion of other men.

Perhaps: ah! my brethren, how little consolation does this word afford in the great events of life; and less consolation still when applied to our salvation!

Perhaps: ah! how little is that word capable of consoling a soul when it has to contend with death! My brethren, we can never consent to make your sal-

vation depend on a *perhaps* : we cannot see that you would have any other hope of salvation than that of a man, who throws himself from a tower ; a man actually descending in the air, that may be saved by a miracle, but he has so many causes to fear the contrary. We cannot see that you would have any other ground of hope than that of a man who is under the axe of the executioner, whose arm is uplifted, which may indeed be held by a celestial hand ; but how many reasons excite alarm that he will strike the fatal blow. We would wish to be able to say to each of you, *fear not*. Mark v. 30. We would wish that each of you could say to himself, *I know ; I am persuaded*. 2 Tim. i. 12. Second our wishes : labour ; pray ; pray without ceasing ; labour during the whole of life. This is the only means of producing that gracious assurance and delightful persuasion. May God bless your efforts, and hear our prayers. *Amen*. To whom be honour and glory for ever.—
AMEN.

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