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# SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN.

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VOL. III.

*BY ROBERT ROBINSON.*



# SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH

OF

THE LATE REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

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BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

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VOLUME III.

*ON THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES OF  
CHRISTIANITY.*

—♦—  
SECOND AMERICAN  
FROM THE FIFTH LONDON EDITION.

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THE  
**PREFACE**

TO THE FIRST

*EDITION OF THE THIRD VOLUME.*

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**T**HREE times have I taken pen in hand to account to my subscribers in a preface for my choice of the sermons, that compose this volume: but one thought hath as often confused me at the outset, and obliged me to lay it aside. I am struck with an idea of the different degrees of labour necessary to two men, one of whom should conceive the project of disuniting Christians, and the other that of cementing them together in mutual love. The first need not trouble himself with study, examination, and argument; he would not be obliged either to divest himself of his own prepossessions, or to expose those of others; he need not sit whole nights and days either to examine coolly his own theses, or impartially to weigh those of his opponents; let him only take popular prejudices, cover them with the sacred style of scripture, or conceal them under the impenetrable jargon of the schools; let him animate them with party spirit, call it religious zeal, and denounce judgment on all who do not believe the whole to be essential to salvation; and the work will be done. Such a man,

methinks, resembles a light-heeled enemy tripping over a spacious field, and scattering, as he goes, the seeds of an endless number of weeds: while the man, who adopts a contrary plan, must be forced, like the patient prying weeder, to stoop and toil step by step, day after day, feeling many a pain, and fetching many a sigh, to pull the noxious produce up.

According to my first proposal, this volume ought to consist of sermons on *the doctrines of Christianity*. My intimate friends, who first encouraged, and subscribed for this translation, thoroughly understood me: but I might have foreseen, that their partiality would procure other purchasers, unacquainted with my notions of men and things, and who probably might expect to find each his own system of religion in a volume of sermons on the doctrines of our common Lord. I am necessitated therefore to explain myself, and to bespeak a candid attention, while I endeavour to do so.

Very early in life I was prepossessed in favour of the following positions.—Christianity is a religion of divine original—a religion of divine original must needs be a perfect religion, and answer all the ends, for which it was revealed, without human additions.—The Christian religion hath undergone considerable alterations since the times of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and yet, *Jesus Christ* was then accounted *the finisher*, as well as *the author of faith*, Heb. xii. 2.—The doctrines of revelation, as they lie in the inspired writings, differ very much from the same doctrines, as they lie in creeds of human composi-

tion.—The moral precepts, the positive institutes, and the religious affections, which constitute the devotion of most modern Christians, form a melancholy contrast to those, which are described by the guides, whom they profess to follow.—The light of nature, and that of revelation; the operations of right reason, the spirit of the first, and the influence of the Holy Ghost, the soul of the last; both proceeding from the same uniform Supreme Being, cannot be supposed to be destructive of each other, or, even in the least degree, to clash together.—The finest idea, that can be formed of the Supreme Being, is that of an infinite intelligence always in harmony with itself; and, accordingly, the best way of proving the truth of revelation is that of shewing the analogy of the plan of redemption to that of creation and providence.—Simplicity and majesty characterize both nature and scripture: simplicity reduces those benefits, which are essential to the real happiness of man, to the size of all mankind; majesty makes a rich provision for the employment and super-added felicity of a few superior geniusses, who first improve themselves, and then felicitate their inferior brethren by simplifying their own ideas, by refining and elevating those of their fellow-creatures, by so establishing a social intercourse, consolidating fraternal love, and along with it all the reciprocal ties, that unite mankind.—Men's ideas of objects essential to their happiness are neither so dissimilar, nor so numerous, as inattentive spectators are apt to suppose.—Variety of sentiment, which is the life of society, cannot be destructive of real religion.—

Mere mental errors, if they be not entirely innocent in the account of the supreme Governor of mankind, cannot be, however, objects of blame and punishment among men.—Christianity could never be intended to destroy the just natural rights, or even to diminish the natural privileges of mankind.—That religion, which allows the just claims, and secures the social happiness of all mankind, must needs be a better religion than that, which provides for only a part at the expence of the rest.—God is more glorified by the good actions of his creatures expressive of homage to him, and productive of universal, social good, than he is by uncertain conjectures, or even accurate notions, which originate in self-possession and terminate in social disunion.—How clear soever all these maxims may be, a certain degree of ambition or avarice, ignorance or malice, presumption or diffidence, or any other irregular passion, will render a man blind to the clearest demonstration, and insensible to the most rational and affecting persuasion.—These positions, mere opinions and prepossessions before examination, became demonstrative truths after a course of diligent search; and these general principles have operated in the choice of the sermons, which compose this volume of the principal doctrines of Christianity.

But, previous to all inquiries concerning the doctrines of Christianity, it is absolutely necessary to establish that of CHRISTIAN LIBERTY; for, say we what we will, if this preliminary doctrine of right be disallowed, voluntary piety is the dream of an enthusiast; the oracles of God in the Christian world, like

those of the Sybils in pagan Rome, are sounds convertible to senatorial sense ; and the whole Christian mission, from the first prophet down to the last minister, is one long muster-roll of statesmen's tools, a disgrace to their species, a contradiction to their profession, a dishonour to their God !

Christian liberty in Italy is liberty to be a Roman Catholic, that is, liberty to believe what the bishop of Rome affirms to be true, and liberty to perform what he commands to be done. Christian liberty in some reformed churches is liberty to renounce what the reformers renounced, to believe what they affirmed, and to practise what they required. But we who *have not learned Christ*, define Christian liberty otherwise ; and if we be asked, What is Christian liberty ! we answer, It is liberty to be a Christian. One part of Christianity consists of propositions to be believed. Liberty to be a Christian believer is liberty to examine these propositions, to form a judgment of them, and to come to a self-determination, according to our own best abilities. Another part of Christianity consists of duties to be performed. Liberty to be a practical Christian is liberty to perform these duties, either as they regard God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Liberty to be a Christian implies liberty not to be a Christian, as liberty to examine a proposition implies liberty to reject the arguments brought to support it, if they appear inconclusive, as well as liberty to admit them, if they appear demonstrative. To pretend to examine christianity, before we have established our right to do

so, is to pretend to cultivate an estate, before we have made out our title to it.

The object of christian liberty, that, with which a man, who would examine christianity, has to do, is a system of christian doctrine : but, having established the doctrine of right, before we proceed to exercise this right by examining the religion proposed to mankind by Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary to inquire what we ought, on sound principles of just and fair reasoning, to expect to find in it. I know some truths without revelation. I have a full demonstration in nature, that there is one God—that it is impossible there should be more than one—that he is an intelligent Spirit—and that he is a wise and bountiful Being. Should any religion, which pretends to be divine, affirm, there is a plurality of gods—God is not an intelligent Spirit—God is an unwise and an unkind being—I should have a right to reject this pretended revelation. Indeed, should a revealed religion allow my demonstrations, and afterwards explain them in a manner quite subversive of my former explications of them : should it affirm, God is, as you say, a wise and bountiful being : but he displays his wisdom and goodness not in governing his intelligent creatures as you have imagined ; such a moral government, I will prove to you, would shew a defect of wisdom and goodness : but he displays the supreme perfection of both by providing for such and such interests, and by bestowing such and such benefits, as have either escaped your notice, or were beyond your comprehension. In this case I ought not to reject

revelation, for, although I can demonstrate without inspiration the wisdom and goodness of God, yet I cannot pretend by the light of nature to know all the directions, and to ascertain all the limits of these perfections.

Lay christianity before me who will, I expect to find three things in it, which I call analogy, proportion, and perfection. Each of these articles opens a wide field of not incurious speculation, and each fully explained and applied would serve to guide any man in his choice of a religion, yea in his choice of a party among the various divisions of christians: but alas! we are not employed now-a-days in examining and choosing religious principles for ourselves, but in subscribing, and defending those of our ancestors! A few hints then shall serve.

By *analogy* I mean resemblance, and, when I say revealed religion must bring along with it an analogical evidence, I mean, it must resemble the just dictates of nature. The reason is plain. The same Supreme Being is the author of both. The God of nature has formed man for observing objects, comparing them together, laying down principles, inferring consequences, reasoning and self-determining; he has not only empowered all mankind to exercise these abilities, but has even constrained them by a necessity of nature to do so; he has not only rendered it impossible for men to excel without this exercise, but he has even rendered it impossible for them to exist safely in society without it. In a word, the God of nature has made man in his own image, a self-determining being, and, to say nothing of the na-

ture of virtue, he has rendered free consent essential to every man's felicity and peace. With his own consent subjection makes him happy; without it dominion over the universe would make him miserable.

The religion of nature, (I mean by this expression, here, the objects, which display the nature of the Deity, and thereby discover the obligations of mankind) is in perfect harmony with the natural constitution of man. All natural objects offer evidence to all: but force it on none. A man may examine it, and he may not examine it: he may admit it, and he may reject it: and, if his rejection of the evidence of natural religion be not expressed in such overt acts as are injurious to the peace of civil society, no man is empowered to force him, or to punish him; the supreme moral Governor of the world himself does not distinguish him here by any exterior punishments; at most he expresses his displeasure by marks attached to the person of the culprit, and concealed from all the rest of his fellow-creatures; and the glory of civil society is not to encroach on the moral government of God.

Christianity comes, pretends to come from the God of nature; I look for analogy, and I find it: but I find it in the holy scriptures, the first teachers, and the primitive churches. In all these, I am considered as a rational creature, objects are proposed, evidence is offered: If I admit it, I am not entitled thereby to any temporal emoluments; if I refuse it, I am not subjected to any temporal punishments: the whole is an affair of conscience, and lies between each individual and his God. I choose to be a Chris-

tion on this very account. This freedom which I call a perfection of my nature ; this self-determination, the dignity of my species, the essence of my natural virtue ; this I do not forfeit by becoming a Christian, this I retain, explained, confirmed, directed, assisted by the regal grant of the Son of God. Thus the prerogatives of Christ, the laws of his religion, and the natural rights of mankind being analogous, evidence arises of the divinity of the religion of Jesus.

I believe, it would be very easy to prove, that the Christianity of the church of Rome, and that of every other establishment, because they are establishments, are totally destitute of this analogy. The religion of nature is not capable of establishment, the religion of Jesus Christ is not capable of establishment: if the religion of any church be capable of establishment, it is not analogous to that of Scripture, or that of nature. A very simple example may explain our meaning. Natural religion requires a man to pay a mental homage to the Deity, to venerate his perfections, by adoring and confiding in them. By what possible means can these pious operations of the mind be established? could they be forced, their nature would be destroyed, and they would cease to be piety, which is an exercise of judgment and will. Revealed religion requires man to pay a mental homage to the Deity through Jesus Christ, to venerate his perfections by adoring and confiding in them as Christianity directs; by repentance, by faith, by hope, and so on. How is it possible to establish those spiritual acts? A human establishment requires

man to pay this Christian mental homage to the Deity by performing some external ceremony, suppose bowing to the east. The ceremony, we grant, may be established: but, the voluntary exercise of the soul in the performance, which is essential to the Christianity of the action, who in the world can establish this? If the religion of Jesus be considered as consisting of external rites and internal dispositions, the former may be established: but, be it remembered, the establishment of the exterior not only does not establish the interior, but the destruction of the last is previously essential to the establishment of the first.

No religion can be established without penal sanctions, and all penal sanctions in cases of religion are persecutions. Before a man can persecute, he must renounce the generous tolerant dispositions of a Christian. No religion can be established without human creeds; and subscription to all human creeds implies two dispositions contrary to true religion, and both expressly forbidden by the author of it. These two dispositions are, love of dominion over conscience in the imposer, and an abject preference of slavery in the subscriber. The first usurps the rights of Christ; the last swears allegiance to a pretender. The first domineers, and gives laws like a tyrant; the last truckles like a vassal. The first assumes a dominion incompatible with his frailty, impossible even to his dignity, yea denied to the dignity of angels; the last yields a low submission, inconsistent with his own dignity, and ruinous to that very religion, which he pretends by this mean to

support. Jesus Christ does not require, he does not allow, yea he expressly forbids both these dispositions, well knowing, that an allowance of these would be a suppression of the finest dispositions of the human soul, and a degrading of revelation beneath the religion of nature. If human inventions have formerly secularized Christianity, and rendered such bad dispositions necessary in times of ignorance, they ought to be exploded now, as all Christians now allow this theory—The Son of God did not come to redeem one part of mankind to serve the secular views, and unworthy passions of the other : but he obtained freedom for both, that both *might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives*, Luke i. 74, 75. When churches reduce this theory to practice, they realize in actual life what otherwise makes only a fine idea decyphered in books, and by so doing they adorn their Christianity with the glorious evidence of analogy.

Suppose the God of nature should think proper to reveal a simple system of astronomy, and to require all mankind to examine and believe this revelation on pain of his displeasure. Suppose one civil government, having examined this revelation, and explained the sense, in which they understood it, should endeavour to establish their explication by temporal rewards and punishments. Suppose they should require all their subjects to carry their infants in their arms to a public school, to answer certain astronomical interrogations, to be put by a professor of astronomy ; as, in general, Wilt thou, infant of eight days

old! Wilt thou be an astronomer? Dost thou renounce all erroneous systems of astronomy? In particular, dost thou admit the true Copernican system? Dost thou believe the revealed explication of this system? And dost thou also believe that explication of this revelation, which certain of our own predecessors in the profession believed, which we, your masters, and parents, in due obedience, receive? Suppose a proxy required to answer for this infant; All, this, I, proxy for this child, do stedfastly believe; and suppose from this hour the child became a reputed astronomer. Suppose yet further, this child should grow to manhood, and in junior life should be pressed, on account of the obligation contracted in his infant state, to subscribe a certain paper called an astronomical creed, containing, mathematical definitions, astronomical propositions, and so on, and should be required for certain rewards to examine and approve, teach and defend this creed, and no other, without incurring the penalty of expulsion from all public schools, a deprivation of all honours, which he might be supposed on other accounts to merit, an exclusion from all offices of trust, credit, and profit, in some cases a loss of property, in others imprisonment, in others death. In this supposed case, I ask, would not the establishment of this system be an open violation of the doctrine of analogy, and should I not have a right to reason thus? The revelation itself is infallible, and the author of it has given it me to examine: but the establishment of *a given meaning* of it renders examination needless, and perhaps dangerous. The God of nature has

given me eyes, instruments, powers, and inclinations to use them; eyes, faculties, and dispositions as good as those of my ancestors, and instruments better: but all these advantages, which may be beneficial to me, if they confirm the truth of the explication, may be fatal to me, if they lag behind, or ken beyond the bound of the creed. Nature says, a constellation is a collection of stars, which in the heavens appear near to one another. This is a plain simple truth, I open my eyes, and admit the evidence. Revelation says, each fixt star is a sun, the centre of a system, consisting of planets inhabited by intelligent beings, who possess one sense and two faculties more than the inhabitants of this globe, and who worship the most high God in spirit and in truth. I cannot comprehend this whole proposition: but there is nothing in it contrary to the nature of things: and I believe the truth of it on the testimony of the revealer. The established explication of this proposition is that of Ptolemy. He numbered the stars in the constellation Bootes, and found them, or supposed he found them, twenty-three, and this number I am to examine and approve, teach and defend against all opponents. What shall I say to Tycho, who affirms, Bootes contains only eighteen? Must I excrete Havelius, who makes them fifty-two? After all, perhaps Flamstead may be right; he says there are fifty-four. Does not this method of teaching astronomy suppose a hundred absurdities? Does it not imply the imperfection of the revealed system, the infallibility of Ptolemy, the erroneousness of the other astronomers, the folly of examination, or the

still greater madness of allowing a conclusion after a denial of the premises, from which it pretends to be drawn? When I was an infant, I am told, I was treated like a man, now I am a man, I am treated like an infant. I am an astronomer by proxy. The plan of God requires faculties, and the exercise of them; *that* of my country exchanges both for quiet submission. I am, and I am not, a believer of astronomy.

Were it affirmed, that a revelation from heaven established such a method of maintaining a science of speculation, reasoning, and practice, every rational creature would have a right to doubt the truth of such a revelation; for it would violate the doctrine of analogy, by making the Deity inconsistent with himself. But we will pursue this track no further; we hope nothing said will be deemed illiberal; we distinguish between a constitution of things, and many wise and good men, who submit to it, and we only venture to guess, if they be wise and good men under such inconveniences, they would be wiser and better men without them: at all adventures, if we owe much respect to men, we owe more to truth, to inconvertible unchangeable truth.

A second character of a divine revelation is *proportion*. By proportion I mean relative fitness, and, when I affirm, a divine revelation must bring along with it proportional evidence, I mean to say, it must appear to be exactly fitted to those intelligent creatures, for whose benefit it is intended. In the former article we required a *similarity* between the requisitions of God and the faculties of men; in this

we require an exact *quantity* of requisition commensurate with those faculties. The former regards the nature of a revelation; this has for its object the limits of it. Were it possible for God, having formed a man only for walking, by a messenger from heaven to require him to fly, the doctrine of analogy would be violated by this requisition; and were he to determine a prodigious space, through which he required him to pass in a given time, were he to describe an immense distance, and to enjoin him to move through it with a degree of velocity impossible to him, the doctrine of proportion, would be violated; and the God of revelation would in both cases be made contradictory to the God of nature.

The Christian revelation, we presume, answers all our just expectations on these articles; for all the truths revealed by it are analogous to the nature of things, and every article in it bears an exact proportion to the abilities of all those, for whose benefit it is given. Our Saviour treats of the doctrine of proportion in the parable of the talents, and supposes the Lord to apportion the number of talents, when he bestows them, and the rewards and punishments, which he distributes for the use, and abuse of them, to the *several ability* of each servant, Matt. xxv. 14. St. Paul depicts the primitive church in all the beauty of this proportional economy; *the same God worketh all diversities of operations in all differences of administrations, dividing to every man severally as he will*, 1 Cor. xii. 5, 6, 11. This economy, he says, assimilates the Christian church to the hu-

man body, and gives to the one as to the other strength, symmetry, and beauty, evidently proving that the author of creation is the author of redemption, framing both by one uniform rule of analogy and proportion.

Full of these just notions, we examine that description of revelation, which human creeds exhibit, and we perceive at once, they are all destitute of proportional evidence. They all consist of multifarious propositions, each of which is considered as essential to the whole, and the belief of all essential to an enjoyment of the benefits of Christianity, yea to those of civil society, in this life, and to a participation of eternal life in the world to come. In this case the free gifts of God to all are monopolized by a few, and sold out to the many at a price, far greater than nine-tenths of them can pay, and at a price, which the remaining part ought not to pay, because the donor has not empowered these salesmen to exact any price, because by his original grant all are made joint proprietors, and because the payment would be at once a renunciation of their right to hold by the original grant, and of their lord's prerogative to bestow.

What can a declaimer mean, when he repeats a number of propositions, and declares the belief of them all essential to the salvation of *man*? or what could he reply to one, who should ask him, Which man do you mean, the man in the stall? Is it Sir Isaac Newton: or the man in the aisle? Is it Tom Long, the carrier. God Almighty, the Creator of both, has formed these two men with different organs of body, and different faculties of mind; he has given them

different advantages and different opportunities of improving them, he has placed them in different relations, and empowered the one to teach what the other, depend on his belief what will, is not capable of learning. Ten thousand Tom Longs go to make up one Newtonian soul. Is it credible, the God, who made these two men, who thoroughly knows them, who is the common parent, the just governor, and the kind benefactor of both, should require of men so different equal belief and practice? Were such a thing supposeable, how unequal and disproportional, how inadequate and unlike himself must such a Deity be! To grasp the terraqueous globe with a human hand, to make a tulip-cup contain the ocean, to gather all the light of the universe into one human eye, to hide the sun in a snuff-box, are the mighty projects of children's fancies. Is it possible, requisitions similar to these should proceed from *the only wise God*?

There is, we have reason to believe, a certain portion of spirit, if I may be allowed to speak so, that constitutes a human soul; there are infinitely, different degrees of capability imparted by the Creator to the souls of mankind; and there is a certain ratio by necessity of nature between each degree of intelligence and a given number of ideas, as there is between a cup capable of containing a given quantity, and a quantity of matter capable of being contained in it. In certain cases it might serve my interest could the palm of my hand contain a hog's-head: but in general my interest is better served by an inability to contain so much. We apply these

certain principles to revelation, and we say, God hath given in the Christian religion an infinite multitude of ideas; as in nature he hath created an infinite multitude of objects. These objects are diversified without end, they are of various sizes, colours, and shapes, and they are capable of innumerable motions, productive of multifarious effects, and all placed in various degrees of perspicuity; objects of thought in the Christian religion are exactly similar, there is no end of their variety, God and all his perfections, man and all his operations, the being and employment of superior holy Spirits, the existence and dispositions of fallen spirits, the creation and government of the whole world of matter, and that of spirit, the influences of God and the obligations of men, the dissolution of the universe, a resurrection, a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, all these, placed in various degrees of perspicuity, are exhibited in religion to the contemplation of intelligent creatures. The creatures, who are required to contemplate these objects, have various degrees of contemplative ability; and their duty, and consequently their virtue, which is nothing else but a performance of duty, consists in applying all their ability to understand as many of these objects, that is, to form as many ideas of them, as are apportioned to their own degree. So many objects they are capable of seeing, so many objects it is their duty to see. So much of each object they are capable of comprehending, so much of each object it is their duty to comprehend. So many emotions they are capable of exercising, so many emotions it is their duty to exercise. So ma-

ny acts of devotion they can perform, so many Almighty God will reward them for performing, or punish them for neglecting. This I call the doctrine of religious proportion. This I have a right to expect to find in a divine revelation, and this I find in the most splendid manner in Christianity, as it lies in the Bible, as it was in the first churches, and as it is in some modern communities. I wish I could exchange the word some for all.

This doctrine of proportion would unroot every human creed in the world, at least it would annihilate the imposition of any. Instead of making one creed for a whole nation, which, by the way, provides for only one nation, and consigns over the rest of the world to the destroyer of mankind; instead of doing so, there should be as many creeds as creatures; and instead of affirming, the belief of three hundred propositions is essential to the felicity of every man in both worlds, we ought to affirm, the belief of half a proposition is essential to the salvation of Mary, and the belief of a whole one to that of John, the belief of six propositions, or, more properly the examination of six propositions, is essential to the salvation of the reverend Edward, and the examination of sixty to that of the right reverend Richard; for, if I can prove, one has sixty degrees of capacity, another six, and another one, I can easily prove, it would be unjust to require the same exercises of all: and a champion ascribing such injustice to God would be no formidable adversary for the pomposness of his challenge, or the caparisons of his horse: his very

sword could not conquer, though it might affright from the field.

The world and revelation, both the work of the same God, are both constructed on the same principles; and were the book of scripture like that of nature laid open to universal inspection, were all ideas of temporal rewards and punishments removed from the study of it, that would come to pass in the moral world, which has actually happened in the world of human science, each capacity would find its own object, and take its own quantum. Newtons will find stars without penalties, Miltons will be poets, and Lardners Christians without rewards. Calvins will contemplate the decrees of God, and Baxter will try to assort them with the spontaneous volitions of men; all, like the celestial bodies, will roll on in the quiet majesty of simple proportion, each in his proper sphere shining to the glory of God the Creator. But alas! *We have not so learned Christ!*

Were this doctrine of proportion allowed, three consequences would follow. First, Subscription to human creeds, with all their appendages, both penal and pompous, would roll back into the turbulent ocean, the *Sea* I mean, from whence they came; the Bible would remain a placid emanation of wisdom from God; and the belief of it a sufficient test of the obedience of his people. Secondly, Christians would be freed from the inhuman necessity of execrating one another, and by placing Christianity in believing in Christ, and not in believing in one another, they would rid revelation of those intolerable abuses,

which are fountains of sorrow to Christians, and sources of arguments to infidels. Thirdly, Opportunity would be given to believers in Christ to exercise those dispositions, which the present disproportional division of this common benefit obliges them to suppress, or conceal. O cruel theology, that makes it a crime to do what I have neither a right nor a power to leave undone!

I call *perfection* a third necessary character of a divine revelation. Every production of an intelligent being bears the characters of the intelligence that produced it, *for as the man is, so is his strength*, Judg. viii. 21. A weak genius produces a work imperfect and weak like itself. A wise, good being produces a work wise and good, and, if his power be equal to his wisdom and goodness, his work will resemble himself, and such a degree of wisdom, animated by an equal degree of goodness, and assisted by an equal degree of power, will produce a work equally wise, equally beneficial, equally effectual. The same degrees of goodness and power accompanied with only half the degree of wisdom, will produce a work as remarkable for a deficiency of skill as for a redundancy of efficiency and benevolence. Thus the flexibility of the hand may be known by the writing; the power of penetrating, and combining in the mind of the physician, may be known by the feelings of the patient, who has taken his prescription; and, by parity of reason, the uniform perfections of an invisible God may be known by the uniform perfection of his productions.

I perceive, I must not launch into this wide ocean of the doctrine of perfection, and I will confine myself to three characters of imperfection, which may serve to explain my meaning. Proposing to obtain a great end without the use of proper means—the employing of great means to obtain no valuable end—and the destroying of the end by the use of the means employed to obtain it; are three characters of imperfection frequently found in frail intelligent agents: and certainly they can never be attributed to the great Supreme. A violation of the doctrine of analogy would argue God an unjust being; and a violation of that of proportion would prove him an unkind being; and a violation of this of perfection would argue him a being void of wisdom. Were we to suppose him capable of proposing plans impossible to be executed, and then punishing his creatures for not executing them, we should attribute to the best of beings the most odious dispositions of the most infamous of mankind. Heaven forbid the thought!

The first character of imperfection is *proposing to obtain a great end without the use of proper means*. To propose a noble end argues a fund of goodness: but not to propose proper means to obtain it argues a defect of wisdom. Christianity proposes the noble end of assimilating man to God! and it employs proper means of obtaining this end. God is an intelligent being happy in a perfection of wisdom; the gospel assimilates the felicity of human intelligences to that of the Deity by communicating the ideas of God on certain articles to men.

God is a bountiful being, happy in a perfection of goodness; the gospel assimilates the felicity of man to that of God by communicating certain benevolent dispositions to its disciples similar to the communicative excellencies of God. God is an operative being happy, in the display of exterior works beneficent to his creatures; the gospel felicitates man by directing and enabling him to perform certain works beneficent to his fellow-creatures. God condescends to propose this noble end, of assimilating man to himself, to the nature of mankind, and not to certain distinctions foreign from the nature of man, and appendent on exterior circumstances. The boy, who feeds the farmer's meanest animals, the sailor, who spends his days on the ocean, the miner, who, secluded from the light of the day, and the society of his fellow-creatures, spends his life in a subterraneous cavern, as well as the renowned heroes of mankind, are all included in this condescending benevolent design of God. The gospel proposes to assimilate all to God: but it proposes such an assimilation, or, may I say? such a degree of moral excellence, as the nature of each can bear, and it directs to means so proper to obtain this end, and renders these directions so extremely plain, that the perfection of the designer shines with the utmost glory.

I have sometimes imagined a Pagan ship's crew in a vessel under sail in the wide ocean; I have supposed not one soul aboard ever to have heard one word of Christianity; I have imagined a bird dropping a New-Testament written in the language of

the mariners on the upper deck ; I have imagined a fund of uneducated, unsophisticated good sense in this company, and I have required of this little world answers to two questions ; first, What end does this book propose ? The answer is, *This book was written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name, John xx. 31.* I ask secondly, what means does this book authorise a foremast man, who believes, to employ to the rest of the crew to induce them to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing they also with the foremast man, may have eternal felicity through his name ? I dare not answer this question : but I dare venture to guess, should this foremast man conceal the book from any of the crew, he would be unlike the God, who gave it to all ; or should he oblige the cabin-boy to admit his explication of the book, he would be unlike the God, who requires the boy to explain it to himself ; and should he require the captain to enforce his explication by penalties, the captain ought to reprove his folly for counter-acting the end of the book, the felicity of all the mariners ; for turning a message of peace into an engine of faction ; for employing means inadequate to the end ; and so for erasing that character of perfection, which the heavenly donor gave it.

A second character of imperfection is *the employing of great means to obtain no valuable end.* Whatever end the author of Christianity had in view, it is beyond a doubt, he hath employed great means to effect it. To use the language of a prophet, he hath

*shaken the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*, Hag. ii. 6, 7. When *the desire of all nations* came, universal nature felt his approach, and preternatural displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, have ever attended his steps. The most valuable ends were answered by his coming. Conviction followed his preaching; and truths, till then shut up in the counsels of God, were actually put into the possession of finite minds. A general manumission followed his meritorious death, and the earth resounded with the praises of a spiritual deliverer, who had set the sons of bondage free. The laws of his empire were published, and all his subjects were happy in obeying them. *In his days the righteous flourished*, and on his plan, *abundance of peace* would have continued *as long as the moon endured*, Psal. lxxii. 7. Plenty of instruction, liberty to examine it, and peace in obeying it, these were ends worthy of the great means used to obtain them.

Let us for a moment suppose a subversion of the seventy-second psalm, from whence I have borrowed these ideas; let us imagine *the kings of Tarshish and of the isles bringing presents*, not to express their homage to Christ: but to purchase that dominion over the consciences of mankind, which belongs to Jesus Christ; let us suppose the boundless wisdom of the gospel, and the innumerable ideas of inspired men concerning it, shrivelled up into the narrow compass of one human creed; let us suppose liberty of thought taken away; and the peace of the world interrupted by the introduction and support of bold usurpations, dry ceremonies, cant phrases, and pue-

rile inventions ; in this supposed case, the history of great means remains, the worthy ends to be answered by them are taken away, and they, who should thus deprive mankind of the end of the sacred code, would charge themselves with the necessary obligation of accounting for this character of imperfection. Ye prophets, and apostles ! ye ambassadors of Christ ! *How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us ? Lo ! certainly in vain made he it, the pen of the scribes is in vain !* Jer. viii. 8. Precarious wisdom, that must not be questioned ! useless books, which must not be examined ! vain legislation, that either cannot be obeyed, or ruins him who obeys it !

All the ends, that can be obtained by human modifications of divine revelation, can never compensate for the loss of that dignity, which the perfection of the system, as God gave it, acquires to him ; nor can it indemnify man for the loss of that spontaneity, which is the essence of every effort, that merits the name of human, and without which virtue itself is nothing but a name. Must we destroy the man to make the Christian ! What is there in a scholastic honour, what in an ecclesiastical emolument, what in an archiepiscopal throne, to indemnify for these losses ! Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for men, not to empower them to enjoy these momentary distinctions ; these are far inferior to the noble ends of his coming : the honour of God and the gospel at large ; the disinterested exercise of mental abilities, assimilating the free-born soul to its benevolent God ; a copartnership with Christ in promoting the universal

felicity of all mankind ; these, these are ends of religion worthy of the blood of Jesus, and deserving the sacrifice of whatever is called great among men.

Thirdly, *The destruction of the end by the use of the means employed to obtain it*, is another character of imperfection. St. Paul calls Christianity *unity*, Eph. iv. 3, &c. He denominates it *the unity of the Spirit*, on account of its author, object, and end. God the supreme Spirit, is the author of it, the spirits, or souls of men are the object, and the spirituality of human souls, that is, the perfection of which finite spirits are capable, is the end of it. The gospel proposes the re-union of men divided by sin, first to God, and then to one another, and, in order to effect it, reveals a religion, which teaches *one God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, one rule of faith, one object of hope*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. and, lest we should imagine this revelation to admit of no variety, we are told, *Grace is given to every one according to the proportional measure of the gift of Christianity*. Each believer is therefore exhorted to *speak the truth in love, to walk with all lowliness, meekness and long suffering, and to forbear another in love*. Here is a character of perfection, for these means employed to unite mankind are productive of union, the end of the means.

Should men take up the gospel in this simplicity ; and, accommodating it to their own imaginary superior wisdom, or to their own secular purposes, should they explain this union so as to suit their designs, and employ means to produce it ; and should they denominate their system Christianity, it would cer-

tainly be, in spite of its name, a Christianity marked with the imperfection of its authors; for in the Christian religion, in the thing itself, and not in its appellation, shines the glorious character of perfection.

The Christian religion unites mankind. By what common *bond* does it propose to do so? By *love*. This is a *bond of perfectness*, a most perfect bond. This is practicable, and productive of every desirable end, and the more we study human nature, the more fully shall we be convinced, that we cannot imagine any religion to do more, nor need we desire more, for this answers every end of being religious. Had Jesus Christ formed his church on a *sentimental* plan, he must have employed many means, which he has not employed, and he must have omitted many directions, which he has given. One of his means of uniting mankind is contained in this direction, *Search the scriptures, and call no man your master upon earth*; that is to say, exercise your very different abilities, assisted by very different degrees of aid, in periods of very different duration, and form your own notions of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. Is not this injunction destructive of a sentimental union? Place ten thousand spectators in several circles around a statue erected on a spacious plain, bid some look at it through magnifying glasses, others through common spectacles, some with keen naked eyes, others with weak diseased eyes, each on a point of each circle different from that where another stands, and all receiving the picture of the object in the eye by different re-

lections and refractions of the rays of light, and say, will not a command to look destroy the idea of sentimental union; and, if the establishment of an exact union of sentiment be the end, will not looking, the mean appointed to obtain it, actually destroy it, and would not such a projector of uniformity mark his system with imperfection?

Had Jesus Christ formed his Church on the plan of a *ceremonial* union, or on that of a *professional* union, it is easy to see, the same reasoning might be applied, the laws of such a legislator would counteract and destroy one another, and a system so unconnected would discover the imperfection of its author, and provide for the ruin of itself.

These principles being allowed, we proceed to examine the doctrines of Christianity, as they are presented to an inquisitive man, entirely at liberty to choose his religion, by our different churches in their several creeds. The church of Rome lays before me the decisions of the council of Trent; the Lutheran church the confession of Augsburg: One nation gives me one account of Christianity, another a different account of it, a third contradicts the other two, and no two creeds agree. The difference of these systems obliges me to allow, they could not all proceed from any one person, and much less could they all proceed from such a person, as all Christians affirm Jesus Christ to be. I am driven, then, to examine his account of his own religion contained in the allowed standard book, to which they all appeal, and here I find, or think I find, a right of reduction, that removes all those suspi-

cions, which variety in human creeds had excited in my mind concerning the truth of Christianity.

The doctrines of Christianity, I presume to guess, according to the usual sense of the phrase, are divisible into two classes. The first contains the principal truths, the pure genuine theology of Jesus Christ, essential to the system, and in which all Christians in our various communities agree. The other class consists of those less important propositions, which are meant to serve as explications of the principal truths. The first is the matter of our holy religion, the last is our conception of the manner of its operation. In the first we all agree, in the last our benevolent religion, constructed on principles of analogy, proportion, and perfection, both enjoins and empowers us to agree to differ. The first is the light of the world, the last our sentiments on its nature, or our distribution of its effects.

In general each church calls its own creed a system of Christianity, a body of Christian doctrine, and perhaps not improperly : but then each divine ought to distinguish that part of his system, which is pure revelation, and so stands confessedly the doctrine of Jesus Christ, from that other part, which is human explication, and so may be either true or false, clear or obscure, presumptive or demonstrative, according to the abilities of the explainer, who compiled the creed. Without this distinction, we may incorporate all our opinions with the infallible revelations of heaven, we may imagine each article of our belief essential to Christianity itself, we may subjoin a human codicil to a divine testament, and attribute

equal authenticity to both, we may account a proposition confirmed by a synodical seal as fully authenticated as a truth confirmed by an apostolical miracle, and so we may bring ourselves to rank a conscientious disciple of Christ, who denies the necessity of episcopal ordination, with a brazen disciple of the devil, who denies the truth of revelation, and pretends to doubt the being of a God.

But here, I feel again the force of that observation, with which this preface begins. How few, comparatively, will allow, that such a reduction of a large system to a very small number of clear, indisputable, essential first principles, will serve the cause of Christianity! How many will pretend to think such a reduction dangerous to thirty-five out of thirty-nine articles of faith! How many will confound a denial of the essentiality (so to speak,) of a proposition, with a denial of the truth of it! How many will go further still, and execrate the latitudinarian, who presumes in this manner to subvert Christianity itself! I rejoice in prospect of that *day, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to his gospel*, Rom. ii. 16. when we shall stand not at the tribunal of human prejudices and passions, but at the just bar of a clement God. Here, were I only concerned, I would rest, and my answer to all complainants should be a respectful silence before their oracles of reason and religion: but alas! I have nine children, and my ambition is (if it be not an unpardonable presumption to compare insects with angels,) my ambition is to engage them to treat a spirit of intolerance, as Hamilcar taught Han-

nibal to treat the old Roman spirit of universal dominion. The enthusiastic Carthaginian parent going to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter for the success of an intended war, took with him his little son Hannibal, then only nine years of age, and eager to accompany his father, led him to the altar, made him lay his little hand on the sacrifice, and swear, that he would never be in friendship with the Romans. We may sanctify this thought by transferring it to other objects, and, while we sing in the church glory to God in the highest, vow perpetual peace with all mankind, and reject all weapons except those, which are spiritual, we may, we must declare war against a spirit of intolerance from generation to generation. Thus Moses wrote *a memorial in a book, rehearsed it in the ears of Joshua, built an altar, called the name of it Jehovah my banner, and said, The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation*, Exod. xvii. 14—16.

We are neither going to contrast human creeds with one another, nor with the bible; we are not going to affirm or deny any propositions contained in them; we only design to prove, that all consist of human explications as well as divine revelations, and consequently, that all are not of equal importance, nor ought any to be imposed upon the disciples of Christ, either by those who are not disciples of the Son of God, or by those who are. The subject is delicate and difficult, not through any intricacy in itself, but through a certain infelicity of the times. An error on the one side may be fatal to revelation, by alluring us to sacrifice the pure doctrines of re-

ligion to a blind benevolence; and on the other an error may be fatal to religion itself by inducing us to make it a patron of intolerance. We repeat it again, a system of Christian doctrine, is the object of Christian liberty; the articles, which compose a human system of Christian doctrine are divisible into the two classes of *doctrines* and *explications*; the first we attribute to *Christ*, and call *Christian* doctrines, the last to some of his *disciples*, and these we call *human* explications; the first *are* true, the last *may be* so; the first execrate intolerance, the last cannot be supported without the spirit of it. I will endeavour to explain my meaning by an example.

Every believer of revelation allows the authenticity of this passage of holy Scripture, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish: but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. If we cast this into propositional form, it will afford as many propositions as it contains ideas. Each idea clearly contained in the text I call an idea of Jesus Christ, a Christian sentiment, a truth of revelation, in a word, a *Christian doctrine*. Each of these ideas of the text in forming itself into a proposition will naturally associate with itself a few other ideas of the expletive kind, these I call secondary ideas in distinction from the first, which I call primary; or, in plainer style, ideas clearly of the *text* I name Christian doctrines, or doctrines of Christ, and *all the rest* I call human explications of these doctrines; they may be Christian, they may not; for I am not sure, that the next idea, which always follows a first in my mind, was

the next idea to the first in the mind of Jesus Christ; the first is certainly his, he declares it, the second might be his: but as he is silent, I can say nothing certain; where he stops, my infallibility ends, and my uncertain reason begins.

The following propositions are evidently in the text, and consequently they are Christian doctrines emanating from the author of Christianity, and pausing to be examined before the intelligent powers of his creatures.—There is an *everlasting life*, a future state of eternal happiness—the mediation of *the only begotten Son of God* is necessary to men's enjoyment of eternal happiness—*believing* in Christ is essential to a participation of eternal felicity—every believer in Christ *shall have everlasting life*—unbelievers shall *perish*—all the blessings of Christianity originate in *God*, display his *love*, and are *given* to the *world*. These, methinks, we may venture to call primary ideas of Christianity, genuine truths of revelation: but each doctrine will give occasion to many questions, and although different expositors will agree in the matter of each proposition, they will conjecture very differently concerning the manner of its operation.

One disciple of Christ, whom we call Richard, having read this text, having exercised his thoughts on the meaning of it, and having arranged them in the propositional form now mentioned, if he would convince another disciple, whom we name Robert, of the truth of any one of his propositions, would be obliged to unfold his own train of thinking, which consists of an associated concatenation of ideas, some

of which are primary ideas of Jesus Christ, and others secondary notions of his own, additions, perhaps of his wisdom, perhaps of his folly, perhaps of both: but all, however, intended to *explicate* his notion of the text, and to facilitate the evidence of his notion to his brother. Robert admits the proposition: but not exactly in Richard's sense. In this case, we assort ideas, we take what both allow to be the original ideas of our common Lord, and we reckon thus, Here are nine ideas in this proposition, numbers one, three, six, nine, genuine, primary ideas of Christ; numbers two, four, five, secondary ideas of Richard; numbers seven, eight, secondary ideas of Robert; the first constitute a divine doctrine, the last a human explication; the first forms one divine object, the last two human notions of its mode of existence, manner of operation, or something similar: but, be each what it may, it is human explication, and neither synod nor senate can make it more.

No divine will dispute the truth of this proposition, God gave Jesus Christ to believers; for it is demonstrably in the text. To this, therefore, Beza and Zanchy, Melancthon and Luther, Calvin and Arminius, Baxter and Crisp agree, all allowing it a Christian doctrine: but, each associating with the idea of gift other ideas of time, place, relation, condition and so on, explains the doctrine so as to contain all his own additional ideas.

One class of expositors take the idea of *time*, and by it explain the proposition. God and believers, says one, are to be considered contemplatively *before the creation* in the light of Creator and creatures,

abstracted from all moral considerations whatever ; then God united Christ to his church in the pure mass of creatureship, without the contemplation of Adam's fall. Another affirms, God gave a Saviour to men in *design before* the existence of creatures : but in full contemplation, however, of the misery induced by the fall. A third says, God gave Christ to believers, not in purpose before the fall : but in *promise immediately after* it. A fourth adds, God gives Christ to believers *on their believing*, by putting them in possession of the benefits of Christianity. In all these systems, the ideas of God, Christ, believers, and gift, remain the pure genuine ideas of the text ; and the association of *time* distinguisheth and varieth the systems.

A second class of expositors take the idea of *relation*, and one affirms, God and believers are to be considered in the relative light of *governor and subjects*. the characters of a perfect government are discernible in the giving of a Saviour, justice vindicates the honour of government by punishing some, mercy displays the benefit of government by pardoning others, and royal prerogative both disculpates and elevates the guilty ; however, as the governor is a God, he retains and displays his absolute right of dispensing his favours as he pleases. A second says, God and believers are to be considered in the light of *parent and children*, and Christ is not given to believers according to mere maxims of exact government : but he is bestowed by God, the common Father, impartially on all his children. A third says, God and believers are to be considered in the light

of *master and servants*, and God rewards the imperfect services of his creatures with the rich benefits of Christianity. A fourth considers God and believers in the relation of *King and consort*, and say, God gave Christianity as an inalienable dowry to his chosen associate. In all these systems, God, Christ, believers, and gift remain, the pure genuine ideas of the text; and the association of the idea of *relation* distinguishes and varies the systems.

In general, we form the ideas of the Supreme Being, and we think, such a being ought to act so and so, and therefore we conclude he does act so and so. God gives Christ to believers conditionally, says one, for so it becomes a holy Being to bestow all his gifts. God gives Christ unconditionally, says another; for so it becomes a merciful being to bestow his gifts on the miserable. I repeat it again, opposite as these may appear, they both retain the notions of the same God, the same Jesus, the same believers, the same giving: but an idea concerning *the fittest way of bestowing* the gift distinguishes and varies the systems. I call it the same giving, because all divines, even they, who go most into a scheme of conditional salvation, allow, that Christ is a blessing infinitely beyond all that is due to the conditions which they perform in order to their enjoyment of him.

Let us for a moment suppose, that this proposition, God gives Christ to believers, is the whole of revelation on this subject. A divine, who should affirm, that his ideas of time, relation, and condition were necessarily contained in this scripture; that his

whole thesis was a doctrine of Christianity; and that the belief of it was essential to salvation; would affirm the most palpable absurdities; for, although the proposition does say, Christ is God's gift to believers, yet it does neither say, *when* God bestowed this gift, nor *why* he bestowed it, nor that a precise knowledge of the *mode* of donation is essentially requisite to salvation. That God gave the world a Saviour in the person of Jesus is a fact affirmed by Christ in this proposition, and therefore a Christian doctrine. That he made the donation absolutely or conditionally, before the fall or after it, reversibly or irrevocably, the proposition doth not affirm; and therefore every proposition including any of these ideas is an article of belief containing a Christian doctrine and an human explication, and consequently it lies before an examiner in different degrees of evidence and importance.

Suppose a man were required to believe this proposition, God gave Jesus to believers absolutely, or this, God gave Jesus to believers conditionally; it is not impossible, the whole proposition might be proved original, genuine, primary doctrine of Jesus Christ. Our proposition in this text could not prove it, and were this the whole of our information on this article, conditionality and unconditionality would be human explications: but, if Christ have given us in any other part of revelation, more instruction on this subject; if he any where affirm, either that he was given on certain conditions to be performed by believers, or that he was not given so, then indeed we may associate the ideas of one text

with those of another, and so form of the whole a genuine Christian doctrine.

When we have thus selected the instructions of our Divine Master from the opinions of our fellow-pupils, we should suppose, these questions would naturally arise, Is a belief of all the doctrines of Christ essential to salvation? If not, which are the essential truths? If the parable of the talents be allowed a part of his doctrine, and if the doctrine of proportion taught in that parable be true, it should seem, the belief of Christian doctrines must be proportioned to exterior evidence and interior ability; and on these principles, should a congregation of five hundred Christians put these questions, they must receive five hundred different answers. *Who is sufficient for these things!* Let us renounce our inclination to damn our fellow-creatures. Let us excite all to faith and repentance, and let us leave the decision of their destiny to Almighty God. *When Christ cometh he will tell us all things*, John iv. 25. till then let us wait, lest we should scatter *fire-brands, arrows, and death*, and *make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad*, Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. Ezek. xii. 23. How many doctrines are essential to salvation, seems to me exactly such a question, as How much food is essential to animal life?

We will venture to go a step further. Were we as capable of determining the exact ratio between any particular mind and a given number of ideas as we are of determining how many feet of water a vessel of a given burden must draw; and were we able so to determine how much faith in how many doc-

trines was essential to the holiness, and so to the happiness of such a soul; we shall not then entertain a vain notion of exacting by force these rights of God of his creature. For, first, the same proportion, which renders a certain number of ideas as essential to the happiness of an intelligent mind, renders this number of ideas so clear, that they establish themselves and need no imposition. Secondly, The nature of faith does not admit of imposition; it signifies nothing to say, Kings command it; if angels commanded it, they would require an impossibility, and exact that of me, which they themselves could not perform. Thirdly, God has appointed no means to enforce belief, he has nominated no vicegerents to do this, he has expressly forbidden the attempt. Fourthly, The means that one man must employ to impose his creed on another, are all nefarious, and damn a sinner to make a saint. Fifthly, Imposition of human creeds has produced so much mischief in the world, so many divisions among Christians, and so many execrable actions, attended with no one good end to religion, that the repetition of this crime would argue a soul infested with the grossest ignorance, or the most stubborn obstinacy imaginable. Sixthly, Dominion over conscience is that part of God's empire, of which he is most jealous. The imposition of a human creed is a third action, and before any man can perform it, he must do two other exploits, he must usurp the throne, and claim the slave. How many more reasons might be added! From a cool examination of the nature of God—the nature of man—the nature of Christianity—the na-

ture of all powers within the compass of human thought to employ—the history of past times—the state of the present—in a word, of every idea, that belongs to the imposition of a human creed, we venture to affirm, the attempt is irrational, unscriptural, impracticable, impossible. Creed is belief, and the production of belief by penal sanction neither is, nor was, nor is to come. The project never entered the mind of a professor of any science, except that of theology. It is high time, theologians should explode it. The glorious pretence of establishing by force implicit belief should be left to the little tyrant of a country school; let him lay down dry documents, gird false rules close about other men's sons, lash docility into vanity, stupidity or madness, and justify his violence by spluttering, *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*.

Were Christians sincere in their professions of moderation, candour, and love, they would settle this preliminary article of IMPOSITION, and, this given up, there would be nothing else to dispute. Our objections lie neither against surplice nor service-book: but against the imposition of them. Let one party of Christians worship God as their consciences direct: but let other parties forfeit nothing for doing the same. It may appear conjectural: but it is sincerely true, theological war is the most futile and expensive contest, theological peace the cheapest acquisition in the world.

Although the distinction of a divine revelation from a human explication is just and necessary, although the principles of analogy, proportion, and

perfection, are undeniable, and although, considered as a theory, the nature and necessity of universal toleration will be allowed to be as clear and demonstrative as possible, yet, we are well aware, the allowance of these articles in all their fair, just, necessary consequences would be so inimical to many dispositions, and so effectually subversive of so many selfish interested systems, that we entertain no hopes of ever seeing the theory generally reduced to practice. Heaven may exhibit a scene of universal love, and it is glorious to Christianity to propose it; it is an idea replete with extatick joy, and, thanks be to God, it is more than an idea, it is a law in many Christian churches, alas! little known, and less imitated by the rest of their brethren. There is *a remnant of Jacob in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Micah v. 7.* These may cheerfully adopt the prophet's exultation, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! If I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me, he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness, chap. vii. 8. In the day that my walls are to be built, in that day shall human decrees concerning conscience be far removed, ver. 11.*

On these general principles the sermons in this volume are selected, and on these the reader will at once perceive why it does not contain the whole system of any one subscriber, or the whole system of the author. Each contains primary truths, which all allow, and secondary explications, which some be-

lieve, which others doubt, and which some deny. I have not been able to form the volume wholly on this plan: but I have endeavoured to approach it as nearly as my materials would permit.

The first sermon is introductory, and exhibits Jesus Christ on the throne in the Christian church, solely vested with legislative and executive power, prohibiting the exercise of either in cases of religion and conscience to all mankind. The twelve following sermons propose *four* objects to our contemplation, as Christianity represents them. The first is *man*, in his natural dignity, his providential appointment, and his moral inability. The second is *Jesus Christ* mediating between God and men, and opening by what he did or suffered our access to immortal felicity. The sermon on the dignity of our Lord, in this part, will be considered by some as a principal essential *doctrine*, while others will account it Mr. Saurin's *explication* of a doctrine of ineffable dignity, which they allow: but which they explain in another manner. The third object proposed is *the mode of participating* the benefits of Christ's mediation, as faith, repentance, and so on. The fourth consists of *motive objects* of Christianity; so I venture to call the Christian doctrines of judgment, heaven, and hell, belief of which gives animation and energy to action. The last sermon is recapitulatory, and proves, that variety is compatible with uniformity, yea, that uniformity necessarily produceth variety. When I call this volume, Sermons on the principal doctrines of Christianity, I mean to affirm, it contains a general view of the most obvious, and the

least disputable articles of Christian theology, according to the notions of the French reformed churches.

I have only to add my sincere prayers to the God of all grace, that he may enable us all to *put on this armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in this evil day, and, having done all, to stand; for we wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*, Eph. vi. 11, 12, 13. May he grant, *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, Eph. iv. 14, 15. SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, *may we grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, to whom alone be DOMINION OVER CONSCIENCE, for ever and ever ! Amen.*

CHESTERTON, }  
July 10, 1777. }

R. R.

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SERMON XIV.

The Uniformity of God in his Government.

HEBREWS xiii. 8.

455



# SERMON I.

*The Sovereignty of JESUS CHRIST in the Church.*



ROMANS xiv. 7, 8.

*None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord: or, whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.*

**T**HESE words are a general maxim, which St. Paul lays down for the decision of a particular controversy. We cannot well enter into the apostle's meaning, unless we understand the particular subject, which led him to express himself in this manner. Our first reflections, therefore, will tend to explain the subject; and afterward we will extend our meditations to greater objects. We will attend to the text in that point of view, in which those Christians are most interested, who have repeatedly engaged to devote themselves wholly to Jesus Christ; to consecrate to him through life, and to commit to him at death, not only with submission, but also with joy, those souls, over which he hath acquired the noblest right. Thus shall we verify, in the most pure and elevated of all senses, this saying of the Apostle;

*none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; or, whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.*

St. Paul proposeth in the text, and in some of the preceding and following verses, to establish the doctrine of toleration. By toleration, we mean, that disposition of a Christian, which on a principle of benevolence, inclines him to hold communion with a man, who through weakness of mind, mixeth with the truths of religion some errors, that are not entirely incompatible with it ; and with the new testament worship some ceremonies, which are unsuitable to its elevation and simplicity, but which, however, do not destroy its essence.

Retain every part of this definition, for each is essential to the subject defined. I say, that he, who exerciseth toleration, acts on a principle of benevolence ; for were he to act on a principle of indolence, or of contempt for religion, his disposition of mind, far from being a virtue worthy of praise, would be a vice fit only for execration. Toleration, I say, is to be exercised towards him only who errs through *weakness of mind* ; for he, who persists in his error through arrogance, and for the sake of rending the church, deserves rigorous punishment. I say, further, that he, who exerciseth toleration, doth not confine himself to praying for him who is the object of it, and to endeavouring to reclaim him, he proceeds further, and *holds communion* with him ; that is to say, he assists at the same religious exercises, and partakes of the Lord's supper at the same table.

Without this communion, can we consider him whom we pretend to tolerate, as a brother in the sense of St. Paul? I add, finally, *erroneous sentiments* which are tolerated, *must be compatible with the great truths of religion*; and *observances*, which are tolerated, *must not destroy the essence of evangelical worship*, although they are incongruous with its simplicity and glory. How can I assist in a service, which, in my opinion, is an insult on the God whom I adore? How can I approach the table of the Lord with a man, who rejects all the mysteries, which God exhibits there? and so of the rest. Retain, then, all the parts of this definition, and you will form a just notion of *toleration*.

This moderation, always necessary among Christians, was particularly so in the primitive ages of Christianity. The first Churches were composed of two sorts of proselytes; some of them were born of Jewish parents, and had been educated in Judaism, others were converted from paganism; and both, generally speaking, after they had embraced Christianity, preserved some traces of the religions which they had renounced. Some of them retained scruples, from which just notions of Christian liberty, it should seem, might have freed them. They durst not eat some foods which God gave for the nourishment of mankind, I mean, the flesh of animals, and they ate only *herbs*. They set apart certain *days* for devotional exercises: not from that wise motive, which ought to engage every rational man to take a portion of his life from the tumult of the world, in order to consecrate it to the service of his Creator;

but from I know not what notion of pre-eminence, which they attributed to some days above others. Thus far all are agreed in regard to the design of St. Paul in the text.

Nor is there any difficulty in determining which of the two orders of Christians of whom we spoke, St. Paul considers as an object of toleration; whether that class, which came from the gentiles, or that, which came from the Jews. It is plain, the last is intended. Every body knows that the law of Moses ordained a great number of feasts under the penalty of the great anathema. It was very natural for the converted Jews to retain a fear of incurring that penalty, which followed the infraction of those laws, and to carry their veneration for those festivals too far.

There was one whole sect among the Jews, that abstained entirely from the flesh of animals; they were the *Essenes*. Josephus expressly affirms this, and Philo assures us, that their tables were free from every thing, that had blood, and were served with only bread, salt and hyssop. As the Essenes professed a severity of manners, which had some likeness to the morality of Jesus Christ, it is probable, many of them embraced Christianity, and in it interwove a part of the peculiarities of their own sect.

I do not think, however, that St. Paul had any particular view to the Essenes, at least, we are not obliged to suppose, that his views were confined to them. All the world know, that Jews have an aversion to blood. A Jew, exact in his religion, does not eat flesh now-a-days with Christians, lest the latter should

not have taken sufficient care to discharge the blood. When, therefore, St. Paul describes converted Jews by their scrupulosity in regard to the eating of blood, he does not speak of what they did in their own families, but of what they practised, when they were invited to a convivial repast with people, who thought themselves free from the prohibition of eating blood, whether they were Gentiles yet involved in the darkness of paganism, or Gentile converts to Christianity. Thus far our subject is free from difficulty.

The difficulty lies in the connexion of the maxim in the text with the end, which St. Paul proposeth in establishing it. What relation is there between Christian toleration and this maxim, *None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself?* How doth it follow from this principle, *whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or, whether we die, we die unto the Lord*, how doth it follow from this principle, that we ought to tolerate those, who through the weakness of their minds, mix some errors with the grand truths of Christianity, and with the New Testament worship some ceremonies, which obscure its simplicity, and debase its glory?

The solution lies in the connexion of the text with the foregoing verses, and particularly with the fourth verse, *who art thou, that judgest another man's servant?* To *judge* in this place does not signify to discern, but to *condemn*. The word has this meaning in a hundred passages of the New Testament. I confine myself to one passage for example. *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*, 1 Cor. xi. 31.

that is to say, if we would condemn ourselves at the tribunal of repentance, after we have partaken unworthily of the Lord's supper, we should not be condemned at the tribunal of divine justice. In like manner, *who art thou, that judgest another man's servant?* is as much as to say, *who art thou that condemnest?* St. Paul meant to make the Christians of Rome understand, that it belonged only to the sovereign of the church to absolve or to condemn, as he saw fit.

But who is the supreme head of the church? Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ, who, with his Father, is *over all, God blessed forever*, Rom. ix. 5. Jesus Christ, by dying for the church, acquired this supremacy, and in virtue of it all true Christians render him the homage of adoration. All this is clearly expressed by our apostle, and gives us an occasion to treat of one of the most abstruse points of Christian theology.

That Jesus Christ is the supreme head of the church, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, is expressed by the apostle in the most clear and explicit manner; for after he hath said, in the words of the text, *whether we live or die, we are the Lord's*, he adds immediately, *for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*.

That this Jesus, *whose*, the apostle says, *we are*, is God, the apostle does not permit us to doubt; for he confounds the expressions *to eat to the Lord*, and *to give God thanks*; *to stand before the judgment seat of Christ*, and *to give account of himself to God*;

to be *Lord both of the dead and living*, ver. 6, 10, 12. and this majestic language, which would be blasphemy in the mouth of a simple creature, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*, ver. 11.

Finally, That Jesus Christ acquired that supremacy by his sufferings and death, in virtue of which all true Christians render him the homage of adoration, the apostle establisheth, if possible, still more clearly. This appears by the words just now cited, *to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*, ver. 8, 11. To the same purpose the apostle speaks in the epistle to the Philippians, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is the sovereignty which Jesus Christ acquired by dying for the church.

But the most remarkable, and at the same time the most difficult article on this subject, is this. These texts, which seem to establish the divinity of Christ in a manner so clear, furnish the greatest objection that hath ever been proposed against it. True, say the enemies of this doctrine, Jesus Christ is God, since the scripture commands us to worship him. But his divinity is an acquired divinity; since that supremacy, which entitles him to adoration as God,

is not an essential, but an acquired supremacy. Now, that this supremacy is acquired is indubitable, since the texts that have been cited, expressly declare, that it is a fruit of his sufferings and death. We have two arguments to offer in reply.

1. If it were demonstrated, that the supremacy established in the forecited texts was only acquired, and not essential, it would not therefore follow, that Jesus Christ had no other supremacy belonging to him in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to worship Jesus Christ, not only because he died for us, but also because he is eternal and almighty, the author of all beings that exist: and because he hath all the perfections of Deity; as we can prove by other passages, not necessary to be repeated here.

2. Nothing hinders that the true God, who, as the true God, merits our adoration, should require every day new rights over us, in virtue of which we have new motives of rendering those homages to him, which, we acknowledge he always infinitely merited. Always when God bestows a new blessing, he acquireth a new right. What was Jacob's opinion, when he made this vow? *If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be my God,* Gen. xxviii. 20, &c. Did the patriarch mean, that he had no other reason for regarding the Lord as his God than this favour, which he asked of him? No such thing. He meant, that to a great many reasons, which bound him to devote himself to

God, the favour which he asked would add a new one. It would be easy to produce a long list of examples of this kind. At present the application of this one shall suffice. Jesus Christ, who, as supreme God hath natural rights over us, hath also acquired rights, because he hath deigned to clothe himself with our flesh, in which he died to redeem us. *None of us is his own*, we are all his, not only because he is our Creator, but because he is also our Redeemer. He hath a supremacy over us peculiar to himself, and distinct from that, which he hath in common with the Father and the holy Spirit.

To return then, to our principal subject, from which this long digression hath diverted us. This Jesus, who is the supreme head of the church; this Jesus, to whom all the members of the church are subject; willeth that we should tolerate, and he himself hath tolerated those, who, having in other cases an upright conscience, and a sincere intention of submitting their reason to all his decisions, and their hearts to all his commands, cannot clearly see, that Christian liberty includes a freedom from the observation of certain feasts, and from the distinction of certain foods. If the sovereign of the church tolerate them, who err in this manner, by what right do you, who are only simple subjects, undertake to condemn them? "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and, whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the

Lord's. Let us not therefore judge one another any more. Let us, who are strong, bear the infirmities of the weak."

This is the design of St. Paul in the words of my text, in some of the preceding, and in some of the following verses. Can we proceed without remarking, or without lamenting, the blindness of those Christians, who, by their intolerance to their brethren, seem to have chosen for their model those members of the church of Rome, who violate the rights of toleration in the most cruel manner? We are not speaking of those sanguinary men, who aim at illuminating people's minds with the light of fires, and faggots, which they kindle against all who reject their systems. Our tears, and our blood, have not assuaged their rage, how can we then think to appease it by our exhortations? Let us not solicit the wrath of heaven against these persecutors of the church; let us leave to the souls of them, who were slain for the word of God, to cry, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them, that dwell on the earth?* Rev. vi. 10.

But, ye intestine divisions! Thou spirit of faction! Ye theological wars! how long will ye be let loose among us? Is it possible, that Christians, who bear the name of reformed, Christians united by the bond of their faith in the belief of the same doctrines, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, Christians united by the very efforts of their enemies to destroy them; can they violate, after all, those laws of toleration, which they have so often prescribed to others, and against the violation of which they have remonstrated?

ted with so much wisdom and success? Can they convoke ecclesiastical assemblies, can they draw up canons, can they denounce excommunications and anathemas against those, who retaining with themselves the leading truths of Christianity and of the reformation, think differently on points of simple speculation, on questions purely metaphysical, and, if I may speak the whole, on matters so abstruse, that they are alike indeterminable by them, who exclude members from the communion of Jesus Christ, and by those who are excluded? O ye sons of the reformation! how long will you counteract your own principles! how long will you take pleasure in increasing the number of those, who breathe only your destruction, and move only to destroy you! O ye subjects of the sovereign of the church! how long will you encroach on the rights of your sovereign, dare to condemn those whom he absolves, and to reject those, whom his generous benevolence tolerates! "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant! for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and, whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's."

What we have said shall suffice for the subject, which occasioned the maxim in the text. The remaining time I devote to the consideration of the general sense of this maxim. It lays before us the condition, the engagements, the inclination, and the felicity of a Christian. What is the felicity of a Christian, what is his inclination, what are his en-

gagements, what is his condition? They are *not to be his own*: but to say, *whether I live, or die, I am the Lord's*. The whole, that we shall propose to you, is contained in these four articles.

I. The text lays before us the primitive *condition* of a Christian. It is a condition of *dependence*.—*None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself*.

None of us *liveth* to himself, *for whether we live, we live unto the Lord*. What do we possess, during our abode upon earth, which doth not absolutely depend on him who placed us here? Our existence is not ours; our fortune is not ours; our reputation is not ours; our virtue is not ours; our reason is not ours; our health is not ours; our life is not ours.

Our *existence* is not ours. A few years ago we found ourselves in this world, constituting a very inconsiderable part of it. A few years ago the world itself was nothing. The will of God alone hath made a being of this nothing, as he can make this being a nothing, whenever he pleaseth to do so.

Our *fortune* is not ours. The most opulent persons often see their riches make themselves wings, and fly away. Houses, the best established, disappear in an instant. We have seen a Job, who had possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and servants without number; we have seen the man, who had been the greatest of all the men of the east, lying on a dung-hill, retaining nothing of his prosperity but a sor-

rowful remembrance, which aggravated the adversities that followed it.

Our *reputation* is not ours. One single frailty sometimes tarnisheth a life of the most unsullied beauty. One moment's absence sometimes debaseth the glory of the most profound politician, of the most expert general, of a saint of the highest order. A very diminutive fault will serve to render contemptible, yea infamous, the man, who committed it ; and to make him tremble at the thought of appearing before men, who have no other advantage over him than that of having committed the same offence more fortunately ; I mean, of having concealed the commission of it from the eyes of his fellow-creatures.

Our *virtue* is not ours. Want of opportunity is often the cause why one, who openly professeth christianity, is not an apostate ; another an adulterer ; another a murderer.

Our *reason* is not ours. While we possess it, we are subject to distractions, to absence of thought, to suspension of intelligence, which render us entirely incapable of reflection ; and, what is still more mortifying to human nature, they whose geniusses are the most transcendent and sublime, sometimes become either melancholy or mad ; like Nebuchadnezzar they sink into beasts, and browse like them on the herbage of the field.

Our *health* is not ours. The catalogue of those infirmities which destroy it, (I speak of those which we know, and which mankind by a study of five or six thousand years have discovered,) makes whole

volumes. A catalogue of those which are unknown, would probably make larger volumes yet.

Our *life* is not ours. Winds, waves, heat, cold, aliments, vegetables, animals, nature, and each of its component parts, conspire to deprive us of it. Not one of those who have entered this church, can demonstrate that he shall go out of it alive. Not one of those who compose this assembly, even of the youngest and strongest, can assure himself of one year, one day, one hour, one moment of life. *None of us liveth to himself*; for, *if we live, we are the Lord's*.

Further, *No man dieth to himself. If we die, we are the Lord's*. How absolute soever the dominion of one man over another may be, there is a moment in which both are on a level; that moment comes when we die. Death delivers a slave from the power of a tyrant, under whose rigour he hath spent his life in groans. Death terminates all the relations that subsist between men in this life. But the relation of dependence, which subsists between the Creator and his creatures, is an eternal relation. That world into which we enter when we die, is a part of his empire, and is as subject to his laws as that into which we entered when we were born. During this life, the Supreme Governor hath riches and poverty, glory and ignominy, cruel tyrants and element princes, rains and drouths, raging tempests and refreshing breezes, air wholesome and air infected, famine and plenty, victories and defeats, to render us happy or miserable. After death, he hath absolution and condemnation, a tribunal of justice

and a tribunal of mercy, angels and devils, *a river of pleasure* and *a lake burning with fire and brimstone*, hell, with its horrors and heaven with its happiness, to render us happy or miserable as he pleaseth.

These reflections are not quite sufficient to make us feel all our *dependence*. Our vanity is mortified, when we remember, that what we enjoy is not ours : but it is sometimes, as it were, indemnified by observing the great means that God employs to deprive us of our enjoyments. God hath, in general, excluded this extravagant motive to pride. He hath attached our felicity to one fibre, to one caprice, to one grain of sand, to objects the least likely, and seemingly the least capable, of influencing our destiny.

On what is your high idea of yourself founded ? On your genius ! And what is necessary to reduce the finest genius to that state of melancholy or madness, of which I just now spoke ? Must the earthquake ? Must the sea overflow its banks ? Must the heavens kindle into lightning and resound in thunder ? Must the elements clash, and the powers of nature be shaken ? No ; there needs nothing but the displacing of one little fibre in your brain !

On what is your high idea of yourself founded ? On that self-complacence, which fortune, rank, and pleasing objects, that surround you, seem to contribute to excite ? And what is necessary to dissipate your self-complacence ? Must the earth tremble ? Must the sea overflow its banks ? Must heaven arm itself with thunder and lightning ? Must all nature be shaken ? No ; one caprice is sufficient. An ap-

pearance, under which an object presents itself to us, or rather, a colour, that our imagination lends it, banisheth self-complacence, and, lo! the man just now agitated with so much joy is fixed in a black, a deep despair.

On what is your lofty idea of yourself founded? On your health? But what is necessary to deprive you of your health? Earthquakes? Armies? Inundations? Must nature return to its chaotick state? No; one grain of sand is sufficient! That grain of sand, which in another position was next to nothing to you, and was really nothing to your felicity, becomes in its present position a punishment, a martyrdom, a hell!

People sometimes speculate the nature of those torments, which divine justice reserves for the wicked. They are less concerned to avoid the pains of hell, than to discover wherein they consist. They ask, what fuel can supply a fire that will never be extinguished. Vain researches! The principle in my text is sufficient to give me frightful ideas of hell. We are in a state of entire *dependence* on the Supreme Being; and to repeat it again, one single grain of sand, which is nothing in itself, may become in the hands of the Supreme Being, a punishment, a martyrdom, a hell in regard to us. What *dependence*! "Whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's." This is the primitive *condition* of a Christian.

II. Our text points out the *engagements* of a Christian. Let us abridge our reflections. Remark the state in which Jesus Christ found us; what he per-

formed to deliver us from it; and under what conditions we enter on and enjoy this deliverance.

1. In what state did Jesus Christ find us, when he came into our world? I am sorry to say, the affected delicacy of the world, which increaseth as its irregularities multiply, obligeth me to suppress part of a metaphorical description, that the holy Spirit hath given us in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," saith he to the church. "When thou wast born no eye pitied thee, to do any thing unto thee: but thou wast cast out in the open air, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, and I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," ver. 3, &c.

Let us leave the metaphor, and let us confine our attention to the meaning. When Jesus Christ came into the world, in what state did he find us? Descended from a long train of ancestors in rebellion against the laws of God, fluctuating in our ideas, ignorant of our origin and end, blinded by our prejudices, infatuated by our passions, "having no hope, and being without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. condemned to die, and reserved for eternal flames. From this state Jesus Christ delivered us, and brought us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God," Rom. viii. 21. in order to enable us to participate the felicity of the blessed God, by making

us “partakers of the divine nature,” 2 Pet. i. 4. By a deliverance so glorious, doth not the deliverer obtain peculiar rights over us?

Remark, further, on what conditions Jesus Christ hath freed you from your miseries, and you will perceive, that *ye are not your own*. What means the morality that Jesus Christ enjoined in his gospel? What vows were made for each of you at your baptism? What hast thou promised at the Lord’s table? In one word, To what authority didst thou submit by embracing the gospel? Didst thou say to Jesus Christ, Lord! I will be partly thine, and partly mine own? To thee I will submit the opinions of my mind: but the irregular dispositions of my heart I will reserve to myself. I will consent to renounce my vengeance: but thou shalt allow me to retain my Delilah and my Drusilla. For thee I will quit the world and dissipating pleasures: but thou shalt indulge the visionary and capricious flow of my humour. On a Christian festival I will rise into transports of devotion; my countenance shall emit rays of a divine flame; my eyes shall sparkle with seraphic fire, *my heart and my flesh shall cry out for the living God*, Psal. lxxxiv. 2. but, when I return to the world, I will sink into the spirit of the men of it; I will adopt their maxims, share their pleasures, immerse myself in their conversation; and thus I will be alternately *cold and hot*, Rev. iii. 15. a Christian and a heathen, an angel and a devil. Is this your idea of Christianity? Undoubtedly it is that, which many of our hearers have formed; and which they take too much pains

to prove, by the whole course of their conversation. But this is not the idea which the inspired writers have given us of Christianity; it is not that which, after their example, we have given you. Him only I acknowledge for a true Christian, who is *not his own*; at least, who continually endeavours to eradicate the remains of sin, that resist the empire of Jesus Christ. Him alone I acknowledge for a true Christian, who can say with St. Paul, although not in the same degree, yet with equal sincerity, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Gal. ii. 20.

Consider, thirdly, what it cost Jesus Christ to deliver you from your wretched state. Could our freedom have been procured by a few emotions of benevolence, or by an act of supreme power? In order to deliver us from our *griefs*, it was necessary for him to *bear* them; to terminate our *sorrows* he must *carry* them, (according to the language of a prophet,) to deliver us from the strokes of divine justice he must be *stricken and smitten of God*, Isa. liii. 4. I am aware, that one of the most deplorable infirmities of the human mind is to become insensible to the most affecting objects by becoming familiar with them. The glorified saints, we know, by contemplating the sufferings of the Saviour of the world, behold objects, that excite eternal adorations of the mercy of him, “who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them

kings, and priests unto God his Father," Rev. i. 5, 6. but in our present state the proposing of these objects to us in a course of sermons is sufficient to weary us. However, I affirm, that, if we have not been affected with what Jesus Christ hath done for our salvation, it hath not been owing to our thinking too much, but to our not thinking enough, and perhaps to our having never thought of the subject once, with such a profound attention as its interesting nature demands.

Bow thyself towards the mystical ark, Christian! and fix thine eyes on the mercy-seat. Revolve in thy meditation the astonishing, I had almost said, the incredible history of thy Saviour's love. Go to Bethlehem, and behold him, "who upholdeth all things by the word of his power," (I use the language of an apostle,) him, who thought it no usurpation of the rights of the Deity to be *equal with God*; behold him *humbling himself*, (I use here the words of St. Paul, Heb. i. 3. Phil. ii. 6. His words are more emphatical still.) Behold him *annihilated*;\* for, although the child, who was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, was a real being, yet he may seem to be *annihilated* in regard to the degrading circumstances, which veiled and concealed his natural dignity: behold him *annihilated* by "taking upon him the form of a servant." Follow him through the whole course of his life; "he went about doing good," x. 33. and exposed himself in every place to incon-

\* Videtur hic alludere ad Dan. ix. 26. Ubi dicitur Messias exinaniendus, ut ei nihil supersit, i. e. quasi in nihilum sit redigendus. *Poli Synopsis*. in loc.

veniences and miseries, through the abundance of his benevolence and love. Pass to Gethsemane ; behold his agony ; see him as the Redeemer of mankind contending with the judge of the whole earth ; an agony, in which Jesus resisted with only “ prayers and supplications, strong crying and tears,” Heb. v. 7. an agony, preparatory to an event still more terrible, the bare idea of which terrified and troubled him, made “ his sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground,” Luke xxii. 44. and produced this prayer so fruitful in controversies in the schools, and so penetrating and affecting, so fruitful in motives to obedience, devotion, and gratitude, in truly Christian hearts, “ O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,” Matt. xxvi. 44. Go further yet Christian ! and, after thou hast seen all the sufferings, which Jesus Christ endured in going from the garden to the cross, ascend Calvary with him ; stop on the summit of the hill, and on that theatre behold the most astonishing of all the works of almighty God. See this Jesus, “ the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” Heb. i. 3. see him stripped, fastened to an accursed tree, confounded with two thieves, nailed to the wood, surrounded with executioners and tormentors, having lost, during this dreadful period, that sight of the comfortable presence of his Father, which constituted all his joy, and being driven to exclaim, “ My God ! My God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?” Matt. xxvii. 40. But behold him, amidst all these painful sufferings, firmly supporting his pa-

tience by his love, resolutely enduring all these punishments from those motives of benevolence, which first engaged him to submit to them, ever occupied with the prospect of saving those poor mortals, for whose sake he descended into this world, fixing his eyes on that world of believers, which his cross would subdue to his government, according to his own saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John xii. 32. Can we help feeling the force of that motive, which the scripture proposeth in so many places, and so very emphatically in these words, *The love of Christ constraineth us*, 2 Cor. v. 14. that is to say, engageth and attacheth us closely to him; "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Yea, "The love of Christ forceth us," when we think what he hath done for us.

III. My third article, which should treat of *the inclination* of a Christian, is naturally contained in the second, that is, in that which treats of his *engagements*. To devote ourselves to a master, who hath carried his love to us so far; to devote ourselves to him by fear and force; to submit to his laws, because he hath the power of precipitating those into hell, who have the audacity to break them; to obey him on this principle only, this is a disposition of mind as detestable as disobedience itself, as hateful as open rebellion. The same arguments, which prove that a Christian is *not his own* by engagement, prove

that he is *not his own* by inclination. When, therefore, we shall have proved that this state is his felicity also, we shall have finished the plan of this discourse.

IV. Can it be difficult to persuade you on this article? Stretch your imaginations. Find, if you can, any circumstance in life, in which it would be happier to reject Christianity than to submit to it.

Amidst all the disorders and confusions, and (so to speak,) amidst the universal chaos of the present world, it is delightful to belong to the governor, who first formed the world, and who hath assured us, that he will display the same power in renewing it, which he displayed in creating it.

In the calamities of life, it is delightful to belong to the master, who distributes them; who distributes them only for our good; who knows afflictions by experience; whose love inclines him to terminate our sufferings; and who continues them from the same principle of love, that inclines him to terminate them, when we shall have derived those advantages from them, for which they were sent.

During the persecutions of the church, it is delightful to belong to a guardian, who can curb our persecutors, and control every tyrant; who useth them for the execution of his own counsels; and who will break them in pieces with a rod of iron, when they can no longer contribute to the sanctifying of his servants.

Under a sense of our infirmities; when we are terrified with the purity of that morality, the equity of which we are obliged to own, even while we

tremble at its severity ; it is delightful to belong to a judge, who doth not exact his rights with the utmost rigour ; who *knoweth our frame*, Psal. ciii. 14. who pitieth our infirmities ; and who assureth us, that *he will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*, Mat. xii. 20.

When our passions are intoxicated, in those fatal moments, in which the desire of possessing the objects of our passions wholly occupies our hearts, and we consider them as our paradise, our gods ; it is delightful, however incapable we may be of attending to it, to belong to a Lord who restrains and controls us, because he loves us ; and who refuseth to grant us what we so eagerly desire, because he would either preclude those terrible regrets, which penitents feel after the commission of great sins, or those more terrible torments, that are inseparable from final impenitence.

Under a recollection of our rebellions, it is delightful to belong to a parent, who will receive us favourably when we implore his clemency ; who sweetens the bitterness of our remorse ; who is touched with our regrets ; who wipes away the tears, that the remembrance of our backslidings makes us shed ; who *spareth us, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*, Mal. iii. 17.

In that empty void, into which we are often conducted, while we seem to enjoy the most solid establishments, the most exquisite pleasures, and the most brilliant honors, it is delightful to belong to a patron, who reserves for us objects far better suited to our original excellence, and to the immensity of our de-

sires. *To live to Jesus Christ* then, is the *felicity* of a Christian.

But, if it be a felicity to belong to Jesus Christ while we *live*, it is a felicity incomparably greater to belong to him when we *die*. We will conclude this meditation with this article, and it is an article, that I would endeavour above all others to impress on your hearts, and to engage you to take home to your houses. But, unhappily, the subject of this article is one of those, which generally make the least impressions on the minds of Christians. I know a great many Christians, who place their happiness in *living to Jesus Christ*: but how few have love enough for him to esteem it a felicity to *die to him*! Not only is the number of those small, who experience such a degree of love to Christ; there are very few, who even comprehend what we mean on this subject. Some efforts of divine love resemble very accurate and refined reasonings. They ought naturally to be the most intelligible to intelligent creatures, and they are generally the least understood. Few people are capable of that attention, which takes the mind from every thing foreign from the object in contemplation, and fixeth it not only on the subject, but also on that part, on that point of it, if I may be allowed to speak so, which is to be investigated and explained; so that, by a frailty which mankind cannot sufficiently deplore, precision confuseth our ideas, and light itself makes a subject dark. In like manner, there are some efforts of divine love, so detached from sense, so free from all sensible objects, so superior to even all the means

that religion useth to attract us to God, so eagerly aspiring after an union more close, more noble, and more tender, that the greatest part of Christians, as I said before, are not only incapable of experiencing them, but they are also hard to be persuaded, that there is any reality in what they have been told about them.

*To be Jesus Christ's* in the hour of death, by *condition*, by *engagement*, and above all by *inclination*, are the only means of dying with delight. Without these, whatever makes our felicity while we live will become our punishment when we die; whether it be a criminal object, or an innocent object, or even an object, which God himself commanded us to love.

*Criminal* objects will punish you. They will represent death to you as the messenger of an avenging God, who comes to drag you before a tribunal, where the judge will examine and punish all your crimes. *Lawful* objects will distress you. Pleasant fields! convenient houses! we must forsake you. Natural relations! agreeable companions! faithful friends! we must give you up. From you, our dear children! who kindle in our hearts a kind of love, that agitates and inflames beings, when nature seems to render them incapable of heat and motion, we must be torn from you.

*Religious* objects, which we are commanded above all others to love, will contribute to our anguish in a dying bed, if they have confined our love, and rendered us too sensible to that kind of happiness, which piety procures in this world; and if they have prevented our souls from rising into a contempla-

tion of that blessed state, in which there will be no more temple, no more sacraments, no more gross and sensible worship. The man who is too much attached to these things, is confounded at the hour of death. The land of love, to which he goes, is an unknown country to him; and as the borders of it, on which he stands, and on which alone his eyes are fixed, present only precipices to his view, fear and trembling surround his every step.

But a believer, who loves Jesus Christ with that kind of love, which made St. Paul exclaim, *The love of Christ constraineth us*, 2 Cor. v. 14. finds himself on the summit of his wishes at the approach of death. This believer, living in this world, resembles the son of a great king, whom some sad event tore from his royal parent in his cradle; who knows his parent only by the fame of his virtues; who has always a difficult, and often an intercepted correspondence with his parent; whose remittances, and favours from his parent are always diminished by the hands through which they come to him. With what transport would such a son meet the moment appointed by his father for his return to his natural state!

I belong to God, (these are the sentiments of the believer, of whom I am speaking,) I belong to God, not only by his sovereign dominion over me as a creature; not only by that right, which, as a master, who hath redeemed his slave, he hath acquired over me: but I belong to God, because I love him, and because, I know, God alone deserves my highest esteem. The deep impressions that his adorable

perfections have made on my mind, make me impatient with every object which intercepts my sight of him. I could not be content to abide any longer in this world, were he not to ordain my stay; and were I not to consider his will as the only law of my conduct. But the law, that commands me to live, doth not forbid me to desire to die. I consider death as the period fixed for the gratifying of my most ardent wishes, the consummation of my highest joy. *Whilst I am at home in the body, I am absent from the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 6. But it would be incomparably more delightful *to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*, ver. 8. And what can detain me on earth, when God shall condescend to call me to himself?

Not ye *criminal* objects! you I never loved; and although I have sometimes suffered myself to be seduced by your deceitful appearances of pleasure, yet I have been so severely punished by the tears that you have caused me to shed, and by the remorse, which you have occasioned my conscience to feel, that there is no reason to fear my putting you into the plan of my felicity.

Nor shall ye detain me, *lawful* objects! How strong soever the attachments that unite me to you may be, you are only streams of happiness, and I am going to the fountain of felicity. You are only emanations of happiness, and I am going to *the happy God*.

Neither shall ye, *religious* objects! detain me. You are only means, and death is going to conduct me to the end, you are only the road; to die is to arrive at home. True, I shall no more read those excel-

lent works, in which authors of the brightest genius have raised the truth from depths of darkness and prejudice in which it had been buried, and placed it in the most lively point of view. I shall hear no more of those sermons, in which the preacher, animated by the holy Spirit of God, attempts to elevate me above the present world: but I shall hear and contemplate eternal wisdom, and I shall discover in my commerce with it the views, the designs, the plans of my Creator; and I shall acquire more wisdom in one moment by this mean than I should ever obtain by hearing the best composed sermons, and by reading the best written books. True, I shall no more devote myself to you, closet exercises! holy meditations! aspirings of a soul in search of its God! crying, *Lord, I besecch thee shew me thy glory!* Exo. xxxiii. 18. Lord dissipate the dark thick cloud that conceals thee from my sight! suffer me to approach that light, which hath hitherto been inaccessible to me! But death is the dissipation of clouds and darkness; it is an approach to perfect light; it takes me from my closet, and presents me like a seraph at the foot of the throne of God and the Lamb.

True, I shall no more partake of you, ye holy ordinances of religion! ye sacred ceremonies! that have conveyed so many consolations into my soul; that have so amply afforded solidity and solace to the ties, which united my heart to my God; that have so often procured me a heaven on earth: but I quit you because I am going to receive immediate effusions of divine love, pleasures at God's right

hand for evermore, *fulness of joy in his presence*, Psal. xvi. 11. I quit you because . . . . .

Alas! your hearts perhaps have escaped me, my brethren! perhaps these emotions, superior to your piety, are no longer the subject of your attention. I have, however, no other direction to give you, than that which may stand for an abridgement of this discourse, of all my other preaching, and of my whole ministry; Love God; be the Lord's by *inclination*, as you are his by *condition*, and by *engagement*. Then, the miseries of this life will be tolerable, and the approach of death delightful. God grant his blessing on the word! to him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON II.

*The Equality of Mankind.*



PROVERBS xxii. 2.

*The rich and poor meet together : the Lord is the maker of them all.*

AMONG the various dispensations of providence, which regard mankind, one of the most advantageous in the original design of the Creator, and at the same time one of the most fatal through our abuse of it, is the diversity of our conditions. How could men have formed one social body, if all conditions had been equal ? Had all possessed the same rank, the same opulence, the same power, how could they have relieved one another from the inconveniences, which would have continually attended each of them ; variety of conditions renders men necessary to each other. The governor is necessary to the people, the people are necessary to the governor ; wise statesmen are necessary to a powerful soldiery, a powerful soldiery is necessary to wise statesmen. A sense of this necessity is the strongest bond of union, and this it is, which inclines one to assist another in hopes of receiving assistance in his turn.

But if this diversity be connected with the highest utility to mankind in the original design of the Crea-

tor, it is become, we must allow, productive of fatal evils through our abuse of it. On the one hand, they, whose condition is the most brilliant, are dazzled with their own brightness ; they study the articles, which elevate them above their fellow-creatures, and they choose to be ignorant of every thing that puts themselves on a level with them ; they persuade themselves, that they are beings incomparable, far more noble and excellent than those vile mortals, on whom they proudly tread, and on whom they scarcely deign to cast a haughty eye. Hence provoking arrogance, cruel reserve, and hence tyranny and despotism. On the other hand, they, who are placed in inferior stations, prostrate their imaginations before these beings, whom they treat rather as gods than men ; them they constitute arbiters of right and wrong, true and false ; they forget, while they respect the rank, which the supreme governor of the world hath given to their superiors, to maintain a sense of their own dignity. Hence come soft compliances, base submissions of reason and conscience, slavery the most willing and abject to the high demands of these phantoms of grandeur, these imaginary gods.

To rectify these different ideas, to humble the one class, and to exalt the other, it is necessary to shew men in their true point of view ; to convince them that diversity of condition, which God hath been pleased to establish among them, is perfectly consistent with equality ; that the splendid condition of the first includes nothing, that favours their ideas of self-preference ; and that there is nothing in the low condition of the last, which deprives them of their real

dignity, or debases their intelligences formed in the image of God. I design to discuss this subject to-day. The men, who compose this audience, and among whom providence hath very unequally divided the blessings of this life; princes, who command, and to whom God himself hath given authority to command subjects; subjects, who obey, and on whom God hath imposed obedience as a duty; the rich, who give alms, and the poor, who receive them; all, all my hearers, I am going to reduce to their natural equality, and to consider this equality as a source of piety. This is the meaning of the wise man in the words of the text, “The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.”

Let us enter into the matter. We suppose two truths, and do not attempt to prove them. First, That although the wise man mentions here only two different states, yet he includes all. Under the general notion of *rich* and *poor*, we think, he comprehends every thing, that makes any sensible difference in the conditions of mankind. Accordingly, it is an incontestible truth, that what he says of the *rich* and *poor* may be said of the nobleman and plebeian, of the master and the servant. It may be said, the master and the servant, the nobleman and the plebeian “meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all:” and so of the rest.

It is not unlikely, however, that Solomon, when he spoke of *the rich and poor*, had a particular design in choosing this kind of diversity of condition to illustrate his meaning in preference to every other.

Although I can hardly conceive, that there ever was a period of time, in which the love of riches did fascinate the eyes of mankind, as it does in this age, yet it is very credible, that in Solomon's time, as in ours, riches made the grand difference among men. Strictly speaking, there are now only two conditions of mankind, that of the rich, and that of the poor. Riches decide all, yea those qualities, which seem to have no concern with them, I mean, mental qualifications. Find but the art of amassing money, and you will thereby find that of uniting in your own person all the advantages, of which mankind have entertained the highest ideas. How mean soever your birth may have been, you will possess the art of concealing it, and you may form an alliance with the most illustrious families; how small soever your knowledge may be, you may pass for a superior genius, capable of deciding questions the most intricate, points the most abstruse; and, what is still more deplorable, you may purchase with silver and gold a kind of honour and virtue, while you remain the most abandoned of mankind, at least, your money will attract that respect, which is due to nothing but honour and virtue.

The second truth, which we suppose, is, that this proposition, "the Lord is the maker of them all," is one of those concise, I had almost said, one of those defective propositions, which a judicious auditor ought to fill up in order to give it a proper meaning. This style is very common in our scriptures; it is peculiarly proper in sententious works, such as this out of which we have taken the text. The design of

Solomon is to teach us, that whatever diversities of conditions there may be in society, the men who compose it are *essentially equal*. The reason that he assigns, is, "the Lord is the maker of them all." If this idea be not added, the proposition proves nothing at all. It does not follow, because the same God is the *creator* of two beings, that there is any resemblance between them, much less that they are equal. Is not God the creator of pure unembodied intelligences, who have faculties superior to those of mankind? Is not God the author of their existence as well as of ours? Because "God is the Creator of both," does it follow that both are equal? God is no less the creator of the organs of an ant, than he is the creator of the sublime geniusses of a part of mankind. Because God hath created an ant and a sublime genius, does it follow, that these two beings are equal? The meaning of the words of Solomon depends then on what a prudent reader supplies. We may judge what ought to be supplied by the nature of the subject, and by a parallel passage in the book of Job. "Did not he that made me in the womb, make my servant? and did he not fashion us alike?"\* chap. xxxi. 15. To the words of our text, therefore, "The Lord is the maker of them all," we must add, the Lord hath fashioned them all alike. Nothing but gross ignorance, or wilful treach-

\* This reading of the French bible differs a little from our translation: but a comparison of the two translations with the original, and with the scope of the place, will give the preference to the French reading. *Nonne disposuit nos in utero unus atque idem?* Vid. Poli Synops. in loc.

ery, can incline an expositor to abuse this liberty of making up the sense of a passage, and induce him to conclude, that he may add to a text whatever may seem to him the most proper to support a favourite opinion, or to cover an unworthy passion. When we are inquisitive for truth, it is easy to discover the passages of holy scripture, in which the authors have made use of these concise imperfect sentences.

Of this kind are all passages, which excite no distinct ideas, or which excite ideas foreign from the scope of the writer, unless the meaning be supplied. For example, we read these words in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, ver. 4. "If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." If we attach such ideas to these words, as they seem at first to excite, we shall take them in a sense quite opposite to the meaning of St. Paul. The apostle aimed to make the Corinthians respect his ministry, and to consider his apostleship as confirmed of God in a manner as clear and decisive as that of any minister, who had preached to them. Is the proposition, that we have read, any thing to this purpose, unless we supply what is not expressed? But if we supply what is understood, and add these words, *but this is incredible*, or any others equivalent, we shall perceive the force of his reasoning, which is this: If there hath been among you any one, whose preaching have revealed a Redeemer, better adapted to your wants than he, whom

we have preached to you; or if you had received more excellent gifts than those, which the holy Spirit so abundantly diffused among you by our ministry, you might indeed have preferred him before us; but it is not credible, that you have had such teachers: you ought then to respect our ministry.

We need not make any more remarks of this kind; our text, it is easy to see, ought to be classed with them, that are imperfect, and must be supplied with words to make up the sense. *The rich and the poor meet together* in four articles of equality; because *the Lord hath made them all* EQUAL in *nature*, or in *essence*; equal in *privileges*, equal in *appointment*; equal in their *last end*. The Lord hath made them equal in *nature*; they have the same faculties, and the same infirmities: Equal in *privileges*; for both are capable by the excellence of their nature, and more still by that of their religion, to form the noblest designs: Equal in *designation*; for although the rich differ from the poor in their condition, yet both are intended to answer the great purposes of God with regard to human nature: Finally, They are equal in their *last end*; the same sentence of death is passed on both, and both alike must submit to it. “The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.” Thus the text affords us four truths worthy of our most serious attention.

The first article of equality, in which men *meet together*, is an equality of *essence*, or of *nature*; the Lord hath made them all with the same faculties, and with the same infirmities.

1. With the same *faculties*. What is man? He consists of a body, and of a soul united to a body. This definition, or rather, if you will, this description, agrees to all mankind, to the great as well as to the small, to the rich as well as to the poor. The soul of the poor hath the same power as that of the rich, to lay down principles, to infer consequences, to distinguish truth from falsehood, to choose good or evil, to examine what is most advantageous, and most glorious to it. The body of the poor, as well as that of the rich, displays the wisdom of him, who formed it; it hath a symmetry in its parts, an exactness in its motions, and a proportion to its secret springs. The laws, that unite the body of the poor to his soul are the same as those, which unite these two beings in the rich; there is the same connexion between the two parts, that constitute the essence of the man; a similar motion of the body produceth a similar thought in the mind, a similar idea of the mind, or a similar emotion of the heart, produceth a similar motion of the body. This is man. These are the faculties of men. Diversity of condition makes no alteration in these faculties.

2. *The Lord hath made them all with the same infirmities.* They have the same infirmities of body. The body of the rich, as well as that of the poor, is a common receptacle, where a thousand impurities meet; it is a general rendezvous of pains and sicknesses; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and is crushed before the moth," Job iv. 19.

They have the same mental infirmities. The mind of the rich, like that of the poor, is incapable of satisfying itself on a thousand desirable questions: The mind of the rich, as well as that of the poor, is prevented by its natural ignorance, when it would expand itself in contemplation, and eclaireise a number of obvious phenomena. The soul of the rich, like that of the poor, is subject to doubt, uncertainty, and ignorance, and, what is more mortifying still, the heart of the rich, like the poor man's heart, is subject to the same passions, to envy, and to anger, and to all the disorder of sin.

They have the same frailties in the laws that unite the soul to the body. The soul of the rich, like the soul of the poor, is united to a body, or rather enslaved by it. The soul of the rich, like that of the poor, is interrupted in its most profound meditations by a single ray of light, by the buzzing of a fly, or by the touch of an atom of dust. The rich man's faculties of reasoning and of self-determining are suspended, and in some sort vanished and absorbed, like those of the poor, on the slightest alteration of the senses, and this alteration of the senses happens to him, as well as to the poor, at the approach of certain objects. David's reason is suspended at the sight of Bathsheba; David no longer distinguisheth good from evil; David forgets the purity of the laws, which he himself had so highly celebrated, and, at the sight of this object, his whole system of piety is refuted, his whole edifice of religion sinks and disappears.

The second point of equality, in which *the rich and the poor meet together*, is an equality of *privileges*. To aspire at certain eminences, when providence hath placed us in inferior stations in society, is egregious folly. If a man, who hath only ordinary talents, only a common genius, pretend to acquire an immortal reputation among heroes, and to fill the world with his name and exploits, he acts fancifully and wildly. If he, who was born a subject, rashly and ambitiously attempt to ascend the tribunal of a magistrate, or the throne of a king, and to aim at governing, when he is called to obey, he is guilty of rebellion. But this law, which forbids inferiors to arrogate to themselves some privileges, doth not prohibit them from aspiring at others, incomparably more great and glorious.

Let us discover, if it be possible, the most miserable man in this assembly; let us dissipate the darkness that covers him; let us raise him from that kind of grave, in which his indigence and meanness conceal him. This man, unknown to the rest of mankind; this man, who seems hardly formed by the Creator into an intelligent existence; this man hath, however, the greatest and most glorious privileges. This man, being reconciled to God by religion, hath a right to aspire to the most noble and sublime objects of it. He hath a right to elevate his soul to God in ardent prayer, and, without the hazard of being taxed with vanity, he may assure himself, that God, the Great God, encircled in glory, and surrounded with the praises of the blessed, will behold him, hear his prayer, and grant his re-

quest. This man hath a right to say to himself, The attention, that the Lord of nature gives to the government of the universe, to the wants of mankind, to the innumerable company of angels, and to his own felicity, doth not prevent this adorable being from attending to me ; from occupying himself about my person, my children, my family, my house, my health, my substance, my salvation, my most minute concern, even a single *hair of my head*, Luke xxi. 18. This man hath a right of addressing God by names the most tender and mild, yea, if I may venture to speak so, by those most familiar names, which equals give each other ; he may call him his God, his master, his father, his friend. Believers have addressed God by each of these names, and God hath not only permitted them to do so, he hath even expressed his approbation of their taking these names in their mouths. This man hath a right of coming to eat with God at the Lord's table, and to live, if I may be allowed to speak so, to live with God, as a man lives with his friend. This man hath a right to apply to himself whatever is most great, most comfortable, most extatic in the mysteries of redemption, and to say to himself ; For me the divine intelligence revolved the plan of redemption ; for me the Son of God was appointed before the foundation of the world to be a propitiatory sacrifice ; for me in the fulness of time he took mortal flesh ; for me he lived several years among men in this world ; for me he pledged himself to the justice of his Father, and suffered such unparalleled punishment, as confounds reason and surpasses imagin-

ation; for me the holy Spirit *shook the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*, Hag. ii. 6. and established a ministry, which he confirmed by healing the sick, by raising the dead, by casting out devils, and by subverting the whole order of nature. This man hath a right to aspire to the felicity of the immortal God, to the glory of the immortal God, to the throne of the immortal God. Arrived at the fatal hour, lying on his dying bed, reduced to the sight of useless friends, ineffectual remedies, unavailing tears, he hath a right to triumph over death, and to defy his disturbing in the smallest degree the tranquil calm, that his soul enjoys; he hath a right to summon the gates of heaven to admit his soul, and to say to them, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors!*

These are the incontestible privileges of the man, who appears to us so contemptible. I ask, my brethren, have the nobles of the earth any privileges more glorious than these? Do the train of attendants, which follows them, the horses that draw them, the grandees, who surround them, the superb titles, which command exterior homage, give them any real superiority over the man, who enjoys those privileges, which we have briefly enumerated? Ah! my brethren, nothing proves the littleness of great men more than the impression, which the exterior advantages, that distinguish them from the rest of mankind, make on their minds. Are you aware of what you are doing, when you despise them whom providence placeth for a few years in a station inferior to your own? You are despising and degrad-

ing yourselves, you are renouncing your real greatness, and, by valuing yourselves for a kind of foreign glory, you discover a contempt for that, which constitutes the real dignity of your nature. The glory of man does not consist in his being a master, or a rich man, a nobleman, or a king; it consists in his being a man, in his being formed in the image of his Creator, and capable of all the elevation, that we have been describing. If you condemn your inferiors in society, you plainly declare, that you are insensible to your real dignity; for, had you derived your ideas of real greatness from their true source, you would have respected it in persons, who appear the most mean and despicable. *The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord hath endowed them all with the same privileges. They all meet together on the same line of equality in regard to their claims of privileges. This was the point to be proved.*

We add, in the third place, *The rich and the poor meet together* in an equality of *destination*. Rich and poor are placed by providence in different ranks, I grant: but their different stations are fixed with the same design, I mean to accomplish the purposes of God in regard to men.

What are the designs of God in regard to men? What end doth he propose to effect by placing us on this planet thirty, forty, or sixty years, before he declares our eternal state? We have frequently answered this important question. God hath placed us here in a state of probation: he hath set before our eyes supreme felicity and intolerable misery; he hath

pointed out the vices, that conduct to the last, and the virtues necessary to arrive at the first, and he hath declared, that our conduct shall determine our future state. 'Tis, I think, is the design of God in regard to men. This is the notion that we ought to form, of the end which God proposes in fixing us a few years upon earth, and in placing us among our fellow-creatures in society.

On this principle, which is the most glorious condition? It is neither that which elevates us highest in society, nor that which procureth us the greatest conveniences of life. If it be not absolutely indifferent to men, to whom it is uncertain whether they shall quit the present world the next moment, or continue almost a century in it; I say, if it be not absolutely indifferent to them, whether they be high or low, rich or poor, it would be contrary to all the laws of prudence, were they to determine their choice of a condition by considerations of this kind alone. A creature capable of eternal felicity ought to consider that the most glorious condition, which is the most likely to procure him the eternal felicity, of which he is capable. Were a wise man to choose a condition, he would certainly prefer that, in which he could do most good; he would always consider that as the most glorious station for himself, in which he could best answer the great end for which his Creator placed him in this world. It is glorious to be at the head of a nation; but if I could do more good in a mean station than I could do in an eminent post, the meanest station would be far more glorious to me than the most eminent

post. Why? because that is most glorious to me, which best answers the end that my Creator proposed in placing me in this world. God placed me in this world to enable me to do good, and prepare myself by a holy life for a happy eternity. To do good at the head of a nation, certain talents are necessary. If I have not these talents, not only I should not do good in this post: but I should certainly do evil. I should expose my country to danger, I should sink its credit, obscure its glory, and debase its dignity. It is, therefore, incomparably less glorious for me to be at the head of a state than to occupy a post less eminent. It is glorious to fill the highest office in the church, to announce the oracles of God, to develop the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and to direct wandering souls to the road, that leads to the sovereign good: but if I be destitute of gifts essential to the filling of this office, it is incomparably more glorious to me to remain a pupil than to commence a tutor. Why? Because that station is the most eligible to me, which best empowers me to answer the end for which my Creator placed me in this world. My Creator placed me in this world, that I might do good, and that by a holy life I might prepare for a happy eternity. In order to do good in the highest offices in the church great talents are necessary; if God hath not bestowed great talents on me, I should not only not do good: but I should do harm. Instead of announcing the oracles of God I should preach the traditions of men; I should involve the mysteries of religion in darkness instead of developing them: I

should plunge poor mortals into an abyss of misery, instead of pointing out the road, which would conduct them to a blessed immortality. But by remaining in the state of a disciple I may obtain attention, docility, and love to truth, which are the virtues of my condition. It is more glorious to be a good subject than a bad king; it is more glorious to be a good disciple than a bad teacher.

But most men have false ideas of glory, and we form our notions of it from the opinions of these unjust appraisers of men and things. That which elevates us in their eyes, seems glorious to us; and we esteem that contemptible, which abaseth us before them. We discover, I know not what, meanness in mechanical employments, and the contempt that we have for the employ, extends itself to him, who follows it, and thus we habituate ourselves to despise them, whom God honours. Let us undeceive ourselves, my brethren; there is no condition shameful, except it necessarily lead us to some infraction of the laws of our Supreme *lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy*, James iv. 12. Strictly speaking, one condition of life is no more honourable than another. There are, I grant, some stations, in which the objects that employ those who fill them, are naturally more noble than those of other stations. The condition of a magistrate, whose employment is to improve and to enforce maxims of government, hath a nobler object than that of a mechanic, whose business it is to improve the least necessary art. There is a nobler object in the station of a pastor called to publish the laws of religion, than in that of a school-

master confined to teach the letters of the alphabet. But God will regulate our eternal state not according to the object of our pursuit: but according to the manner in which we should have pursued it. In this point of light, all ranks are equal, every condition is the same. Mankind have then an equality of *destination*. The rich and the poor are placed in different ranks with the same view, both are to answer the great end, that God hath proposed to answer by creating and arranging mankind.

Hitherto we have had occasion for some little labour to prove our thesis, that all men are equal, notwithstanding the various conditions in which God hath placed them. And you, my brethren, have had occasion for some docility to feel the force of our arguments. But in our fourth article the truth will establish itself, and its force will be felt by a recital, yea, by a hint of our arguments.

We said, fourthly, that men are equal in their *last end*, that the same sentence of death is denounced on all, and that they must all alike submit to their fate. On which side can we view death, and not receive abundant evidence of this truth? Consider the certainty of death; the nearness of death; the harbingers of death; the ravages of death; so many sides by which death may be considered, so many proofs, so many demonstrations, so many sources of demonstrations of the truth of this sense of my text, *the rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all*.

1. Remark the *certainty* of death; *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*, Gen. iii. 19. *It is ap-*

*pointed unto men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. The sentence is universal, its universality involves all the posterity of Adam; it includes all conditions, all professions, all stations, and every step of life ensures the execution of it.

Whither art thou going, Rich man! thou, who congratulatest thyself because thy *fields bring forth plentifully*, and who sayest to thy soul, *Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?* To death. Whither art thou going, poor man! thou, who art toiling through a languishing life, who beggest thy bread from door to door, who are continually perplexed in finding out means of procuring bread to eat, and raiment to put on, always an object of the charity of some, and of the hard heartedness of others? To death. Whither goest thou, nobleman! thou, who deckest thyself with borrowed plumes, who puttest the renown of thine ancestors into the list of thy virtues, and who thinkest thyself formed of an earth more refined than that of the rest of mankind? To death. Whither goest thou, peasant! thou, who deridest the folly of a peer, and at the same time valuest thyself on something equally absurd? To death. Whither, soldier! art thou marching, thou, who talkest of nothing but glory and heroism, and who amid many voices sounding in thine ears, and incessantly crying, *Remember, thou art mortal*, art dreaming of, I know not what, immortality? To death. Whither art thou going, merchant! thou, who breathest nothing but the increase of thy fortune, and who judgest of the happiness or misery of

thy days, not by thine acquisition of knowledge, and thy practice of virtue: but by the gain or the loss of thy wealth? To death. Whither are we all going, my dear hearers? To death. Do I exceed the truth, my brethren? Does death regard titles, dignities, and riches? Where is Alexander? Where is Caesar? Where are all they, whose names struck terror through the whole world? They were: but they are no more. They fell before the voice, that cried, *Return, ye children of men*, Psal. xc. 3. *I said, Ye are gods: but ye shall die like men*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. *I said, Ye are gods*; this, ye great men of the earth! this is your title; this is the patent that creates your dignity, that subjects us to your commands, and teacheth us to revere your characters: *but ye shall die like men*: this is the decree, that degrades you, and puts you on a level with us. *Ye are gods*; I will then respect your authority, and consider you as images of him, “by whom kings reign: but ye shall die;” I will not then suffer myself to be imposed on by your grandeur, and whatever homage I may yield to my king, I will always remember, that he is a man. The certainty of death is the first side, on which we may consider this murderer of mankind; and it is the first proof of our fourth proposition: Mankind are equal in their *last end*.

2. The *proximity* of death is a second demonstration, a second source of demonstrations. The limits of our lives are equal. The life of the rich as well as that of the poor is “reduced to an handbreadth,” Psal. xxxix. 5. Sixty, eighty, or a hun-

dred years, is usually the date of a long life. The sceptre hath no more privilege in this respect than the crook: nor is the palace at any greater distance from the tomb than the cottage from the grave. Heaps of silver and gold may intercept the rich man's sight of death: but they can neither intercept death's sight of the rich man, nor prevent his forcing the feeble intrenchments, in which he may attempt to hide himself.

3. The *harbingers* of death are a third demonstration, a third source of demonstrations. The rich have the same forerunners as the poor; both have similar dying agonies, violent sicknesses, disgusting medicines, intolerable pains, and cruel misgivings. Pass through those superb apartments in which the rich man seems to defy the enemy, who lurks and threatens to seize him; go through the crowd of domestics who surround him; cast your eyes on the bed where nature and art have contributed to his ease. In this grand edifice, amidst this assembly of courtiers, or, shall I rather say, amidst this troop of vile slaves, you will find a most mortifying and miserable object. You will see a visage all pale, livid, distorted; you will hear the shrieks of a wretch tormented with the gravel, or the gout; you will see a soul terrified with the fear of those eternal books, which are about to be opened, of that formidable tribunal, which is already erected, of the awful sentence, that is about to be denounced.

4. The *ravages* of death make a fourth demonstration; they are the same with the rich as with the poor. Death alike condemns their eyes to impen-

eternal night, their tongue to eternal silence, their whole system to total destruction. I see a superb monument. I approach this striking object. I see magnificent inscriptions. I read the pompous titles of the *most noble*, the *most puissant*, *general*, *prince*, *monarch*, *arbiter of peace*, *arbiter of war*. I long to see the inside of this elegant piece of workmanship, and I peep under the stone, that covers him, to whom all this pomp is consecrated; there I find, what? . . . a putrified carcase devouring by worms. O vanity of human grandeur! "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom is no help," Eccl. i. 2. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish," Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more," Psal. ciii. 15, 16.

5. Finally, *the judgment*, that follows death, carries our proposition to the highest degree of evidence. "It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment," Heb. ix. 27. The rich and the poor must alike appear before that throne, which St. John describes in the revelation, and before that venerable personage, "from whose face the heaven and the earth flee away," chap. xx. 11. If there be any difference between the rich and the poor, it is all, methinks, in favor of the latter. The summons, that must be one day addressed to each of us, *give an account of thy stewardship*, Luke xvi. 2. this summons is always terrible. You indigent people!

whom God (to use the language of scripture,) hath *set over a few things*, an account of these *few things* will be required of you, and you will be as surely punished for hiding *one talent*, as if you had hidden more, Matt. xxv. 17.

But how terrible to me seems the account that must be given of a great number of talents! If the rich man have some advantages over the poor, (and who can doubt that he hath many?) how are his advantages counterpoised by the thought of the consequences of death! What a summons, my brethren! is this for a great man, *Give an account of thy stewardship!* give an account of thy *riches*. Didst thou acquire them lawfully? or were they the produce of unjust dealings, of cruel extortions, of repeated frauds, of violated promises, of perjuries and oaths? Didst thou distribute them charitably, compassionately, liberally? or didst thou reserve them avariciously, meanly, barbarously? Didst thou employ them to found hospitals, to procure instruction for the ignorant, relief for the sick, consolations for the afflicted? or didst thou employ them to cherish thy pride, to display thy vanity, to immortalize thine ambition and arrogance? Give an account of thy *reputation*. Didst thou employ it to relieve the oppressed, to protect the widow, and orphan, to maintain justice, to diffuse truth, to propagate religion? or, on the contrary, didst thou use it to degrade others, to deify thy passions, to render thyself a scourge to society, a plague to mankind? Give an account of thine *honours*. Didst thou direct them to their true end, by contributing all in thy power

to the good of society, to the defence of thy country, to the prosperity of trade, to the advantage of the public? or, didst thou direct them only to thine own private interest, to the establishment of thy fortune, to the elevation of thy family, to that insatiable avidity of glory, which gnawed and devoured thee? Ah! my brethren! if we enter very seriously into these reflections, we shall not be so much struck, as we usually are, with the diversity of men's conditions in this life; we shall not aspire very eagerly after the highest ranks in this world. "The rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all;" that is to say, he hath made them equal in their nature, equal in their privileges, equal in their destination, and equal, as we have proved, in their last end.

The inferences, that we intend to draw from what we have said, are not inferences of sedition and anarchy. We do not mean to disturb the order of society; nor, by affirming that all men have an essential equality, to reprobate that subordination, without which society would be nothing but confusion, and the men, who compose it, a lawless banditti. We affirm, that the subject and the prince, the master and the servant, are truly and properly equal: but far be it from us to infer, that therefore the subject should withdraw his submission from his prince, or the servant diminish his obedience to his master. On the contrary, subjects and servants would renounce all that is glorious in their conditions, if they entertained such wild ideas in their minds. That, which equals them to the superiors, whom provi-

dence hath set over them, is the belief of their being capable, as well as their superiors, of answering the end that God proposeth in creating mankind. They would counteract this end, were they to refuse to discharge those duties of their condition to which providence calls them.

Nor would we derive from the truths which we have affirmed, fanatical inferences. We endeavoured before to preclude all occasion for reproach on this article, yet perhaps we may not escape it; for how often does an unfriendly auditor, in order to enjoy the pleasure of deerying a disgustful truth, affect to forget the corrective, with which the preacher sweetens it? we repeat it, therefore, once more; we do not pretend to affirm, that the conditions of all men are absolutely equal, by affirming that in some senses all mankind are on a level. We do not say, that the man, whom society agrees to condemn, is as happy as the man, whom society unites to revere. We do not say, that the man, who hath no where to hide his head, is as happy as he who is commodiously accommodated. We do not say, that a man, who is destitute of all the necessities of life, is as happy as the man, whose fortune is sufficient to procure him all the conveniences of it. No, my brethren! we have no more design to deduce inferences of fanaticism from the doctrine of the text, than we have to infer maxims of anarchy and rebellion. But we infer just conclusions conformable to the precious gift of reason, that the Creator hath bestowed on us, and to the incomparably more precious gift of religion with which he hath enriched

us. Derive then, my brethren, conclusions of these kinds, and let them be the application of this discourse.

Derive from our subject conclusions of *moderation*. Labour, for it is allowable, and the morality of the gospel doth not condemn it, labour to render your name illustrious, to augment your fortune, to establish your reputation, to contribute to the pleasure of your life ; but labour no more than becomes you. Let efforts of this kind never make you lose sight of the great end of life. Remember, as riches, grandeur, and reputation, are not the supreme good, so obscurity, meanness, and indigence, are not the supreme evil. Let the care of avoiding the supreme evil, and the desire of obtaining the supreme good, be always the most ardent of our wishes, and let others yield to that of arriving at the chief good.

Derive from our doctrine conclusions of *acquiescence* in the laws of providence. If it please providence to put an essential difference between you and the great men of the earth, let it be your holy ambition to excel in it. You cannot murmur without being guilty of reproaching God, because he hath made you what you are ; because he formed you men, and not angels, archangels, or seraphims. Had he annexed essential privileges to the highest ranks, submission, would always be your lot, and you ought always to adore, and to submit to that intelligence, which governs the world : but this is not your case. God gives to the great men of the earth an exterior, transient, superficial glory : but he hath made you share with them a glory real, solid, and permanent.

What difficulty can a wise man find by acquiescing in this law of providence?

Derive from the truths you have heard conclusions of *vigilance*. Instead of ingeniously flattering yourself with the vain glory of being elevated above your neighbour; or of suffering your mind to sink under the puerile mortification of being inferior to him; incessantly inquire what is the virtue of your station, the duty of your rank, and use your utmost industry to fill it worthily. You are a magistrate, the virtue of your station, the duty of your rank, is to employ yourself wholly to serve your fellow subjects in inferior stations, to prefer the public good before your own private interest, to sacrifice yourself for the advantage of that state, the reins of which you hold. Practise this virtue, fulfil these engagements, put off self-interest, and devote yourself wholly to a people, who intrust you with their properties, their liberties, and their lives. You are a subject, the duty of your rank, the virtue of your station, is submission, and you should obey not only through fear of punishment but, through a wise regard for order. Practise this virtue, fulfil this engagement, make it your glory to submit, and in the authority of princes respect the power of God, whose ministers and representatives they are. You are a rich man, the virtue of your station, the duty of your condition, is beneficence, generosity, magnanimity. Practise these virtues, discharge these duties. Let your heart be always moved with the necessities of the wretched, and your ears open to their complaints.

Never omit an opportunity of doing good, and be in society a general resource, an universal refuge.

From the truths which you have heard, derive motives of *zeal and fervour*. It is mortifying, I own, in some respects, when one feels certain emotions of dignity and elevation, to sink in society. It is mortifying to beg bread of one who is a man like our selves. It is mortifying to be trodden under foot by our equals, and, to say all in a word, to be in stations very unequal among our equals. But this economy will quickly vanish. *The fashion of this world* will presently *pass away*, and we shall soon enter that blessed state, in which all distinctions will be abolished, and in which all that is noble in immortal souls, will shine in all its splendour. Let us, my brethren, sigh after this period, let us make it the object of our most constant and ardent prayers. God grant we may all have a right to pray for it! God grant our text may be one day verified in a new sense. May all who compose this assembly, masters and servants, rich and poor, may we all, my dear hearers, having acknowledged ourselves equal in essence, in privileges, in destination, in the last end, may we all alike participate the same glory. God grant it for his mercy-sake. Amen.



# SERMON III.

*The Worth of the Soul.*

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MATTHEW xvi. 26.

*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

MY brethren, before we enforce the truths which Jesus Christ included in the words of the text, we will endeavour to fix the meaning of it. This depends on the term *soul*, which is used in this passage, and which is one of the most equivocal words in scripture; for it is taken in different, and even in contrary senses, so that sometimes it signifies a *dead body*, Lev. xxi. 1. We will not divert your attention now by reciting the long list of explications that may be given to the term: but we will content ourselves with remarking, that it can be taken only in two senses in the text.

*Soul* may be taken for *life*; and in this sense the term is used by St. Matthew, who says, *They are dead who sought the young child's soul*, chap. ii. 20. *Soul* may be taken for that spiritual part of us, which we call *the soul* by excellence; and in this sense it is used by our Lord, who says, *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, chap. x. 28.

If we take the word in the first sense, for *life*, we put into the mouth of Jesus Christ a proposition verified by experience; that is, that men consider life as the greatest of all temporal blessings, and that they part with every thing to preserve it. This rule hath its exceptions: but the exceptions confirm the rule. Sometimes, indeed, a disgust with the world, a principle of religion, a point of honour, will incline men to sacrifice their lives: but these particular cases cannot prevent our saying in the general, "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

If we take the word for that part of man, which we call the *soul* by excellence, Jesus Christ intended to point out to us, not what men usually do; (for alas! it happens too often, that men sacrifice their souls to the meanest and most sordid interest,) but what they always ought to do. He meant to teach us, that the soul is the noblest part of us, and that nothing is too great to be given for its ransom.

Both these interpretations are probable, and each hath its partisans, and its proofs. But, although we would not condemn the first, we prefer the last, not only because it is the most noble meaning, and opens the most extensive field of meditation: but because it seems to us the most conformable to our Saviour's design in speaking the words.

Judge by what precedes our text. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Jesus Christ spoke thus to fortify his disciples against the temptations, to which their profession of the gospel was about to expose them.

If by the word *soul* we understand the *life*, we shall be obliged to go a great way about to give any reasonable sense to the words. On the contrary, if we take the word for the *spirit*, the meaning of the whole is clear and easy. Now it seems to me beyond a doubt, that Jesus Christ, by the manner in which he hath connected the text with the preceding verse, used the term *soul* in the latter sense.

Judge of our comment also by what follows. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For," adds, our Lord immediately after, "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." What connection have these words with our text, if we take the word *soul* for *life*? What connection is there between this proposition, Man hath nothing more valuable than life, and this, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels?" Whereas if we adopt our sense of the term, the connection instantly appears.

We will then retain this explication. By the *soul* we understand here the *spirit* of man; and, this word being thus explained, the meaning of Jesus Christ in the whole passage is understood in part, and one remark will be sufficient to explain it wholly. We must attend to the true meaning of the phrase, *lose his soul*, which immediately precedes the text, and which we shall often use to explain the text itself. To *lose the soul* does not signify to be deprived of this part of one's self; for, however great this punishment might be, it is the chief object of a wicked man's wishes: but to *lose the soul* is to lose those real

blessings, and to sustain those real evils, which a soul is capable of enjoying and of suffering. When, therefore, Jesus Christ says in the words that precede the text, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and in the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" he exhibits one truth under different faces, so that our reflections will naturally be turned sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other of these propositions. He points out, I say, two truths, which being united signify, that as the conquest of the universe would not be an object of value sufficient to engage us to sacrifice our souls, so if we had lost them, no price could be too great to be paid for the recovery of them. Let us here fix our attention; and let us examine what constitutes the dignity of the soul. Let us inquire,

I. The excellence of its nature;

II. The infinity of its duration;

III. The price of its redemption; Three articles which will divide this discourse.

I. Nothing can be given in exchange for our souls. We prove this proposition by the excellence of its *nature*. What is the soul? There have been great absurdities, in the answers given to this question. In former ages of darkness, when most of the studies that were pursued for the cultivation of the mind served to render it unfruitful; when people thought they had arrived at the highest degree of knowledge, if they had filled their memories with pompous terms and superb nonsense; in those times, I say, it was thought, the question might be fully and

satisfactorily answered, and clear and complete ideas given of the nature of the soul. But in later times, when philosophy being cleansed from the impurities that infected the schools, equivocal terms were rejected, and only clear and distinct ideas admitted, and thus literary investigations reduced to real and solid use; in these days, I say, philosophers, and philosophers of great name, have been afraid to answer this question, and have affirmed that the narrow limits which confine our researches, disable us from acquiring any other than obscure notions of the human soul, and that all which we can propose to elucidate the nature of it, serve rather to discover what it is not, than what it is. But if the decisions of the former savour of presumption, does not the timid reservedness of the latter seem a blameable modesty? If we be incapable of giving such sufficient answers to the question as would fully satisfy a genius earnest in inquiring, and eager for demonstration, may we not be able to give clear and high ideas of our souls, and so to verify these sententious words of the Saviour of the world, *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Indeed we do clearly and distinctly know three properties of the soul; and every one of us knows by his own experience, that it is capable of knowing, willing, and feeling. The first of these properties is intelligence, the second volition, the third sensation, or, more properly, the acutest sensibility. I am coming now to the design of my text, and here I hope to prove, at least to the intelligent part of my hearers, by the nature of the soul, that the loss

of it is the greatest of all losses, and that nothing is too valuable to be given for its recovery.

*Intelligence* is the first property of the soul, and the first idea that we ought to form of it, to know its nature. The perfection of this property consists in having clear and distinct ideas, extensive and certain knowledge. *To lose the soul*, in this respect, is to sink into total ignorance. This loss is irreparable, and he who should have lost his soul in this sense, could give nothing too great for its recovery. Knowledge and happiness are inseparable in intelligent beings, and, it is clear, a soul deprived of intelligence cannot enjoy perfect felicity. Few men, I know, can be persuaded to admit this truth, and there are, I must allow, great restrictions to be made on this article, while we are in the present state.

1. In our present state, "every degree of knowledge, that the mind acquires, costs the body much." A man, who would make a progress in science, must retire, meditate, and in some sense, involve himself in himself. Now, meditation exhausts the animal spirits; close attention tires the brain; the collecting of the soul into itself often injures the health, and sometimes puts a period to life.

2. In our present state, "our knowledge is confined within narrow bounds." Questions the most worthy of our curiosity, and the most proper to animate and inflame us, are unanswerable; for the objects lie beyond our reach. From all our efforts to eclaireise such questions we sometimes derive only mortifying reflections on the weakness of our capacities, and the narrow limits of our knowledge.

3. In this present state, *sciences are incapable of demonstration*, and consist, in regard to us, of little more than probabilities and appearances. A man, whose genius is a little exact, is obliged in multitudes of cases to doubt, and to suspend his judgment; and his pleasure of investigating a point is almost always interrupted by the too well-grounded fear of taking a shadow for a substance, a phantom for a reality.

4. In this world, *most of those sciences*, in the study of which we spend the best part of life, *are improperly called sciences*; they have indeed some distant relation to our wants in this present state: but they have no reference at all to our real dignity. What relation to the real dignity of man hath the knowledge of languages, the arranging of various arbitrary and barbarous terms in the mind to enable one to express one thing in a hundred different words? What relation to the real dignity of man hath the study of antiquity? Is it worth while to hold a thousand conferences, and to toil through a thousand volumes for the sake of discovering the reveries of our ancestors?

5. In this world we often see *real and useful knowledge deprived of its lustre*, through the supercilious neglect of mankind, and science falsely so called crowned with their applause. One man, whose mind is a kind of scientific chaos, full of vain speculations and confused ideas, shall be preferred before another, whose speculations have always been directed to form his judgment, to purify his ideas, and to bow his heart to truth and virtue. This partiality is

often seen. Now, although it argues a narrowness of soul to make happiness depend on the opinions of others, yet it is natural for intelligent beings, placed among other intelligent beings, to wish for that approbation which is due to real merit. Were the present life of any long duration, were not the proximity of all-pursuing death a powerful consolation against all our inconveniences, these unjust estimations would be very mortifying.

Such being the imperfections, the defects, and the obstacles of our knowledge, we ought not to be surprized, if in general we do not comprehend the great influence, that the perfection of our faculty of thinking and knowing hath over our happiness. And yet even in this life, and with all these disadvantages, our knowledge, however difficult to acquire, however confined, uncertain and partial, how little soever it may be applauded, contributes to our felicity. Even in this life there is an extreme difference between a learned and an illiterate man: between him, whose knowledge of languages enables him (so to speak,) to converse with people of all nations, and of all ages; and him who can only converse with his own contemporary countrymen: between him, whose knowledge of history enables him to distinguish the successful from the hazardous, and to profit by the vices and the virtues of his predecessors; and him, who falls every day into mistakes inseparable from the want of experience: between him whose understanding weighs all in the balance of truth; and him, who every moment needs a guide to conduct him. Even in this life, a man collected

within himself, sequestered from the rest of mankind, separated from an intercourse with all the living, deprived of all that constitutes the bliss of society, entombed, if the expression may be allowed, in a solitary closet, or in a dusty library, such a man enjoys an innocent pleasure, more satisfactory and refined than that, which places of diversion the most frequented, and sights the most superb, can afford.

But if, even in this life, learning and knowledge have so much influence over our happiness, what shall we enjoy, when our souls shall be freed from their slavery to the senses? What, when we are permitted to indulge to the utmost the pleasing desire of knowing? What felicity, when God shall unfold to our contemplation that boundless extent of truth and knowledge which his intelligence revolves! What happiness will accompany our certain knowledge of the nature, the perfections, and the purposes of God! What pleasure will attend our discovery of the profound wisdom, the perfect equity, and the exact fitness of those events, which often surprized and offended us! Above all, what sublime delight must we enjoy, when we find our own interest connected with every truth, and all serve to demonstrate the reality, the duration, the immutability of our happiness! How think you, my brethren, is not such a property beyond all valuation? Can the world indemnify us for the final loss of it? If we have had the unhappiness to lose it, ought any thing to be accounted too great to be given for its recovery? And is not this expression of Jesus Christ, in this view of it, full

of meaning and truth, *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

What we have affirmed of the first property of our souls, that it is infinitely capable of contributing to our happiness, although we can never fully comprehend it on earth, we affirm of the other two properties, volition, and sensibility.

The perfection of the will consists in a perfect harmony between the holiness and the plenitude of our desires. Now, to what degree soever we carry our holiness on earth, it is always mixed with imperfection. And, as our holiness is imperfect, our enjoyments must be so too. Moreover, as providence itself seems often to gratify an irregular will, we cannot well comprehend the misery of losing the soul in this respect. But judge of this loss, (and let one reflection suffice on this article :) judge of this loss by this consideration. In that economy, into which our souls must enter, the being, the most essentially holy, I mean God, is the most perfectly happy ; and the most obstinately wicked being is the most completely miserable.

In like manner, we cannot well comprehend to what degree the property of our souls, that renders us susceptible of sensations, can be carried. How miserable soever the state of a man exposed to heavy afflictions on earth may be, a thousand causes lessen the weight of them. Sometimes reason assists the sufferer, and sometimes religion, sometimes a friend condole, and sometimes a remedy relieves; and this thought at all times remains, death will shortly terminate all my ills. The same reflections

may be made on sensations of pleasure, which are always mixed, suspended, and interrupted.

Nevertheless, the experience we have of our sensibility on earth is sufficient to give us some just notions of the greatness of that loss, which a soul may sustain in this respect; nor is there any need to arouse our imaginations by images of an economy of which we have no idea.

The most depraved of mankind, they, who are slaves to their senses, may comprehend the great misery of a state, in which the senses will be tormented, even better than a believer can, who usually studies to diminish the authority of sense, and to free his soul from its lawless sway.

Judge ye then of the loss of the soul, ye sensual minds, by this single consideration, if you have been insensible to all the rest. When we endeavour to convince you of the greatness of this loss by urging the privation of that knowledge, which the elect enjoy now, and which they hope to enjoy hereafter, you were not affected with this misery, because you considered the pleasure of knowing as a chimera. When we attempted to convince you of the misery of losing the soul by urging the privation of virtue, and the stinging remorse that follows sin, you were not touched with this misery, because virtue you consider as a restraint, and remorse as a folly. But as you know no other felicity, nor any other misery, than what your senses transmit to your souls, judge of the loss of the soul by conceiving a state, in which all the senses shall be punished. The loss of the soul is the loss of those harmonious sounds, which

have so often charmed your ears; it is the loss of those exquisite flavours, that your palate has so often relished; it is the loss of all those objects of desire, which have excited your passions. The loss of the soul is an ocean of pain, the bare idea of which hath so often made you tremble, when religion called you to sail on it. The loss of the soul will be in regard to you the imprisonment of yon confessor, enclosed in a dark and filthy dungeon, a prey to infection and putrefaction, deprived of the air and the light. The loss of the soul will reduce you to the condition of that galley slave, groaning under the lashes of a barbarous officer, who is loaded with a galling chain, who sinks under the labour of that oar which he works, or rather, with which he himself is trailing along. The loss of the soul will place you in the condition of yon martyr on the wheel, whose living limbs are disjointed and racked, whose lingering life is loth to cease, who lives to glut the rage of his tormentors, and who expires only through an overflowing access of pain, his executioners with the barbarous industry being frugal of his blood and his strength, in order to make him suffer as much as he can possibly suffer before he dies.

But, as I said before, all these images convey but very imperfect ideas of the loss of our souls. Were we to extend our speculations as far as the subject would allow, it would be easy to prove that the soul is capable of enjoying sensible pleasures infinitely more refined, and of suffering pains infinitely more excruciating than all those which are felt in this world. In this world, sensations of pleasure and pain are

proportioned to the end, that the Creator proposed in rendering us capable of them. This end is almost always the preservation and well-being of the body during the short period of mortal life. To answer this end, it is not necessary, that pleasure and pain should be so exquisite as our senses may be capable of enduring. If our senses give us notice of the approach of things hurtful and beneficial to us, it is sufficient.

But in heaven sensible pleasures will be infinitely more exquisite. There the love of God will have its free course. There the promises of religion will all be fulfilled. There the labours of the righteous will be rewarded. There we shall discover how far the power of God will be displayed in favour of an elect soul. In like manner the extent of divine power in punishing the wicked will appear in their future state of misery. That justice must be glorified, which nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ could appease in favour of the elect. There the sinner must fall a victim to the wrath of God. There he must experience how “fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. x. 31. Hath a man, who is threatened with these miseries, anything too valuable to give for this redemption from them? Is not the nature of our souls, which is known by these three properties, understanding, volition, and sensibility, expressive of its dignity? Does not this demonstrate this proposition of our Saviour, “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

II. The *immortality* of a soul constitutes its dignity, and its endless duration is a source of demon-

strations in favour of the proposition in the text. This dignity is incontestible. The principle of the immortality of the soul, from which we reason, is undeniable. Two suppositions may seem, at first sight, to weaken the evidence of the immortality of the soul. First, The close union of the soul to the body seems unfavourable to the doctrine of its immortality, and to predict its dissolution with the body. But this supposition, methinks, vanisheth, when we consider what a disproportion there is between the properties of the soul, and those of the body. This disproportion proves, that they are two distinct substances. The separation of two distinct substances makes indeed some change in the manner of their existing: but it can make none really in their existence.

But whatever advantages we may derive from this reasoning, I freely acknowledge, that this, of all philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul, the least of any affects me. The great question on this article, is not what we think of our souls, when we consider them in themselves, independently on God, whose omnipotence surrounds and governs them. Could an infidel demonstrate against us, that the human soul is material, and that therefore it must perish with the body: Could we, on the contrary, demonstrate, against him, that the soul is immaterial, and that therefore it is not subject to laws of matter and must survive the destruction of the body; neither side, in my opinion, would gain any thing considerable. The principal question that, which alone ought to determine our notions on this

article, would remain unexamined : that is, whether God will employ his power over our souls to perpetuate, or to destroy them. For could an infidel prove, that God would employ his power to annihilate our souls, in vain should we have demonstrated, that they were naturally immortal; for we should be obliged to own, that they are mortal in respect of the will of that God, whose omnipotence rules them. In like manner, if we could prove to an unbeliever, that God would employ his power to preserve them in eternal existence, in vain would he have demonstrated, that considered in themselves they are mortal; and he would be obliged in his turn to allow that human souls are immortal in virtue of the supreme power of God. Now, my brethren, the supposition, that God will employ his power to annihilate our souls, will entirely disappear, if you attend to the well-known and familiar argument of the connexion between the immortality of the soul, and that desire of immortality which the Creator hath imparted to it. What can we reply to a man who reasons in this manner?

I find myself in a world, where all things declare the perfections of the Creator. The more I consider all the parts, the more I admire the fitness of each to answer the end of him who created them all. Among numberless productions perfectly correspondent to their destination I find only one being, whose condition doth not seem to agree with that marvellous order, which I have observed in all the rest. This being is my own soul. And what is this soul of mine? Is it fire? Is it air? Is it ethereal

matter? Under whatever notions I consider it, I am at a loss to define it. However, notwithstanding this obscurity, I do perceive enough of its nature to convince me of a great disproportion between the present state of my soul, and that end for which its Creator seems to have formed it. This soul, I know, I feel (and, of all arguments, there are none more convincing than those, that are taken from sentiment,) this soul is a being eagerly bent on the enjoyment of a happiness infinite in its duration. Should any one offer me a state of perfect happiness, that would continue ten thousand years, an assemblage of reputation and riches, grandeur and magnificence, perhaps, dazzled with its glare, I might cede my pretensions in consideration of this enjoyment. But, after all, I fully perceive, that this felicity, how long, and how perfect soever it might be, would be inadequate to my wishes. Ten thousand years are too few to gratify my desires; my desires leap the bounds of all fixed periods of duration, and roll along a boundless eternity. What is not eternal is unequal to my wishes, eternity only can satisfy them.

Such is my soul. But where is it lodged? Its place is the ground of my astonishment. This soul, this subject of so many desires, inhabits a world of vanity and nothingness. Whether I climb the highest eminences, or pry into the deepest indigence, I can discover no object capable of filling my capacious desires. I ascend the thrones of sovereigns, I descend into the beggar's dust; I walk the palaces of princes, I lodge in the peasant's cabin; I retire

into the closet to be wise, I avoid recollection, choose ignorance, and increase the crowd of idiots ; I live in solitude, I rush into the social multitude : but every where I find a mortifying void. In all these places there is nothing satisfactory. In each I am more unhappy, through the desire of seeing new objects, than satisfied with the enjoyment of what I possess. At most, I experience nothing in all these pleasures, which my concupiscence multiplies, but a mean of rendering my condition tolerable, not a mean of making it perfectly happy.

How can I reconcile these things ? How can I make the Creator agree with himself ? There is one way of doing this, a singular but a certain way ; a way that solves all difficulties, and covers infidelity with confusion ; a way that teacheth me what I am, whence I came, and for what my Creator hath designed me. Although God hath placed me in this world, yet he doth not design to limit my prospects to it ; though he hath mixed me with mere animals, yet he doth not intend to confound me with them ; though he hath lodged my soul in a frail perishable body, yet he doth not mean to involve it in the dissolution of this frame. Without supposing immortality, that which constitutes the dignity of man, makes his misery. These desires of immortal duration, this faculty of thinking and reflecting, of expanding and perpetuating the mind ; this superiority of soul, that seems to elevate mankind above beasts, actually place the beast above the man, and fill him with these bitter reflections full of mortification and pain. Ye crawling reptiles ! ye beasts

of the field! destitute of intelligence and reason! if my soul be not immortal, I envy your condition. Content with your own organs, pleased with ranging the fields, and browsing the herbage, your desires need no restraint; for all your wishes are fully satisfied. While I, abounding on the one hand with insatiable desires, and on the other confined amidst vain and unsatisfactory objects, I am on this account unhappy!

We repeat these philosophical reasonings, my brethren, only for the sake of convincing you, that we are in possession of immense advantages over sceptics in this dispute. On the principles of an unbeliever, you see, were his notion of revelation well-grounded; were the sacred book, in which so many characters of truth shine, an human production; were a reasonable man obliged to admit no other propositions than those, which have been allowed at the tribunal of right reason; yea, we say more, were our souls material, we ought, on the suppositions before mentioned, to admit the immortality of the soul as most conformable to our best notions of the will of our Creator.

But, when we are thus convinced of our immortality, need we any new arguments to demonstrate the proposition included in the text, *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Most subjects may be made to appear with greater or less dignity, according to the greater or smaller degree of importance, in which the preacher places it. Pompous expressions, bold figures, lively images, ornaments of eloquence, may often supply either a want of

dignity in the subject discussed, or a want of proper dispositions in auditors, who attend the discussion of it. But in my opinion, every attempt to give importance to a motive taken from eternity, is more likely to enfeeble the doctrine than to invigorate it. Motives of this kind are self-sufficient. Descriptions the most simple, and the most natural, that can be made, are always, I think, the most pathetic, and the most terrifying; nor can I find an expression, on this article, more eloquent and more emphatical than this of St. Paul, *The things which are seen, are temporal: but the things, which are not seen, are eternal*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Were the possession of the whole world the price you ask in *exchange for your souls*: were the whole world free from those characters of vanity, which open such a boundless field to our reflections; would there not always be this disproportion between a perishing world, and a soul aspiring at felicity, that the world would end, and the soul would never die?

Death puts an end to the most specious titles, to the most dazzling grandeur, and to the most delicious life; and the thought of this period of human glory reminds me of the memorable action of a prince, who, although he was a heathen, was wiser than many Christians; I mean the great Saladin. After he had subdued Egypt, passed the Euphrates, and conquered cities without number; after he had retaken Jerusalem, and performed exploits more than human, in those wars which superstition had stirred up for the recovery of the holy land; he finished his life in the performance of an action,

that ought to be transmitted to the most distant posterity. A moment before he uttered his last sigh, he called the herald, who had carried his banner before him in all his battles, he commanded him to fasten to the top of a lance, the shroud, in which the dying prince was soon to be buried. Go, said he, carry this lance, unfurl this banner, and, while you lift up this standard, proclaim, "This, this is all, that remains to Saladin the Great, the Conqueror and the King of the empire, of all his glory."\* Christians! I perform to-day the office of this herald. I fasten to the top of a spear sensual and intellectual pleasures, worldly riches, and human honours. All these I reduce to the piece of crape, in which you will shortly be buried. This standard of death I lift up in your sight, and I cry; This, this is all that will remain to you of the possessions, for which you exchanged your souls. Are such possessions too great to be given in exchange for such a soul? Can the idea of their perishing nature prevail over the idea of the immortality of the soul? And do you not feel the truth of the text, *What shall a man, a rational man, a man who is capable of comparing eternity with time, What shall such a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Finally, We make a reflection of another kind to convince you of the dignity of your souls, and to persuade you, that nothing can be too valuable to be given in exchange for them. This is taken from the astonishing works that God hath performed in

\* Maimb. Hist. des Croisades, lib. vi. p. 572. de l'Edit in 4.

their favour. We will confine ourselves to one article, to the inestimable price that God hath given for the redemption of them. Hear these words of the holy scriptures, *Ye are bought with a price. Ye were redeemed from your vain conversation, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold: but with the precious blood of Christ*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18.

Some of you perhaps, may say, as the limits of a sermon will not allow us to speak of more than one of the wondrous works of God in favour of immortal souls, we ought at least to choose that which is most likely to affect an audience, and not to dwell on a subject, which having been so often repeated, will make only slight impressions on their minds. Perhaps, were we to inform you, that in order to save your souls, God had subverted formerly all the laws of nature, or to use the language of a prophet, that he had *shaken the heaven and the earth, the sea and the dry land*, Hag. ii. 6. Perhaps, were we to tell you, that in order to save your souls, God deferred the end of the world, and put off the last vicissitudes, that are to put a period to the duration of this universe, that according to St. Peter, *the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward*, 2 Pet. iii. 9. Perhaps, were we to affirm, that in order to save our souls, he will come one day on the clouds of heaven, sitting on a throne, surrounded with glorious angels, accompanied with myriads of shouting voices, to deliver them with the greater pomp, and to save them with more splendour: Perhaps by relating all these mighty works done for our souls, we might excite in you ideas of their dignity more lively than that which

we have chosen, and to which we intend to confine our attention. But surmount if you can, your customary indolence, and form an adequate idea of the dignity of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in order the better to judge of the dignity of those souls, of which his blood was the price.

Go, learn it in heaven. Behold the Deity. Approach his throne. Observe the *thousand thousands ministering unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him*, Dan. vii. 19. See his eyes sparkling with fire, and his majesty and glory filling his sanctuary, and by the dignity of the victim sacrificed, judge of the value of the sacrifice.

Go, study it in all the economies, that preceded this sacrifice. Observe the types, which prefigured it; the shadows that traced it out; the ceremonies which depicted it; and by the pomp of the preparations, judge of the dignity of the substance prepared.

Go, learn it on mount Calvary. Behold the wrath that fell on the head of Jesus Christ. Behold his blood pouring out upon the earth, and him, your Saviour, drinking the bitter cup of divine displeasure. See his hands and his feet nailed to the cross, and his whole body one great wound; observe the unbridled populace foaming with rage around the cross, and glutting their savage souls with his barbarous sufferings; and by the horror of the causes that contributed to his death, judge of the death itself.

Go to the infidel, and let him teach you the dignity of the sacrifice of Christ. Remember on this account he attacks Christianity, and he hath some

shew of reason for doing so ; for if this religion may be attacked on any side, with the least hope of success, it is on this. The truths of the Christian religion are incontestible : but if there be any one article of the gospel, which requires an entire docility of mind, an absolute submission of heart, a perfect deference to God, who speaks, it is the article of the sacrifice of the cross. Weigh the objections, and, by the greatness of the difficulties judge of the dignity of the mystery.

Recollect, Christian! God thought fit to require the blood of his Son for the redemption of our souls. These souls must have been very precious in the sight of God, since he redeemed them at a price so immense. The misery into which they were liable to be plunged, must have been extremely terrible, since God thought proper to make such great efforts to save them from it. The felicity of which they are capable, and to which the Lord intends to elevate them, must be infinitely valuable, since it cost him so much to bring them to it. For what in the universe is of equal value with the blood of the Son of God? Disappear all ye other miracles, wrought in favour of our souls! ye astonishing prodigies, that confirmed the gospel! thou delay of the consummation of all things! ye great and terrible signs of the second coming of the Son of God! Vanish before the miracle of the cross, for the cross shines you all into darkness and shade. This glorious light makes your glimmering vanish, and after my imagination is filled with the tremendous dignity of this sacrifice, I can see nothing great beside.

But, if God, if this just appraiser of things, hath estimated our souls at such a rate, shall we set a low price on them? If he hath given so much for them; do we imagine we can give too much for them? If, for their redemption, he hath sacrificed the most valuable person in heaven, do we imagine there is any thing upon earth too great to give up for them?

No, No, my brethren! after what we have heard, we ought to believe, that there is no shadow of exaggeration in this exclamation of Jesus Christ, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul!* I do not certainly know what our Saviour meant to say, whether he intended to speak of a man, who should *gain the whole world*, and instantly *lose his soul*; or of one who should not *lose his soul* till long after he had obtained *the whole world*, and had reigned over it through the course of a long life. But I do know that the words are true, even in the most extensive sense. Suppose a man, who should not only enjoy universal empire for one whole age; but for a period equal to the duration of the world itself; the proposition that is implied in the words of Jesus Christ is applicable to him. Such a soul as we have described, a soul so excellent in its nature, so extensive in its duration, so precious through its redemption; a soul capable of acquiring so much knowledge, of conceiving so many desires, of experiencing so much remorse, of feeling so many pleasures and pains; a soul that must subsist beyond all time, and perpetuate itself to eternity; a soul redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; a soul so valuable ought to be preferred before all

things, and nothing is too precious to be given for its exchange. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

However, my brethren, we are willing to acknowledge, were we in the case supposed by Jesus Christ; were it in our power to gain the whole world by losing our own souls; or, being actually universal monarchs, were we obliged to sacrifice this vast empire to recover our souls already lost; were we, being smitten with the splendid offer, or being alarmed at the immense price of our purchase, to prefer the whole world before our own souls, we might then, if not exculpate our conduct, yet at least give a little colour to it; if we could not gain our cause, we might however plead it with some shew of reason. A reason of state, a political motive, as that of governing a whole universe, would naturally have some influence over us. The titles of Sovereign, Monarch, Emperor, would naturally charm little souls like ours. Sumptuous palaces, superb equipages, a crowd of devoted courtiers, bowing and cringing before us, and all that exterior grandeur which environs the princes of the earth, would naturally fascinate such feeble eyes, and infatuate such puerile imaginations as ours. I repeat it again, could we obtain the government of the universe by the sale of our souls, if we could not justify our conduct we might extenuate the guilt of it; and although we could not gain our cause, we might at least plead it with some shew of reason.

But is this our case? Is it in our power to *gain the whole world*? Is this the price at which we sell our souls? O shame of human nature! O meanness of soul, more proper to confound us than any thing else, with which we can be reproached! This intelligent soul, this immortal soul, this soul which has been thought worthy of redemption by the blood of the Saviour of the world, this soul we often part with for nothing, and for less than nothing! In our condition, placed as most of us are, in a state of mediocrity; when by dissipation and indolence, by injustice and iniquity, by malice and obstinacy, we shall have procured from vice all the rewards that we can expect, what shall we have gained? Cities? Provinces? Kingdoms? a long and prosperous reign? God hath not left these to our choice. His love would not suffer him to expose us to a temptation so violent. Accordingly we put up our souls at a lower price. See this old man, rather dead than alive, bowing under his age, stooping down, and stepping into the grave, at what price does he exchange his soul? at the price of a few days of a dying life; a few pleasures smothered under a pile of years, if I may speak so, or buried under the ice of old age. That officer in the army, who thinks he alone understands real grandeur, at what rate does he value his soul! He loses it for the sake of the false glory of swearing expertly, and of uniting blasphemy and politeness. What does yon mechanic get for his soul? One acre of land, a cottage bigger and less inconvenient than that of his neighbour.

Unmanly wretches ! If we be bent on renouncing our dignity, let us, however, keep up some appearance of greatness. Sordid souls ! if we will resign our noblest pretensions, let us do it, however, in favour of some other pretensions that are real. “ Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this ! and be ye horribly afraid ; for my people have committed two evils : they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” Jer. ii. 12. Do you perceive, my brethren, the force of this complaint, which God anciently uttered over his people the Jews, and which he now utters over us ? Neither genius nor erudition can explain it. Could they, you might perhaps understand it. A certain elevation, a certain dignity of soul, singular sentiments of heart, are the only expositors of these affecting words. Therefore, I fear, they are unintelligible to most of you. “ Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this ! and be ye horribly afraid ; for my people have committed two evils : they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” God loves us, he desires we should love him. He has done every thing to conciliate our esteem. For us he sent his Son into the world. For us he disarmed death. For us he opened an easy path to a glorious eternity. And all this, to render himself master of our hearts, and to engage us to return him love for love, life for life. We resist all these attractives, we prefer other objects before him. No matter, he would pass this ingratitude, if the objects, which we

prefer before him, were capable of making us happy; if, at least, they bore any apparent proportion to those which he offereth to our hopes. But what arouseth his displeasure, what provokes his just indignation, what excites reproaches that would cleave our hearts asunder, were they capable of feeling, is the vanity of the objects, which we prefer before him. The soul, in exchange for which the whole world would not be a sufficient consideration, this soul we often give for the most mean, the most vile, the most contemptible part of the world. “O ye heavens! be astonished at this, at this be ye horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

But do we know, ungrateful that we are, do we know, that if the hardness of our hearts prevent our feeling in particular, the energy of this reproof, and in general the evidence of the reflections, that make the substance of this discourse; do we know that a day will come, when we shall feel them in all their force? Do we know, that there is now a place, where the truth of our text appears in a clear, but a terrible light? Yes, my brethren, this reflection is perhaps essential to our discourse, this, perhaps, approaches nearest to the meaning of Jesus Christ; perhaps Jesus Christ, in these words, “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” meant to inform us of the disposition of a man in despair, who, immersed in all the miseries, that can excruciate a soul, surprised at having parted with such a soul at

a price so small, stricken with the enormous crime of losing it, wishes, but too late, to give every thing to recover it.

Ideas like these we never propose to you without reluctance. Motives of another kind should suffice for Christians. Learn the worth of your souls. Enter into the plan of your Creator, who created them capable of eternal felicity; and into that of your Redeemer, who died to enable you to arrive at it. Against all the deceitful promises, which the world, the flesh, and the devil use to seduce you, oppose these words of Jesus Christ, “What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” May God inspire you with these noble sentiments! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



## SERMON IV.

*Real Liberty.*



JOHN viii. 36.

*If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

MY brethren, there were many mysteries in the Jewish feast of the Jubilee. It was a joyful festival to the whole nation: but none celebrated it with higher transports than slaves. No condition could be more deplorable than that of these unhappy people, and, notwithstanding the lenitives, that the Jewish jurisprudence mixed with their sufferings, their condition was always considered as the most miserable, to which men can be reduced. The jubilee day was a day of universal enfranchisement. All slaves, even they, who had refused to embrace the privileges of the sabbatical year, their wives, and their children were set at liberty.

Should I affirm, my brethren, that no slave among them had more interest in this festival than you have, perhaps you would exclaim against my proposition. Probably, you would say to me, as some of them said to Jesus Christ, *We were never in bondage to any man.* But undeceive yourselves. The jubilee was instituted not only to moderate the authority of

masters, and to comfort slaves: but God had greater designs in appointing it. Hear the mystical design of it. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 1, 2.* Who speaks in this prophecy of Isaiah? Had not Jesus Christ answered this question in the synagogue at Nazareth, ye sheep of the *chief shepherd and bishop of your souls!* should ye not have known his voice?

Come, my brethren, come, behold to-day with what precise accuracy, or rather, with what pomp and majesty he hath fulfilled this prophecy, and broken your chains in pieces. Do not disdain to follow the reflections we are going to make on these words, which proceeded from his sacred mouth, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." O may this language inspire us with the noble ambition of terminating our slavery! May slaves of prejudice, of passion, and of death, quit their shameful bonds, enjoy *the acceptable year of the Lord*, and partake of *the glorious liberty of the children of God!* Amen. Rom. viii. 21.

*If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* In order to explain these words, it will be necessary to relate the occasion of them, and to explain, at least in part, the discourse, from which they are taken.

*Jesus Christ spoke these words in the treasury, ver. 20.* that is to say, in a court of the temple, which was called *the woman's porch*, because women were

allowed to enter it. This court was also called *the treasury*, because it contained thirteen tubes like trumpets for the reception of public contributions. Jesus Christ is supposed to allude to the form of these, when he says, *When thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee*, Matt. vi. 2. Each of these tubes had a different inscription on it, according to the different contributions, for the reception of which they were placed, either charitable contributions for the relief of the poor, or votive for the discharge of a vow, or such as were prescribed by some particular law. In this court sat Jesus Christ observing what each gave to the poor. In this place he absolved a woman caught in adultery, and confounded her accusers, whose great zeal against her was excited more by the barbarous desire of shedding the blood of the criminal, than by the horror of the crime. To punish those vices in others, of which the punisher is guilty, is a disposition equally opposite to benevolence and equity. It was a received opinion among the Jews, that the waters of jealousy had no effect on an adulterous wife, whose husband had been guilty of the same crime. Jesus Christ perhaps referred to this opinion, when he said to the Pharisees, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*, ver. 7.

I suppose this woman not to have been one of those who live in open adultery, who know not what it is to blush, who not only commit this crime, but even glory in it. I suppose her a penitent, and that sentiments of true repentance acquired her the protection of him, who *came not to call the righteous, but*

*sinner to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. Yet the indulgence of our Saviour seemed to be a subversion of that law of Moses, which condemned them to death who were guilty of adultery. (Levit. xx. 10. Deut. xxii. 22.) Nothing could be less likely to conciliate the minds of the Jews to Jesus Christ than the infraction of a religion, the origin of which was divine, and which no person could alter without incurring the most rigorous penalties; “ye shall not add unto the word which I command you,” said the supreme legislator, “*Neither shall ye diminish aught from it*, Deut. iv. 2. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*, Isa. viii. 20. Accordingly we find, one of the most specious accusations, that was ever invented against Jesus Christ, and one of the most pardonable scruples, which some devout souls had about following him, arose from this consideration, that on some occasions he had relaxed those laws, which no mortal had a right to alter, *this man is not of God*, said some, *because he keepeth not the sabbath-day*, John ix. 16.

This conduct certainly required an apology. Jesus Christ must needs justify a right which he claimed, but which no man before him had attempted to claim. This is the true clue of the discourse, from which our text is taken. Jesus Christ there proves, that he is the supreme law-giver, that although the eternal laws of right and wrong, which proceeded from him, are invariable, yet the positive institutes that depended on the will of the legislator, and derived all their authority from his revealed command,

might be continued, or abrogated at his pleasure. He there demonstrates of the whole levitical ritual what he elsewhere said of one part of it, *the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath*, Matt. xii. 8.

He begins his discourse in this manner, I am *the light of the world*. In the style of the Jews, and, to say more, in the style of the inspired writers, *light*, by excellence, “Son of God, Word of God, God’s *Shekinah*,” as the Jews speak, that is to say, *the habitation of God* among men, *Deity* itself, are synonymous terms. Witness, among many other proofs, the majestic frontispiece of the gospel of St. John, the magnificent titles which he gives the adorable personage, of whom he writes. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” John i. 1, &c. Remark these words, *dwelt among us*, the phrase alludes to the *Shekinah*, which many Jewish Rabbies say, was the Messiah.

What Jesus Christ affirms being granted, that is, that he was THE LIGHT by excellence, no apology is needful; for he had a right to absolve a woman whom Moses, by the order of God, had condemned to die. The authority of inferior judges is limited to the execution of those laws, which the supreme legislator appoints. Sovereign princes have reserved the prerogative of shewing mercy. The Pharisees foresaw the consequences of admitting the title that he claimed, and therefore they disputed his

right to claim it ; *Thou bearest record of thyself*, say they, *thy record is not true*, chap. viii. 13.

This objection would naturally arise in the mind. It seems to be founded on this incontestible principle, No envoy from heaven, the Messiah himself not excepted, has a right to require submission to his decisions, unless he give proofs of his mission. All implicit faith in men, who have not received divine credentials, or who refuse to produce them, is not faith, but puerile credulity, gross superstition.

But the Pharisees, who made this objection, did not make it for the sake of obtaining evidence, and Jesus Christ reproves them for this duplicity. If you continue in doubt of my mission, said he to them, it is your own fault, your infidelity can only proceed from your criminal passions, *ye judge after the flesh*, ver. 15. If you would suspend these passions, you would soon perceive, that the holiness of my life gives me a right to bear witness in my own cause ; for *which of you convinceth me of sin ?* ver. 46. You would soon see, that my testimony is confirmed by that of my Father, who, when he sent me into the world, armed me with his omnipotence, which displays itself in my miracles, *He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone*, ver. 29. But the hatred you bear to me prevents your seeing the attributes of my Father in me, *ye neither know me, nor my Father*, ver. 19. However, I will not yet justify my mission by inflicting those punishments on you which your obstinacy deserves, *I judge no man* ; nor will I perform the office of a judge, till I have finished that of a Redeemer.

When you have filled up the measure of your sins, by obtaining a decree for my crucifixion, you shall be forced to acknowledge under that iron rod, which the Father hath given me to destroy my enemies, the divinity of a mission, that your wilful obstinacy now disputes, *when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he*, ver. 23.

Arguments so powerful, threatenings so terrible, made deep impressions on the minds of some of our Lord's hearers, and to them, who felt the force of what was said, Jesus Christ added, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*, ver. 31.

I suppose, among the people, to whom these words were addressed, were some of the disciples of Judas of Gaulon a city of Galilee, who for this reason was called Judas the Gaulonite. These seditious people supposed, that in order to be a good Jew, it was necessary to be a bad subject of the emperor. They were always ripe for rebellion against the Romans, and they reproached those of their countrymen, who quietly submitted to these tyrants of mankind, with degenerating from the noble spirit of their ancestors. This opinion, I think, places their answer to Jesus Christ in the clearest light. *We are*, say they, *Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* ver. 33. Had they spoken of the whole nation, how durst they have affirmed, after the well known subjection of their country to so many dif-

ferent conquerors, *we were never in bondage to any man ?*

Jesus turned their attention from the literal to the spiritual meaning of his promise. He told them, there were bonds more shameful than those which Pharoah and Nebuchadnezzar had formerly put on their fathers, more humiliating than those to which the Romans obliged the nation at the time of his speaking to submit ; bonds, with which sin loaded its slaves, chains, which they themselves actually wore, while they imagined they were free ; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*, ver. 34. Jesus Christ intended to inform them, that, although God had patiently treated them to that time as his children in his church, he would shortly expel them as slaves, and deal with them not as the legitimate children of Abraham ; but as the sons of Hagar, of whom it had been said as St. Paul remarks, *Cast out the bond-woman and her son ; for the son of the bond-woman, shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman*, Gal. iv. 30.

But while he undeceived them concerning that imaginary liberty, which they flattered themselves they enjoyed, he announced real liberty to them, and after he had given them most mortifying ideas of their condition, he declared, that he alone could free them from it ; this is the sense of my text, “ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Some interpreters think, there is in these words an allusion to a custom among the Greeks, with whom a presumptive heir had a right of adopting brethren, and of freeing slaves.

I will neither undertake to prove the fact, nor the consequence inferred from it: but it is clear, that the title of *Son* by excellence, which Jesus Christ claims in this place, entirely corresponds with the end that I have assigned to this whole discourse, that is, to justify that pre-eminence over Moses, which he had assumed; and to prove that he might without usurpation, or, as St. Paul expresses it, without *thinking it robbery*, Phil. ii. 6. act as supreme legislator, and pardon a woman whom the law of Moses condemned to die. A passage in the epistle to the Hebrews will confirm this sense of our text. Jesus Christ “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. He that built all things, is God. Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant. But Christ as a son over his own house,” Heb. iii. 3, 4. &c. This is the *Son* by excellence, the *Son*, of whom it was said, when he came into the world, *Let all the angels of God worship him*, chap. i. 6. This *Son*, this *God*, who *built the house*; this *Son*, this *God*, who is the maker and Lord of all things; this is he to whom alone it appertains to free us from the dominion of sin, and to put us into the possession of true and real liberty. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Here let us finish this analysis, and let me hope, that its utility, will sufficiently apologize for its length, and let us employ our remaining time in attending to reflections of another kind, by which we

shall more fully enter into the views of our blessed Saviour.

I. I will endeavour to give you a distinct idea of liberty.

II. I shall prove that liberty is incompatible with sin, and that a sinner is a real slave.

III. I shall lead you to the great Redeemer of sinners, and I shall prove the proposition, which I have chosen for my text, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

I. What is *Liberty*? Liberty, I think, may be considered in five different points of view. The first regards the understanding. The second respects the will. The third relates to the conscience. The fourth belongs to the conduct, and the fifth to the condition.

1. The liberty of man in regard to his *understanding* consists in a power of suspending his judgment, till he has considered any object in contemplation on every side, so that he may yield only to evidence. A suspension of judgment is a power adapted to the limited sphere, in which finite creatures are confined. God, who is an infinite Spirit, hath not this kind of liberty; it is incompatible with the eminence of his perfections; the ideas which he had of creatures before their existence, were the models according to which they were created. He perceives at once all objects in every point of view. He sees the whole with evidence, and, as evidence carries consent along with it, he is gloriously incapable of doubt, and of suspending his judgment.

It is not so with finite minds, particularly with minds so limited as ours. We hardly know any thing, we are hardly capable of knowing any thing. Our very desire of increasing our knowledge, if we be not very cautious, will lead us into frequent and fatal mistakes, by hurrying us to determine a point before we have well examined it; we shall take probability for demonstration, a spark for a blaze, an appearance for a reality. A liberty of suspending our judgment is the only mean of preventing this misfortune; it does not secure us from ignorance: but it keeps us from error. While I enjoy the liberty of affirming only that, of which I have full evidence, I enjoy the liberty of not deceiving myself.

Further, the desire of knowing is one of the most natural desires of man, and one of the most essential to his happiness. By man I mean him who remains human, for there are some men who have renounced humanity. There are men, who, like brutes, inclosed in a narrow circle of sensations, never aspire to improve their faculty of intelligence any further, than as its improvement is necessary to the sensual enjoyment of a few gross gratifications, in which all their felicity is contained. But man hath a natural avidity of extending the sphere of his knowledge. I think God commanded our first parents to restrain this desire, because it was one of their most eager wishes. Accordingly, the most dangerous allurements that Satan used to withdraw them from their obedience to God, was this of science; "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," *Gen.*

iii. 5. The state of innocence was a happy state, however, it was a state of trial, to the perfection of which something was wanting. In every dispensation, God so ordered it, that man should arrive at the chief good by way of sacrifice, and by the sacrifice of that, which mankind holds most dear, and this was the reason of the primitive prohibition. "The Lord God said, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," chap. ii. 16, 17. I presume, had man properly borne this trial, he would have been rewarded with that privilege, the usurpation of which was so fatal to him.

A mind, naturally eager to obtain knowledge, is not really free, if it have not the liberty of touching the tree of knowledge, and of deriving from the source of truth an ability to judge clearly, particularly of those objects, with the knowledge of which its happiness is connected. Without this the garden of Eden could not satisfy me; without this all the delicious pleasures of that blessed abode would leave a void in the plan of my felicity, and I should always suspect that God entertained but a small degree of love for me, because he reposed no confidence in me. This idea deserves the greater regard, because it is an idea, that Jesus Christ taught his apostles, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have

heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15.

2. I call that *volition* free, which is in *perfect harmony with an enlightened understanding*, in opposition to that which is under the influence of irregular passions condemned by the understanding. The slavery of a will that hath not the liberty of following what the understanding offers to it as advantageous, is so incompatible with our notion of volition, that some doubt, and others positively deny the possibility of such a bondage. Not to decide this question at present, it is certain, one of the most common artifices of a will under the influence of inordinate affections is to seduce the understanding, and to engage it in a kind of composition with it. Any truth considered in a certain point of view may seem a falsehood, as any falsehood in a certain point of light may appear a truth. The most advantageous condition, considered in some relations, will appear disadvantageous, as the most inconvenient will seem advantageous. A will under the influence of disorderly desires solicits the judgment to present the evil objects of its wishes in a light in which it may appear good. That will then I call free, which is in perfect harmony with an enlightened understanding, following it with docility, free from the irregular desire of blinding its guide, I mean of seducing the judgment.

Perhaps I ought to have observed, before I entered on a discussion of the judgment and the will, that these are not two different subjects: but the same subject, considered unto two different faces.

We are obliged, in order to form complete ideas of the human soul, to consider its divers operations. When it thinks, when it conceives, when it draws conclusions, we say it judges, it understands, it is the *understanding*: when it fears, when it loves, when it desires, we call it volition, *will*. We apply to this subject what St. Paul says of another, "there are diversities of operations: but it is the same spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 6.

3. As we give different names to the same spirit on account of its different operations, so also we give it different names on account of different objects of the same operations. And as we call the soul by different names, when it thinks, and when it desires, so also we give it different names, when it performs operations made up of judging and desiring. What we call *conscience* verifies this remark. Conscience is, if I may venture to speak so, an operation of the soul consisting of volition and intelligence. Conscience is intelligence, judgment, considering an object as just or unjust; and conscience is volition inclining us to make the object in contemplation an object of our love or hatred, of our desires or fears.

If such be the nature of conscience, what we have affirmed of the liberty of the will in general, and of the liberty of the understanding in general, ought to determine what we are to understand by the freedom of the conscience. Conscience is free in regard to the understanding, when it hath means of obtaining clear ideas of the justice, or injustice of a case before it, and when it hath the power of suspending

its decisions on a case until it hath well examined it. Conscience is free in regard to the will, when it hath the power of following what appears just, and of avoiding every thing that appears contrary to the laws of equity. This article, we hope is sufficiently explained.

4. But it sometimes happens, that our will, and our conscience incline us to objects, which our understanding presents to them as advantageous: but from the possession of which some superior power prevents us. A man is not really free, unless he have power over his senses sufficient to make them obey the dictates of a cool volition directed by a clear perception. This is liberty in regard to our *conduct*.

There is something truly astonishing in that composition, which we call man. In him we see an union of two substances, between which there is no natural relation, at least we know none, I mean the union of a spiritual soul with a material body. I perceive, indeed, a natural connexion between the divers faculties of the soul, between the faculty of thinking, and that of loving. I perceive indeed, a natural connexion between the divers properties of matter, between extension and divisibility, and so of the rest. I clearly perceive, that because an intelligence thinks, it must love, and because matter is extended, it must be divisible, and so on.

But what relation can there subsist between a little particle of matter and an immaterial spirit, to render it of necessity, that every thought of this spirit must instantly excite some emotion in this parti-

cle of matter? And how is it, that every motion of this particle of matter must excite some idea, or some sensation, in this spirit? yet this strange union of body and spirit constitutes man. God, say some, having brought into existence a creature so excellent as an immortal soul, least it should be dazzled with his own excellence, united it to dead matter incapable of ideas and designs.

I dare not pretend to penetrate into the designs of an infinite God. Much less would I have the audacity to say to my Creator, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Rom. ix. 20. But I can never think myself free while that which is least excellent in me, governs that part of me which is most excellent. Ah! what freedom do I enjoy, while the desires of my will, guided by the light of my understanding, cannot give law to my body; while my senses become legislators to my understanding and my will?

5. It only remains, in order to form a clear notion of a man truly free, that we consider him in regard to his *condition*, that is to say, whether he be rich or poor, enveloped in obscurity or exposed to the public eye, depressed with sickness or regaled with health; and in like manner of the other conditions of life.

I do not think that any man is really free in regard to his condition, unless he have the liberty of choosing that kind of life, which seems the most advantageous to him. Solomon was free in this respect, when he had that pleasing dream, in which God presented all the blessings of this world to his view, and gave him his choice of all. A man, on

the contrary is a slave, when circumstances confine him in a condition contrary to his felicity, when, while he wishes to live, he is forced to die, when, while he lingers to die, death flees from him, and he is obliged to live.

My task now is almost finished, at least, as well as I can finish a plan so extensive in such narrow limits as are prescribed to me. My first point explains the two others that follow. Having given clear ideas of liberty it naturally follows, that liberty is incompatible with sin, and that a sinner is a real slave. A slave in regard to his understanding ; a slave in regard to his will ; a slave in regard to his conscience ; a slave in regard to his conduct ; a slave in regard to his condition. A small knowledge of Christianity is sufficient now to prove, that Jesus Christ alone can terminate these various slaveries, he only can justify the proposition in the text, *If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Is a sinner free in his understanding, hath he the liberty of suspending his judgment, he whose senses always confine him to sensible objects, and always divert him from the study of truth ? Is he free whose understanding is continually solicited by an irregular will, and by a depraved conscience, to disguise the truth from them, to give them false notions of just and unjust, to present every object to them in that point of view, which is most proper to favour their irregularity and corruption ? Can he be called free, who “ receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they appear foolishness to him ? ” 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Is a sinner free in his will, and in his conscience he who, his understanding being seduced by them, yields to whatever they require, judgeth in favour of the most frivolous decisions, and approves the most extravagant projects; can such a man be called free?

Is a sinner free in his conduct, he who finds in an inflexibility of his organs, in an impetuosity of his humors, in an irregular flow of his spirits, obstacles sufficient to prevent him from following the decisions of his understanding, the resolutions of his will, the dictates of his conscience? Is he free in his conduct, who like the fabulous or perhaps the real Medea, groans under the arbitrary dominion of his senses, sees and approves of the best things, and follows the worst? Is the original of this portrait, drawn by the hand of an Apostle, free, *I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members?* Is he free in his conduct, whose eyes sparkle, whose face turns pale, whose mouth foams at the sight of a man, who perhaps may have offended him: but for whose offence the God of love demands a pardon? Is he free in his conduct, who, whenever he sees an object fatal to his innocence, not only loses a power of resistance, and a liberty of flying: but even ceases to think, has hardly courage to call in the aid of his own feeble virtue, forgets his resolutions, his prayers, and his vows, and plunges into disorders, at

which his reason blushes, even while he immerses himself in them?

O how necessary to us is the religion of Jesus Christ! how fit to rectify the irregularities of nature! how needful the succours of his holy Spirit to lead us into the genius of religion! *If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

*If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed* in regard to your understanding, because Jesus Christ being the Angel of the divine presence, the wisdom that conceives the counsels of God, and the word that directs them, he perfectly knows them, and when he pleases, he reveals them to others. By that universal empire, which he hath acquired by his profound submission to the will of his Father, he will calm those senses, which divert your understanding from the study of truth and precipitate your judgment into error; he will direct thy will not to seduce it; and will forbid thine erroneous conscience to impose its illusions upon it.

*If the Son make you free, you will be free indeed* in your will and conscience, because your understanding directed by a light divine, will regulate the maxims that guide them, not by suggestions of concupiscence, but by invariable laws of right and wrong; it will present to them (to use the language of scripture) not *bitter* for *sweet*, and *sweet* for *bitter*, not *good* for *evil*, and *evil* for *good*, Isa. v. 20, but each object in its own true point of light.

*If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed* in your conduct, because by the irresistible aid of his Spirit he will give you dominion over those senses

to which you have been a slave ; because his almighty Spirit will calm your humours, attemper your blood, moderate the impetuosity of your spirits, restore to your soul its primitive superiority, subject your constitution entirely to your reason, render reason by a supernatural power lord of the whole man, make you love to live by its dictates, and teach you to say, while you yield to its force, *O Lord ! thou hast allured me, and I was allured : thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed*, Jer. xx. 7.

*If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed* in all your actions, and in all your faculties because he will put on you an easy yoke, that will terminate your slavery, constitute your real freedom, render you a citizen of *Jerusalem above*, which is a *free city*, and *mother of all* the sons of freedom, Gal. iv. 26.

I said lastly, a sinner is a slave in regard to his condition. We observed, that a man was not free in regard to his condition, unless he could choose that kind of life, which seemed to him most suitable to his felicity. And is not a sinner, think ye, a real slave in this sense ? Indeed, if there remain in him any notion of true felicity, he ought to give himself very little concern, whether he spend his days in riches or poverty, in splendour or obscurity ; for the duration of each is extremely short. These things, unless we be entirely blind, are very diminutive objects, even in a plan of sinful earthly pleasure. But to be obliged to die, when there are numberless reasons to fear death, and to be forced to live, when there are numberless reasons for loath-

ing life, this is a state of the most frightful slavery, and this is absolutely the slavish state of a sinner.

The sinner is forced to die, in spite of numberless reasons to fear death ; he is in this world as in a prison, the decorations of which may perhaps beguile him into an inattention to his real condition : but it is a prison however, which he must quit, as soon as the moment arrives, which the supreme legislator has appointed for his execution. And how can he free himself from this dreadful necessity ? Fast bound by the gout, the gravel, the benumbing aches and the numerous infirmities of old age, the bare names of which compose immense volumes, and all which drag him to death, how can he free himself from that law, which binds him over to suffer death ? One art only can be invented to prevent his falling into despair in a state of imprisonment, the issue of which is so formidable, that is, to stun himself with noise, business, and pleasure, like those madmen, to whom human justice allows a few hours to prepare themselves to appear before divine justice, and who employ those few hours in drowning their reason in wine, lest they should tremble at the sight of the scaffold on which their sentence is to be executed. This is the state of a sinner : but as soon as the noise that stuns his ears shall cease ; as soon as business, which fills the whole capacity of his soul, shall be suspended ; as soon as the charms of those pleasures that enchant him, shall have spent their force ; as soon as, having recovered reason and reflection, this thought presents itself to his mind, .... I must die .... I must instantly die ... he groans

under the weight of his chains, his countenance alters, his eyes are fixed with pain, the shaking of a leaf makes him tremble, he takes it for his executioner, thundering at the door of his cell, to call him out to appear before his judge. Is it freedom to live under these cruel apprehensions? Is he free, who *through fear of death is all his life time subject to bondage?* Heb. ii. 15.

The condition of a sinner is still more deplorable, inasmuch as not being at liberty to exist, as he chooses to exist, he hath not the liberty of being annihilated. For, (and this is the severest part of his slavery, and the height of his misery,) as he is forced to die, when he hath so many reasons to fear death, so he is obliged to live, when he hath numberless reasons to wish to die; he is not master of his own existence. The superior power that constrains him to exist, excites in him sentiments, which in scripture style are called, *seeking death, and not finding it*, Rev. ix. 6. *cursing the day of birth*, saying to the mountains, *Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us*, Jer. xx. 14. expressing despair in these miserable requests, *Mountains! fall on us; rocks! hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Rev. vi. 16, 17.

But what can rocks and mountains do against the command of him of whom it is said, *the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place, before the Lord of the whole earth*, Micah i. 4. and iv. 13.

Time-server! thou must live to expiate the guilt of abjuring the truth, of denying the name of the Lord, of bowing thy knee before the altar of an idol, of neglecting the exterior of religious worship, of despising the sacraments, of sacrificing thy whole family to superstition and error.

Thou grandee of this world! whether thy grandeur be real or imaginary, thou must live to expiate the guilt of that pride and arrogance, which has so often rendered thee deaf, or inaccessible to the solicitations of those thine inferiors, for whose protection providence and society have elevated thee to a rank, which thou art unworthy to hold.

Magistrate! thou must live to expiate the guilt of thine unrighteous decrees, of thy perversion of justice for the sake of bribes, of thy ruining widows and orphans to gratify that sordid avarice, which animates all thine actions.

Pastor! thou must live to expiate the guilt of accommodating thy ministry to the passions of the great, of *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, Rom. i. 18. of *shunning to declare the whole counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. of opening the kingdom of heaven to those whom thou oughtest to have *pulled out of the fire*, and to have *saved with fear*, Jude 23. in whose ears thou shouldst have thundered these terrible words, *Depart, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*.

And thou prostitute, the disgrace and distress of thy family! thou must live to expiate the guilt of defiling thy bed, the criminality of thine infidelity, and of thy baneful example.

Barbarous parent! thou must live. Thou, who hast sacrificed those children to the world, who were dedicated to God in baptism, thou must live to expiate the guilt of a cruel treachery, which the sharpest language is too gentle to reprove, and the most dismal colours too faint to describe.

Disobedient child! thou must live. Wicked heart! in which a good education seemed to have precluded the contagion of the world, thou must live to expiate the guilt of despising the example of thy pious father, and of forgetting the tender persuasive instructions of thy holy mother.

Who will terminate this slavery? "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. vii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 57. Jesus Christ re-establisheth the order that sin hath subverted. Is death the object of our fears? Jesus Christ is the object of our desires. Is annihilation after death the object of our desires? Jesus Christ is the object of our fears, or rather, he makes that eternal existence, which we shall enjoy after this life, a ground of the most transporting pleasure.

We do not exceed the truth in speaking thus. How inconsiderable soever the number of true Christians may be, the number would be less considerable still, if an entire freedom from the fear of death were essential to the Christian character. Death is always an evil, an exceeding great evil, even to saints of the first class. Let not this proposition offend you. Each privilege of redemption is perfectly acquired for us:

however, in the present economy we are not put into the full enjoyment of any one. One privilege that redemption has procured for us, is a knowledge of the mysteries of God: but who of us knows them thoroughly? Another privilege of redemption is holiness: but who of us is perfectly holy? One of the privileges of redemption is a most close and tender union to God: but where is the Christian, who does not find this communion interrupted? All the other privileges of redemption are like these. It is the same with death. Death is vanquished, and we are delivered from its dominion: but the perfect enjoyment of this freedom will not be in this present economy. Hence St. Paul says, *The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death*, 1 Cor. xv. 26. Death will not be entirely destroyed till after the resurrection, because, although before this great event the souls of those who die in the Lord, enjoy an ineffable happiness, yet they are in a state of separation from the bodies to which the Creator at first united them; while this separation continues, death is not entirely conquered, this separation is one of the trophies of death. The time of triumphing over the enemy is not yet come: but it will arrive in due time, and when soul and body are again re-united, we shall exclaim with joy, *O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?* ver. 55.

Let not the infidel insult the believer here, let him not treat us as visionaries, because we pretend to vanquish death, while we are vanquished by it. Our prerogatives are real, they are infinitely substantial, and there is an immense difference between those

fears, which an idea of death excites in a man, whom sin hath enslaved, and those which it excites in the soul of a Christian. The one, the man, I mean, whom sin enslaves, fears death, because he considers it as the end of all his felicity, and the beginning of those punishments to which the justice of God condemns him. The other, I mean the Christian, fears death, because it is an evil: but he desires it, because it is the last of those evils, which he is under a necessity of suffering before he arrives at his chief good. He fears death; he fears the remedies, sometimes less supportable than the maladies to which they are opposed; he dreads last adieus; violent struggles; dying agonies; and all the other forerunners of death. Sometimes he recoils at the first approaches of an enemy so formidable, and sometimes he is tempted to say, *O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, Matt. xxvi. 39.

But presently, penetrating through all the terrible circumstances of dying, and discovering what follows, he remembers, that death is the fixed point, where all the promises of the gospel meet, the center of all the hopes of the children of God. Filled with faith in these promises, the soul desires what it just now feared, and flies to meet the enemy that approaches it.

But Jesus Christ renders annihilation, which was the object of our sinful desires, the object of our fears, or rather, as I said before, he makes that eternal existence, which we must enjoy after death, the ground of our transport and triumph. The happier the condition of the glorified saints should be, the

more miserable would it be to apprehend an end of it. Shortness of duration is one grand character of vanity inseparable from the blessings of this life. They will make thee happy, thou! whose portion is in this life, they will make thee happy, I grant: but thy happiness will be only for a short time, and this is the character that imbitters them. Forget thyself, idolatrous mother! forget thyself, with that infant in thine arms, who is thine idol; but death will shortly tear thee from the child, or the child from thee. Slave to voluptuousness! intoxicate thy soul with pleasure: but presently death will destroy the senses that transmit it to thy heart.

But to feel ourselves supremely happy, and to know that we shall be for ever so; to enjoy the company of angels, and to know that we shall for ever enjoy it; to see the Redeemer of mankind, and to know that we shall behold him for ever; to enjoy the presence of God, and to be sure that we shall ever enjoy it; to incorporate our existence with that of the being, who necessarily exists, and our life with that of the immortal God; to anticipate thus, in every indivisible moment of eternity, the felicity that shall be enjoyed in every instant of an eternal duration, (if we may consider eternal duration as consisting of a succession of moments,) this is supreme felicity, this is one of the greatest privileges of that liberty which Jesus Christ bestows on us.

The different ideas, that we have given, are, I think, more than sufficient to induce us to regard all those with execration, who would tear us from communion with this Jesus, who procures us advantages

so inestimable. I do not speak only of heretics, and heresiarchs; I do not speak of persecutors and executioners; I speak of the world, I speak of the maxims of the world, I speak of indolence, effeminacy, seducing pleasures, tempters far more formidable than all executioners, persecutors, heretics, and heresiarchs. *Who* of them all, "shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Lord! to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," Rom. viii. 35, 39. John vi. 68. To God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

# SERMON V.

*The Divinity of Jesus Christ.*



REVELATIONS v. 11, 12, 13, 14.

*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures,\* and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands;*

*Saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

*And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

*And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

**ALTHOUGH** Atheism and Superstition are weapons, which have been too successfully employed by

\* *Beasts*, in our translation.—*Animaux*—*animals*—*living creatures*, more agreeably to the apostle's Ζωα, as well as to Ezek. i. 4, 5, &c. to which St. John seems to allude. Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουον . . . ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ὡς ὁμοιωμὰς τεσσαρῶν ΖΩΩΝ. Septuag.

the devil against the truth, yet are they not his most formidable arms, nor the most difficult to be resisted. It was an excess of stupidity which formed superstition ; and it was an excess of corruption, that forged atheism : but a very little knowledge, and a very little integrity sufficiently preserve us from both. Superstition is so diametrically opposite to reason, that one is shocked at seeing earth, water, fire, air, minerals, passions, maladies, death, men, beasts, devils themselves placed by idolaters on the throne of the sovereign, and elevated to supreme honours. Far from feeling a propensity to imitate a conduct so monstrous, we should hardly believe it, were it not attested by the unanimous testimonies of historians and travellers : did we not still see in the monuments of antiquity, such altars, such deities, such worshippers : and did not the Christian world, in an age of light and knowledge, madly prove too faithful a guarantee of what animated the heathen world, in ages of darkness and ignorance. The system of atheism is so loose, and its consequences so dreadful and odious, that only such as are determined to lose themselves can be lost in this way. Whether a Creator exist is a question decided, wherever there is a creature. Without us, within us, in our souls, in our bodies, every where, we meet with proofs of a first cause. An infinite being follows us, and surrounds us ; “ O Lord, thou compasses my path, and my lying down, thou hast beset me behind and before. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? ” Psal. cxxxix. 1, 3, 7.

But there is another class of arguments against our mysteries, which at first present themselves to the mind under a very different aspect. There is a system of error, which, far from appearing to have ignorance for its principle like superstition, or corruption like atheism, seems to proceed from the bosom of truth and virtue, and if I may be allowed to say so, to have been extracted from the very substance of reason and religion. I speak of that system, which tends to degrade the Saviour of the world from his divinity, and to rank him with simple creatures. There is in appearance a distance so immense, between an infant born in a stable, and the *Father of Eternity*, Isa. ix. 6. between that Jesus, who conversed with men, and that God, who *upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. between him, who, being crucified, expired on a cross, and him, who, sitting on the sovereign throne, receives supreme honours; that it is not at all astonishing, if human reason judge these objects in appearance contradictory. This system seems also founded on virtue, even on the most noble and transcendent virtue, on zeal and fervency. It aims in appearance at supporting those excellencies, of which God is most jealous, his divinity, his unity, his essence. It aims at preventing idolatry. Accordingly, they who defend this system, profess to follow the most illustrious scripture-models. They are the Phineasses, and Eleazars, who draw their swords only to maintain the glory of Jehovah. They are the Pauls, whose *spirits are stirred* by seeing the idolatry of Athens, Acts xvii. 16. They are the Elijahs,

who are *moved with jealousy for the Lord of hosts*, 1 Kings xix. 10.

But, if the partisans of error are so zealous and fervent, should the ministers of the truth languish in lukewarmness and indolence? If the divinity of the Son of God be attacked with weapons so formidable, should not we oppose them with weapons more forcible, and more formidable still? We also are *stirred* in our turn, we also in our turn are *moved with jealousy* for the Lord of hosts, and we consecrate our ministry to-day to the glory of that God-man, whose ministers we are. In order to prove the doctrine of his divinity we will not refer you to the philosophers of the age, their knowledge is incapable of attaining the sublimity of this mystery; we will not even ask you to hear your own teachers, the truth passing through their lips loses sometimes its force: They are the *elders*, they are the *angels*, they are the *thousands*, the *ten thousand times ten thousands*, Dan. vii. 10. before the throne of God, who render to Jesus Christ supreme honours. We preach to you no other divinity than their divinity. We prescribe to you no other worship than their worship. No! no! celestial intelligences! “Ye angels that excel in strength; ye, who do the commandments of God; ye ministers that do his pleasure,” Psal. ciii. 20, 21. we do not come to-day to set up altar against altar, earth against heaven. The extreme distance, which your perfections put between you and us, and which renders the purity of your worship so far superior to our’s, does not change the nature of our homage. We come to mix our incense with that which you

incessantly burn before our Jesus, who is the object of your adoration and praise. Behold, Lord Jesus! behold to-day creatures prostrating themselves upon earth before thy throne, like those who are in heaven. Hear the harmonious concert, accept our united voices, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honour and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." May every one of us "fall down, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, Amen."

It is then in relation to the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity, and in relation to this doctrine only, that we are going to consider the words of our text. They might indeed occasion discussions of another kind. We might inquire first, who are the *twenty-four elders*? Perhaps the Old Testament ministers are meant, in allusion to the twenty-four classes of priests, into which David divided them. We might further ask, who are the four living creatures? Perhaps they are emblems of the four evangelists. We might propose questions on the occasion of this song, on the number, ministry and perfections of the intelligences mentioned in the text: but all our reflections on these articles would be uncertain, and uninteresting. As I said before, we will confine ourselves to one single subject, and on three propositions we will ground the doctrine of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and su-

premely adored by beings the most worthy of our imitation.

II. It implies a contradiction to suppose, that God communicates the honours of supreme adoration to a simple creature.

III. Our ideas on this article are perfectly conformable to the ideas of those ages, the orthodoxy of which is best established, and least suspected.

I. *Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored by beings the most worthy of our emulation*; this is our first proposition. We join the term *supreme* to the term *adoration*, in order to avoid an equivocation, of which this proposition is susceptible. The scripture does not distinguish, as some divines with so little reason do, many sorts of religious adorations. We do not find there the distinction of the worship of *Latria*, from the worship of *Dulia*: but religious adoration is distinguished from civil adoration. Thus we are told in the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, ver. 1. that Lot, seeing two angels, rose up to meet them, and *bowed himself with his face toward the ground*, it is in the Hebrew, he adored them. We have numberless examples of the same kind. To remove this equivocation, to shew that we mean supreme adoration, we have affirmed, that Jesus Christ is *supremely adorable, and supremely adored*. But wherein does this supreme adoration consist? The understanding of this article, and in general of this whole discourse, depends on a clear notion of supreme worship. We will make it as plain as we can. Supreme adoration supposes three dispositions in him who renders it, and it supposes accord-

ingly three excellences in him to whom it is rendered.

1. Supreme adoration supposes an *eminence of perfections* in him, to whom it is rendered. It supposes also an homage of mind relative to that eminence in him who renders it. Adoration is a disposition of our minds, by which we acknowledge, that God excels all other beings, how great, how noble, how sublime, soever they may be. We acknowledge, that he has no superior, no equal. We acknowledge him to be supremely wise, supremely powerful, supremely happy; in one word, we acknowledge, that he possesseth all conceivable perfections without bounds, in the most elevated manner, and in exclusion to every other being. In this sense it is said, *Our God is one Lord; he only is wise; he only hath immortality*, Deut. vi. 4. Jude 25. and 1 Tim. vi. 15.

2. Supreme adoration supposes, that he, to whom it is rendered, is supremely amiable, supremely communicative, supremely good. Goodness is a perfection. It is comprised in the idea which we have already given of the adorable Being: but we consider it separately; because, in the foregoing article, we considered the divinity without any relation to our happiness, whereas now we consider him in his relation to our felicity; for it is the goodness of God, which relates God to us: it is that, which in some sort reduces to our size, and moves towards us all those other attributes, the immensity of which absorbs us, the glory of which confounds us. Adoration supposes in him who renders it, an *adherence of heart*, by which he cleaves to God as to his supreme

good. It is an effusion of soul, which makes the worshipper consider him as the source of all the advantages which he now enjoys, and of all the advantages which he can ever enjoy. It makes him perceive, that he derives from him *life, motion and being*, Acts xvii. 28. It makes him say with a prophet, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Psal. lxxiii. 25, 28. and ii. 12.

3. In fine, adoration supposes in him, to whom it is rendered, an absolute empire over all beings that exist. It supposes in him, who renders it, that perfect devotedness, that unlimited submission, by which he acknowledges himself responsible to God for every instant of his duration; that there is no action so indifferent, no circumstance so inconsiderable, no breath (so to speak) so subtile, which ought not to be consecrated to him. It is that universal homage, by which a man owns that God only has a right to prescribe laws to him; that he only can regulate his course of life; and that all the honours, which are rendered to other beings, either to those who gave us birth, or to those who govern us in society, ought to be in subordination to the honour which is rendered to himself.

Such is our idea of supreme adoration, an idea not only proper to direct us in the doctrines of religion, as we shall see presently, but singularly adapted to our instruction in the practice of it: an idea, which may serve to convince us whether we have at-

tained the spirit of religion, or whether we are floating on the surface of it; whether we be idolaters, or true worshippers of the living God; for these three dispositions are so closely connected together, that their separation is impossible. It is for this, that obedience to the commands of God is so powerfully enforced in religion as an essential part of the homage which we owe him. It is for this, that the scriptures tell us, "covetousness is idolatry; to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, Col. iii. 5. 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.

These truths being thus established, we affirm, that Jesus Christ is supremely *adorable*, and we affirm also, that he is supremely *adored* by beings the most worthy of imitation. He is supremely adorable is a question of right. He is supremely adored is a question of fact.

1. The question of right is decided by the idea which the scripture gives us of Jesus Christ. The three excellences, which we must suppose in him, to whom adoration is paid, are attributed to him in scripture: and we are there required to render those three homages to him, which suppose adoration in him who renders them. The scripture attributes to him that *eminence of perfections*, which must needs claim the homage of our *minds*. What perfection can you conceive, which is not ascribed to Jesus Christ by the sacred writers? Is it eternity? the scripture tells you he *existed in the beginning*, John i. 1. *he was before Abraham*, chap. viii. 58. *he is, he was,*

he *is to come*, Rev. i. 8. Is it omnipresence? the scripture tells you, "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20. even when he ascended into heaven, he promised to be with his Apostles on earth, chap. xxviii. 20. Is it omnipotence? the scripture tells you he is *the Almighty*, Rev. i. 8. Is it omniscience? the scripture tells you, he *knoweth all things*, John xxi. 17. he "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," chap. ii. 25. *searcheth he the hearts and the reins*, Rev. ii. 23. Is it unchangeableness? the scripture tells you, he is *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. even when *the heavens perish, he shall endure*, when they shall *wax old*, when they shall *be changed*, when they shall be "changed like a vesture, he shall be the same, and his years shall have no end." Psal. cii. 26, 27. Hence it is that scripture attributes to him a perfect equality with his Father; for *he counted it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. Hence it tells us, *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. For this reason, it calls him God by excellence: *his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father*, Isa. ix. 6. *O God! thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*, Psal. xlv. 7. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, John i. 1. *We are in him that is true, even in Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. Hence he is called *the great God*, Tit. ii. 13. *God over all, Blessed for evermore*, Rom. ix. 5.

2. The scripture attributes to Jesus Christ that supreme *communication*, that supreme goodness, that intimate relation to our happiness, which is the second ground of adoration, and which is the foundation of that second homage, which is required of a worshipper, that is, the homage of the *heart*. Hence it is, that the holy scriptures direct us to consider him, as the author of all the blessings, which we possess. If the heavens rolling above our heads serve us for a pavilion, if the earth be firm beneath our feet to serve us for a support, it is he who is the author of both; for *thou, Lord, thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands*, Psal. cii. 26. If numberless creatures near and remote contribute to the happiness of man, it is he who has formed them; for “without him nothing was made that was made. By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist,” John i. 3. Col. i. 16, 17. If the Jews received miraculous deliverances in Egypt, if they gained immortal victories over the nations, which they defeated, it was he who procured them, for “the angel of his presence he saved them, in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old,” Isa. lxiii. 9. If darkness has been dissipated from the face of the church, it was he who made it vanish; for “he is the true light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John i.

9. If we are reconciled to God, it was he who made our peace; for "we have redemption through his blood, Eph. i. 7. it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things unto himself, and by the blood of his cross to unite things in heaven, and things on earth," Col. i. 19, 20. If we have received the Comforter, it was he who sent him; for, says he, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. If, after this life, our souls be carried into the bosom of God, it will be by his adorable hands; *Lord Jesus*, said one of his exemplary servants, *receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. If our bodies rise from their graves, if they be recalled to life, after they have been reduced to ashes, he alone will re-animate them; for "he is the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die," John xi. 25, 26.

3. Finally, the scripture attributes to Jesus Christ the third ground of adoration, that is, empire over all creatures. This lays a foundation for the third homage of the worshipper, I mean devotedness of life. "I saw in the night visions, said the prophet Daniel, and behold! one, like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom

that which shall not be destroyed," ch. vii. 13. &c. "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psal. ii. 7—9. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty! with thy glory and with thy majesty. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre," Ps. xlv. 3, 5, 6. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," Psal. cx. 1, 2. The question of right then is sufficiently proved.

The question of fact immediately follows. As Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, so he is supremely adored by intelligences, whom we ought to imitate. This adoration is recommended by scripture; the very scripture that forbids us to adore any but God, prescribes the adoration of Jesus Christ. "Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, John v. 22, 23. He hath received a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, Phil. ii. 9, 10. The four and twenty elders fell down, and worshipped him who liveth for ever and ever," All the par-

ticular acts of adoration, which are reputed acts of idolatry when rendered to any but God, are rendered to Jesus Christ by the express direction of the holy scriptures. Prayer, that prayer, of which it is said, *how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. x. 14. prayer is addressed to Jesus Christ; *they stoned Stephen praying and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit,* Acts vii. 59. (1) Confidence, that confidence, of which it is said, *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,* Jer. xvii. 5. that confidence is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ; *Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed,* Rom. x. 11. Baptism, that baptism, which is commanded to be administered in the name of the Father, that baptism is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ, it is administered in his name; *Go teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,* Matt. xxviii. 19. Swearing, that swearing, of which it is said, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name,* Deut. vi. 13. that swearing is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ; "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," Rom. ix. 1. Benediction, that blessing, of which it is said, *The Lord bless thee and keep thee,* Num. vi. 24. that benediction is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. i. 7. In fine, supreme praise, that praise of which it is said, *To the only wise God be honour and*

(1) *Ils lapidoient Etienne, furiant, et disant, Seigneur Jesus, &c.* perfectly agreeable to St. Luke's ΕΠΙΚΑΛΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ καὶ λεγόντας. The word *God* in our text is inserted properly.

*glory*, 1 Tim. i. 17. is an homage paid to Jesus Christ. "And I beheld, says our text, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, to the Lamb be honour and glory and blessing for ever." Weigh that expression which God uses to give the greater weight to his command of worshipping him only; *before my face*, (2) *Thou shalt have no other Gods before my face*, Exod. xx. 3. God would have this always inculcated among his ancient people that he was among them in a peculiar manner, that he was their head and general, that he marched in the front of their camp and conducted all their host: he meant by this declaration, to retain them in his service, and to make them comprehend how provoking it would be to him, should they render divine honours in his presence to any beside himself. But here the elders, the angels, the ten thousand, the ten thousand times ten thousands in heaven, in the *presence* of God, and before the throne of his glory, adore Jesus Christ, and pay no other honours to him, who *sitteth on the throne* than they pay to Jesus Christ himself.

Collect now, my brethren, all these reflections into one point of view, and see into what contradictions people fall, who, admitting the divinity of our scriptures, refuse to consider Jesus Christ as the supreme God. No, Jesus Christ is not the supreme God, (thus are our opponents obliged to speak,) Jesus

(2) Mr. S. quotes according to the Hebrew text of Exod. xx. 3.

Christ is not the supreme God: but he possesseth that eminence of perfections which constitutes the essence of the supreme God; like him he is eternal, like him he is omnipresent, like him he is almighty, he knows all things like him, he searcheth the heart and the reins like him, he possesses the fulness of the Godhead like him, and like him merits the most profound homage of the *mind*. No, Jesus Christ is not the supreme God: but he possesseth that goodness, that communication, which is the grand character of the supreme God; like God supreme, he made heaven and earth, he formed all creatures like him, he wrought miracles like a God, for the ancient church, he enlightens like him, he sanctifies like him, he saves us, he raises us from the dead, he glorifies us like him, and like him merits the most profound homage of the *heart*. No, Jesus Christ is not the supreme God: but we are commanded to worship him as if he were. St. Stephen prays to Jesus Christ as if he were God, the faithful confide in Jesus Christ as if he were God, they swear by Jesus Christ as if he were God, they bless in the name of Jesus Christ as if he were God. Who does not perceive these contradictions? Our first proposition is therefore sufficiently established. Jesus Christ is supremely adorable; Jesus Christ is supremely adored by intelligences the most worthy of imitation. But it implies a contradiction, to suppose that the honours of adoration should be communicated to a simple creature. This is our second proposition, and the second part of this discourse.

II. This supreme adoration, of which we have given an idea, cannot be communicated to any be-

ing, except an eminence of perfections, such as independence, eternity, omnipresence, be communicated to that being also. Supreme adoration cannot be communicated to any being, except supreme goodness be communicated, except a being become an immediate essential source of felicity. Supreme adoration cannot be communicated to any being, unless absolute, boundless, immense empire be communicated to him also. Now to communicate all these excellencies to a creature is to communicate the Godhead to him. If then it be absurd to suppose that deity can be communicated to a creature, so that what had a beginning, becomes what had no beginning; it is also absurd to suppose that a simple creature can possess these excellences, and consequently it implies a contradiction, to affirm that a created being can become supremely adorable. If therefore we have proved, that Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, we have thereby proved that he is the supreme God.

Accordingly, however important our second proposition may be, we should suppose it fully proved, if the scripture did not seem positively to affirm, that a right to supreme adoration is a right acquired by Jesus Christ, and is ascribed to him, not on account of what he was from eternity, but of what he has done in time. *The Father judgeth no man*, says Jesus Christ himself: *but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 22, 23. Here, it is plain, Jesus Christ does not require men to honour him, as they honour the Father, on account of

his own excellent nature : but on account of that power to *judge the world*, which was given him in time. "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," Phil. ii. 7, 9. Here again, Jesus Christ seems to have received this exaltation only in virtue of that profound humiliation, and of that profound obedience, which he rendered to his Father. And in our text it seems as if those acclamations, praises, and adorations, with which the happy spirits in heaven honour the Saviour of the world, are only offered to him on account of that sacrifice which he offered in time ; for after these celestial intelligences have said in the following words, "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood ;" they repeat this reason of adoration, and worship Jesus Christ under the idea of a *Lamb*, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom," and so on.

This difficulty comes from the equivocal meaning of the term *worship*, which may be understood to regard those infinite perfections, which eternally render him who possesseth them, worthy of supreme honours ; or that particular honour, which God merits by the performance of some memorable work performed in time. The first sort of adoration cannot be acquired. It is essential to him to whom it is paid ; this we have proved. But the second kind of adoration, that part of supreme honour, which is

rendered to God, in virtue of some new achievement, that honour he acquires; and far from proving, that he who acquires this new honour, and the homage consequential of it, does not possess essential Deity, it is on the contrary an invincible argument, that divinity is essential to him. God, for example, is essentially adorable, yet every new favour that he grants, is an acquisition of a new title of adoration.

Apply this remark to Jesus Christ. As God he is essentially adorable. But Jesus Christ, who is supremely adorable as God, may bestow some new favour on us. In this sense, he may acquire a new title of adoration, because he affords us a new motive to adore him. And what more powerful motive can be proposed, than that of his profound abasement for our salvation? Now the inspired writers in the passages which we have cited, speak of this latter kind of adoration. They do not say, Jesus Christ hath acquired that divine essence, which renders him who possesses it essentially adorable; for that would imply a contradiction: they only say, that by the benefits which he hath communicated to us in time, he hath acquired over us in time a new title of adoration. This is evident to a demonstration in regard to the Philippian text, which appears the most difficult. For St. Paul, so far from affirming that Jesus Christ had not those perfections which make any being adorable, till after his humiliation, establishes expressly the contrary. He expressly says, that Jesus Christ, before he was found *in fashion as a man, thought it no robbery to be equal with*

*God*; that, before he took upon him *the form of a servant, he was in the form of God*: but when Jesus Christ was *in the form of God*, when *he counted it no robbery to be equal with God*, he was supremely adorable. By consequence, Jesus Christ is not adorable only because he was *found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant*," Phil. ii. 6, &c.

This shall suffice on the second proposition. Let us attend a few moments to the discussion of the third. Let us attend to the celebrated question of the faith of the three first ages on the divinity of the Saviour of the world, and let us prove, that our ideas of the doctrine of Christ's divinity exactly answer those of the ages, the orthodoxy of which is least suspected. This is our third part.

III. One of the most celebrated members of the Romish communion, a man (3) who would have been one of the surest guides, who could have been chosen to conduct us through the labyrinths of the first ages, could we have assured ourselves, that the integrity of his heart had been equal to the clearness of his understanding, and to the strength of his memory; this man I say, has been the astonishment of every scholar, for declaring, that after he had made profound researches into antiquity, it appeared to him, the doctrine of Christ's divinity was not generally received in the church, till after the council of Nice. It is yet a problem, what could induce this able Jesuit to maintain a paradox apparently so opposite to his own knowledge. But, leaving this question to the decision of the Searcher of

(3) Petavius.

hearts, let us only observe, that this author has been a thousand times answered, both by our own divines, and by those of the church of Rome. A treatise on this subject, by an illustrious prelate of the church of England, is in the hands of all learned men. The (4) author proves there with the fullest evidence, that the fathers who lived before the council of Nice, did maintain, first, that Jesus Christ subsisted before his birth; secondly, that he was of the same essence with his Father; and thirdly, that he subsisted with him from all eternity. To repeat the passages extracted from the fathers by this author is not the work of a sermon. We are going to take a way better proportioned to the limits of these exercises to arrive at the same end.

1. We will briefly indicate the principal precautions necessary to the understanding of the sentiments of the fathers of the three first centuries on this article.

2. We will then more particularly inform you what their sentiments were. And as these articles are a summary of many volumes, and (if I may say so,) the essence of the labours of the greatest men, they deserve your serious attention.

1. In order to answer the objections, which may be extracted from the writings of the fathers against our thesis, the same general solution must be admitted, which we oppose to objections extracted from the scriptures. Passages of scripture are opposed to us, in which Jesus Christ speaks of himself as a *simple man*. To this objection we reply, these pas-

sages make nothing against us. According to us, Jesus Christ is God and man. We can no more conclude, that he is not God, because the Holy Spirit sometimes speaks of him as a simple man, than we can conclude, that he is not man, because he speaks of him sometimes as God.

2. It must be observed, that though the fathers taught that Jesus Christ was of the same essence with his Father, yet they believed, I know not what, *subordination* among the three persons who are the object of our worship. They considered the Father as the source of Deity, and pretended that the generation of the Son gave the Father a pre-eminence above the Son, and that the procession of the Holy Ghost gave the Son a pre-eminence over the Holy Ghost. “We are not Atheists, says Justin Martyr, “we religiously adore the Creator of this universe: “we put in the second place Jesus Christ, who is “the true Son of God, and we place in the third “degree the spirit of prophecy.” (5) As these first teachers of the church have sometimes been contradicted on this article, so they have advanced in the heat of the dispute some over-strained propositions, which we cannot adopt; as this of Origen, among many others. “There have been among the multitude of the faithful, some who, departing from “the sentiments received by others, have rashly affirmed that Jesus Christ was God over all creatures. In truth, we who believe the word of the “Son, who said, *The Father is greater than I*, John “xiv. 28. do not believe this proposition.” (6) The

(5) Apol. sec. ad Ant. Pium. pag. 60. edit. Paris.

(6) Origen against Celsus, book 8th.

advantages which the Arians gained by this, made many of the Fathers after the Nicene council renounce the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and explain those passages in which Christ acknowledged himself inferior to the Father of his humanity. This is the method of St. Athanasius, (7) of St. Cyril of Alexandria, (8) and of many others. It was particularly St. Augustine's way, who to prove that these expressions ought to be understood of the humanity only of Jesus Christ, makes this remark that they are never used of the Holy Ghost, that it is no where said of the Holy Ghost, that the Father is *greater than he* (9.)

3. The fathers, who lived before the council of Nice, admitted a *generation* of the Son of God, before the foundation of the world, and which is no other than that power, which proceeded from the Father, when he created the universe. We must take care not to be deceived by arguments taken from such passages. It cannot be concluded, that these fathers denied the existence of Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, because they said, he then came from the bosom of the Father. Here is an example of their way of expressing this generation. "I am going, says Tatian, to *explain clearly* the mysteries of our religion. In the beginning was God. Now we have learnt, that this beginning is the power of the word; for the Lord of all things was then all the substance of the universe,

(7) Athan. Dialog. cont. Maced.

(8) Cyril Alex. de vera fide. c. 26.

(9) August. Ep. 66. et lib. 2. de Trin. c. 6

“ because having then made no creature, he existed  
 “ alone. By his simple will his word proceeded  
 “ from him. Now the word did not advance into  
 “ the empty void: but was the first work of the  
 “ Spirit, and we know this is the principle of the  
 “ world.” (1) This father calls this *clearly explaining* the mysteries of our religion. Perhaps he might find some gainsayers. However, it appears by this passage, and by a great number more, that the ancient doctors of the church thought, Jesus Christ was then produced after a certain manner, which they explained according to their own ideas. We do not deny their holding this opinion. We only say, that what they advanced concerning this production in time does not prove, that they did not admit the eternal generation of Jesus Christ.

4. We do not pretend, that certain *expressions*, which the orthodox have affected since the council of Nice, were received in the *same sense* before that council. We generally see, when two parties warmly controvert a point, they affect certain expressions, and use them as their livery. As we can never find terms proper to express this union, or this ineffable distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so we must not be surprised, that the church hath varied on this article. “ Necessity,” says St. Austin, speaking of the terms used in disputing with the Arians, “ necessity has given birth to these terms, in order to avoid the snares of heretics in long discussions.” (2) We acknowledge then, some of

(1) Tatian. orat. con. Græc. See Theoph. Anti. lib. 2. ad Autol. Tertull. adv. Prax. p. 505. edit. Rigalt.

(2) August. lib. 7. de trin. cap. 4.

the fathers have advanced that the Father and the Son had two distinct *essences*, or two different *natures*. Thus, according to Photius, Pierius, priest and martyr, (3) and Dennis of Rome, in a letter against the Sabellians, (4) declaimed against those who divided the divinity into three *Hypostases*; or three *Persons*. And thus also the orthodox, assembled in council at Sardis, complained, that the heretical faction wanted to establish, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were three distinct *persons*: “for,” add these fathers, “our ancestors have taught us, “and it is the catholic and apostolic tradition, that “there is but one *person* in the Divinity.” (5) The question is not whether the fathers of the first ages used the very terms, which succeeding ages have used. We do not say they did. “We would not “excite odious disputes about words provided other “syllables include the same opinion:” (6) but the question is, whether they had the same ideas, whether, when they said there were three *essences* in the Deity and one *person*, they did not mean by *essence* what we mean by *person*, and by *person* what we mean by *essence*.

5. We must take care not to lay down for a principle, that the fathers *expressed themselves justly*, that their words were always the most proper to convey adequate ideas of their sentiments, that they always reasoned in a close uniform manner, that their theses in some pages of their writings never contradicts their

(3) Phot. Bib. Cod. i. 9.

(4) Athan. de Syn. Nic. decr.

(5) Theod. Hist. Eccl. lib. 2. cap. 8.

(6) Greg. Nazianz.

theses in other pages. The sense of a passage in Origen, or Tertullian, divides the learned. Some affirm these fathers meant one thing, others say they meant another thing. Each pretends to define precisely what they intended. Is there not sometimes a third part to take? May we not believe that Origen and Tertullian, in other respects great men, had not distinct ideas of what they meant to express, and did not always rightly understand themselves.

6. In fine, the last precaution which we must use to understand the sentiments of the first ecclesiastical writers, and which demands a very particular attention, is not to be deceived by *spurious writings*. We know what was the almost general weakness of Christians of those times. We know particularly, what were the secret dealings of the Arians. We know they often substituted power for reason, and craft for power, when authority was wanting. Among spurious writings, those which have the most certain marks of reprobation, are frequently those which have the most venerable titles. Such among others, is that which bears the fine name of *Apostolical constitutions*. It is very surprising, that a man who cannot be justly taxed with ignorance of the writings of the ancient fathers, should advance this unwarrantable proposition, This book is of apostolical authority. (7) The doctor threatens the church with a great volume to establish his opinion, and to forward in the end the dreadful design which he has formed and declared of reviving Arianism. Time will convince the learned, on what unheard-of reasons this man grounds his pretensions. Who can persuade

(7) Doctor Whiston.

himself, that a book, the spuriousness of which has been acknowledged, even by those who had the greatest interest in defending its authenticity, by Bellarmine, (8) Baronius, (9) Petavius, (1) Du Perron (2) and many others; a book, which none of the fathers, none of the councils, even those which have given us lists of the canonical books, have ever comprised in the canon; (3) a book of which there is no trace in the three first centuries, nor hardly any in those which immediately follow; a book full of passages of scripture mis-quoted; (4) a book which makes decisions contrary to the inspired writings; (5) as one decision touching the observation of the Sabbath, another concerning women with child, a third, which allows a master a forbidden intercourse with his slave; a book that bestows pompous titles on a bishop, giving him a pre-eminence above magistrates, princes, and kings; a book that prescribes idle ceremonies in baptism, and enjoins the observation of superstitious fasts and festivals; a book which gives an absurd idea of building temples; a book that establisheth prayer for the dead, and directs us to offer the sacrament of the Eucharist for them; a book which adopts notorious fables, as the pretended combat between Simon the sorcerer, and Simon Peter;

(8) Bellarm. de script. eccl. sect. 1.

(9) Baron. tom. 1. an. 32.

(1) Du Per. de Euch. l. 2. c. 1.

(2 3) Conc. Laod. 3d coun. of Carthage.

(4) Book 1. chap. 5. Amst. edit. Frob. pages 221, 214, 402, 293. &c.

(5) Book 2. chap. 36.

References to all the other articles are in Mr. S. but omitted for brevity sake here.

a book where we meet with glaring contradictions, as what it says of St. Stephen in one place, compared with what it says of him in another; a book where we meet with profane things, as the comparison of a bishop with God the Father, of Jesus Christ with a deacon, of the Holy Ghost with a deaconess; who, I say, can persuade himself, that such a book was compiled by apostles or apostolical men.

Such are the precautions necessary for understanding the sentiments of the fathers of the first ages on the doctrine in question. Let us pass on to some proofs of our conformity to their judgments on this article.

1. The fathers, who followed the doctrine of the Nicene Council, never pretended to teach new divinity. The Arians, on the contrary, boasted of being the first inventors of their own system. The following passage of St. Athanasius proves the first member of this proposition. “We demonstrate, “that our doctrine descended from teacher to teacher down to us. But what father can you cite to “prove your sentiments? You find them all opposite to your opinions, and the devil only, who is “the author of your system, can pretend to authenticate it.” (6) The following passage of Theodoret proves the second member of the proposition, “They boast of being the first inventors of their “doctrine, they glory in affirming, that what never “entered into the mind of man before has been revealed to them.” (7)

(6) Athan. lib. 1. de Syn. Nic. dec.

(7) Theod. Hist. Ec. lib. 1. cap. x. See Soc. Hist. Eccl. lib. 5. cap. 10.

2. The Jews accused the primitive Christians of idolatry for worshipping Jesus Christ as God, nor did the primitive Christians deny their worshipping Jesus as God; they only maintained, that to worship him as such was not idolatry. Here is a passage from Justin's Dialogue with Trypho. The Jews say to him, "Your affirmation, Christ is God, appears to me not only an incredible paradox, but downright foolishness." Justin's answer will prove the second member of the proposition: "I know," replies he, "this discourse appears incredible, particularly to people of your nation, who neither believe nor understand the things of the Spirit of God."

3. The heathens also reproached the Christians with adoring Jesus Christ: nor did the Christians tax them with calumny on this account. Weigh these words of Arnobius. A pagan makes this objection to him; "You adore a mere man." "If this were true," replies Arnobius, "would not the benefits, which he has so freely and bountifully diffused, acquire him the title of a God? But as he is really God without any ambiguity or equivocation, do you think we will deny our paying him supreme honours? What then, will some furiously ask, Is Jesus Christ God? Yes, we answer he is God, he is God over all heavenly powers." (8) Origen answered the philosopher Celsus who reproached him with believing that a man clothed in mortal flesh was God, in this manner. Let our accusers know, that this Jesus, who, we believe, is God, and the Son

(8) Arnob. lib. 1.

of God, is the Word of God, his mortal body and his soul have received great advantages from their union with the Word, and, having partaken of the divinity, have been admitted to the divine nature. (9)

4. When any teachers rose up in the church to injure the doctrine of Christ's divinity, they were reputed heretics, and as such rejected. Witness Artemon, Theodosius, Paul of Samoseta. The latter lifted up a standard against the divinity of the Saviour of the world, and six of the most celebrated bishops were chosen by the synod of Antioch to write him a letter, which we yet have, and in which they profess to believe, that Jesus Christ subsisted from all eternity with his Father. (1) To which we add this passage of Origen, "Let us represent as fully as we are able what constitutes heresy. He is a heretic who has false notions about our Lord Jesus Christ. Such as deny that he was the first-born, the God of every creature, the word, the wisdom, the beginning of the ways of God, *formed from the beginning, or ever the world was, begotten before the mountains and hills,*" Prov. viii. (2)

5. The fathers of the three first centuries made invariable profession of adoring but one God. This was, as it were, the first distinct character of their religion. Yet the primitive Christians adored Jesus Christ: witness Pliny's letter, which says, "they

(9) Orig. contra Celsum, lib. 3.

(1) Euseb. Eccl. hist. lib. 5. Athan. de Syn. Arim. et Seleuc. Bibliot. des peres, tom. 2.

(2) Apol. Pamph. Mart. in the 4th vol. of St. Jerom's works. Edit. Froben.

“sang hymns to Jesus Christ as to a God.”(3) Witness Justin Martyr, who, in his *Apology to Antonius*, expressly says, “Christians religiously worship Father, Son and Spirit.” And in the same apology he assures us, that “the constant doctrine of Christians, which they received from Jesus Christ himself, was the adoration of one only God.” Witness that famous letter of the faithful at Smyrna, whom the heathens accused of paying divine honours to Polycarp. “It is impossible,” say these believers, “that we should abandon Jesus Christ, or worship any other but him. We worship Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God: but in regard to the martyrs, disciples of Christ, and imitators of his virtues, we respect them for their invincible love to their Master and King.” Hence it was, that Paul of Samoseta, who denied the divinity of Christ, would not allow the custom of singing hymns to his honour: and Eusebius uses this argument to prove the doctrine that we are maintaining: “The psalms and hymns,” says he, “composed a long time ago by the faithful, do they not proclaim, that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, that he is God.” (4)

6. Finally, Among numberless passages in the fathers, which attest the truth in question, there are some so clear and so express, that we ourselves, who would prove their faith in our Saviour’s divinity, cannot dictate terms more emphatical than those which they have used. Weigh these words of Ter-

(3) Lib. 10. Epist. 97.

(4) Euseb. Hist. Eccl. book 7. chap. 30. book 5. chap. 28

tullian. “ Jesus Christ had the substance of the human nature, and the substance of the divine nature; on which account we say, he had a beginning, and he had no beginning; he was natural and spiritual; weak and powerful; mortal and immortal; properties (adds this father) which distinguish his human and divine nature.”(5) Weigh these words of the same Tertullian. “ We have been taught that God brought forth that Spirit, which we call the Word, that God by bringing him forth begat him, that for this reason he is called the Son of God, because his substance and the substance of God is one and the same substance; as a ray proceeding from the body of the sun, receives a part of its light without diminishing the light of the sun, so in the generation of the word, spirit is derived of spirit, and God of God. As the light of a flambeau derived from another does not at all diminish the light whence it is taken, so it is with God. That which proceeds from him is God, both God and Son of God, one with the Father, and the Father with him. It follows, that this distinction of spirit from spirit, of God from God, is not in substance but in person.”(6) Weigh again these words of Hyppolitus the martyr. “ Thou art he, who existest always. Thou art with the Father without beginning, and eternal as well as the holy Spirit.”(7) Again, weigh these words of Origen. In examining what doctrines are neces-

(5) Tertul. de Carne Christi.

(6) Tertul. adv. Gen. Apol. cap. 24.

(7) Bibl. Patr. tom. 12.

sary to salvation, he puts this in the first class: "Jesus Christ, who, being God, became incarnate, did not cease to be God." (8) Again, weigh these of Justin Martyr. "They call us Atheists, because we do not adore their demons. We grant we are such in regard to their gods: but not in regard to the true God, with whom we honour and worship the Son." (9) Finally, weigh these of Pope Felix. "We believe, Jesus Christ the Word is the eternal Son of God." (1)

No part of our discourse would bear a greater enlargement than this. Literally speaking, the subject exemplified from the fathers would fill a large volume. We have abridged the matter. Let us finish with a few reflections of another kind on our text.

We have endeavoured to prove, that Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored. Christians, what idea do you form of this doctrine? Do we think, we have done all that this doctrine engages us to do, when we have signalized our zeal by affirming and defending it? Shall we be of that number of extravagant people, who, having established the truth with warmth, sometimes with wrath (placing their passion to the account of religion) imagine, they have thereby acquired a right of refusing to Jesus Christ that unlimited obedience which so directly follows the doctrine of his divinity? The sacred authors, whom we have followed in proving this doctrine, draw very different consequences from

(8) Origen cont. Cels. lib. 5.

(9) Just. Mart. Apol. 2.

(1) Conc. Ephes. act. 1.

it. They use it to inflame our love for a God, who *so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16. They use it to elevate us to the sublimest hopes, declaring it impossible for him, *who gave his own Son, not to give us all things freely with him*, Rom. iii. 31. They use it to enforce every virtue, particularly humility, a virtue essential to a Christian; and, when order requires it, to sacrifice the titles of Noble, Sovereign, Potentate, Monarch, after the example of this God-man, who, “being in the form of God, and counting it no robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself,” Phil. ii. 6. They use it to exalt the Evangelical dispensation above the Mosaical economy, and by the superiority of the former to prove, that piety should be carried to a more eminent degree now than formerly; for God, *who spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1. They use it to prove, that the condition of a wicked Christian would be infinitely worse after this life than that of a wicked Jew; for “if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord?” chap. ii. 2. “He that despised Moses’s law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God? chap. x. 28, 29. They use it to describe the despair of those, who shall see him come in divine pomp, whom they once despised under the

vail of mortal flesh, for “they that pierced him shall see him, and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? Rev. i. 7. and vi. 15, &c.

Our second reflection is on that multitude of intelligences, which continually wait around the throne of God. Hear what Daniel says, *Thousand thousands ministered unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him*, chap. vii. 10. Hear what Micah says, “I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left,” 1 Kings xxii. 19. Hear what the Psalmist says, *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels*, Psal. lxxviii. 17. Hear what St. Luke says, “There was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest,” chap. ii. 13. Hear what Jesus Christ says, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” Matt. xxvi. 53. Hear what our text says, *The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*. My brethren, one of the most dangerous temptations, to which a believer is exposed in this world, is that of seeing himself despised. He sometimes, like

Elias, thinks himself *alone* on the Lord's side, 1 Kings xix. 10. Like Joshua, he is sometimes obliged to say of his duty, *Choose you whom you will serve: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*, chap. xxiv. 15. The church is yet a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32, and although we cannot say of the external profession of religion as St. Paul says, *Ye see your calling, brethren, that not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble are called*, 1 Cor. i. 26. yet it may be too truly said of the reality and essence of Christianity. No, we have *not many noble*. They are called noble in the world, who have, or who pretend to have, some ancient titles, and who are often ashamed of those whom Jesus Christ has ennobled, associated into his family, made *partakers of the divine nature*, and *changed from glory to glory by his Spirit*, 2 Pet. i. 4. We have very few of these nobles. No, we have *not many mighty*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. They are called mighty in the world, who have the art of surmounting every obstacle in the path that leads to fortune, who in spite of a world of opposers, have the art of arriving at the pinnacle of worldly grandeur, and make the difficulties opposed to their designs the means of succeeding. These people generally entertain a contemptible idea of such as are concentrated in virtue, who use it both as buckler and sword to conquer flesh and blood, *the prince of the power of the air*, and his formidable legions, Eph. i. 2. We have but few such mighty ones as these. No, *we have not many wise*. They are called wise in this world, who by the impenetrable secrets of a profound policy find new ways of supporting the state,

and of deriving from public prosperity a fund to maintain their own pomp. Those are usually despised, who possess that fear of the Lord, which *is the beginning of wisdom*, of that *wisdom among them, that are perfect*, Prov. i. 7. 1 Cor. ii. 6. which we are taught in the gospel. We have very few of these wise men. What then! have falsehood and vice more partisans than virtue and truth? What then! shall we have less approbation in submitting to God than in submitting to the devil? Far from us be an idea so puerile! Let us cease to consider this little handful of men, who surround us, as if they made up the universality of intelligences; and this earth, this point, this atom, as if it were the immensity of space. Let us open our eyes. Let our text produce the same effect in us to-day as Elisha's voice once produced in his servant. All on a sudden they were surrounded with soldiers, armies, and chariots, sent by the Syrian king to carry off Elisha. The servant is frightened; *Alas my master!* says he, *what shall we do?* *Fear not*, answers Elisha, *they that be with us are more than they that be with them.* And Elisha prayed, and said, *Lord I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.* And what does he see? *He sees the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*, 1 Kings vi. 15, &c. Believers, ye, who think yourselves alone on the Lord's side, ye, who tremble at the sight of the formidable troops which the enemy of your salvation has sent against you, ye, who cry, *What shall we do? Fear not, they that are with us are more than they that are with them* . . . . *O Lord, open their eyes that they may see.* See

christians! see whether ye be alone. See these *ten thousand times ten thousands, that stand before him*. See these *heavenly hosts* which surround his throne *on the right hand and on the left*. See the *twenty thousand chariots*. See legions of angels and elders, *whose numbers are twenty thousand times ten thousand*,\* Rev. ix. 16. These are your companions, these your approvers, these your defenders.

3. But what are the delights of these intelligences? You have heard my brethren, (and this is our third reflection,) their felicity, their delights consist in rendering supreme honours to God. “And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength.” A reflection very proper to humble and confound us, whose taste is so vitiated and depraved. I am aware, that nothing is less subject to our decisions than taste. I am aware, that what is delicious to one is disgusting to another, and, as it would be stupid to expect a sublime spirit should take pleasure in the gross occupations of a mechanic, so it would be unjust to expect that a mechanic should be pleased with the noble speculations of a sublime genius. I know, the difference between us and these intelligences is such as not to allow our pleasures to be of the same kind. But, after all, is this difference so great as to make such a disproportion in our delights? Do we not aspire to divine happiness as well as they? And if the flesh, which covers

\* Rev. ix. 16. Two hundred thousand thousand. *Vingt mille fois dix mille*. Duæ myriades myriadum. *Indefinite* intelligendum, more Hebrææ, pro ingenti numero.

that spiritual substance, that animates us, placeth us so far beneath them, is not the honour, which this flesh has received by the incarnation of the Word, who *took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham*, Heb. ii. 16. is not this more than enough to remove the prodigious distance, which the sublimity of their essence puts between us and them? at least should it not make us lament the depravity of our taste, if it be not sufficient perfectly to restore it? Christians, the plan of our evangelical felicity is founded on that of celestial felicity. Christians are called, even here below, to taste those noble pleasures, which are so delightful to the blessed above. Let us feel these pleasures, my brethren. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of the mind. Let us soar into a sublime meditation of his essence. Of his perfections let us form the most elevated ideas, that our diminutive capacities can permit. Let us conceive, as far as we possibly can, a wise God, supremely powerful, supremely holy, supremely good. Let us associate his glorious attributes, and, judging by the splendor of these feeble rays, of some of the beauties of the original, let us adore this Great Supreme. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of the heart. Let us measure the dimensions of love divine. Let us lose ourselves in the *length*, in the *breadth*, in the *height*, in the *depth* of that love, which *passeth knowledge*, Eph. iii. 18. Let us conceive the inexpressible felicity of an intimate union with the *happy* God, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Let us reflect on the happiness of a creature, who has a relation of love to a God, who knows how to love with so much ex-

tent, with so much pity, with so much power. Let us feel the pleasure of rendering to God the homage of an entire devotedness, the submission of all our desires. Slaves of the world, let us free ourselves from sensuality and cupidity, let us shake off the yoke of these domineering passions, let us *submit ourselves to God*, James iv. 7. Thus let us taste the felicity of returning to order, of obeying that God, all whose commands enforce love to what is supremely lovely.

True, deceitful world! thou wilt yet oppose our real pleasures. True, sensual flesh! thou wilt yet solicit us to pleasures agreeable to thy corruption. True, worldly pomp! thou wilt again dazzle us with thy vain glory. But thou worldly pomp shalt presently vanish! thou sensual flesh shall presently fall into the dust! thou also deceitful *fashion of the world\** thou shalt presently pass away!

Cor. vii. 31. presently these auditors, who have endeavoured to approach nearest to angelical pleasures, shall approach them entirely. Shortly this flock shall be numbered with the *twenty thousand times ten thousand*. Presently the voices, which have made these walls resound the Creator's praise, shall sing it in a nobler manner, and shall make the heavenly arches echo the hymn in my text, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive honour, power, riches, wisdom, strength, glory and blessing. To him, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing, and honour, and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

\* Cor. vii. 31. Fashion of this world. το σχημα τῆς κοσμοῦ τῶν τῶν. Locutio a theatro et scenis desumpta, quæ subito cum personis mutantur. *Figure du monde trompeur.*

## SERMON VI.

*Christ the Substance of the Ancient Sacrifices of the Law.*



HEBREWS X. 5, 6, 7.

*Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not: but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: Then said I, Lo! I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*

**T**O take Jesus Christ for our Redeemer and for our example is an abridgment of religion, and the only way to heaven.

If Jesus Christ be not taken for our Redeemer, alas! how can we bear the looks of a God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil?* Hab. i. 13. How can we hope to please, with prayers debased by numberless imperfections; with a repentance, in which a regret for not daring to repeat a crime too often mixes with a sorrow for having committed it; with a love of which self-interest is always the first spring; how, I say, can we hope with our sinful services to please a God, before whom seraphims veil their faces, and in whose sight the heavens themselves are unclean?

If we do not take Jesus Christ for our example, with what face can we take him for our Redeemer? Should we make the mysteries of religion mysteries of iniquity? Should we wish, that he, who came into the world on purpose to destroy the works of the devil, would re-establish them, in order to fill up the communion with this wicked spirit that void, which communion with Christ leaves? But to take Jesus Christ for a Redeemer and to take him for a model, is to unite all that can procure our supreme felicity; it is, as I said before, an abridgment of religion, and the only way to heaven.

In these two points of light St. Paul presents our divine Saviour to the view of the Hebrews, in this chapter, from which we have taken the text, and in some following chapters. It was necessary to convince men, educated in Judaism, new converts to Christianity, and greatly prejudiced in favour of the magnificence of the Levitical service, that the most pompous parts of the Mosaic ritual, the altars and the offerings, the priests and the sacrifices, the temple and all its ceremonies, were designed to prefigure the sacrifice on the cross. It was necessary to convince men, who were as little acquainted with the morality of the gospel as with the divinity of it, that, far from using this oblation to diminish in the least degree the motives which engage every intelligent creature to devote himself to his Creator, it was employed to give them all new and additional influence. St. Paul intended to convince the Jewish converts of these truths in this epistle in general, and in my text in particular. But is the doctrine of my text addressed to new converts

only? Suppose the doctrine addressed particularly to them, does it follow, that it is needless to preach it in this pulpit? We will not examine these questions now. However averse we are to consume the precious moments of these exercises in scholastic debates, the words, that we have read, furnish us with a most specious pretext for a minute discussion of them. Are the words of my text to be considered as the language of Jesus Christ, as the far greater number of expositors, for very strong reasons, maintain? Are they the words of David, who, considering the many reasons, which persuade us to believe, that the dedications of our persons to the service of God are the most acceptable of all sacrifices to him, vows to devote himself to his service? We answer they are the words of Jesus Christ; they are the words of David; and they express the sentiments of all true believers after him. We are going to prove these assertions.

First, We will consider the text, as proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Christ. We will shew you Jesus substituting the sacrifice of his body instead of those of the Jewish economy.

Secondly, We will put the words of the text into your mouths, and we will endeavour to convince you, that this second sense of the text is clearly deducible from the first, and necessarily connected with it. Having excited your admiration in the first part of this discourse, at that inestimable gift of God, his beloved Son, we will endeavour, in the second, to excite suitable sentiments of gratitude in each of your hearts.

Great God! What bounds can I henceforth set to my gratitude! Can I be so stupid as to imagine, that I express a sufficient sense of thy beneficence by singing a psalm, and by performing a lifeless ceremony? I feel irregular propensities. Great God! to thee I sacrifice them all. My body rebels against thy laws. To thee I offer it in sacrifice. My heart is susceptible of fervour and flame. For thee, my God! may it for ever burn! "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not: but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo! I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will. O God!" Accept this dedication of ourselves to thee, O God! Amen.

I. Let us consider our text in relation to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Three things are necessary. 1. Our text is a quotation; it must be verified. 2. It is a difficult passage; it must be explained. 3. It is one of the most essential truths of religion; it must be supported by solid proofs.

1. Our text is *a quotation, and it must be verified.* It is taken from the fortieth psalm. St. Paul makes a little alteration in it, for which we will assign a reason in a following article. In this, our business is to prove, that the psalm is prophetic, and that the prophet had the Messiah in view. In confirmation of this notion we adduce the evidence that arises from the object, and the evidence that arises from testimony.

In regard to the object we reason thus. All the fortieth psalm, except one word, exactly applies to

the Messiah. This inapplicable word, as it seems at first, is in the twelfth verse, *mine iniquities have taken hold upon me*. This expression does not seem proper in the mouth of Jesus Christ, who, the prophets foretold should have *no deceit in his mouth*, Isa. liii. 9. and who, when he came, defied his enemies to *convince him of a single sin*, John viii. 46. There is the same difficulty in a parallel psalm, I mean the sixty-ninth, *O God ! thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee*, ver. 50. The same solution serves for both places. Some have accounted for this difficulty by the genius of the Hebrew language, and have understood by the terms, *sins* and *iniquities*, not any crimes, which the speaker means to attribute to himself: but those which his persecutors committed against him. In the style of the Jews, *my rebellion* sometimes signifies *the rebellion that is excited against me*. In this manner we account for an expression in Jeremiah, *My people are attached to my rebellion*, that is to say, *My people persist in rebelling against me*. So again, we account for an expression in the third of Lamentations, *O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong*. That is, *the wrong done to me*. In like manner are those words to be explained, *my foolishness, my sins, my iniquities*, ver. 59.

But, if the idiom of the Hebrew language could not furnish us with this solution, we should not think the difficulty sufficient to engage us to erase the fortieth psalm from the list of prophecies, if other solid reasons induced us to insert it there. Jesus Christ on the cross was the substitute of sinners, like the scape-

goat, that was accursed under the old dispensation, and, as he stood charged with the iniquities of his people, he was considered as the perpetrator of all the crimes of men. The scripture says in so many words, *he bare our sins*. What a burden! What an inconceivable burden! Is the bearer of such a burden chargeable with any exaggeration, when he cries, “My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head?” 1 Pet. ii. 25. This passage being thus explained, we affirm, there is nothing in this psalm, which doth not exactly agree to the Messiah; and if we do not attempt now to prove what we have affirmed on this article, it is partly because such a discussion would divert us too far from our subject, and partly because there seems to be very little difficulty in the application of each part of the psalm of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the fortieth psalm is parallel to other prophecies, which indisputably belong to the Messiah. I mean particularly the sixty-ninth psalm, and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Were not the expositions of fallible men grounded on the testimonies of infallible writers, the nature of the thing would oblige us to admit the application. In whose mouth, except in that of the Messiah, could David with so much reason have put these words? *For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face*, Ps. lxi. 7. Of whom could Isaiah so justly say as of the Messiah, “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his

stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," chap. liii. 5, 6. Now if you put the chapter and the psalm, which we have quoted, among prophecies of the Messiah, you will find no difficulty in adding the psalm, from which our text is taken, because they need only to be compared to prove that they speak of the same subject.

Over and above the evidence, that arises from the object, we have the evidence of testimony. St. Paul declares, that the words of the Psalmist are a prophecy, and that the mystery of the incarnation was the accomplishment of it. After a decision so respectable, it ill becomes us to reply.

I very well know what the enemies of our mysteries say against this reasoning, and against all our arguments of this kind by which we have usually derived the mysteries of the gospel from the writings of the prophets. Jesus Christ, say they, and his apostles, reasoned from the prophecies only for the sake of accommodating themselves to the genius of the Jews, who were always fond of finding mysteries in the writings of their sacred authors, even in the most simple parts of them. What you take, continue they, for explications of prophecies in the writers of the New Testament, are only ingenious applications, or more properly, say they, accommodations. But what! when Philip joined himself to the Ethiopian treasurer, who was reading the fifty-third of Isaiah, and who put this question to him, *I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or*

*of some other man? When he began at the same scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus, Acts viii. 34, 35. did he mean only to accommodate himself to the genius of the Jewish nation? What! when St. Matthew, speaking of John the Baptist, said, This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ch. iii. 3. and when John the Baptist, in answer to those questions, which the Jews, whom the priests sent, put to him, Who art thou? Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet? When he replied, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, John i. 19, 21, 23. did he mean only to accommodate himself to the prejudices of the Jews? What! when Jesus Christ after his resurrection taxed his disciples with folly, because they had not discovered his resurrection in the ancient prophecies! and when, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he derived from thence arguments to prove that Christ ought to have suffered, and to enter into his glory, Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 27. had he no other design than that of making ingenious applications, and of accommodating himself to the prejudices of the Jewish nation? And is this the design of St. Paul in my text? Hear how he speaks, how he reasons, how he concludes. "It is not possible, says he, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo! I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God!" Having*

said before, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not*, which things are appointed by the law, he adds, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God! He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Do people speak in this manner, when they make only ingenious applications, and when reasoning is carried on by dexterity and accommodation?

Audacious heresy, my brethren! which having first offered violence to the expressions of the prophets, proceeds to offer violence again to the decisions of the evangelists, and apostles, the interpreters of the prophets; and with equal presumption contradicts a prophecy, and an interpretation as infallible as prophecy itself! There is great simplicity, I allow, in a turn for the marvellous, and in obliging one's self to find the Messiah in the most unlikely passages in the prophecies: but there is also a great deal of obstinacy in denying demonstrations so palpable and plain.

The words of my text are then a quotation, and, we think, we have justified it. We are now to consider it, secondly, as a difficult passage, that needs elucidation.

The principal difficulty in my present view is in these words, *A body hast thou prepared me*. The Hebrew has it, thou has digged, bored, or opened mine ears. The expression is figurative: but it is very intelligible even to those who are but little acquainted with sacred history. None of you can be ignorant, that it is an allusion to a law recorded in

the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, where they, who had Hebrew-slaves, were ordered to release them in the sabbatical year. A provision is made for such slaves as refused to accept of this privilege. Their masters were to bring them to the doors of their houses, to bore their ears through with an awl, and they were to engage to continue slaves for ever, that is to say, till the year of Jubilee, or till their death, if they happened to die before that festival. As this action was expressive of the most entire devotedness of a slave to his master, it was very natural for the prophet to make it an emblem of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to his Father's will. A passage of our apostle exactly agrees with these words of the prophet. "Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 7, 8. This is the best comment on the words of the Psalmist, *Thou hast bored mine ears.*

But why did not St. Paul quote the words as they are in the psalm? Why, instead of rendering the words according to the Hebrew, *Thou hast bored mine ears*, did he render them, *Thou hast prepared me a body*? It is plain the apostle followed the *version* commonly called that of the *seventy*. But this remark, far from removing the difficulty, produces a new one. For it may be asked why did the *seventy* render the original words in this manner? As this is a famous question, and as the discussion of it may serve to

cast light on many other passages of scripture, it will not be an unprofitable waste of time to inquire into the matter. Our people often hear this version mentioned in our pulpits, and they ought to have at least, a general knowledge of it.

By the *Septuagint*, or the *version of the seventy*, we mean a Greek translation of the Old Testament, made about three hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and it derived its name from a common report, that seventy, or seventy-two interpreters were the authors of it. One history, (or shall I rather call it, one romance?) attributed to an officer of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, says that this prince, intending to collect a library at Alexandria, employed a learned Athenian, named Demetrius Phalareus, to execute his design—That he informed the king, that the Jews were in possession of a book containing the law of their legislator—that Ptolemy deputed three officers of his court to wait on the high-priest at Jerusalem, to require of him a copy of the book, and men capable of translating it into Greek—that in order to conciliate the Jews, and to obtain this favor, he released a hundred thousand slaves, who had been held captives in his kingdom, and amply furnished them with all necessities for their return to Judea—that he loaded his deputies with rich presents for the temple—that the high-priest not only gave them a copy of the law: but also sent six men of each tribe to translate it—that Ptolemy received them with marks of great distinction, and lodged them in the isle of Pharos, where they might pursue their work without interruption—

and that they finished the work in as many days as there were authors laboring at it, that is to say, in seventy-two.

This narration being favorably received among the Jews, it happened that the superstition of the populace, fomented by their own ignorance, and by the rash decisions of the Rabbies, which were put in the place of solid proofs, added divers circumstances to render the tale more marvellous. Of this kind is the account given by Philo, who says that each of the seventy translators pursued his work separately from the rest, and that when the translations of all came to be compared, there was not the least difference either in the meaning, or in the expressions. Of the same sort is another circumstance related by Justin Martyr. Each translator, says he, was confined in a little cell, in order to prevent his holding any conversation with the rest of the interpreters; and this good father pretends to have seen the ruins of these cells in the isle of Pharos. We will not increase the list of these fabulous tales here, let it suffice to observe, that learned men have long agreed to reject these fables; and have fully shewn the paradoxes, the anachronisms, and the contradictions with which they are replete. We proceed now to relate what they have almost unanimously admitted.

That about three hundred years before the advent of Jesus Christ, a Greek translation of the Old Testament was made at Alexandria for the use of the descendants of that multitude of Jews, which Alexander the Great had settled there, when he

built that famous city in Egypt, to which he gave his own name—That a version was absolutely necessary for those people, because the far greater part of them had lost their native language—that at first the five books of Moses only were translated, because they were the only books, which were then read in the synagogues—that after the tyrannies of Antiochus Epiphanes, the reading of the prophecies being then introduced, the prophecies also were translated—that this version was spread through all those parts of the world, where the Greek language was used, or where Jews dwelt—and that the apostles, preaching the gospel in the greatest part of the known world, and the Greek tongue being then every where the favourite of all, who valued themselves on learning and politeness, made use of the version, commonly called the version of the seventy, to convince the Pagans, that the different parts of the economy of the Messiah had been foretold by the prophets, and that this version was one of the preparations, which providence had employed for the call of the Gentiles.

This digression thus going before us, I will relate the replies, that are usually made to the question before us, namely, why the pretended seventy rendered the prophecy, as in the text, *A body hast thou prepared me*, instead of translating it according to the literal Hebrew, *Mine ears hast thou bored*.

Some learned men have pretended, that the translation of our prophecy was altered in our copies of the seventy, and that we should read *ears* instead of *body*. But the reasons on which this solution is

grounded, appear to us so inconclusive, that far from establishing a fixed sentiment, they hardly seem capable of supporting a momentary conjecture.

Beside, if this reading, *A body hast thou prepared me*, be faulty, how came St. Paul to avail himself of the version of the seventy to give currency to a thought which was not theirs, and to persuade the illiterate that these interpreters had translated the words, *A body hast thou prepared me*, when indeed they had rendered the words, *Mine ears hast thou bored*? How could St. Paul employ a fraud so gross to establish one of the most venerable mysteries of Christianity, I mean the doctrine of the incarnation? Had not his own conscience restrained him, a foresight of the reproaches, to which he must necessarily have exposed himself by such conduct, must needs have prevented it.

This first solution not appearing defensible to most learned men, they have had recourse to the following. The seventy translators, say they, or the authors of this version, that bears their name, whoever they were, knew the mystery of the incarnation; they were convinced, that this mystery was foretold in the fortieth Psalm; and as Jesus Christ could not perform the functions of a servant, without uniting himself to a mortal body, they chose rather to give the meaning of the prophecy than to render the bare terms of it. Some have even gone so far as to affirm, that the seventy did this by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This solution has one great advantage, it favours the theological system of those who admit it, and every solution of

this kind, will always have, independently on the accuracy and justness of it, the suffrages of great numbers. This opinion, however, is not free from difficulty. Do not the mistakes of which this version is full, and which the apostles have often corrected in their quotations of it, form insuperable objections against the imaginary doctrine of their inspiration ? But if the authors of this version had not been inspired, would it have been possible for them to have spoken of the mystery of the incarnation in a manner more clear than any of the prophets ? This difficulty appears to me the greater, because I cannot find any Rabbi, (I except none,) who ever understood the prophecy in the fortieth Psalm of the Messiah. It is St. Paul alone who gives us the true sense of it.

The conjectures that I have mentioned, appear to me very uncertain ; I therefore hazard my own private opinion on the subject, and that proof which I think is the most proper to make it eligible, I mean the great simplicity of it, will be perhaps (considering the great love, that almost all men have for the marvellous,) the chief reason for rejecting it. However, I will propose it.

I remark first, that the word used by the pretended seventy, and by St. Paul, and rendered in our language *prepared*, is one of the most vague terms in the Greek tongue, and signifies indifferently, *to dispose, to mark, to note, to render capable*, and, so on. This remark is so well grounded, that they, who think the septuagint reading used the word *ears* in-

stead of *body*, retain, however, the term in question, so that according to them, it may signify *bore, cut, &c.*

I observe secondly, that before the septuagint version the Mosaic rites were very little known among the heathens, perhaps also among the dispersed Jews; it was a very common thing with the Rabbies to endeavour to conceal them from all, except the inhabitants of Judea, for reasons which I need not mention now. Hence I infer, that in the period of which I am speaking, few people knew the custom of boring the ears of those slaves, who refused to accept the privileges of the sabbatical year. I say in this period, not after; for we find in the writings of those Pagans, who lived in after-times, and particularly in the satires of Petronius and Juvenal, allusions to this custom.

I observe thirdly, that it was a general custom among the Pagans to make marks on the bodies of those persons, in whom they claimed a property. They were made on soldiers, and slaves, so that if they deserted, they might be easily reclaimed. Sometimes they apposed marks on them who served an apprenticeship to a master, as well as on them who put themselves under the protection of a God. These marks were called *stigmas*; the word has passed into other languages, and St. Paul, probably alludes to this custom in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, *from henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, chap. vi. 17. You may see several such allusions in the ninth of Ezekiel, and in the seventh of Revelations, where they, who had put themselves under the

protection of God, and had devoted themselves to his service, are represented as marked in the forehead with a certain mark respected by the messengers of his avenging justice.

On these different observations I ground this opinion. The seventy, or the authors of the version, that bears their name, whoever they were, thought if they translated the prophecy under consideration literally, it would be unintelligible to the Pagans and to the dispersed Jews, who being ignorant of the custom to which the text refers, would not be able to comprehend the meaning of the words, *mine ears hast thou bored*. To prevent this inconvenience, they translated the passage in that way which was most proper to convey its meaning to the readers. It was well known that the Pagans marked the bodies of their soldiers, and slaves, and disciples. Our authors alluded to this custom, and translated the words in general, "thou hast marked my body, *or*, thou hast disposed my body," that is to say, "thou hast disposed it in the way which is most agreeable to the functions in which I am engaging." Now as this translation was well adapted to convey the meaning of the prophet to the Pagans, St. Paul had a right to retain it.

Thus we have endeavoured to explain the greatest difficulty in the terms of the text. The following words, *In the volume of the book it is written of me*, refer to the manner in which the ancients disposed their books. They wrote on parchments, fastened one to another, and made rolls of them. The Hebrew term, which St. Paul, and the pretended

seventy, render *book*, signifies a roll ; and some think, the Greek term, which we render *beginning*,\* and which properly signifies a *head*, alludes to the form of these rolls : but these remarks ought not to detain us.

Jesus Christ, we are very certain, is introduced in this place as accomplishing what the prophets had foretold, that is, that the sacrifice of the Messiah should be substituted in the place of the Levitical victims. On this account, as we said before, our text contains one of the most essential doctrines of the religion of Jesus Christ, and the establishment of this is our next article.

In order to comprehend the sense in which the Messiah says to God, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not*, we must distinguish two sorts of volition in God, *a willing of a mean*, and *a willing of an end*. God may be said to *will a mean*, when he appoints a ceremony or establisheth a rite, which has no intrinsic excellence in itself : but which prepares them, on whom it is enjoined, for some great events, on which their felicity depends. By *willing an end*, I mean a production of such events.

If the word *will*, be taken in the first sense, it cannot be truly said, that God *did not will* or appoint *sacrifices and burnt-offerings*. Every one knows he instituted them, and regulated the whole ceremonial of them, even the most minute articles. On this account, St. Paul observes, when God had given

\* *Il est écrit de moi au commencement du livre.* It is written of me in the *beginning* of the book. Fr.

It is written of me in the *volume* of the book. Eng.

Moses directions concerning the construction of the tabernacle, he said to him, *See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*, Heb. viii. 5.

But if we take the word *will* in the second sense, and by the will of God understand his willing an end, it is strictly true, that God did *not will* or appoint *sacrifices and burnt-offerings* ; because they were only instituted to prefigure the Messiah, and consequently as soon as the Messiah, the substance appeared, all the ceremonies of the law were intended to vanish.

Now, as we said in the beginning of this discourse, the Hebrews, who were contemporary with St. Paul, those, I mean, who made a profession of Christianity, had great occasion for this doctrine. If their attachment to the Levitical ritual did not operate so far as to hinder their embracing the profession of Christianity, it must be allowed, it was one of the principal obstacles to their entering into the true spirit of it. The apostles discovered, for a long time, a great deal of indulgence to those who were misled by their prejudice. St. Paul, a perfect model of that Christian indulgence and toleration, which the consciences of erroneous brethren require, *became to the Jews, a Jew* ; and far from affecting to degrade the ceremonies of the law, observed them with a scrupulous exactness himself.

But when it was perceived, as it soon was, that the attachment of the Jews to the ceremonies of the law, and particularly to sacrifices, was injurious to the sacrifice of the cross, the apostles thought it their duty vigorously to oppose such dangerous prejudi-

ces, and this is the design of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul establisheth his thesis, I mean the inutility of sacrifices, on four decisive arguments. The first is taken from the nature of the sacrifices. The second is derived from the declarations of the prophets. The third is inferred from types. And the last arises from the excellence of the Gospel-victim.

*It is not possible*, says the apostle immediately before my text, *that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin*, Heb. x. 4. this is as much as to say, the blood of irrational victims is not of value sufficient to satisfy the justice of God, righteously expressing his displeasure against the sins of intelligent creatures. This is an argument, taken from the *nature of sacrifices*.

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant, that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,” chap. viii. 8, 9. This is an argument taken from the *decisions of the prophets*.

Jesus Christ is a “priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also, king of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning

of days nor end of life ; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. The law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," chap. vii. 17, 1, &c. and x. 1. This is an argument taken from *types*.

The argument taken from *the excellence of the victim* runs through this whole epistle, and has as many parts as there are characters of dignity in the person of Jesus Christ, and in his priesthood.

The first character of dignity is this. Jesus Christ is neither a mere man, nor an angel, he is *the Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*. He upholds all things by the word of his power, chap. i. 3. and of him when he came into the world, it was said, *Let all the angels of God worship him*, ver. 6. He, in a word, hath the perfections of a supreme God, and to him the Psalmist rendered the homage of adoration, when he said, "Thy throne O God! is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou, Lord! in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish : but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail, ver. 8, &c.

The solemnity of the instituting of Jesus Christ is a second character of dignity. *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest: but it was God, who said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee*, ch. v. 5.

The sacred oath that accompanies the promises, which Jesus Christ alone fulfils, is a third character of dignity. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely, blessing, I will bless thee," chap. vi. 14. "The priests," under the law, "were made without an oath: but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," chap. vii. 21.

The unity of the priest and the sacrifice is a fourth character of dignity. "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood," ver. 23, 24.

The fifth character of dignity is the magnificence of that tabernacle, into which Jesus Christ entered, and the merit of that blood, which obtained his access into it. "The first covenant had a worldly sanctuary," chap. ix. 1. into the first room of which "the priests went always, accomplishing the service of God;" and "into the second the high-priest alone went once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. But Christ, being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, neither by the blood of bulls and calves, but by his own blood, entered not into holy places made with hands, which were figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," chap. x. 6, 7, 11, 12, 24.

To what purpose are Levitical sacrifices, of what use are Jewish priests, what occasion have we for hecatombs, and offerings, after the sacrifice of a victim so excellent? My text contains one of the most essential doctrines of Christianity, that Jesus Christ offered himself for us to the justice of his Father. This is a doctrine, the evidences of which we all receive with joy; a doctrine, the enemies of which we consider with horror; a doctrine, of which we have the highest reason to be holily jealous, because it is the foundation of that confidence, with which we come boldly to the throne of Grace, throughout life, and in the article of death: but a doctrine, however, that will be entirely useless to us, unless, while we take Jesus Christ for our Redeemer, we take him also for our example. The text is not only the language of Jesus Christ, who substitutes himself in the place of Old-Testament sacrifices: but it is the voice of David, and of every believer, who, full of this just sentiment, that a personal dedication to the service of God is the most acceptable sacrifice, that men can offer to the Deity, devote themselves entirely to him. How foreign soever this second sense may appear from the first, there is nothing in it that ought to surprise you. This is not the only passage of holy scripture, which contains a mystical as well as a literal signification, nor is this the first time in which the dispositions of inspired men have been emblems of those of the Messiah.

Let us justify this second sense of our text. Come, my brethren, adopt the words, say with the prophet, and thus prepare yourselves for the celebration of

the festival of the nativity, which is just at hand, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not ; but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure : then said I, Lo! I come, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do thy will, O God!* This is the second part, or rather the application of this discourse.

II. *God willeth not sacrifices.* The meaning of these words is easily understood, I presume. They signify, that the only offering, which God requires of us, is that of our persons. Recollect a distinction, which we made a little while ago, to justify the first sense of the text, and which is equally proper to explain the second. There is in God a twofold will, *a willing of means, and a willing of an end.* If the word *will* be taken in the first sense, it cannot be said, *God willeth, or desireth, not sacrifices.* He appointed them as *means* to conduct us to that *end*, which he intended, that is, to the offering of our persons.

I have been delighted to find this idea developed in the writings of those very Jews, who of all men have the strongest inclination to exceed in respect for the ceremonial of religion. I have my eye on a work of a Rabbi, the most respectable, and the most respected, of all, who are so called, I mean *Moses Maimonides*. The book is entitled, *A guide to doubtful souls*.\* Under how many faces does he present this distinction? On what solid foundations does he take care to establish it? I should weaken the arguments of this learned Jew by abridging them, and I

\* More Nevochim,

refer all, who are capable of reading it, to the book itself. You understand then in what sense God demands only the sacrifice of your persons. It is what he wills as the end; and he will accept neither offerings, nor sacrifices, nor all the ceremonies of religion, unless they contribute to the holiness of the person who offers them.

Let us not rest in these vague ideas: but let us briefly close this discourse by observing, 1. The nature of this offering. 2. The necessity of it. 3. The difficulties. 4. The delights that accompany it; and lastly, its reward.

1. Observe the *nature* of this sacrifice. This offering includes our whole persons, and every thing that providence hath put in our power. Two sorts of things may be distinguished in the victim, of which God requires the sacrifice; the one bad, the other good. We are engaged in vicious habits, we are carried away with irregular propensities, we are slaves to criminal passions; all these are our bad things. We are capable of knowledge, meditation, and love; we possess riches, reputation, employments, and so on: these are our good things. God demands the sacrifice of both these. Say to God in both senses, *Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!* Whatever you have of the bad, sacrifice to God, and consume it in spiritual burnt-offering. Sacrifice to him the infernal pleasure of slander. Sacrifice to him the brutal passions that enslave your senses. Sacrifice to him that avarice which gnaws and devours you. Sacrifice to him that pride, and presumption, which swell a mortal into imaginary con-

sequence, disguise him from himself, make him forget his original dust, and hide from his eyes his future putrefaction.

But also sacrifice your good things to God. You have genius. Dedicate it to God. Employ it in meditating on his oracles, in rectifying your own ideas, and in diffusing through the world by your conversation and writing the knowledge of this adorable Being. You have the art of insinuating your opinions into the minds of men. Devote it to God, use it to undeceive your acquaintances, to open their eyes, and to inspire them with inclinations more worthy of immortal souls, than those which usually govern them. You have credit. Dedicate it to God, strive against your own indolence, surmount the obstacles, that surround you, open your doors to widows and orphans, who wish for your protection. You have a fortune. Devote it to God, use it for the succour of indigent families, employ it for the relief of the sick, who languish friendless on beds of infirmity, let it help forward the lawful desires of them, who hungering and thirsting for righteousness, wander in the deserts of *Hermon*, and pour out these complaints on the hill *Mizar*, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God," Psal. xlii. 6, 1, &c. "My flesh crieth out for thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king, and my God," Psal. lxxxiv. 2, 3.

Having observed the nature of that offering which God requires of you, consider next the *necessity* of it. I will not load this article with a multitude of

proofs. I will not repeat the numerous declarations that the inspired writers have made on this subject. I will neither insist on this of Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," 1 Sam. xv. 22. Nor on this of the psalmist, "Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth seeing thou hatest instruction?" Psal. l. 16, 17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," Psal. li. 17. Nor on this of Isaiah, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes," chap. i. 11, 16. Nor on this of Jeremiah, "Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. But I commanded not your fathers, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offering, or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. Behold ye trust in lying words. Do not steal, Do no murder, Do not commit adultery," chap. vii. 21—23, 4, 9. Nor will I insist on many other declarations of this kind, with which scripture abounds: I have no need of any other testimony than that of your own consciences.

To what purpose do you attend public worship in a church consecrated to the service of Almighty God, if you refuse to make your bodies temples of the Holy Ghost, and persist in devoting them to im-

purity? To what purpose do you hear sermons, if, as soon as the preacher has finished, you forget all the duties that he has recommended? To what purpose do you spread your miseries in prayer before God, while you neglect all the means, by which he has promised to relieve them? To what purpose do you approach the table of the Lord, if, a few days after you have partaken of the sacred elements, you violate all your vows, break all your promises, and forget the solemn adjurations which you made there? To what purpose do you send for your ministers, when death seems to be approaching, if as soon as you recover from sickness, you return to the same kind of life, the remembrance of which caused you so much horror, when you were sick, and afraid of death?

The sacrifice required of us is difficult, say you. I grant it, my brethren, accordingly, far from pretending to conceal it, I make one article of the difficulties and pains that accompany it. How extremely difficult, when our reputation and honour are attacked, when our fidelity, our morals, our conversation, our very intentions are misinterpreted, and slandered; how extremely difficult, when we are persecuted and oppressed by cruel and unjust enemies; how hard is it to practice the laws of religion, which require us to pardon injuries, and to exercise patience and mercy to our enemies! How difficult is it to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, who when he hung on the cross, prayed for them who nailed him there; how hard is it thus to sacrifice to God our resentment and vengeance? How difficult

is it to sacrifice unjust gains to God, by restoring them to their owners; how hard to retrench expences, which we cannot honestly support, to reform a table, that gratifies the senses, to diminish the number of our attendants, which does us honour, to lay aside equipages, that surround us with pomp, and to reduce our expences to our incomes! How difficult is it, when all our wishes are united in the gratification of a favourite passion, O! how hard is it to free one's self from its dominion! How difficult is it to eradicate an old criminal habit, to reform, and to renew one's self, to form as it were, a different constitution, to create other eyes, other ears, another body! how hard is it, when death approacheth, to bid the world farewell for ever, to part from friends, parents and children! In general, how difficult is it to surmount that world of obstacles, which oppose us in our path to eternal happiness, to devote one's self entirely to God in a world, where all the objects of our senses seem to conspire to detach us from him!

But, is this sacrifice the less necessary, because it is difficult? Do the disagreeables and difficulties, which accompany it, invalidate the necessity of it? Let us add something of the comforts that belong to it, they will soften the yoke that religion puts upon us, and encourage us in our arduous pursuit of immortal joy. Look, reckon, multiply as long as you will, the hardships and pains of this sacrifice, they can never equal the pleasures and rewards of it.

What *delight*, after we have laboured hard at the reduction of our passions, and the reformation of our

hearts; what delight, after we have striven, or, to use the language of Jesus Christ, after we have been in *an agony*, in endeavouring to resist the torrent, and to survive, if possible, the dreadful storm that involves the Christian in his passage; what delight to find, that heaven crowns our wishes with success!

What delight, when, on examining conscience preparatory to the Lord's supper, a man is able to say to himself, "Once I was a sordid, selfish wretch; now my happiness is to assist my neighbour. Formerly, my thoughts were dissipated in play, my devotions were interrupted by worldly objects, of which the whole capacity of my soul was full; now, I am enabled to collect my thoughts in my closet, and to fix them on that God, in communion with whom I pass the happiest hours of my life. Once, I relished nothing but the world and its pleasures; now, my soul breathes only piety and religion." What high satisfaction when old age arrives, when our days are passing *swifter than a weaver's shuttle*, to be able to give a good account of our conduct, and, while the last moments fly, to fill them with the remembrance of a life well-spent! When our sins present themselves before us in all their enormity; when we find ourselves in the situation mentioned by the psalmist, *My sin is ever before me*, Psal. li. 3. the image of bloody Uriah haunts me every where, then how happy to be enabled to say "I have wept for these sins, in the bitterness of penitence I have lost the remembrance of pleasure in sin; and I trust, by the grace of God, I am guarded against future attacks from them."

Such are the pleasures of this sacrifice : but what are its *rewards* ? Let us only try to form an idea of the manner in which God gives himself to a soul, that devotes itself wholly to him. Ah ! if *we love him*, is it not *because he first loved us* ? Alas ! to what degree soever we elevate our love to him, it is nothing in comparison of his love to us ! What shall I say to you, my brethren, on the love of God to us ? What shall I say of the blessings, which he pours on these states, and on the individuals who compose them, of the restoration of peace, the confirmation of your liberties, the preservation of your lives, the long-suffering that he exercises toward your souls ? Above all, what shall I say concerning that great mystery, the anniversary of which the church invites you to celebrate next Lord's day ? *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16.

A God who has loved us in this manner, when we were enemies to him, how will he not love us, now we are become his friends, now we dedicate to him ourselves, and all beside that we possess ? What bounds can be set to his love ? *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things* ? Rom. viii. 32. Here I sink under the weight of my subject, *O my God ! how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee* ! Psal. xxxi. 19. My God ! what will not the felicity of that creature be, who gives himself wholly to thee, as thou givest thyself to him !

Thus, my dear brethren, religion is nothing but gratitude, sensibility, and love. God grant we may

know it in this manner! May the knowledge of it fill the heart and mouth of each of us during this festival, and from this moment to the hour of death, with the language of my text, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings for sin, thou hast had no pleasure : Then said I, Lo ! I come. I come, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do thy will, O God!" May God condescend to confirm our resolutions by his grace. Amen.

# SERMON VII.

*The Efficacy of the Death of Christ.*



2 CORINTHIANS v. 14, 15.

*The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.*

MY BRETHREN,

WE have great designs to-day on you, and we have great means of executing them. Sometimes we require the most difficult duties of morality of you. At other times we preach the mortification of the senses to you, and with St. Paul, we tell you, “ they that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,” Gal. v. 24. Sometimes we attack your attachment to riches, and after the example of our great Master, we exhort you to “ lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal,” Matt. vi. 20. At other times we endeavour to prepare you for some violent operation, some severe exercises, with which it may please God to try you, and we repeat the words of the apostle to the Hebrews, “ Ye have not

yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin : Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. xii. 4, 12. At other times we summon you to suffer a death more painful than your own ; we require you to dissolve the tender ties that unite your hearts to your relatives and friends ; we adjure you to break the bonds that constitute all the happiness of your lives, and we utter this language, or shall I rather say, thunder this terrible gradation in the name of Almighty God, " Take now thy son—thine only son—Isaac—whom thou lovest—and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2. To-day we demand all these. We require more than the sacrifice of your senses, more than that of your riches, more than that of your impatience, more than that of an only son ; we demand an universal devotedness of yourselves to *the author and finisher of your faith* ; and to repeat the emphatical language of my text, which in its extensive compass involves, and includes all these duties, we require you " henceforth not to live unto yourselves : but unto him, who died and rose again for you."

As we have great designs on you, so we have great means of executing them. They are not only a few of the attractives of religion. They are not only such efforts as your ministers sometimes make, when uniting all their studies and all their abilities, they approach you with the power of the word : It is not only an august ceremony, or a solemn festival. They are all these put together.

God hath assembled them all in the marvellous transactions of this one day.

Here are all the attractives of religion. Here are all the united efforts of your ministers, who unanimously employ on these occasions all the penetration of their minds, all the tenderness of their hearts, all the power of language to awake your piety, and to incline you to render to Jesus Christ love for love, and life for life. It is an august ceremony, in which, under the most simple symbols, that nature affords, God represents the most sublime objects of religion to you. This is a solemn festival, the most solemn festival, that Christians observe, this occasions them to express in songs of the highest joy their gratitude and praise to their deliverer, these are their sentiments, and thus they exult, *The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly!* Psal. cxviii. 15. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,* Eph. i. 3. *Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* 1 Pet. i. 3.

And on what days, is it natural to suppose, should the preaching of the gospel perform those miracles, which are promised to it, if not on such days as these? When if not on such days as these, should *the sword of the spirit, divide asunder soul and spirit, joints, and marrow,* Eph. vi. 17. Heb. iv. 12. and cut in twain every bond of self-love and sin?

To all these means add the supernatural assistance that God communicates in a double portion in these circumstances to all those, whom a desire of recon-

ciliation with heaven conducts to this assembly. We have prayed for this assistance at the dawning of this blessed day; we prayed for it as we ascended this pulpit, and again before we began this exercise; with prayer for divine assistance we began this discourse, and now we are going to pray for it again. My dear brethren, unite your prayers with ours, and let us mutually say to God:

O thou *rock* of ages! Thou author of those great mysteries, with which the whole Christian world resounds to-day! make thy *work perfect*, Deut. xxxii. 4. Let the end of all these mysteries, be the salvation of this people. Yea Lord! the incarnation of thy Word; the sufferings, to which thou didst expose him; the vials of thy wrath, poured on this victim, innocent indeed in himself, but criminal as he was charged with all our sins; the cross to which thou didst deliver him; the power that thou didst display in raising him from the tomb conqueror over death and hell; all these mysteries were designed for the salvation of those believers, whom the devotion of this day hath assembled in this sacred place. Save them, O Lord! “God of peace! who didst bring again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make them perfect in every good work to do thy will; work in them that which is well-pleasing in thy sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Heb. xiii. 20. 21.

*The love of Christ constraineth us.* This is our text. Almost every expression in it is equivocal:

but its ambiguity does not diminish its beauty. Every path of explication is strewed with flowers, and we meet with only great and interesting objects, even conformable to the mysteries of this day, and to the ceremony, that assembles us in this holy place. If there be a passage in the explication of which we have ever felt an inclination to adopt that maxim, which hath been productive of so many bad comments, that is, that expositors ought to give to every passage of scripture all the different senses, which it will bear, it is this passage, which we have chosen for our text. Judge of it yourselves.

There is an ambiguity in the *principal subject*, of which our apostle speaks, *The love of Christ*. This phrase may signify either the love of Christ to us, or our love to him.

There is an ambiguity in the *persons* who are animated with this love. *The love of Christ constraineth us*; St. Paul means either the *ministers* of the gospel, of whom he speaks in the preceding and following verses; or *all believers*, to the instruction of whom he consecrated all his writings.

There is also an ambiguity in the *effects*, which the apostle attributes to this love. He says, *The love of Christ constraineth us*, the love of Christ *uniteth*, or *presseth* us. *The love of Christ constraineth us*, may either signify, our love to Jesus Christ uniteth us to one another, because it collects and unites all our desires in one point, that is, in Jesus Christ the centre. In this sense St. Paul says, *Love is the bond of perfectness*, Col. iii. 14. that is to say, the most perfect friendships, that can be formed, are those which

have love for their principle. Thus if my text were rendered *love uniteth us together*, it would express a sentiment very conformable to the scope of St. Paul in this epistle. He proposeth in this epistle in general, and in this chapter in particular, to discourage those scandalous divisions which tore out the vitals of the church at Corinth, where party was against party, one part of the congregation, against another part of the congregation, and one pastor was against another pastor.

*The love of Christ constraineth us* may also signify, the love of Christ *transporteth us*, and carries us, as it were, out of ourselves. In this case, the apostle must be supposed to allude to those inspirations, which the pagan priests pretended to receive from their gods, with which they said, they were filled, and to those, with which the prophets of the true God were really animated. The original word is used in this sense in Acts, where it is said, *Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ*, chap. xviii. 5. This explication approaches still nearer to the scope of St Paul, and to the circumstances of the apostles. They had ecstasies. St. Peter in the city of Joppa was *in an ecstasy*. St. Paul also was *caught up to the third heaven*, chap. x. 10. not knowing *whether he was in the body, or out of the body*, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. These ecstasies, these transports, these close communions with God, with which the inspired men were honoured, made them sometimes pass for idiots. This is the sense which some give to these words, *We are fools for Christ's sake*, 1 Cor. iv. 10. This meaning of our

text well comports with the words which immediately precede, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause;" that is to say, If we be sometimes at such an immense distance from all sensible objects, if our minds be sometimes so absent from all the things, that occupy and agitate the minds of other men, that we seem to be entirely *beside ourselves*, it is because we are all concentrated in God; it is because our capacity, all absorbed in this great object, cannot attend to any thing that is not divine, or which doth not proceed immediately from God.

*The love of Christ constraineth us.* This expression may mean, . . . . (my brethren, it is not my usual method to fill my sermons with an enumeration of the different senses that interpreters have given of passages of scripture: but all these explications, which I repeat, and with which perhaps I may overcharge my discourse to-day, appear to me so just and beautiful, that I cannot reconcile myself to the passing of them over in silence. When I adopt one, I seem to myself to regret the loss of another.) This, I say, may also signify, that the love of Jesus Christ to us *surrounds us on every side*; or that our love to him *pervades*, and *possesses* all the powers of our souls.

The first sense of the original term is found in this saying of Jesus Christ concerning Jerusalem, *The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side*, Luke xix. 43. The latter is a still more beautiful sense of the term, and per-

fectly agrees with the preceding words, already quoted, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God." A prevalent passion deprives us at times of the liberty of reasoning justly, and of conversing accurately. Some take these famous words of St. Paul in this sense, *I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren*, Rom. ix. 3. and these of Moses, *Forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book*, Exod. xxxii. 32. Not that a believer in Christ can ever coolly consent to be separated from Christ, or blotted out of the catalogue of those blessed souls, for whom God reserves eternal happiness: but these expressions flow from *transports of love* in holy men. They were *beside themselves*, transported beyond their judgment. It is the state of a soul occupied with one great interest, animated with only one great passion.

Finally, These words also are equivocal, *If one died for all*, that is to say, if Jesus Christ hath satisfied divine justice by his death for all men, then, all they, who have recourse to it, are accounted to have satisfied it in his person. Or rather, *If one died for all*, if no man can arrive at salvation but by the grace, which the death of Christ obtained for him, *then are all dead*, then all ought to take his death for a model by dying themselves to sin. Agreeably to this idea, St. Paul says, *We are buried with him by baptism into death*, Rom. vi. 4. that is, the ceremony of wholly immersing us in water, when we were baptized, signified, that we died to sin, and that of raising us again from our immersion signified, that we would no more return to those disorderly prac-

tices, in which we lived before our conversion to Christianity. *Knowing this*, adds our apostle, *in that Christ died, he died unto sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*, ver. 10. Thus in my text, “ If one died for all, then were all dead,” that is, agreeable to the following words, “ He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves : but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.”

Such is the diversity of interpretations, of which the words of my text are susceptible. Nothing can be further from my design, nothing would less comport with the holiness of this day, than to put each of these in an even balance, and to examine with scrupulosity which merited the preference. I would wish to unite them all, as far as it is practicable, and as far as the time allotted for this exercise will allow. They, who have written on eloquence, should have remarked one figure of speech, which, I think, has not been observed, I mean, *a sublime ambiguity*. I understand by this, the artifice of a man, who, not being able to express his rich ideas by simple terms, of determinate meaning, makes use of others, which excite a multitude of ideas ; like those war-machines that strike several ways at once. “ I could shew you many examples of these traits of eloquence in both sacred and profane writers : but such discussions would be improper here.

In general we are fully persuaded, that the design of St. Paul in my text is to express the power of those impressions, which the love of Jesus Christ to mankind makes on the hearts of real Christians.

This is an idea that reigns in all the writings of this apostle; and it especially prevails in this epistle, from which our text is taken. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii, 18. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," chap. iv. 10. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but things which are not seen are eternal," ver. 16—18. "He that hath wrought us for the self same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit," chap. v. 5. "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord," ver. 8. Again in the text, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." This is the language of a soul, on which the love of Christ makes lively and deep impressions.

Let us follow this idea, and, in order to unite, as far as an union is practicable, all the different explanations I have mentioned, let us consider these impressions.

I. In regard to the vehement desires and sentiments they excite in our hearts. *This love constraineth*, it possesseth, it transporteth us.

II. In regard to the several recipients of it. *The love of Christ constraineth us*, us believers, and particularly us ministers of the Gospel, who are heralds of the love of God.

III. In regard to the consolations which are experienced through the influence of love in the miseries of life, and in the agonies of death, of which the apostle speaks in the preceding verses.

IV. In regard to the universality of that devotedness, with which these sentiments inspire us to this Jesus, who hath loved us in a manner so tender. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

After we have considered these ideas separately, I will endeavour to unite them all together, and apply them to the mystery of this day. God grant, when you come to the table of Jesus Christ, when you receive from our hands the bread and the wine, the symbols of his love, when in his name we say to you, *This is my body, this is my blood*; you may answer, from the bottom of a soul penetrated with this love, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

I. Let us consider the impressions of the love of

Christ on us in regard to *the vehemence of those desires, and the vivacity of those sentiments, which are excited by it in the soul of a real Christian.* I am well aware that lively sentiments, and vehement desires, seem entirely chimerical to some people. There are many persons, who imagine that the degree, to which they have carried piety, is the highest that can be attained; that there is no going beyond it; and that all higher pretensions are unsubstantial, and enthusiastical. Agreeably to this notion, they think it right to strike out of the list of real virtues as many as their preachers recommend of this kind, although they seem celebrated in scripture, and beautifully exemplified in the lives of the holy men of old. I am speaking now of zeal and fervour. This pretence, all extravagant as it is, seems to be founded on reason, and has I know not what of the serious and grave in its extravagance. It is impossible, say they, that abstract truths should make the same impressions, on men composed of flesh and blood, as sensible objects do. Now all is abstract in religion. An invisible Redeemer, invisible assistance, an invisible judge, invisible punishments, invisible rewards.

Were the people, whom I oppose, to attribute their coldness and indifference to their own frailty; were they endeavouring to correct it; were they succeeding in attempts to free themselves from it; we would not reply to their pretence: but, when they are systematically cold and indolent; when, not content with a passive obedience to these deplorable dispositions, they refuse to grant the ministers of the

gospel the liberty of attacking them ; when they pretend that we should meditate on the doctrines of redemption and on a geometrical calculation with equal coolness ; that these words, “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to save it,” should be pronounced with the same indifference as these, “ The whole is greater than a part ;” this is the height of injustice. We are not obliged, we think, to reason with people of this kind, and while they remain destitute of that faculty, without which they cannot enter into those demonstrations, which we could produce on this article, it would be in vain to pretend to convince them.

After all, we glory in being treated by persons of this kind in the same manner, in which they would have treated saints of the highest order, those eminent pietists, who felt the fine emotions, which they style enthusiasm and fanaticism. What impressions of religion, had Moses, David, Elias, and many other saints, a list of whom we have not time to produce ? Were the sentiments of those men cold, who uttered their emotions in such language as this ? “ O Lord ! I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,” *Exod.* xxxiii. 18. “ O Lord ! forgive their sin, or blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book,” *chap.* xxxii. 32. “ I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts,” *1 Kings* xix. 10. “ The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,” *Psal.* lxxix. 9. “ How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. When shall I come, and appear before God ? Before thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God !” *Psal.* lxxxiv. 1—3.

“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!” chap. xlii. 1, 2.

“Love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as the grave. The coals thereof are coals of fire. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it,” Cant. viii. 6, 7.

If religion hath produced such lively sentiments, such vehement desires in the hearts of those believers, who saw in a very imperfect manner the objects, that are most capable of producing them, I mean the cross, and all its mysteries, what emotions ought not to be excited in us, who behold them in a light so clear?

Ah, sinner! thou miserable victim of death and hell, recollect the means that grace hath employed to deliver thee! raised from the bottom of a black abyss, contemplate the love that brought thee up, behold, stretch thy soul, and measure the dimensions of it. Represent to thyself the Son of God enjoying in the bosom of his Father ineffable delights, himself the object of his adorable Father's love. Behold the Son of God casting his eyes on this earth, touched with a sight of the miseries into which sin had plunged the wretched posterity of Adam; forming from all eternity the generous design of suffering in thy stead, and executing his purpose in the fulness of time. See him, whom angels adore, uniting himself to mortal flesh in the virgin's womb, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger at Bethlehem. Represent to thyself Jesus suffering the just displeasure of God in the garden of

Gethsemane ; sinking under the weight of thy sins, with which he was charged ; crying in the extremity of his pain, “ O my Father ! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! ” See Jesus passing over the brook Cedron, carrying to Calvary his cross, execrated by an unbridled populace, fastened to the infamous instrument of his punishment, crowned with thorns, and rent asunder with nails ; losing sight for a while of the love of his Father, which constituted all his peace and joy ; bowing under the last stroke, and uttering these tragical words, which ought to make all sinners shed tears of blood, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ” Ah ! philosophical gravity ! cool reasoning ! how misemployed are ye in meditating these deep mysteries ! “ How excellent is thy loving-kindnesses, O God ! ” Psal. xxxvi. 7. “ My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches,” Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. “ The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,” Rom. v. 5. “ I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Gal. ii. 20. “ He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” This is the language of a heart inflamed with an idea of the love of Christ.

II. Let us consider the impressions of the love of Jesus Christ in regard to *the different receivers of it. The love of Christ constraineth us*, that is to say *us believers*, whatever rank we occupy in the church: but in a particular manner *us apostles* of the Lord. I have already intimated, that my text may be considered as an explication of what related to the apostles in the foregoing verses. What idea had St. Paul given of apostleship in the preceding verses? He had represented these holy men as all taken up with the duties of their office; as surmounting the greatest obstacles; as triumphing over the most violent conflicts in the discharge of their function; as acquitting themselves with a rectitude of conscience capable of sustaining the strictest scrutiny of men, yea of God himself; as deeply sensible of the honour that God had put upon them, by calling them to such a work; as devoting all their labours, all their diligence, and all their time to the salvation of the souls of men. We must repeat all the foregoing chapters, were we to confirm these observations by the apostle's own words. In these chapters we meet with the following expressions. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," 2 Cor. i. 12. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place," chap. ii. 14. "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ," ver. 17. "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not

stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" chap. iii. 7, 8. "All things are for your sakes, that abundant grace might redound to the glory of God," chap. iv. 15. To the same purpose are the words immediately preceding the text. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." What cause produced all these noble effects? What object animated St. Paul, and the other apostles, to fill up the noble character they bore in a manner so glorious? St. Paul tells you in the text, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" that is to say, the love of Jesus Christ to his church makes such deep and lively impressions on our hearts, that we can never lose sight of it. We think we can never take too much pains for the good of a society, which Jesus Christ so tenderly loves. We are so filled with gratitude for his condescension, first for incorporating us into this august body, and next for substituting us to act in his place, that we rejoice in every opportunity of sacrificing all to express our sense of it.

These are the true sentiments of a minister of the Gospel. When I speak of a minister of the Gospel, I do not mean a minister by trade and profession only, I mean a minister by inclination and affection. For, my brethren, there are two sorts of ministers, the one I may justly denominate trading ministers, the other affectionate ministers. A trading minister, who considers the functions of his ministry in temporal views only, who studies the evidences and doc-

trines of religion, not to confirm himself, but to convince others, who puts on the exterior of piety, but is destitute of the sentiments of it, is a character sordid and base, I had almost said, odious and execrable. What character can be more odious and execrable, than that of a man, who gives evidence of a truth, which he himself does not believe? Who excites the most lively emotions in an auditory, while he himself is less affected than any of his hearers? But there is also a minister by inclination and affection, who studies the truths of religion, because they present to him the most sublime objects that a reasonable creature can contemplate, and who speaks with eagerness and vehemence on these truths, because, he perceives, they only are worthy of governing intelligent beings.

What effects does a meditation of the love of God in Christ produce on the heart of such a minister? St. Paul mentions the effects in the text, *The love of Christ constraineth, surroundeth, presseth, transporteth him.* My brethren, pardon me if I say the greatest part of you are not capable of entering into these reflections; for, as you consider the greatest mysteries of the gospel only in a vague and superficial manner, you neither know the solidity nor the beauty of them, you neither perceive the foundation, the connection, nor the glory of them. Hence it is, that your minds are unhappy when they attend long to these subjects, reading tires you, meditation fatigues you, a discourse of an hour wears out all your patience, the langour of your desires answers to the nature of your applications, and your sacrifices to

religion correspond to the faintness of those desires, and to the dulness of those applications which produced them. It was not thus with St. Paul, nor is it thus with such a minister of the gospel as I have described. As he meditates he learns; as he learns, his desire of knowing increaseth. He sees the whole chain of wonders, that God hath wrought for the salvation of men; he admires to see a promise made to Adam renewed to Abraham; he rejoices to find a promise renewed to Abraham confirmed to Moses; he is delighted to see a promise confirmed to Moses published by the prophets, and long after that publication accomplished by Jesus Christ. Charmed with all these beauties, he thinks it felicity to enter into the views and the functions of Jesus Christ, and to become *a worker together with him*, chap. vi. 1. this work engrosses all his thoughts; he lives only to advance it; he sacrificeth all to this great design, he is *beside himself*. Why? *The love of Christ constraineth him*.

III. Let us add a few considerations on the impressions of the love of Jesus Christ in regard to “the consolations which they afford in the miseries of life, and in the agonies of death.”

By what unheard of secret does the Christian surmount pain? By what unheard of secret does he find pleasure in the idea of death? St. Paul informs us in the text. “The love of Christ possesseth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” *If one died for all, then were all dead*, this is the source of the consolations of a dying man, this is the only rational system that men have opposed

against the fears of death. All beside are vain and feeble, not to say stupid and absurd.

What can be more improper to support us under the fear of death than the presumptions, the uncertainties, the tremulous hopes of a Socrates, or a Seneca, or other pagan philosophers?

What can be less likely to arm us against the fear of death than distant consequences drawn from confused notions of the nature of the soul, such as natural religion affords? What can be less substantial than vague speculations on the benevolence of the Supreme Being?

Can any thing be more extravagant, can any thing be less capable of supporting us under the fear of death, than that art which worldlings use, of avoiding the sight of it, and of stupifying the soul in tumult and noise?

Let us not assume a brutal courage; let us not affect an intrepidity, which we are incapable of maintaining, and which will deceive us, when the enemy comes. Poor mortal! victim of death and hell! do not say, *I am increased with goods, and have need of nothing*, Rev. iii. 17. while every voice around thee cries, *Thou art poor and miserable, blind and naked*. Let us acknowledge our miseries. Every thing in dying terrifies me.

The *pains* that precede it, terrify me. I shudder, when I see a miserable creature burning with a fever, suffocated, tormented, enduring more on a death-bed than a criminal suffers on a scaffold or a wheel. When I see this, I say to myself, This is the state into which I must shortly come.

'The *sacrifices*, to which death calls us, terrify me. I am not able, without rending my soul with insufferable grief, I am not able to look at the dismal vail, that is about to cover every object of my delight. Ah! how can I bear to contemplate myself dissolving my strongest bonds, leaving my nearest relations, quitting, for ever quitting my most tender friends, and tearing myself from my own family!

The *state* into which death brings my *body*, terrifies me. I cannot without horror figure to myself my funeral, my coffin, my grave, my organs, to which my Creator hath so closely united my soul, cold and motionless, without feeling and life.

Above all, *the idea of a just tribunal*, before which death will place me, terrifies me. My hair starts and stiffens on my head, my blood freezes in my veins, my thoughts tremble and clash, my knees smite together, when I reflect on these words of St. Paul just before my text, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," ver. 10. Miserable I! I, who have so often sinned against my own light; I, who have so often forgotten my Creator; I, who have so often been a scourge to my neighbour; so often a scandal to the church; Wretched I! I must "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the things done in my body, whether they be good or bad!" What an idea! What a terrible, what a desperate idea!

The impressions which an idea of the love of Christ makes upon my soul, efface those gloomy im-

pressions which an idea of death had produced there. *The love of Christ* consoles my soul and dissipates all my fears. *If one died for all, then were all dead,* is a short system against the fear of death.

*Jesus Christ died for all.* The pains of death terrify me no more. When I compare what Jesus Christ appoints me to suffer with what he suffered for me, my pains vanish, and seem nothing to me. Beside, how can I doubt, whether he, who had so much love as to die for me, will support me under the pains of death? Having been *tried in all points like as we are*, will he not be *touched with a feeling of my infirmities*, and deliver me when I am tried as he was?

*Jesus Christ died for all.* The sacrifices that death requires of me, terrify me no more. I am fully persuaded, God will indemnify me for all that death takes from me, and he who gave me his own Son, “will with him also freely give me all things,” Rom. viii. 32.

*Jesus Christ died for all.* The state to which death reduces my *body*, terrifies me no more. Jesus Christ hath sanctified my grave, and his resurrection is a pledge of mine.

*Jesus Christ died for all.* The *tribunal* before which death places me, hath nothing in it to terrify me. Jesus Christ hath silenced it. The blows of divine justice fell on his head, and he is the guardian of mine. Thus “the love of Christ presseth, covereth, and surroundeth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.”

IV. The impressions of the love of Christ on us are considerable, in regard to that *universal obedience* with which the tender love of a Redeemer inspires us. This is the meaning of these words, “he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” Of the characters, the motives, the pleasures of this universal obedience, you cannot be ignorant, my brethren. They make the chief matter of all the discourses that are addressed to you; and they have been particularly the topics for some weeks past, while we were going over the history of the passion of Christ, a history that may be truly called a narration of Christ’s love to you. I will therefore confine myself to one reflection.

I make this reflection in order to prevent mistakes on this disposition of mind, of which my text speaks. Let us not imagine, that St. Paul, by exhorting us to live only to Christ, intends to dissuade us from living for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. On the contrary, I have already recommended that sense of the words which some commentators give; “the love of Christ constraineth us,” that is, say some, “the love of Christ unites us in bonds of love to one another;” and I have already shewn, that if this could not be proved to be the precise meaning of St. Paul in the text, it is however, a very just notion in itself, and a doctrine taught by the apostle in express words in other places. But what I have not yet remarked is this. In the opinion of some interpreters there is a close connection between the words of my text, “the love of Christ

constraineth us,” and the preceding words, “whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God ; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.” According to this notion, St Paul having described the two parts of devotion, or if ye will, the two kinds of Christian devotion, unites both in this general expression, *Live unto Christ*. The one is the devotion of the closet, the other that of society. Closet devotion is expressed in the words, “whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” This is expressive of the effusions of a soul, who, having excluded the world, and being alone with his God, unfolds a heart penetrated with love to him, “Whether we be sober, it is for your cause, for the love of Christ uniteth us,” signifies the state of a soul, who having quitted the closet, having returned to his natural course of thought, and having entered into the society in which God has appointed him to live, makes the happiness of his neighbour his principal occupation.

I say of this interpretation, as I said of a former, I am not sure, that it contains precisely the meaning of St. Paul in the text : but it contains an idea very just in itself, and which the apostle, as well as other inspired writers, has expressed elsewhere. Would ye then perform this necessary duty, agreeably to this sense of the text ? Would they “who live not live to themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again ?” Let your devotion have two parts. Let your life be divided into two sorts of devotion, the devotion of the closet, and the devotion of society.

Practise private devotion, be *beside yourself unto God*. Believer ! Is it right for thee to indemnify thyself by an immediate communion with thy God for the violence that is done to thine affection, when thou art obliged, either wholly to lose sight of him, or to see him only through mediums, which conceal a part of his beauty ? Well then, enter into thy closet, shut thy door against the world, flee from society, and forget it, give thyself up to the delights which holy souls feel, when they absorb themselves in God. Beseech him, after the example of inspired men in their private interviews with him, to manifest himself to you in a more intimate manner. Say to him as they said, “ O Lord, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. It is good for me to draw near to God. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee,” Exod. xxxiii. 18. Psal. lxxxiii. 28, 25.

But, after thou hast performed the devotion of the closet, practise the devotion of society. After thou hast been *beside thyself to God*, be *sober to thy neighbour*. Let *love unite thee* to the rest of mankind. Visit the prisoner ; relieve the sick ; guide the doubtful ; assist him who stands in need of your credit. Distrust a piety that is not ingenious at rendering thee useful to society. St. Paul somewhere says, “ All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This proposition seems hyperbolic. Some expositors have thought it justifiable, by supposing, that the apostle speaks here only of the second table of the law. Their supposition is unnecessary. In some respects

all virtues are comprised in this command, *thou shalt love thy neighbour*. To love our neighbour, we must be *humble*. When we have lofty notions of ourselves, it is impossible to pay that attention to a neighbour which his merit demands. To love our neighbour, we must be *patient*. When the first obstacle discourages us, or when the least opposition inflames our tempers; it is impossible to enter into those details which love for a neighbour requires. In order to discharge the duty of *loving* a neighbour, we must be *moderate in our pleasures*. When we are devoted to pleasure, it is impossible to endure those disagreeables, which love to a neighbour demands. Above all, to *love a neighbour*, we must *love God*. Remember the saying of St. John, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," 1 John iv. 20. For what is love? Is it not that sympathy which forms between two intelligent beings a conformity of ideas and sentiments? And how can we flatter ourselves, that we have a conformity of ideas with a God of love, who hath communicated to his creatures a conformity of sentiments and ideas, if we withhold our affection from his creatures, and live only to ourselves? "He then, who saith, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." If thou dost not love him, thou art (permit me to say it,) thou art a visionary, a fanatic.

Who is a visionary? who is a fanatic? He is a man who creates fanciful ideas of God. He is a man who frames an arbitrary morality. He is a man, who, under pretence of living to God, forgets what he owes to his fellow-creatures. And this is exactly

character of the man, whose closet devotion makes him neglect social religion. Ah! hadst thou just notions of God, thou wouldst know, that *God is love*; and hadst thou just notions of morality, thou wouldst know, that it is impossible for God, who is love, to prescribe any other love to us, than that which is the essence of all moral duties.

All these ideas, my brethren, would require much enlargement: but time fails. I shall not scruple so much the closing of this subject to-day, without considering it in every point of view, as I should do in our ordinary exercises. I descend from this pulpit to conduct you to the table of the Lord, on which lie the symbols of that love of which we have been speaking, and they will exhort you in language more forcible than mine to reduce all the doctrine of this day to practice.

We have been preaching to you fervour, zeal, transports of divine love; attend to those symbols, they preach these virtues to you in words more powerful than ours. Say to yourselves, when you approach the holy table: It was on the evening that preceded the terrible day of my Redeemer's infinite sufferings, that he appointed this commemorative supper. This bread is a memorial of his body, which was bruised for my sins on the cross. The wine is a memorial of that blood which so plentifully flowed from his wounds to ransom me from my sins. In remembering this love is there any ice that will not thaw? Is there any marble that will not break? will not love the most vehement animate and inflame you?

We have been preaching that the love of Jesus Christ ought to animate you. Hear the voice of these symbols, they preach this truth to you in language more powerful than ours. There is not to-day among you an old man so infirm; nor a poor man so mean; nor a citizen so unknown to his fellow citizens, that he may not approach the holy table, and receive from sovereign wisdom the mysterious repast.

But, ministers of the gospel, we have been saying, ought more than other men to be animated with the love of Christ. My dear colleagues in the work of the Lord, hear these symbols; they preach to you in language more powerful than ours. What a glory hath God put upon us in choosing to commit to us such a ministry of reconciliation? What an honour to be called to preach such a gospel! What an honour to be appointed dispensers of these rich favours, which God to-day bestows on this assembly! But, at the same time, what love ought the love of God to us to excite in our hearts? The heart of a minister of the gospel should be an altar on which divine fire should burn with unquenchable flame.

We have been preaching to you, that the love of Christ will become to you an inexhaustible source of consolation in the distresses of life, and in the agonies of death. Hear these symbols; they preach these truths to you in language more forcible than ours. Hear them; they say to you in the name of God, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob! When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt," Isa. xli. 14.

We have been preaching to you an universal obedience to the will of God. Hear these symbols; they preach this truth to you in language more forcible than ours. And what exceptions would you make in your obedience to a Saviour, who does for you what you are going to see, to hear, and to experience? What can you refuse to a Saviour, who gave you his blood and his life; to a Saviour, who, on his throne, where he is receiving the adorations of Angels and Seraphims, thinks of your bodies, your souls, your salvation: who still wishes to hold the most tender and intimate communion with you?

My dear brethren, I hope so many exhortations will not be addressed to you in vain. I hope we shall not be ministers of vengeance among you to-day. You are not going, I trust, by receiving sacramental bread and wine at our hands to-day, to eat and drink your own condemnation. I hope the windows of heaven will be opened to-day, and benedictions from above poured out on this assembly. The angels, I trust, are waiting to rejoice in your conversion. May Jesus Christ testify his approbation of your love to him by shedding abroad rich effusions of his love among you! May this communion be remembered with pleasure when you come to die, and may the pleasing recollection of it felicitate you through all eternity! O thou *mighty one of Israel*! O Jesus, our hope and joy, hear and ratify our prayers! Amen. To him, as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



## SERMON VIII.

*The Life of Faith.*



HABAKKUK ii. 4.

*The just shall live by his Faith.*

THE words of our text, which open to us a wide field of reflections, may be taken in two senses. The first may be called a moral sense, and the last a theological sense. The first regards the circumstances of the Jews, when the prophet Habakkuk delivered this prophecy; and the last respects that great object, on which believers have fixed their eyes in all ages of the church.

Habakkuk, (for I enter into the matter immediately, in order to have full time to discuss the subject,) began to prophecy before the destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was raised up to announce the progress of that scourge, or, as another prophet calls him, that *hammer of the whole earth*, Jer. i. 23. Habakkuk, astonished, and, in a manner, offended at his own predictions, derives strength from the attributes of God to support himself under this trial, and expresseth himself in this manner; “Art thou not everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy one? We shall not die,

O Lord! thou hast ordained them for judgment, and, O Mighty God! thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil," chap. i. 12, 13.

The prophet goes further. Not content with vague ideas on a subject so interesting, he intreats God to give him some particular knowledge by revelation of the destiny of a tyrant, who boasted of insulting God, pillaging his temple, and carrying his people into captivity, *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me.* The Rabbies gives a very singular exposition of the words, *I will stand upon my watch*, and they translate them, *I will confine myself in a circle.* The prophet, say they, drew a circle, and made a solemn vow, that he would not go out of it till God had unfolded those dark dispensations to him, which seemed so injurious to his perfections. This was almost like the famous consul, who, being sent by the Roman senate to Antiochus, made a circle round that prince, and said to him, Either you shall accept the conditions of peace which I offer you, before you go out of this circle, or in the name of the Senate I will declare war against you.\*

God yielded to the desire of his servant; he informed him of the dreadful vicissitudes which Nebuchadnezzar should experience; and of the return of the Jews into their own country: but at the same time he assured him, that these events were at a considerable distance, that no man could rejoice in them

\* M. Popilius Læna a Antiochus Epiphanes dans Vellei Paerc, Hist. Rom. l. j.

except he looked forward into futurity, but that faith in the accomplishment of these promised blessings would support believers under that deluge of calamities which was coming on the church. "The vision is yet for an appointed time. At the end it shall speak and shall not lie." If the Lord seem to you to defer the accomplishment of his promises too long, wait for it with all that deference, which finite creatures owe to the supreme Intelligence that governs the world. He, you will find, *will not tarry* beyond his appointed time. *The soul, which is lifted up*, that is to say, the man who would fix a time for God to crush tyrants, *is not upright*, but wanders after his own speculations: *but the just shall live by his faith.*

This is what I call the moral sense of the text, relative to the peculiar circumstances of the Jews in the time of the prophet, and in this sense St. Paul applies my text to the circumstances of the Hebrews, who were called to endure many afflictions in this life, and to defer the enjoyment of their reward till the next. "Ye have need of patience, (says the apostle,) that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 36—38.

But these words also have a theological meaning, which regards those great objects on which believers have fixed their eyes in all ages of the church. This is the sense which St. Paul gives the words in his epistle to the Romans. "The righteousness of God

is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith,*" chap. i. 17. In the same sense he uses the passage in the epistle to the Galatians, "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident; for the just shall live by faith," chap. iii. 11. In this sense I intend to consider the text now, and to apply all the time allotted for this discourse to this view of it.

In order to develope the subject, I will do three things.

I. I will explain the terms of this proposition, *the just shall live by his faith.*

II. I will prove the truth of it.

III. I will endeavour to remove the difficulties, which may attend the subject to some of you.

I. Let us explain the terms of this proposition, *the just shall live by his faith.* In order to understand the subject, we must inquire who is the *just*, what is the *life*, and what the *faith*, of which the prophet, or rather St. Paul after the prophet, speaks.

Who is this *just*, or righteous man? To form a clear notion of this, it is necessary with St. Paul to distinguish two sorts of righteousness, a righteousness according to the law, and a righteousness according to faith.

By righteousness after the law, I understand that which man wishes to derive from his own personal ability. By righteousness of faith, I understand that which man derives from a principle foreign from himself. A man who is just, or to speak more precisely, a man who pretends to be just according to this first righteousness, consents to be examined and

judged according to the utmost rigour of the law. He desires the justice of God to discover any thing in him that deserves punishment; and he hath the audacity to put himself on such a trial as justice pronounceth in these words of the law, *If a man do these things he shall live in them*, Lev. xviii. 5. He, on the contrary, who is just according to the righteousness of faith, acknowledgeth himself guilty of many and great sins, which deserve the most rigorous punishment: but he doth not give himself up to that despair, into which the idea of his criminality would naturally hurry him; he is not afraid of those punishments, which, he owns, he deserves; he hopes to live, because he expects God will deal with him, not according to what he is in himself, but according to his relation to Jesus Christ.

That these are the ideas which must be affixed to the term *just*, is evident from these words of St. Paul; "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him:" remark these words, "not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. This passage sufficiently shews the sense in which the term *just* is to be taken, and this term needs no further elucidation.

The second also is easily explained. The *just* shall *live*, that is to say, although divine justice had condemned him to eternal death, yet he shall be

freed from it; and although he had rendered himself unworthy of eternal felicity, yet he shall enjoy it. This is so plain, that it is needless to enlarge on this term. We intend to insist most on that term which is the most difficult, the third term, *faith*, I mean, "The just shall live by his faith."

To have faith, or to believe, is an expression so vague in itself, and taken in so many different senses in scripture, that we cannot take too much care in determining its precise meaning. Faith is sometimes a disposition common to the righteous and the wicked; sometimes it is the distinguishing character of a Christian, and of Christianity; sometimes it is put for the virtue of Abraham, who was called the *father of the faithful*, Rom. iv. 11. by excellence; and sometimes it stands for the credence of devils, and the terrors that agitate them in hell are ascribed to it.

The variety of this signification arises from this consideration; faith is a disposition of mind, that changeth its nature according to the various objects which are proposed to it. If the object presented to faith be a particular object, faith is a particular disposition; and if the object be general, faith is a general virtue. If we believe a past event, we are said to have faith, for "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 3. If we believe a future event, we are said to have faith, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," ver. 1. When the woman of Canaan believed that Jesus Christ would grant her petition, she was said to have

faith, "O woman, great is thy faith," Matt. xv. 28. In a similar case, our Lord says, "I have not found such faith in Israel," chap. viii. 10. When the disciples believed, that they should work miracles in virtue of the name of Jesus Christ, it was called a having of faith, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall obey you," chap. xvii. 20. In a word, every act of the mind acquiescing in a revealed truth is called faith in the style of scripture.

But, among these different notions, there is one which is particular, there is a faith to which scripture ascribes extraordinary praise. Saving faith, the faith that Jesus Christ requires of all Christians and of which it is said, "through faith are ye saved," Eph. ii. 8. and elsewhere, whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life, John iii. 16. this is the faith of which the text speaks, and of the nature of which we are now inquiring. To comprehend this, we must trace the question to its principle, and examine what is the object of this faith.

The great and principal object, which is presented to the faith that justifies, without doubt is Jesus Christ as dying and offering himself to the justice of his Father. On this account St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Epist. ii. 2. Faith contemplates the objects that are displayed in the cross of Jesus Christ, and persuades the Christian, that there is no other way of obtaining salvation, or, to use the language of scrip-

ture, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. It inspires him with a sincere desire of lodging under the shadow of his cross, or, to speak in plain scripture language without a figure, of being "found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law : but that, which is through the faith of Christ." This is a general vague account of the nature of faith.

But as this notion of faith is vague, it is subject to all the inconveniences of vague ideas ; it is equivocal, and open to illusion. We are not saved by wishing to be saved ; nor are we justified because we barely desire to be justified.

We must, therefore, distinguish two sorts of desires to share the benefits of the death of Christ. There is a desire, unconnected with all the acts, which God hath been pleased to require of us, of this we are not speaking. There is also another kind of desire to share the benefits of the death of Christ, a desire that animates us with a determination to participate these benefits, whatever God may require, and whatever sacrifices we may be obliged to make to possess them. This desire, we think, constitutes the essence of faith.

The true believer inquires with the strictest scrutiny what God requires of him, and he finds three principal articles. Jesus Christ, he perceives, is proposed, (if you will allow me to speak thus,) to his mind, to his heart, and to his conduct. Faith receives Jesus Christ in all these respects ; in regard to the mind, to regulate its ideas by the decisions of

Jesus Christ alone ; in regard to the heart, to embrace that felicity only, which Jesus Christ proposeth to its hope ; in regard to the conduct to make the laws of Jesus Christ the only rules of action. Faith, then, is that disposition of soul, which receives Jesus Christ wholly, as a teacher, a promiser, a legislator. Faith will enable us to admit the most incomprehensible truths, the most abstruse doctrines, the most profound mysteries, if Jesus Christ reveal them. Faith will engage us to wish for that kind of felicity, which is the most opposite to the desires of flesh and blood, if Jesus Christ promise it. Faith will inspire us with resolution to break the strongest ties, to mortify the most eager desires, if Jesus Christ command us to do so. This, in our opinion, is the only true notion of saving faith.

The terms of the proposition being thus explained, we will go on to explain the whole proposition, *the just shall live by his faith.* All depends on one distinction, which we shall do well to understand, and retain. There are two kinds, or causes of justification, The first is the fundamental or meritorious cause ; the second is the instrumental cause. We call that the fundamental cause of our justification, which requires, merits and lays the foundation of our justification and salvation. By the instrumental cause, we mean those acts which it hath pleased God to prescribe to us, in order to our participation of this acquired salvation, and without which *Christ becomes of no effect to us*, according to the language of scripture, Gal. v. 4. The fundamental cause of our justification is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone.

It is Jesus Christ independently on our faith and love. If Jesus Christ had not died, our faith, our repentance, and all our efforts to have been saved would have been in vain, *for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 11. There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 14.* Verily, If any thing could conciliate God to men, ye excruciating agonies of my Saviour! thou perfect satisfaction! thou bloody death! sacrifice proposed to man immediately after his fall! ye only, only ye could produce this great effect! Accursed, accursed be he who preacheth another gospel! *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world, Gal. vi. 14.*

But when we inquire how we are justified, we do not inquire the meritorious cause of salvation; we suppose salvation already merited; but we ask, what is essential to our participation of it? To this we reply, faith, faith alone, but such a faith however, as we have described, a living faith, faith as a principle of renovation; faith, which receiveth the decisions of Jesus Christ, embraceth his promises, and enables us to devote ourselves to his service. This is the sense in which we understand the proposition in the text, *the just shall live by his faith.* It is not sufficient to explain the proposition, we must prove, and establish it against erroneous divines, and loose casuists. This is our second article.

II. We oppose our system, first against that of some erroneous divines. We have a controversy on

this subject, not only with those enemies of our mysteries, who consider Jesus Christ only as a legislator, distinguished from other moralists only by the clearness of his moral principles, and the power of his motives: but we have also a famous dispute with the divines of the church of Rome on this head, and we attack that part of their doctrine, which we call the merit of good works.

In order to understand this controversy clearly, we must observe, that the members of the church of Rome are divided into two classes on this article. In the first class we place those divines, who, without any restrictions or qualifications, maintain this unwarrantable thesis, good works merit heaven, as bad ones deserve hell. The second affirm, that good works do, indeed, merit heaven: but in virtue of the mercy of God, and of the new covenant, that he hath made with mankind. When we dispute against the errors of the church of Rome we should carefully distinguish these opinions. It must be granted, protestants have not always done so. We speak as if the church of Rome as a body held this thesis, good works merit heaven, as bad ones deserve hell; whereas this is an opinion peculiar to only some of their divines; it has been censured and condemned by a bull of Pius V. and Gregory XIII. as one of our most celebrated divines has proved, whom, although his pious design of conciliating our disputes may have made him rather exceed his evidence in some of his affirmations, we cannot contradict on this article, because he proves it by incontestible evidence.\* But the second opinion is professedly

\* See the Theses of Mons'r Louis Le Blanc.

that of the whole church of Rome. This canon, which I am going to repeat to you, is the decision of the council of Trent. "Eternal life is to be proposed to the children of God both as a gift mercifully offered to them thro' Jesus Christ, and as a promised reward equitably rendered to their merits and good works in virtue of this promise."\*

We oppose our system against both these opinions. To say, with the first of these divines, that good works merit heaven, as bad works deserve hell, is to affirm a proposition, which Rome itself denies. What! works that bear no proportion to objects of our hope, a few meditations, a few prayers, a few alms-deeds! What! would the sacrifice of our whole selves merit that *eternal weight of glory*, which is to be revealed in us? What! can works, that are not performed by our power, works, that proceed from grace, works, which owe their design and execution to God, who *worketh to will, and to do*, as St. Paul expresseth it, Phil. ii. 13. can these attain, do these deserve a *weight of glory* for us? Does not the whole that we possess come from God? If we know the doctrines of revelation, is it not because *the Father of glory hath enlightened the eyes of our understanding*? Eph. i. 17, 18. If we believe his decisions, is it not because he gave us faith? If we suffer for his gospel, is it not because he gives us strength *to suffer*? Phil. i. 29. What! works, that are of them-

\* Proponenda est vita eterna, et tanquam Gratiae filiis dei per Christum Jesum, misericorditer promissa et tanquam merces ex ipsius Dei promissione, bonis ipsorum operibus et meritis fideliter reddenda. Concil. Trid. Sess. vi. c. 16.

selves inseparably connected with our stations, and therefore duties, indispensable engagements, debts, and debts, alas! which we discharge so badly, can these merit a reward? God forbid we should entertain such an opinion! Even Cardinal Bellarmine, after he had endeavoured more than any other writer to establish the merit of good works, with one stroke of his pen effaced all his arguments, for, said he, on account of the precariousness of our own righteousness, and the danger of vain glory, the safest method is to have recourse to the mercy of God, and to trust in his mercy alone.†

But we oppose also the other opinion, that we have mentioned. For, although it may seem to be purified from that venom, which we have remarked in the first, yet it is attended with two inconveniencies.

1. It is contradictory in terms. A work that derives its value from the mercy of God is called meritorious. What an association of terms? Merit, Mercy. If it be of mercy, how is it meritorious; If it be meritorious, how is it of mercy? "If by grace, then, is it no more of works: but if it be of works then is it no more grace," Rom. xi. 6. You know the language of St. Paul.

2. This opinion furnisheth a pretext to human pride, and whether this be not sufficiently evident, let experience judge. Do we not often see people, who, not being capable of entering into those theological distinctions, which are contained in the writings of their teachers, think by their good works, and often by their superstitions so to merit eternal felicity,

† Card. Bell. Controvers. T. iv. De Jastif. Lib. 1.

that God cannot deprive them of it without subverting the laws of his justice? Hath not the church of Rome other doctrines, which lead to this error? Is not supererogation of this kind? According to this a man may not only fully perform all his engagements, but he may even exceed them. Is not the doctrine, that excludes merit, considered by many of the Roman community as a mark of heresy? If we believe an anecdote in the life of Charles V. it was principally for having written on the walls of his room several passages of Scripture excluding the merit of works, that he was suspected of adhering to our doctrines, and that the inquisition deliberated on punishing him after his death as an heretic. The inquisitors would certainly have proceeded against him, had not Philip II. been given to understand that the son of an heretic was incapable of succeeding to the crown of Spain\*.

Against this system we oppose that which we have established. We consider Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone, as the meritorious cause of our justification. If faith justifies us, it is as an instrument, that of itself can merit nothing, and which contributes to our justification only as it capacitates us for participating the benefits of the death of Christ. These were the ideas of the ancient church. The divines of primitive times taught, that men were righteous, who acknowledged their guilt, and that they had nothing of their own but sin, and who, although they were saints, yet attributed nothing to their own merit. On those principles, we find, in an ancient work attributed to

\* L'Abbe de S. Real, Histoire de Don Carlos.

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, the sick were comforted in this manner. "Dost thou trust in the merit of Jesus Christ alone for salvation?" The sick person replied, *I do*. The assistant then added, "Praise God to the last moment of your life; place all your confidence in him; and, when the Supreme Judge of the world calls you to his tribunal, say to him, Lord! I interpose between thy righteous judgment and myself the death of thy Son, and I ascribe no merit to any good work of my own."

Thus we oppose the merit of works. But it is dangerous for those, who preach to people gone to one extreme, to express themselves so as to seem to favour the opposite extreme. Although all our divines unanimously connect faith and holiness together, yet there is great reason to fear, our people carry their aversion against the doctrine of merit so far that they lose sight of this union of faith and obedience. A man, whose great labours in the church prevent our mentioning his name, while we reprove his error, has affirmed these propositions—the Gospel consists of promises only—Jesus Christ gave no precepts—we are under no other obligations than those of gratitude to obey the laws of religion—our souls are in no danger if we neglect them.

Against these ideas we again oppose our system of justification. We affirm, that justifying faith is a general principle of virtue and holiness; and that such a recourse to the mercy of God, as wicked Christians imagine, doth not justify in any sense. It doth not justify as the meritorious cause of our salvation; for to affirm this is to maintain an heresy.

We have said Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone is the foundation of our salvation, and our most ardent desire to participate the benefits of it is incapable of deserving them. It doth not justify as a condition. To affirm, that to have recourse to the grace of Jesus Christ is the only condition that the Gospel requires, is to mutilate the Gospel, apparently to widen beyond all scriptural bounds the way to heaven, and really to open a large and spacious road to eternal perdition.

If there be one in this assembly so unacquainted with Christianity as to suppose that he may be justified before God by a fruitless desire of being saved, and by a barren recourse to the death of Christ, let him attend to the following reflections.

1. Justifying faith is lively faith, a believer cannot live by a dead faith: but *faith without works is dead*, James ii. 20. Consequently the faith that gives life, is a faith containing, at least in principle, all virtues.

2. Justifying faith must assort with the genius of the covenant to which it belongs. Had the Gospel no other design than that of pardoning our sins, without subduing them, faith might then consist in a bare act of the mind accepting this part of the Gospel: but if the Gospel proposeth both to pardon sin, and to enable us to renounce it, faith, which hath to do with this covenant of grace, must needs involve both these articles. Now, who will pretend to say, the Gospel hath not both these blessings in view? And consequently, who can deny, that faith consists both in trusting the grace, and in obeying all the laws of the Gospel?

3. Justifying faith must include all the virtues, to which the Scripture attributes justification and salvation. Now, if you consult the oracles of God, you will perceive Scripture speaks a language that will not comport with the doctrine of fruitless faith. Sometimes salvation is attributed to love, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat," Matth. xxv. 34. Sometimes it is attributed to *hope*, *Hope maketh not ashamed*, Rom. v. 5. Sometimes to *faith*, *Whosoever believeth in him shall have eternal life*, John iii. 15. I ask now, to which virtue, strictly speaking, does salvation belong? to love, to hope, or to faith? Or rather, is it not clear, that, when scripture attributes salvation to one of these virtues, it doth not consider it separately, as subsisting in a distinct subject, but considers it as flowing from that general principle, which acquiesces in the whole Gospel?

4. Justifying faith must merit all the praises which are given to it in Scripture. What encomiums are bestowed on faith! It unites us to Jesus Christ. It crucifieth us as it were, *with him*, it *raiseth us up together*, and makes us *sit together with him in heavenly places*, in a word, it makes us *one with him as he is one with the Father*, Gal. ii. 20. Eph. ii. 6. and John xvii. 20. But the bare desire of salvation by Jesus Christ devoid of obedience to him, is this to be crucified with Jesus Christ? Is this to be risen with him? Is this to sit in heavenly places with him?

5. Justifying faith must enter into the spirit of the mystery, that acquires justification for us; I mean the mystery of the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. What

is the system of our churches on the mystery of satisfaction? Some divines among us have ventured to affirm, that God was entirely free either to exact the punishment due to sin, or to release mankind from all obligation to suffer it. He required a satisfaction, say they, because of its greater fitness to express to the whole universe his just abhorrence of sin.

But the generally received doctrine among us, is that although God was entirely free when he punished sin, yet he was necessarily inclined to do it by the perfection of his nature; and that as, being an uniform Spirit, it was *impossible for him to lie*, Heb. vi. 18. and contradict himself, so, being a just and holy Spirit, it was impossible for him to pardon sinners without punishing sin on some victim substituted in their stead.

We will not now compare these systems, nor allege the motives of our embracing one in preference to the other: But, this we affirm, choose which you will, either affords a demonstration in favour of our thesis.

In regard to the first, it may be justly said, What! hath God, think ye, so much love for holiness, and so much hatred of sin, that, although he was not inclined to exact a satisfaction by necessity of nature, yet he chose rather to do so than to let sin pass unpunished? Hath God, think you, sacrificed his Son, on account of the fitness of his sufferings to remove every shadow of tolerating sin? Do you believe this, and can you imagine, that a God, to whom sin is so extremely odious, can approve of a faith that is com-

patible with sin, and which never gives vice its death-wound?

The demonstration is equally clear in regard to those who embrace the general system of our churches. How can a man persuade himself, that the love of order is so essential to God, that he cannot without contradicting himself pardon the sinner, and not punish the sin; how, I say, can such a man persuade himself that such a faith as we have exploded can enable us to participate the pardoning benefits of the death of Christ?

Is it not evident, that these two suppositions make a God contradictory to himself, and represent his attributes as clashing with each other? In the first supposition, a God is conceived, to whom sin is infinitely odious; in the second a God is imagined, to whom sin is perfectly tolerable. In the first a God is conceived, who naturally and necessarily requires a satisfaction; in the second a God is imagined, who by a pliable facility of nature esteems a sinner although he derives from the satisfaction no motives to renounce his sin. In the first, God is conceived as placing the strongest barriers against sin, and as sacrificing the noblest victim to express his insuperable aversion to vice; in the second, God is imagined as removing all obstacles to sin, and protecting men in the practice of it, nothing contributing more to confirm wicked men in sin than the vain opinion, that, carry vice to what pitch they will, they may be reconciled to God by the mediation of Jesus Christ, whenever they wish for the benefits of his sacrifice.

To all these considerations, add one more on the unanimous opinion of all your ministers. In vain do you attempt to seek pretexts for sin in those scholastic disputes, and in those different methods which divines have struck out in establishing the doctrines of faith and justification. Your divines, I grant, have used expressions capable of very different meanings, on these articles. They are men, their geniusses, like those of the rest of mankind are finite, and they have discovered in the far greater part of all their systems the narrow limits of their minds. Intelligences, confined like ours, are necessarily stricken with a first truth more than with another truth, no less important and clear than the first. Every science, every course of study, afford proofs of the truth of this remark: but the present subject of our inquiry abounds with evidence of this sort. Some have been more struck with the necessity of believing the truths of speculation, than with that of performing the duties which belong to these truths. Others have been more affected with the necessity of performing the duties of religion, than with that of adhering to the speculative truths of it. Some, having lived among people believing the merit of works, have turned all their attention against the doctrine of merit, and have expressed themselves, perhaps without design, in a manner, that seemed to enervate the necessity of good works. Others, on the contrary, having lived among libertines, who did not believe, or who affected not to believe the necessity of good works have turned all the point of their genius against this per-

nicious doctrine, and in their turn have expressed themselves, perhaps without design, in a manner that seemed to favour the notion of merit. Nothing is so rare as a genius comprehending at once the whole of any subject. As nothing in the military art is so rare as that self-possession, which enables a general to pervade a whole army, and to be present, so to speak, in every part of the field of battle; so in the sciences, nothing is so uncommon as that kind of comprehensive attention, which enables a man always to think and speak in perfect harmony with himself, and so to avoid destroying one part of his thesis, while he establishes another part of it. But, after all, there is no real difference among your ministers on this article. Whatever method they take, they all agree, that no man can be a true Christian, who does not receive Jesus Christ as his prophet, priest, and king; that as faith unites us to Jesus Christ, it is impossible for the members of a head so holy to continue in sin. Now does not all this amount to a demonstration that saving faith transforms the heart?

Let us examine the objections which are made against this doctrine.

Is it pretended, that the design of excluding holiness from the essence of faith is to elevate the merit of the death of Christ? But, *O vain man!* Do not we elevate the merit of the death of Christ, we, who place it in our system as the only foundation; the alone cause of the salvation of man, excluding works entirely, however holy they may be?

Dost thou say, thy design is to humble man? But, *O vain man!* What can be more proper to humble man than our system, which shews him that those works are nothing, which do not proceed from the assistance of God; and that if God condescends to accept them, he does so through mere mercy, and not on account of their merit?

Dost thou add, that our system is contrary to experience, and dost thou allege the examples of many, who have been justified without performing one good work, and by the bare desire of being saved by Jesus Christ, as the converted thief, and many others, who have turned to God on a death-bed? But, *O vain man!* What have we been establishing? Have we said, that a faith, which had not produced good works, was not a true faith? No, we have only affirmed, that a true faith must necessarily be a principle of good works. It may happen, that a man may have this principle, and may not have any opportunity of expressing it by practice, and of bringing it into action; he hath it, however, in intention. In this sense we admit the maxims of St. Augustine, and if he did not understand it in our sense, it ought to be understood so, "Good works, says he, do not accompany justification; but they follow it." The thief, in one sense, strictly speaking, did no good work: but in another sense he did all good works. We say of him, as we say of Abraham, he did all in heart, in intention. Abraham, from the first moment of his vocation, was accounted to have abandoned his country, sacrificed his son Isaac, and wrought all those heroic actions of Chris-

tian faith, which made him a model for the whole church. In like manner, the converted thief visited all the sick, clothed all the naked, fed all the hungry, comforted all the afflicted, and was accounted to have done all the pious actions, of which faith is the principle, because he would infallibly have done them, had God afforded him opportunity.

Dost thou say, our justification and salvation flow from a decree made before the foundation of the world, and not from our embracing the gospel in time? But, *O vain man!* Do we deny the decree by shewing the manner of the accomplishment of it? Do we destroy the end by establishing the means? If your side can prove, without injuring the doctrine of decrees, that man is justified by a bare desire of being justified, can we injure the same doctrine by asserting, that this desire must proceed from the heart, and must needs aim to please God, as well as to be reconciled to him, and to share his love?

Dost thou still object, that, although our system is true in the main, yet it is always dangerous to publish it; because man has always an inclination to *sacrifice unto his own net, and burn incense unto his own drag*, Hab. i. 16. that by pressing the necessity of works, occasion is insensibly given to the doctrine of merit? But, allow me to ask, Is there no danger in the opposite system? If ours seem to favour one vice, does not the opposite system favour all vices? If ours seem to favour pride, does not the opposite system favour that, and with that all other vices, revenge, calumny, adultery, and incest? And, after all, should the abuse of a holy doctrine prevent the

use of it? Where, pray, are the men among us, who think to merit heaven by their good works? For our parts, we protest, my brethren! that, having examined a great number of consciences, we find the general inclination the other way; people are in general more inclined to a careless reliance on a kind of general grace than to an industrious purchase of happiness by good works. What is it, after all, that decoys thousands before our eyes into the broad way of destruction? Is it an opinion, after they have been very charitable, that they merit by charity? Is it an opinion, after they have been very humble, that they merit by humility? Ah! my brethren! the greatest part of you have so fully proved by your indisposition to piety, that you have no idea of the merit of good works, that there is no fear of ever establishing this doctrine among you. But, to form loose notions of obedience, to mutilate the covenant of grace, to render salvation the easiest thing in the world, to abound in flattering ourselves with hopes of salvation, although we live without love, without humility, without labouring to be saved; these are the rocks against which we split; these are the dangers from which we would free you; this is the monster that we would never cease to attack, till we have given it its death-wound.

I would then abhor myself, deplore my frailty, blush at the remembrance of my best duties, cast myself into the arms of divine mercy, and own all my felicity derivable from grace. I would own, it is grace that elects; grace which calls; grace that justifies; grace which sanctifies; grace that accepts

a sanctification always frail and imperfect : but at the same time, I would watch over myself, I would arouse myself to duty, I would *work out my salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. and, while I acknowledge grace does all, and my works merit nothing, I would act as if I might expect every thing from my own efforts.

Verily, Christians ! these are the two dispositions, which, above all others, we wish to excite in your minds and hearts. These are the two conclusions that you ought to draw from this discourse ; a conclusion of humility, and a conclusion of vigilance : A conclusion of humility, for behold the abyss into which sin had plunged you, and see the expence at which you were recovered from it. Man had originally a clear judgment, he knew his Creator, and the obedience that was due to him from his creatures. The path of happiness was open to him, and he was in full possession of power to walk in it. All on a sudden he sins, his privileges vanish, his knowledge is beclouded, and he is deprived of all his freedom : Man, man, who held the noblest dominion in nature, falls into the most abject of all kinds of slavery. Instantly the heavens *reveal his iniquity, the earth rises up against him*, Job xx. 27. lightnings flash in his eyes, thunders roll in his ears, and universal nature announces his final ruin. In order to rescue him from it, it was necessary for the mercy and justice of God to *shake heaven and earth*, Heb. xii. 26. God must *take upon him the form of a servant*, Phil. ii. 7. the most excellent of all intelligent beings must die in order to save him from eternal death.

This is not all. Even since Jesus Christ hath said to us, This is the path to paradise; that is the broad way to destruction; a fatal charm still fascinates our eyes, a dreadful propensity to misery yet carries us away. Here again the nature and fitness of things require the assistance of heaven. Grace, that revealed salvation, must dispose us to accept it, and must save us, if I may be allowed to speak so, in spite of our own unhappy disposition to vice and misery. After so many crimes, amidst so many errors, in spite of so many frailties, who, who dare lift up his head? Who can presume to trust himself? Who can imagine himself the author of his own salvation, and expect to derive it from his own merit?

Hide, hide thyself in the dust, miserable man! smite thy breast, fix thine eyes on the ashes, from which thou wast taken. Lift up thy voice in these penitential cries, *If thou, Lord! shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord! who shall stand?* Psal. cxxx. 3. "O Lord! righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face," Dan. ix. 7. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," Gal. vi. 14. Lay thy pretensions, thy virtues, thy merits at the foot of this cross. Divest thyself of thyself, and tear from thy heart, if possible, the last fibre of that pride, which would obstruct thy salvation, and ensure thy destruction.

But, my brethren! shall this be the whole of your religion? will you acknowledge no other engagement? Does this short system, think you, include the whole of a Christian's calling? Let us add

to this, brethren! watchfulness. As no vices are so dangerous as those which present themselves to us under the ideas of exalted virtues, such as hatred under a colour of zeal, pride under an appearance of severity and fervour, so no errors slide more easily into our minds than those which conceal themselves under the names of the great truths of religion. To plead for human innocence, to deny the satisfaction of Christ, to pretend to elevate our good works so high as to make them the price of eternal felicity, are errors so gross, and so diametrically opposite to many express declarations of scripture, that a little love for truth, and a small study of religion will be sufficient to preserve us from them. But under pretence of venerating the cross of Christ, and of holding fast the doctrine of human depravity, with the pious design of humbling man, under, I know not what veils of truth and orthodoxy, to widen the way to heaven, and to lull whole communities of Christians into security; these are the errors, that softly and imperceptibly glide into our souls, as, alas! were not the nature of the subject sufficient to persuade you, experience, the experience of most of you would easily convince you.

But you have heard the maxim of St. James, *faith without works is dead*, chap. ii. 26. This maxim is a touchstone by which you ought to try yourselves.

One of you believes there is a God: *faith without works is dead*. Art thou penetrated with veneration for his perfections, admiration of his works, deference

to his laws, fear of his judgments, gratitude for his bounties, and zeal for his glory ?

Another believes, Christ died for his sins : *faith without works is dead*. Dost thou abhor thy sins for shedding his blood, for preparing his cross, for wounding his person, for piercing his side, for stirring up a war between him and divine justice, for making him cry in the bitterness of his soul, *Now is my soul troubled*, John xii. 27. *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. Matt. xxvi. 38. *My God ! My God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?*

Thou believest there is a future state : *faith without works is dead*. Dost thou place thy heart where thy treasure is ? Dost thou anticipate by faith and hope the blessed period of thine admission to future felicity ? Dost thou *desire to depart and to be with Christ* ? Phil. i. 23. Is thy soul *a-thirst for God* ? Dost thou *pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water brooks* ? Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

Ah, formidable maxim ! Ah, dreadful touchstone ! We wish God had not only fitted religion, so to speak, to our frailties and infirmities ; we want him also to accommodate it to our inveterate vices. We act as if we desired, that the sacrifice, which was once offered to free us from the punishment of sin, and to merit the pardon of it, had been offered again to free us from the necessity of subduing it, and to merit a right for us to commit it. What madness ! From the days of Adam to this moment conscience has been the terror of mankind ; and this terror, excited by an idea of a future state, and by the approach of death, hath inclined all men to seek a

remedy against this general and formidable evil. Philosophers, Divines, Libertines, Worldly heroes, all have failed in this design. Jesus Christ alone has succeeded in it. Only Jesus Christ presents to us this true remedy so ardently desired, and so vainly sought ; and we still refuse it, because our vices, fatal as they have been to us, are still the objects of our most eager desires.

But do you know what all these objects of our contemplation suppose ? Conscience, if we listen to its voice, death and futurity, if we attend to them, the doctrine, the humbling doctrine of justification, that we have been preaching to you, all suppose that we are criminals, that the wrath of heaven is kindled against us, that the eternal books, in which our actions are registered, are opening, that our Judge is seated, our trial coming on, our final doom preparing, and that there remains no refuge from all these miseries but Jesus Christ, whose name is announced, that we may escape the wrath to come, and be saved. To him let us flee. To him let us resign our minds, our hearts, and our lives. God give us grace to do so. To him be honour and glory for ever, Amen.



# SERMON IX.

*Repentance.*



2 CORINTHIANS vii. 10.

*Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

THE words we have read, and with which we propose to cherish your devotion in this exercise, are connected, not only with the preceding verses, but also with a part of that epistle which St. Paul had written to Corinth before this. This connection is the properest comment on the sense of the text; with this therefore, we begin, and this part of our discourse will require your particular attention.

Our apostle had scarcely planted the gospel at Corinth, and formed the professors of it into a Christian church, before one of the most atrocious crimes was committed in the community. Ought we to be surprized that we, inferior disciples of the apostles, fail in attempting to prevent or to correct some excesses? Churches founded and edified by inspired men were not exempt from them. In the Church of Corinth we see impure, and even incestuous practices. How abominable soever the crime was, St.

Paul was less chagrined at it than at the conduct of the Corinthian church towards the perpetrators of it. It is not astonishing to find some in a large congregation, who are the execration of nature. Of the twelve disciples whom Jesus Christ chose for apostles, one was a devil, John vi. 70. But that a whole congregation, a Christian congregation, should consider such a monster with patience, and, instead of punishing his crime, should form pretexts to palliate, veils to conceal it, is surely the height of depravity. Such, however, were the Corinthians. Our apostle says, *ye are puffed up*, 1 Cor. v. 2. With what pride does he reproach them? How could any men possibly derive a glory from an abomination, which naturally inspires mortification and shame? The *pride* with which he reproaches them, is a disposition too well known among Christians. It is the disposition of a man who pretends to free himself from the ordinary laws of moral rectitude, and to leave that path in which the gospel requires all Christians to walk, to the vulgar; who treats the just fear of a well regulated conscience, that trembles at the approach of sin, as meanness of soul, and pusillanimity; and who accommodates the laws of religion to the passions that govern him, and to the seasons in which he has or has not an opportunity of being wicked. These were the dispositions of the Corinthians in regard to the incestuous person. Perhaps they derived some exculpating maxims from the Jews. The Jews thought, that a man who became a proselyte to their religion, was thereby freed from those natural ties which before united him to his re-

lations, so that a man might innocently espouse his sister, or his mother, and so on. The pagans reproached the Jewish nation with this ; and this perhaps might furnish Tacitus with a part of the character, that he gave the Jews\*. What is considered by us as sacred, says this celebrated historian, they treat as profane, and incestuous marriages, which shock us, they think lawful.

St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for marking with a character of infamy, not only their own church : but in a manner the whole Christian world. Do you, as if he had said, consider a crime with indifference, which is unknown even among heathens ? *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles that one should have his father's wife*, 1 Cor. v. 1. Indeed there are in pagan writings most severe laws against incest, and what is very remarkable, the apostle seems to allude in the words just now cited, to a passage in Cicero, who speaking of incest, calls it *scelus inauditum*, an unheard of crime. Accordingly, we find in Tertullian, in Minutius Felix, and in other famous apologists for Christianity, that incest was one of the disorders with which the pagans reproached the primitive Christians ; the heathens either did what has been too often done, charge a whole family, sometimes a whole city, sometimes a whole nation, with the fault of one member ; or they thought nothing could blacken Christians more than taxing them with a vice, although falsely, which

\* Hist. v. 4.

was held in the utmost detestation by all professors of paganism.

The apostle tells the Corinthians, that instead of having adopted, as they had, maxims which seemed to palliate incest, they should have imitated the conduct of the Jews, when they were obliged to excommunicate any scandalous offenders from their community. On these sad occasions, it was customary with the Jews to fast, to weep, and to put on mourning, as if the person were dead. *Ye are puffed up, and have not mourned, as if he who had done this deed had been taken from you*, ver. 2. This custom was followed afterward by Christians, witness a famous passage in the book entitled *apostolical constitutions*\*; witness also these words of Origen, Christians mourn as over the dead for those whom they are obliged to separate from them; however odious and infectious a member of our body may be, we always do violence to ourselves when we are under a necessity of cutting it off†. This is not all. St. Paul, not content with general censures and reproofs, thought this one of the extreme cases, in which the honour of his apostleship would oblige him to take his ecclesiastical rod, and to perform one of those formidable miracles, which God enabled the primitive Christians to work. You cannot but know, that among other miraculous gifts which God communicated for the establishment of Christianity, that of inflicting remarkable punishments on some offenders was one of the most considerable. St. Peter employed this power against

\* Constit. Apostol. lib. ii. cap. 41.

† Orig. lib. iii. cont. Celsum.

Ananias, whom he caused to fall dead at his feet, and against the wife of this miserable prevaricator, to whom he said, *Behold ! the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out*, Acts v. 9. St. Paul speaks of this power in this style, *The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, in readiness to revenge all disobedience*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 6. Our apostle used this power against Elymas the sorcerer, and against Hymeneus and Alexander; he thought he ought also to use it against the incestuous Corinthian, and to *deliver him to Satan*, 1 Cor. v. 5. thus was this terrible dispensation described.

Such an exertion of apostolical power was indispensibly necessary ; it reclaimed those by fear whom mildness could not move ; while an indulgence for such a crime as this would have encouraged the commission of many more. But the apostle, while he used this power, was extremely uneasy on account of the necessity that forced him to exercise it. *I wrote unto you*, says he, *out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears*, 2 Cor. i. 4. He not only declares, that he had no intention by punishing the culprit to destroy his soul ; but that he even feared those sharp censures which his letter had engaged the Corinthian church to inflict, would produce impressions too terrific on the soul of the incestuous sinner, or, as he expresses it, that he would be *swallowed up with over much sorrow*, ver. 7.

He goes further in my text, and in the whole chapter from which I have taken it. He wishes to indemnify himself for the violent anguish that he had suffered, when he was obliged to treat his dear Co-

rinthians with extreme rigour. He comforts himself by recollecting the salutary effects which his zeal had produced, *Though I made you sorry with a letter*, says he in the words immediately before the text, *I do not repent ; though I did repent ; because ye sorrow to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner.* In the text he establisheth this general maxim for all Christians, “ Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of : but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

The connection of the text with the whole subject, that we have been explaining, was, as I said before, the best comment that we could propose to explain the text itself. By what we have heard, it is easy to understand what godly sorrow is, and what the sorrow of the world. *Godly sorrow* has for its object sin committed against God, or rather, *godly sorrow* is the grief of a man who repents of his sins as God would have him repent ; it is the sorrow of a man who afflicts himself not only because he is miserable, but because he deserves to be so ; and because he hath violated those laws of righteousness and holiness which his own conscience approves. *The sorrow of the world* is that which hath worldly blessing for its object ; or it is the grief of a man who repents of his sins as worldly men repent ; it is the sorrow of one who is more concerned for his misery than for sin, the cause of it, and who would even increase his crimes to get rid of his troubles. The ground of St. Paul’s reasoning then, is this : *Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation*, or, as it may be rendered, *saving repentance not to be repented of ;*

that is to say, a man who afflicts himself on the accounts which we have mentioned, will be exercised at first, indeed, with violent anguish ; but in a little time he will derive from this very anguish substantial comfort and joy, because his sorrow for sin will induce him to subdue it, and to pray for the pardon of it. On the other hand, *the sorrow of the world worketh death*, that is to say, either the sorrow which is occasioned by the loss of earthly enjoyments is fatal to him who gives himself up to it ; for, as the wise man saith, *a broken spirit drieth the bones*, Prov. xvii. 22. or *the sorrow of the world worketh death*, because such a repentance as that of worldlings will never obtain the forgiveness that is promised to those who truly repent. In this latter sense I take the words here.

This is a general view of the scope of the apostle, and of his ideas in the text, ideas which we must develop in order to lead you into the spirit of the holy supper of the Lord, that so the sermon may contribute to the devotion of the day. I speak of those ideas which St. Paul gives us of *godly sorrow, saving repentance, not to be repented of* ; for we cannot enlarge on that which he calls *sorrow of the world*, without diverting your attention from the solemn service of this day. We will, therefore, content ourselves with tracing a few characters of it in the body of this discourse, that you may perceive how different the virtue which the apostle recommends is, from the vice which he intends to destroy.

Godly sorrow then, is the principal object of our contemplation, and there are three things that de-

mand a particular attention. The *causes* which produce it ; the *effects* that follow it ; and the *blessings* with which it is accompanied. The *first* of these articles will describe your state a few days ago, when examining your consciences, (if, indeed, you did examine them,) you were overwhelmed with a remembrance of your sins. How could you cast your eyes on these sad objects without feeling that sorrow which a penitent expresses thus, *O Lord ! righteousness belongeth unto thee : but unto me confusion of face*, Dan. ix. 7. *Against thee, thee only, O God ! have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight* ; Psal. li. 4. The second article will describe your present condition. How can you feel godly sorrow, without resolving, by reiterated acts of love to God, to dissipate that darkness which covered all the evidences of your love to him, during the whole course of your sins ? The third article will describe your future condition, through life, at death, in the day of judgment, and throughout all eternity. Happy periods ! joyful revolutions ! in which penitent souls, washed in the Redeemer's blood, may expect nothing but grace, glory, and fulness of joy ! This is the whole plan of this discourse. Blessed be God, who calls us to day to exercise such an honourable ministry ! What pleasure to preach such a gospel to a people to whom we are united by the tenderest love ! “ O ye Corinthians ! O ye our beloved brethren, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us : but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged, 2 Cor. vi. 11—13.

I. *The remembrance of sin is the cause of godly sorrow in the heart of a true penitent.* The sinner of whom I am speaking, is to be considered in two different periods of time. In the first he is under the infatuation of sin ; in the last, after-reflections on his sinful conduct fill his mind. While a sinner is committing sin, he resembles an enchanted man, a fatal charm fascinates his eyes, and sears his conscience, as St. Paul speaks, 1 Tim. iv. 2. He judges of truth and error, happiness and misery, only according to the interest of his reigning passion. Reason, persuade, preach, censure, terrify, thunder, open the treasures of heaven, and the abysses of hell, the sinner remains insensible ; *so foolish and ignorant is he, he is like a beast before you*, to use the language of Asaph, Psal. lxxiii. 22.

But there is another period, which I called a time of after-reflection on his sinful conduct. Then the remembrance of sin is cutting. Then his soul is full of fears, regrets, griefs, remorse, reproach. Then that sin, like the book, that St. John ate, which had been sweet as honey in his mouth, becomes bitter in his belly, Rev. x. 10. Then the sinner beholding himself, and entering into his heart, finds himself wounded with seven darts:—with the number of his sins—with the enormity of them—with the vanity of the motives which induced him to commit them—with their fatal influences on the minds of his neighbours—with that cruel uncertainty, into which they have deluded his own conscience—with the horrors of hell, of which they are the usual causes—and

with those sad reflections with which they inspire an ingenuous loving heart.

1. The sinner is affected with the number of his sins. When we reflect on our past lives, sins arise from all parts, and absorb our minds in their multitude. We owe all our existence to a Supreme Being, and we are responsible to him for every moment of our duration. There are duties of age, obligations that belong to childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. There are duties of fortune, obligations that lie upon people, rich, poor, or in a middle station of life. There are civil obligations which belong to magistrates and subjects. There are domestic duties, which belong to us as parents or children, masters or servants. There are ecclesiastical duties, belonging to us as pastors or people, preachers or hearers. There are duties of circumstance, binding on us as sick or well, in society or in solitude. Each of these is a class of obligations, and almost each of them is a list of crimes. Most men deceive themselves on this subject; they contract their notion of morality, maim the religion of Jesus Christ, reduce their duties to a small number, which they can easily perform, and at length form their idea of repentance by that which they imagine of their obligations. But we are to suppose the penitent in question free from these prejudices, and finding his guilt every where pronouncing himself guilty as a magistrate, and as a subject; as a father and as a son; as a servant and as a master; as a youth and as an old man; as a rich and as a poor man; as enjoying his health, and as pining in want of it; as pastor, and as one of the people; as

preacher and as hearer. People sometimes affect to be astonished, and to complain, because we say in our confessions of sin, that we have sinned from the moment of our nativity, and that the number of our sins is greater than that of the hairs on our heads. However, these are not hyperbolical expressions; the greatest saints have used them; and a close examination of our lives will convince us of their exact conformity to truth. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man are only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. "Our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens," Ezra ix. 6. "Who can understand his errors?" Psal. xix. 12. "O Lord let thy loving kindness preserve me, for innumerable evils have compassed me about, they are more than the hairs of mine head," Psal. xl. 11, 12.

2. The true penitent adds, to a just notion of the number of his sins that of their enormity. Here again, we must remove the prejudices that we have imbibed concerning the morality of Jesus Christ; for here also we have altered his doctrine, and taken the world for our casuist, the maxims of loose worldlings for our supreme law. We have reduced great crimes to a few principal enormous vices, which few people commit. There are but few murderers, but few assassins, but few highway-robbers, strictly speaking: other sins, according to us, are frailties incidental to humanity, necessary consequences of human infirmity, and not evidences of a bad heart. But undeceive yourselves, lay aside the morality of the world, take the law of Jesus Christ for your

judge, and consider the nature of things in their true point of light. For example, what can be more opposite to the genius of Christianity than that spirit of pride, which reigns over almost all of us, which disguises us from ourselves, which clothes us with, I know not what, phantom of grandeur, and self-importance, and which persuades us, that a little money, a distant relation to a noble family, a little genius, a little countenance and applause, entitle us to an elevation above the rest of mankind, and to the fantastic privilege of considering ourselves as men made of a mould different from that of the rest of mankind? What can be more criminal than those calumnies and slanderous falsehoods, which infect the greatest part of our conversations; to maintain which, we pretend to penetrate the most hidden recesses of a neighbour's heart, we publish his real faults, we impute others to him, of which he is perfectly innocent, we derive our happiness from his misery, and build our glory on his shame? What more execrable than habitual swearing and profaning the name of Almighty God? Is it not shocking to hear some who profess Christianity, daily profane religion, revile its institutions, blaspheme their Creator for an unfavourable cast of a die, or turn of a card? In general, can any thing be more injurious to Jesus Christ, than that attachment which most of us have to the world, although in different degrees? What more fully proves our light estimation of his promises, our little confidence in his faithfulness? My brethren, we tremble when we hear of a wretch, whom hunger had driven to commit a robbery on

the highway; or of a man mad with passion, who, in a transport of wrath had killed his brother! But, would we enter into our own hearts, would we take the pains to examine the nature of our own sins, we should soon find ourselves so black and hideous, that the distance which partial self-love puts between us and the men, at whom we tremble, would diminish and disappear.

3. A third idea that afflicts a penitent, is that of the fatal *influence* which his sins have had on the soul of his neighbour. My brethren, one sin strikes a thousand blows, while it seems to aim at striking only one. It is a contagious poison, which diffuseth itself far and wide, and infects not only him who commits it, but the greatest part of those who see it committed. You are a father, you cannot sin without dragging your children down the gulph into which you precipitate yourself. Hence we generally see, if a father be ignorant of religion, his children are ignorant of religion; if a mother be a mere worldling, her children are infatuated with love to the world. You are a pastor, you cannot fall into sin without inducing some of your flock to sin too; there are always some people so weak, or so wicked, as to think they cannot do wrong, while they imitate you, while they take those for their examples who profess to regulate the conduct of others. St. Jerom says, The house and the conduct of a bishop are considered as a mirror of public discipline, so that all think they do right when they follow the example of their bishop. You are a master, you cannot sin without emboldening your apprentices and

workmen to sin, nor without making your families schools of error, and your shops academies of the devil. Dreadful thought ! too capable of producing the most exquisite sorrow ! What can a man think of himself, who, considering those unhappy creatures who are already victims to the just displeasure of God in hell, or who are likely to become so, is obliged to say to himself, agreeably to the divers circumstances in which providence hath placed him, Perhaps this church, which hath produced only apostates, might have produced only martyrs, had I *declared the whole counsel of God* with plainness and courage ? Acts xx. 27. Perhaps this family that is plunged into ignorance, fallen from ignorance to vice, and from vice into perdition, might have produced an *Onesimus, a partner of the saints*, Philem. 10, 17. had I caused the spirit of piety and virtue to have animated the house ! Perhaps this child, given me to be made an offering to the Lord, and so to become *my joy and crown*, Phil. iv. 1. through all eternity may execrate me as the author of his misery ; he perhaps may justly reproach me, and say, unworthy parent, it was by imitating thy fatal example that I was brought into this intolerable condition ; they were thine abominable maxims, and thy pernicious actions, which involved me first in sin and then in punishment in hell.

4. The weakness of *motives* to sin is the fourth cause of the sorrow of a penitent. When people find themselves deceived in the choice of one out of many objects, they comfort themselves by reflecting, either that all the objects had similar qualifications

to recommend them, or that their dissimilarity was difficult to be known. But what proportion is there between motives to vice and motives to virtue? Attend a moment to motives to sin. Sometimes a vapour in the brain, a rapidity in the circulation of the blood, a flow of spirits, a revolt of the senses, are our motives to sin. But after this vapour is dissipated, after this rapidity is abated, after the spirits and senses are calmed, and we reflect on what induced us to offend God, how can we bear the sight of ourselves without shame and confusion of face? Motives to sin are innumerable and very various: but what are they all? Sometimes an imaginary interest, an inch of ground, and sometimes a sceptre, a crown, the conquest of the universe, *the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, Matt. iv. 10. There comes, however, a moment, in which all these different motives are alike. When a man lies on a death-bed, when all terrestrial objects are disappearing, when he begins to consider them in their true point of light, and to compare sceptres, conquests, crowns, and kingdoms with the ideas of his own mind, the immense desires of his heart, and the large plans of felicity that religion traceth, he finds he has been dazzled and misled by false lights, and how in such an hour can he bear to reflect on himself without shame and confusion?

5. I make a fifth article of the penitent's *uncertainty* of his state. For although the mercy of God is infinite, and he never rejects those who sincerely repent, yet it is certain the sinner in the first moments of his penitence hath reason to doubt of his

state, and till the evidences of his conversion become clear, there is almost as much probability of his destruction as of his salvation. Terrible uncertainty! so terrible, that I am not afraid of affirming, except the torments of hell it is the most cruel condition into which an intelligent being can be brought. Represent to yourselves, if it be possible, the state of a man who reasons thus. When I consider myself, I cannot doubt of my guilt. I have added crime to crime, rebellion to rebellion. I have sinned not only through infirmity and weakness: but I have been governed by principles horrible and detestable, incompatible with those of good men, and with all hopes of paradise. I deserve hell, it is certain, and there are in that miserable place sinners less guilty than myself. My sentence, indeed, is not yet denounced: but what proof have I, that I have not sinned beyond the reach of that mercy which is held forth to sinners in the gospel? The gospel says plainly enough, *If any man sin, there is an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, 1 John ii. 1. but the same gospel declares as plainly, that *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance*, Heb. vi. 4, 6. I see indeed in the New Testament a Peter, who repented and was pardoned, after he had denied his Saviour: but the same book shews me also a Judas, who died in despair. On this side of a crucified Christ I see a converted thief: on the other hangs one, who persisting in impenitence expires in guilt unpardoned; and the blood of the Saviour flowing all warm and propitious from his veins obtains in his

sight pardon for his partner, but none for him. I see indeed in the gospel, that God invites the sinner, and waits a while for his return: but I see also, that this time is limited, that it is a fine day succeeded by a terrible night, that it is a measure which the obstinacy of a sinner fills up. O happy days! in which I saw the face of my God, in which I could assure myself of my salvation, in which I cheerfully waited for death as my passage to glory. Ah! whither are you fled! Now, what must I think of myself? Have I committed only pardonable offences, or have I been guilty of those crimes for which there is no forgiveness? Shall I be forgiven as Peter was, or shall I be abandoned to desperation like Judas? Shall I ascend to paradise with the converted thief, or must I with his impenitent partner be cast into the flames of hell? Will my Redeemer deign to raise me by his life-giving voice from my grave to the resurrection unto life, or will he doom me to destruction? Are *the riches of the goodness and forbearance of God*, yet open to me, or are they closed against me? Am I a real penitent, or am I only an apparent one? Shall I be damned?—Shall I be saved?—Perhaps the one.—Perhaps the other.—Perhaps heaven.—Perhaps hell.—O fatal uncertainty!—Dreadful horror!—Cruel doubt!—This is the sixth *arrow of the Almighty*, that wounds the heart of a repenting sinner.

6. Perhaps *hell*. This is my sixth reflection. Hell is an idea, against which there is no philosophy to comfort, no profaneness to protect, no brutality to harden; for if we every day see men, who seem to be got above the fear of future punishment, it is because we see at

the same time men, who have found the art either of stupifying themselves by the tumultuous noise of their passions, or of blinding themselves by their infidelity. The very scepticism of these men marks their timidity. The very attempts, which they make to avoid thinking of hell, are full of proofs that they cannot bear the sight of it. Indeed, who can support the idea of the torments of hell, especially when their duration is added? Yet this is the idea that strikes a penitent, he condemns himself to suffer this punishment, he places himself on the edge of this gulf, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, draws in the pestilential vapours, that arise from this bottomless abyss. Every moment of his life, before he beholds God as his reconciled Father, is a moment, in which probably he may be cast into hell, because there is no period in the life of such a man, in which it is not probable that he may die, and there is no death for one who dies in impenitence, which will not be a death in a state of reprobation.

7. In fine, the last arrow that woundeth the heart of a penitent, is an arrow of divine *love*. The more we love God, the more misery we endure when we have been so unhappy as to offend him. Yes, this love, which inflames Seraphims, this love, which makes the felicity of Angels, this love, which supports the believer under the most cruel torments, this love is more terrible than death, and becomes the greatest tormentor of the penitent. To have offended a God whom he loves, a God whom so many excellences render lovely, a God whom he longs again to love, notwithstanding those terrible looks which

he casts on the sins that the penitent deplores; these thoughts excite such sorrows in the soul, as nothing but experience can give men to understand.

The union of all these causes, which produce sorrow in a true penitent, forms the grand difference between that which St. Paul calls *godly sorrow*, and that which he calls *the sorrow of the world*, that is to say, between true repentance and that uneasiness, which worldly systems sometimes give another kind of penitents. The grief of the latter ariseth only from motives of self interest, from punishments they feel, or from consequences they fear.

We have seen, then, the true causes of *godly sorrow*, and we are now to attend to its effects, they constitute a second remarkable difference between *godly sorrow* and *the sorrow of the world*.

II. St. Paul speaks of the *effects* of *godly sorrow* only in general terms in our text, he says, it *worketh repentance to salvation*: but in the following verses he speaks more particularly; "Behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" Some of these terms may perhaps be equivocal, however, we do not intend at present to inquire into the various senses of them: but we will take them in that sense which seems most obvious, most agreeable to the style of St. Paul, and to the subject of which he is speaking.

There is also in the language of the apostle, in what he calls the *working of godly sorrow*, something

relative to the state of the Corinthian church in regard to the case of the incestuous person; and this seems particularly clear in the expression, *yea, what revenge!* St. Paul very likely referred to the excommunication of this person by the Corinthian church. He had directed them in a former epistle, *when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one unto Satan*, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. We have seen that the punishments inflicted on such persons are called *vengeance*, and of this *revenge*, or *vengeance*, the apostle speaks. Let us omit every thing personal, and let us attend only to that part of the subject which regards ourselves.

The first effect of *godly sorrow* is what our apostle calls carefulness, or, as I would rather read it, *vigilance*, *yea, what vigilance!* I understand by this term the disposition of a man, who, feeling a sincere sorrow for his sins, and being actually under the afflicting hand of God, is not content with a few general notions, and a little vague knowledge of his own irregularities: but uses all his efforts to examine every circumstance of his life, and to dive into the least obvious parts of his own conscience, in order to discover whatever is offensive to that God, whose favour and clemency he most earnestly implores. The penitence of worldlings, or as St. Paul expresseth it, *the sorrow of the world*, may indeed produce such general notions, and such a vague knowledge of sin, as I just now mentioned. Afflicted people very commonly say, We deserve these punishments, we are sinners, very great sinners: but those penitents are rare, very rare indeed, who pos-

sess what our apostle calls *carefulness*, or vigilance. A christian, who is truly affected with having offended God, labours with the utmost earnestness to find out all that can have contributed to excite the anger of God against him, and to engage him to redouble the strokes of a just displeasure. Perhaps it may be some connection attended with dangerous influences, which I had not perceived. Perhaps it may be the retention of some ill-acquired property, the injustice of acquiring which I have refused to acknowledge, lest my conscience should drive me to make restitution. Perhaps I may have omitted some virtue essential to christianity. God has taken away my fortune ; but perhaps I abused it, perhaps it excited my pride, and made me forget my infirmities, my dust and ashes. God took away my child, the whole comfort of my life ; but probably he saw, I made an idol of it, and suffered it to fill a place in my heart, which ought to have been reserved for God alone. God sent a sickness which I should not have naturally expected ; but perhaps health was a snare to me, and held me from considering my last end. In view of such a person our apostle would exclaim, “ Behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you !”

What *clearing of yourselves* ! adds St. Paul. The Greek word signifies *apology*, and it will be best understood by joining the following expression with it, *yea, what indignation* ! In the sorrow of the world apology and indignation are usually companions ; indignation against him who represents the atrocity of

a sin, and apology for him who commits it. In what odious colours does this artful indignation describe a man, who freely preacheth *the whole counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. representing to every sinner in its own point of light the crime of which he is guilty ! Sometimes we accuse him of rashness, as if a man ought never to reprove the vices of others unless he believes his own conduct is irreprehensible. Sometimes we reproach him with the very sins which he censures in others, as if a man ought to be perfect himself, before he pretends to reprove the imperfections of his brethren. Sometimes we account him a maintainer of heresies, as if it were impossible to press home the practice of religion without abjuring the speculative doctrines that are revealed in the same gospel. St. Paul experienced this indignation as much as any minister of the gospel. Indeed it seems impossible, that a ministry so famous as his should not expose itself to slander from the abundant malignity of the age in which it was exercised. And this will always be the fate of all them, who walk in the steps of this apostle, and take his resolution and courage for a model.

The same principle, that produceth *indignation* against those who reprove our disorders, inspires us with *apologies* to excuse ourselves. The reprovèd sinner is always fruitful in excuses, always ingenious in finding reasons to exculpate himself, even while he gives himself up to those excesses which admit of the least excuse ; one while, his time of life necessarily induces him to some sins ; another time, human frailty is incompatible with perfect piety ; now he pleads

the vivacity of his passions, which will suffer no controul; and then he says, he is irresistibly carried away with the force of example in spite of all his efforts.

Now, change the objects of *indignation* and *apology*, and you will have a just notion of the dispositions of the Corinthians, and of the effects which *godly sorrow* produces in the soul of a true penitent. Let your *apology* have for its object that ministry which you have treated so unworthily, let your *indignation* turn against yourselves, and then you will have a right to pretend to the prerogatives of true repentance. What sins have you lamented last week? Your excessive love of the world? Let this *sorrow* produce an apology for the holy ministry; let it excite your indignation against yourselves; acknowledge that we had reason to affirm *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*, Jam. iv. 4. that *no man could serve two masters*, Matt. vi. 24. that some amusements, some ostentatious airs, some liveries of the world ill become a christian; and blame yourselves, if you be incapable of relishing this doctrine. What sin have you been lamenting? Avarice? Let this sorrow apologise for the holy ministry, and let it excite your indignation against yourselves. Acknowledge, we had reasons sufficient for saying, that *the love of money is the root of all evil*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. that *covetousness is idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. that *the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. that such mean, low, sordid sentiments are unworthy of those, whom Jesus Christ hath received into communion with himself, whom he hath brought

up in a school of generosity, disinterestedness, and magnanimity ; who have seen in his person examples of all these noble virtues ; and now find fault, if you can, with any beside yourselves, if you be incapable of digesting this doctrine. “ Behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what apology, yea, what indignation ! ”

The apostle adds, *yea, what fear !* By fear in this place we understand that self-diffidence, which an idea of the sins we have committed, ought naturally to inspire. In this sense, St. Paul says to the Romans, *be not high minded ; but fear*, chap. xi. 20. *Fear*, that is to say, distrust thyself. I do not mean a bare speculative diffidence, that persuades the mind : I understand a practical fear, which penetrates the heart, inspires us with salutary cautions against the repetition of such sins as we are most inclined to commit. This effect, produced by godly sorrow, is one of the principal characters that distinguishes it from the sorrow of the world, from that repentance, which is often found in false penitents. It is one of the surest marks of real repentance, and one of the best evidences, that it is not imaginary. Let the occasion of your penitential sorrows in the past week teach you to know yourself, and engage you to guard those tempers of your hearts, the folly of which your own experience has so fully taught you. Here you suffered through your inattention and dissipation ; *fear* lest you should fall by the same means again, guard against this weakness, strengthen this feeble part, accustom yourself to attention, exam-

ine what relation every circumstance of your life has to your duty. There you fell through your vanity; *fear* lest you should fall again by the same mean, guard against this weakness, accustom yourself to meditate on your original meanness, and on whatever can inspire you with the grace of humility. Another time, you erred through your excessive complaisance; *fear* lest you should err again by the same mean, guard against this weakness, accustom yourself to resist importunity, when resistance is necessary, and never blush to say, *It is right in the sight of God, to hearken unto God more than unto you*, Acts iv. 19. In such a case, St. Paul would exclaim, "behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what fear it wrought in you!"

In the fifth place, *What vehement desire!* This is another vague term. *Godly sorrow* produceth divers kinds of desire. Here I confine it to one meaning, it signifies, I think, a desire of participating the favor of God, of becoming an object of the merciful promises, which he hath made to truly contrite souls, and of resting under the shade of that cross, where an expiatory sacrifice was offered to divine justice for the sins of mankind. A penitent, who sees the favorable looks of a compassionate God intercepted; a penitent, who cannot behold that adorable face, the smiles of which constitute all his joy; a penitent, who apprehends his God justly flaming with anger against him, *desires* only one thing, that is to recover a sense of the favor of God. *If thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence*, said Moses once, Exod. xxxiii. 15. should we conquer

all the land of promise, and possess all its treasures, and not enjoy thy love, we would rather spend all our days here in the desert. *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, make me as one of thy hired servants,* Luke xv. 18, 19. this was the language of the prodigal son. And the prayer of the psalmist is to the same purpose, “Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, uphold me with thy free spirit,” Psal. li. 11, 12.

Finally, *zeal* is the sixth effect of *godly sorrow*, and it may have three sorts of objects, God, our neighbours, and ourselves. But, as the time is nearly elapsed, and as I have shewn you in general what *godly sorrow* is, and what effects are wrought in a penitent by it, I shall proceed to close this discourse by describing the benefits that accompany it.

III. St. Paul expresses himself in a very concise manner on this article: but his language is full of meaning; repentance produced by *godly sorrow*, says he, *is not to be repented of*. This is one of those tours of expression, by which, while a subject seems to be diminished, the highest ideas are given of it. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of*, that is to say, it is always a full source of consolation and joy. Let us adapt ourselves to the shortness of our time. *Godly sorrow* reconciles us to three enemies, who, while we live in sin, attack us with implacable rage. The first is divine justice; the second our own conscience; the last death.

1. The first enemy who attacks us while we live in sin, with implacable rage, is the justice of God. There can be no other relation between God and an obstinate sinner than that which subsists between judge and criminal ; *God is of purer eyes than to behold evil*, Heb. i. 13. and his justice points all his thunders against the devoted head of him who gives himself up to the commission of it. *Godly sorrow* reconciles us to divine justice. This is perhaps of all propositions the least disputable, the most clear, and the most demonstrable.

Consult your own reason, it will inform you, God is good ; it will prove, by all the objects that surround you, that it is not possible for God to refuse mercy to a penitent, who weeps, and mourns for sin, who prays for mercy, who covers himself with sackcloth and ashes, who dares not venture to lift up his eyes to heaven, who would shed all his blood to atone for the sins that he hath committed, and who would not for the whole universe allow himself to commit them again.

To reason add *authority*, and it will appear, that all mankind profess to be guilty of sin, and to adore a God of pardoning mercy, and although numbers remain ignorant of the nature of true repentance, yet all allow it is attended with excellent prerogatives.

To reason and authority add *revelation*. But how is it possible for me at present even to hint all the comfortable testimonies of revelation on this article ? Revelation gives you ideas of the mercy of God the most tender, the most affecting, the most sublime ; it

speaks of *bowels troubled, repentings kindled together*, at the sound of a penitent's plaintive voice, Jer. xxxi. 20. Hos. xi. 8. Revelation speaks of oaths uttered by God himself, whose bare word is evidence enough, *As I live, saith the Lord*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. (St. Paul tells us, *because God could swear by no greater, he sware by himself*, Heb. vi. 13. and in the text now quoted, God employs this kind of speaking an appeal to the most excellent of all beings, in order to satisfy the trembling conscience of a penitent.) *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* Revelation opens to you those *fountains of life* which were *opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, and leads to the blood of the Saviour of the world, which flows for penitent sinners, Zech. xiii. 1.

Consult *experience*, and it will shew you a cloud of witnesses, whose repentance was accepted. Witness many a time the whole people of Israel, witness Moses, witness David, witness Hezekiah, witness Manasseh, witness Nebuchadnezzar, witness Nineveh, witness that prostitute who wept in Simon's house, witness the poor publican, witness the converted thief, witness every penitent in this assembly, for what would become of you, I speak of the holiest of you, what would become of you, were not God good, were he not infinitely good, were he not merciful to wait while we fall into sin until we rise again by repentance?

2. As *godly sorrow* reconciles us to divine justice, so it reconciles us to our own *consciencs*. We some-

times lull conscience into a deep sleep; but it is very difficult to keep it from starting and waking. Wo be to them who throw it into a dead sleep to wake no more! But how dreadful, when it awakes, does it arise from its sleep! What blows does it strike! What wounds does it make! What pains and horrors does it excite, when it says to a sinner, Miserable wretch! what hast thou done? from what dignity art thou fallen! into what deep disgrace and distress art thou plunged! *My punishment is greater than I can bear! Mountains! cover me: Hills! fall upon me*, Gen. iv. 13. Hos. x. 8. Ah! ye empty sounds of worldly pleasure! ye tumultuous assemblies! ye festal and amusive scenes! how feeble are ye against an enemy so formidable! It is repentance only, it is only godly sorrow that can disarm conscience. A soul reconciled to God, a soul made to hear this comfortable language, *thy sins be forgiven thee*, Mat. ix. 2. passeth, so to speak, all on a sudden from a kind of hell to a sort of heaven; it feels that *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, Phil. iv. 7. it enters into that *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. which hath supported the greatest saints under the most infamous calumnies that ever were invented to blacken them, and the sharpest punishments that ever were devised to torment them.

3. In fine, *godly sorrow* reconciles us to *death*. While we live without repentance, yea, while there remains any doubt of the sincerity or truth of our repentance, how can we sustain the thoughts of a just tribunal, an exact register, an impartial sentence, all ready to unfold and decree our future fate? How

can we hear this summons, *Give an account of thy stewardship* ? Luke xvi. 2. *Godly sorrow*, reconciles us to this enemy, *the sting of death is sin*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. and sin has no sting for a penitent. Death appears to the repenting sinner as a messenger of grace, sent to conduct him to a merciful God, and to open to him ineffable felicity flowing from boundless mercy.

Ah ! my brethren, would to God it were as easy to prove that you bear the marks of true repentance, as it is to display its prerogatives ! But alas ! . . . I dare not even move this question . . . And yet what wait you around the pulpit for ? Why came you to hear this sermon ? Would you have me to close the solemnity as usual by supposing that you have understood all, and referred all to the true design : that last week you all very seriously examined your own hearts ; that you all prepared yourselves for the table of the Lord by adopting such dispositions as this holy ceremony requires of you ; that this morning you all received the communion with such zeal, fervour, and love, as characterize worthy communicants ; that in the preceding exercise you all poured out your hearts before God in gratitude and praise ; and that nothing remains now but to congratulate you on the holiness and happiness of your state ?

But tell me in what period of your lives, (I speak not of you all, for thanks be to God, I see many true penitents in this assembly ; men, who “ shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,” Phil. ii. 15. and who may perhaps have obtained to-day by the fervour of their zeal forbearance

for all the rest. But I speak of a great number, and of them I ask,) In what period of your lives were you in possession of all those characters of *godly sorrow*, of which we have been speaking?

Was it in your closet? What! that trifling examination, that rapid reading, those superficial regrets, those hasty resolutions, was this your course of repentance?

Was it in company? But what! that commerce with the world, in which you were not distinguished from other worldlings, and where after the example of your company you put on their livery, and pursued their pleasures, was this your course of repentance?

Was it at the table of Jesus Christ? But what! those communions, to which you came rather to acquire by some slight exercises of devotion a right to commit more sin, than to lament what you had committed; those communions which you concluded as indevoutly as you began; those communions that produced no reformation in you as men of the world, members of the church, or of private families: those communions, after which you were as proud, as implacable, as sordid, as voluptuous, as envious, as before; do these communions constitute the course of your repentance?

Perhaps, we may repent, when we are dying! What! a forced submission; an attention extorted in spite of ourselves by the prayers and exhortations of a zealous minister; resolutions inspired by fear; can this be a safe course of repentance?

Ah! my brethren, it would be better to turn our hopes from the past; for past times offer only melancholy objects to most of us, and to confine our attention to future, or rather to the present moments, which afford us more agreeable objects of contemplation. O may the present proofs, the glorious proofs, which God gives us to-day of his love, make everlasting impressions upon our hearts and minds! May the sacred table, of which we have this morning participated, be forever before our eyes! May this object every where follow us, and may it every where protect us from all those temptations to which a future conversation with the world may expose us! May our prayers, our resolutions, our oaths, never be effaced from our memories! May we renew our prayers, resolutions, vows and oaths this moment with all our hearts! Let each of us close this solemnity by saying, "Thou art my portion, O Lord! I have said, that I would keep thy words! I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," Ps. cxix. 57, 106. I have sworn to be more exact in all thy service, more attentive to thy voice, more sensible to thine exhortations. And to unite all my wishes in one, may that sincerity, and integrity, with which we take this oath, be accompanied with all the divine assistance, which is necessary to enable us never, never to violate it. Amen and Amen!

# SERMON X.

*Assurance.*

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ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

IT is a circumstance of sacred history well worthy of our reflections, my brethren, that Moses and Joshua, being yet, the one beyond Jordan, the other hardly on the frontiers of Palestine, disposed of that country as if they had already subdued it. They made laws concerning kings, subjects, priests and levites; they distributed towns and provinces; and they described the boundaries of every tribe. It should seem their battles had been all fought, and they had nothing remaining now but the pleasure of enjoying the fruit of their victories. Yet war is uncertain, and the success of one day does not always ensure the success of the next. Hence the ancient proverb, *Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off*, 1 Kings xx. 11.

Certainly, my brethren, these leaders of the people of God would have been chargeable with rashness, had they founded their hopes only on their own resolution and courage, had they attacked their enemies only *with a sword and with a spear*: but they went *in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel*, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. for he had said to them, *Arise, and go, for I do give this land to the children of Israel*, Josh. i. 2. Resting on these promises, and possessing that *faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. they thought themselves in the land of promise; they tasted the milk and honey, and enjoyed all the privileges of it.

Christians, there is a greater distance between heaven and earth, than there was between the wilderness and the land of promise. There are more difficulties to surmount to arrive at salvation, than there were formerly to arrive at Canaan. Yet, my text is the language of a Christian soldier, yet in arms yet resisting flesh and blood, yet surrounded by innumerable enemies conspiring against his soul; behold him assured, triumphing, defying all the creatures of the universe to deprive him of salvation. But, be not surprised at his firmness, the angel of the Lord fights for him, and says to him, *Arise, and go, for I do give the land to thee*, Josh. i. 3. and his triumphant song is full of wisdom, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other

creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Let us examine the steadfastness of St. Paul, and let the words of our text decide two disputed points. Some divines pretend, that believers ought always to remain in a state of doubt and uncertainty concerning their salvation. Our first dispute is with them. Our second is with some false Christians, who, pretending that assurance of salvation is taught in the holy scriptures, arrogate to themselves the consolations afforded by this doctrine, even while they live in practices inconsistent with a state of regeneration. With a view to both, we will divide this discourse into two general parts. In the first we will prove this proposition; a believer may arrive at such a degree of holiness as to be assured of his salvation. *I am persuaded*, says St. Paul; he does not say, I think, I presume, I conjecture: but *I am persuaded*, I am assured, *that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. In the second place, we will prove, that no one has a right to assure himself of his salvation, any further than he hath a right to assure himself, that he shall persevere in faith and obedience. I am persuaded, of what? Is it that, live how I will, I shall be saved? No. But I am persuaded, that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God; that is to say, I am persuaded, I shall triumph over all temptations. The first of these articles shall be directed to confirm our consciences, and to explain our divinity. The second to justify our mo-

rality, and to destroy that false system of confidence which carnal security aims to establish.

I. A believer may carry his faith and holiness to a degree which will assure him of his salvation. This is our first proposition, and there is as much necessity of explaining it clearly as of solidly proving the truth of it; for if there be an article, that is rendered obscure by disputes about words, and by the false consequences which different authors impute to each other, it is certainly this. If we clearly state the question, and omit what is not essential to the subject, although it may have some distant relation to it, we shall preclude a great many difficulties, and the truth will establish itself.

First, then, when we affirm, there is such a blessing as assurance of salvation, we do not mean that assurance is a duty imposed on all mankind, so that every one, in what state soever he may be, ought to be fully persuaded of his salvation, and by this persuasion to begin his Christianity. We are well assured, that all those who are out of the road of truth and virtue, can have no other assurance than what is false, rash, and injurious to religion. By this we get rid of all those calunnies, by which some attempt to blacken our doctrine. It has been pretended, that we require false Christians, wicked and abandoned people, persisting in error and vice, to believe that they are justified, and that they have nothing more to do, in order to arrive at salvation, than to persuade themselves that they shall be saved. Indeed, we allow, obligations to faith and holiness, by which we arrive at assurance, lie upon all men, even

the most unbelieving and profane: but while they persist in unbelief and profaneness, we endeavour to destroy their pretences to assurance and salvation.

2. We do not affirm, that all Christians, even they who may be sincere Christians, but of whose sincerity there may be some doubt, have a right to assurance. Assurance of our justification depends on assurance of our bearing the characters of justified persons. As a Christian in his state of infancy and noviciate, can have only mixed and doubtful evidences of his Christianity, so he can have only mixed and doubtful evidences of his certainty of salvation. In this manner we reply to those who reproach us with opening a broad way to heaven not authorised by the word of God.

3. Less still do we affirm, that they who for a considerable time seemed to give great proof of their faith and love, but who have since fallen back into sin, and seem as if they would continue in it for the remaining part of life, ought, in virtue of their former apparent acts of piety to persuade themselves that they shall be saved. Far from pretending that these people ought to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of true believers, we affirm, they were never partakers of the first principles of true religion, according to this saying of an apostle, *If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*, 1 John ii. 19. In this manner we reply to the difficulties, which some passages of Scripture seem to raise against our doctrine; as this of St. Paul, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heav-

only gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance," Heb. vi. 4, 6. And this of the prophet, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned, in his trespass shall he die," Ezek. xviii. 24.

4. We do not say that they who have arrived at the highest degree of faith and holiness, can be persuaded of the certainty of their salvation in every period of their lives. Piety, even the piety of the most eminent saints, is sometimes under an eclipse. Consequently, assurance, which piety alone can produce, must be subject to eclipses too. Thus we answer objections taken from such cases as that of David. After he had killed Uriah, he was given up to continual remorse, the shade of Uriah all covered with gore, for ever haunted him, broke his bones, and made him cry most earnestly for a restoration of the joy of salvation, Psal. li. 8, 12. In some such circumstances the prophet Asaph was, when he exclaimed, *Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Psal. lxxvii. 7, 9. These were moments of suspension of divine love; these were the sad remains of sin in these holy men.

5. We do not say that the greatest saints have any right to persuade themselves of the certainty of their salvation in case they were to cease to love

God. Certainty of salvation, supposes perseverance in the way of salvation. Thus we reply to objections taken from the words of St. Paul, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. We are persuaded St. Paul, all holy as he was, had he ceased to have been holy, would have been obliged to doubt of his salvation. Thus also we account for the threatenings which are denounced in Scripture, and for this command of an apostle, *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. And by this also we get rid of the unjust reproaches which some cast on the doctrine of assurance, as favoring indolence and licentiousness.

6. We do not affirm, that any man, considered in himself, employing only his own strength, and unassisted by grace, can hope to persevere in holiness. We suppose the Christian assisted by the power of God, without which no man can begin the work of salvation, much less finish it. Thus our doctrine frees itself from rashness and presumption.

7. We do not pretend to affirm, that doubts exclude men from salvation. Faith may be sincere, where it is not strong. All the children of Abraham are not like Abraham *fully persuaded*.

Finally, While we maintain the doctrine of assurance, we wish to have it distinguished from the doctrine of perseverance. It is a doctrine of our churches, once a child of God, and always a child of God. But, although these two doctrines seem to be closely connected together; although the same arguments

which establish the one, may be of use to prove the other ; yet there is a considerable difference between the two. We are not considering to-day so much the *condition* of a Christian, as the *judgment* which he ought to make of it. Let it not surprise you then, if, while we press home the article of assurance, we do not speak much on the faithfulness of God in his promises, or the irrevocable nature of his eternal decrees ; for we are not inquiring in this discourse, whether the promises of God be faithful, or whether his decrees be inviolable : but whether we can arrive at a persuasion of our own interest in these promises, and whether we be included in the eternal decrees of his love. Our question is not, May true believers fall away into endless perdition ? but, Have we any evidence that we are among the number of those saints who can never perish ?

These elucidations and distinctions are sufficient at present. Were we to compose a treatise on the subject, it would be necessary to explain each article more fully : but in a single sermon they can only be just mentioned. These hints, we hope, are sufficient to give you a clear state of the question, and a just notion of the doctrine of our churches. We do not say every man, but a believer ; not every pretended believer, but a true believer ; not a believer in a state of infancy and noviciate, but a confirmed believer ; not a believer who backslides from his profession, but one who perseveres ; not a believer during his falls into sin, but in the ordinary course of his life ; not a believer considered in himself, and left to his own efforts, but a believer sup-

ported by that divine aid which God never refuses to those who ask it; such a believer, we say, may *persuade* himself, not only that the promises of God are faithful, and that his decrees are irrevocable, but that he is of the number of those whom faithful promises and immutable decrees secure. Not that we pretend to exclude from salvation those who have not obtained the highest degree of assurance: but we consider it as a state to which each Christian ought to aspire, a privilege that every one should endeavour to obtain. It is not enough to advance this proposition, we must endeavour to establish it on solid proof.

We adduce in proof of this article, first, the experience of holy men; next, the nature of regeneration; then the privileges of a Christian; and lastly, the testimony of the Holy Spirit; each of which we will briefly explain.

1. We allege the *experience* of holy men. A long list of men persuaded of their salvation might here be given. A few follow. Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself," chap. xix. 25—27. David says, "O Lord, deliver my soul from men of the world, who have their portion in this life. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," Ps. xvii. 14, 15. So Asaph, "It is my happiness to draw near to God. I am continually with thee, thou hast holden me by thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to

glory," Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24. But not to multiply examples, let us content ourselves with the words of the text, and in order to feel the force of them, let us explain them.

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor thing to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What is this love of God, of which our apostle speaks? The expression is equivocal. It either signifies the love of Jesus Christ to us, or our love to him. Both come to the same; for as St. Paul could not persuade himself that God would always love him, without at the same time assuring himself that he should always love God; nor that he should always love God, without persuading himself that God would always love him; so it is indifferent which sense we take, for in either sense the apostle means by the love of God in Christ Jesus, his communion with God in Jesus Christ. What does he say of this communion? He says, he is "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate it." This enumeration includes all, and leaves no room for addition. In effect, what are the most formidable enemies, that conspire against our souls?

Are they the sophisms with which Satan gives a gloss to error? There is an art of enveloping the truth; there is a superficial glare that may render

false religions probable, and may dazzle the eyes of enquirers. St. Paul defies not only the most accomplished teachers, and the most refined sophists: but the very devils also, *neither angels*, says he, that is, fallen angels.

Are they the dissipations of life, which by filling all the capacity of the soul, often deprive it of the liberty of working out its salvation? or are they the approaches of death, the gloom of which intercepts the light and obscures the rays of the Sun of Righteousness? St. Paul is superior to both, *neither death, nor life*, says he.

Are they worldly pomps and grandeurs? A certain love of elevation, inseparable from our minds, prejudiceth us in favour of whatever presents itself to us under the idea of grandeur. St. Paul dares all the pomps, and all the potentates in the world, *neither principalities, nor powers, nor height*, adds he.

Are the impressions that present objects always make on us enemies to us? The idea of a present benefit weighs much with us. The sacrifice of the present to the future is the most difficult of all the efforts of our hearts. St. Paul knows the art of rendering present objects future, and of annihilating the present, if I may venture to say so, by placing it in future prospect; *neither things present, nor things to come*.

Are they the most cruel torments? How difficult is it to resist pain! In violent sensations of pain the soul itself retires into concealment, and surrounded with excruciating maladies can scarcely support itself by reflection. St. Paul can resist all torments.

*distress and persecution, famine and nakedness, peril and sword.*

Is contempt an enemy? Many who have withstood all other trials, have sunk under that unjust scandal which often covers the children of God in this world. St. Paul entertained rectified ideas of glory, and found grandeur in the deepest abasement, when religion reduced him to it. *Neither, says he, shall depth be able to separate. I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth; and lest the imperfection of his enumeration should excite any suspicion concerning his perseverance, he adds, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In vain it will be objected, that this assurance was grounded on some extraordinary revelation, and on some privileges peculiar to the apostles; for it is clear, by the preceding verses, that the apostle grounds his assurance of salvation on promises made to all the church. On this account some duties are enjoined on all Christians, which suppose that all Christians may arrive at this assurance; these duties are thanksgiving, joy, and hope. Nothing then, can invalidate our arguments drawn from the examples of holy men. Thus the question of assurance is not a question of right, subject to objections and difficulties; it is a question of fact, explained by an event, and decided by experience.

2. Let us attend to the nature of *regeneration*. A regenerate man is not one who lightly determines his

choice of a religion; he is not a child tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, Eph. iv. 14. but he is a man who hath studied Christianity, weighed its arguments, seen its evidences, and felt all their force, so that he is persuaded by demonstration, that there is a God, a providence, another life, a judgment, a heaven, a hell, and so on.

A regenerate man is one, who, by continual meditations and pious actions, hath surmounted his natural propensities to sin. He is a man, whose constitution, so to speak, is new cast and refined, so that instead of being inwardly carried away to sin by his own violent passions, he is inwardly moved to the practice of piety and virtue.

A regenerate man is one, who, in pious exercises, hath experienced that satisfaction which a rational mind tastes, when inward consciousness attests a harmony between destiny and duty. He is a man, who hath felt *that peace which passeth all understanding, that joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, Phil. iv. 7. 1 Pet. i. 8. which the presence of God produceth in the soul. He is a man, whose life hath abounded with those happy periods, in which the soul loses sight of the world, holds communion with its God, foretastes eternal felicity, finds itself, as St. Paul expresseth it, *raised up from the dead, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 6.

A regenerate man is one who hath meditated on the attributes of God, on his wisdom, his omnipresence, and his justice, and particularly on those depths of mercy, which inclined him to redeem a fallen world, and to ransom it by a sacrifice, the

bare idea of which confounds imagination, and absorbs all thought.

A regenerate man is one, whose own ideas of God have produced love to him, a love the more fervent because it is founded on his own perfections and excellencies, *a love strong as death, a love that many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown*, Cant. viii. 6, 7.

This is a fair account of a regenerate man. Now, it is certain, such a man has a right to be persuaded that he shall triumph over all his temptations; he may say, *I am persuaded that no creature shall separate me from the love of God*.

Let us consider things at the worst with this man. It may happen to him, that a complex sophism, or an ingenious objection, may for a moment becloud his faith, and excite some doubt in his mind; but as we suppose him enlightened, guarded, and grounded in the truth, it is impossible his persuasion of these great truths, truths so well understood and established, should ever be totally effaced from his mind.

Indeed, it may happen, that such a man through a revolt of his senses, or a revolution of his spirits, may fall into some excesses: but as his constitutional turn is reformed, his propensity to sin surmounted, and his habits of piety established, it is impossible he should not know that his senses and spirits will return to their usual calm.

It may happen, that such a man through the allurements of a present pleasure, through the enticement of a temptation, through the false attractives

of the world, may for a few moments be imposed on, and betrayed away : but a remembrance of the pleasures of piety, a contrast between them and the pleasures of the world, will soon recover him to such religious exercises as before gave him real pleasure and pure joy.

Remark here, that by proposing this reasoning we have granted our opponents all which they can reasonably require ; we have placed things at the worst. But, including all our ideas, we affirm, the principles of regeneration are such, that he who possesseth them, will not only rise from his falls, should he sometimes fall into sin under violent temptations : but he will avail himself of these very temptations to confirm his faith and obedience. The same objects produce different effects, according to the different dispositions of the persons to whom they are offered. What serves to confirm a wicked man in sin, serves to confirm a good man in virtue, and, if he has fallen, to reclaim him to God.

Propose to a regenerate man the most artful sophism of error, he will take occasion from it to attach himself more earnestly to the study of truth ; he will increase his knowledge, and he will never find a more sincere attachment to religion than after discovering the nullity of the objections that are made against it. Surround him with worldly pomp, it will elevate his mind to that glory which God hath reserved for his children in the other world. Put him in a state of meanness and misery, it will detach him from the world, and enliven him in searching felicity in another life. Lay him on a death-bed,

even there he will triumph over all. The veils that concealed the supreme good from him, will begin to fall in pieces, and he will become inflamed with the desire of possessing it. Suppose him even fallen into sin, an experience of his frailty will animate him to vigilance ; he will hereafter doubly guard the weak passes of his soul ; and thus he will gain by his losses, and triumph in his very defeats.

It is too little to say, “ No creature shall separate him from the love of God ;” all creatures shall serve to unite him more closely to his Lord. Thus St. Paul says, “ All things work together for good to them that love God ; in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,” Rom. viii. 28, 37. Observe these expressions, not only nothing can hurt a true believer : but *all things work together for his good* ; not only, we are conquerors : but we are *more than conquerors through him that loved us*. Nothing is hyperbolical here. Every thing actually contributes to the salvation of a believer. In this sense *all are his, Paul, Cephas, and the world*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. In this sense he *spoileth principalities and powers*, and, like his Saviour, *makes a shew of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. And this is a reason for a believer’s continual joy, because, in whatever circumstances providence may place him, all conduct him to the one great end. Were his chief aim health, sickness would deprive him of it ; were it elevation, meanness would thwart him ; were it riches, poverty would counteract his design : but as his chief aim is salvation, all things, sickness and health, majesty and meanness, poverty and riches, all con

tribute to his salvation. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All things work together for good to them that love God. We are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us."

The *prerogatives* of a Christian afford a third class of arguments for assurance of salvation. This appears by two propositions. A Christian may know, that he hath a true faith. When a person is persuaded, that he hath a true faith, he may assure himself of obtaining assistance to persevere, and consequently of arriving at salvation.

The first proposition is incontestible. True faith hath proper characters. It consists in some ideas of the mind, in some dispositions of heart, and in some actions of life, each of which may be described, if not with facility, yet with certainty, when the laws of self-examination are obeyed. The scripture puts these words into the mouths of true believers: "We know that we have passed from death unto life; we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," 1 John iii. 14, 19. Agreeably to which St. Paul says, "Hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Here lies the difficulty; I have faith to-day, how can I assure myself that I shall have it to-morrow?

I am sure to-day I am in a state of grace, how can I be sure I shall be so to-morrow? Our second proposition is intended to remove this difficulty. When we are sure faith is true and genuine, we may be sure of assistance to persevere. We ground this on the privileges of true faith. One of these is the pardon of all the sins that we have committed in the whole course of our lives, provided we repent. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 1. A second privilege is the acceptance of sincerity instead of perfection, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench," Matt. xii. 20. Another privilege is supernatural grace to support us under trials, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally," James i. 5. One privilege is the connection of all benefits with the one great gift, "God who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Another privilege is the gift of perseverance, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 33. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Another privilege is an interest in the intercession of Jesus Christ, which God never rejects. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 31, 32.

“ Holy Father ! keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone ; but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word,” John xvii. 11, 20. “ I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,” chap. xiv. 16. These privileges, in a word, consist in being *loved* of God, *unto the end*, chap. xiii. 1. having been loved from *the beginning*, and in receiving from God *gifts and calling without repentance*, Rom. xi. 29.

Do not attempt, then, to overwhelm me with a sense of my own frailty and sin. Do not allege my natural levity and inconstancy. Do not oppose against me the rapid moments, in which my passions sport with my real happiness, and change me in an instant from hatred to love, and from love to hatred again. Do not produce, in the sad history of my life, the mortifying list of so many resolutions forgotten, so many unreal plans, so many abortive designs. The edifice of my salvation is proof against all vicissitudes ; it is in the hand of him who *changeth not*, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*, Heb. xiii. 8. To him I commit the preservation of it ; because I am a Christian, and because it is the privilege of a Christian to say, according to the beautiful expression of St. Paul, “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,” 2 Tim. i. 12.

Finally, the *inward testimony of the Spirit of God* puts the doctrine of assurance out of all doubt. We

propose this argument with trembling, so excessively has human fancy abused it ! Enthusiasm defiles the church of God. The world, always fantastic, and full of visionary schemes, seems now-a-days to be superannuated. We almost every where meet with, what shall I call them ? weak heads or wicked hearts, who, being destitute of solid reasons to establish their reveries, impute them to the Spirit of God, and so charge eternal truth with fabulous tales, that make reason blush, and which are unworthy of the meanest of mankind.

It is true, however, that the believer hath in his heart a testimony of the Spirit of God, which assures him of his salvation ; and the abuse of this doctrine ought not to prevent a sober use of it. This testimony is a kind of demonstration superior to all those of the schools. It is an argument unknown to philosophers, and supreme wisdom is the author of it. It is a lively apprehension of our salvation excited in our hearts by God himself. It is a powerful application of our mind to every thing that can prove us in a state of grace. It is an effect of that supreme power, which sound reason attributes to God over the sensations of our souls, and according to which he can excite, as he pleases, joy or sorrow. It is a Christian right founded on scripture promises. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,” Rom. v. 5. “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear : but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children

of God," chap. viii. 15, 16. He which establisheth us with you in Christ, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts," 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us," 1 John iii. 24. "To him that overcometh, will I give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it," Rev. ii. 7. We see the glorious effects of these promises in some believers, who, although they live in meanness and indigence, enjoy such pleasures as all the riches and grandeurs of the world cannot give. We see the effects of them in some dying persons, who, at the sight of death, experience consolations, which change their beds of sickness into fields of victory and triumph. We see them again in many martyrs, who are happier on racks and burning piles than tyrants on their thrones, environed with all the possible pomp of a court.

Such are the arguments which establish the doctrine of assurance. But, shall I tell you, my brethren, a thought that has run in my mind all the time of this exercise? In our general preaching, we fear our arguments may seem inconclusive, and may but half convince our auditors. In this discourse we have been afraid they would appear too convincing, and carry the subject beyond our intention. Each hearer will perhaps indiscreetly arrogate to himself the particular privileges of believers. Having, therefore, preached the doctrine, it is necessary to guard you against the abuse of it by a few precautions. Having proved that there is a well-grounded

assurance, it is necessary to attack security, and to shew, that the consolations which result from our doctrine, belong to the real Christian only, and are privileges to which unregenerate persons, yea even they, whose regeneration is uncertain, ought not to pretend. We will not produce new objects, we will consider the articles that have been already considered, in a new point of light; for what serves to establish true confidence serves at the same time to destroy carnal security. We have been convinced, that a believer may assure himself of his salvation by four arguments, by the experiences of holy men, by the nature of regeneration, by the prerogatives of a Christian, and by the testimony of the holy Spirit. These four arguments support what we just now affirmed; that assurance is a privilege, to which unregenerate men, and suspected Christians, have no right, and thus the sophisms of sin demonstrate the necessity of vigilance.

II. The first argument that establisheth the assurance of a believer, the first argument which we employ against the carnal security of a sinner, is the experience of the saints. Of all sophistical ways of reasoning, is there one that can compare with this? Job, a model of patience, who adored God under all his afflictions, was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, who rage under trials, who would, if it were possible, deprive God of the empire of the world, which he seems to me to govern partially and unjustly, I may persuade myself of my salvation. David, *a man after God's own heart*, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. David, whose whole *delight was in the law of the*

*Lord*, Psal. i. 2. was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, whose every devotional exercise savours of nothing but languor and lukewarminness, I, who can hardly drag myself to hear the word of God, I may persuade myself of my salvation. St. Paul, that wise proselyte, that zealous minister, that bleeding martyr, was persuaded of his salvation; therefore I, who profess the religion in which I was educated, without knowing why.....it is hardly worth while to refute these unnatural and inconclusive consequences.

Further, these eminent saints not only avoided grounding their assurance of salvation on your principles; but they were persuaded, if they lived as you live, they should be consigned to destruction. What said Job on this article? *Let me be weighed in an even balance. If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid servant, if I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?* chap. xxxi. 6, 13, 16, 24, 14. That is to say, If he had practised any of the vices, or neglected any of the virtues which he enumerated, God would have rejected him. This now is your case; you are haughty towards your inferiors; if not cruel, yet strait-handed to the poor; gold is your god; and, consequently, if your ideas of assurance be regulated by these of Job, you ought not to persuade yourself of your salvation. What says St. Paul? *I keep under my body, and bring*

*it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away,* 1 Cor. ix. 27. That is to say, St. Paul was persuaded, if he relaxed his piety, if he were not to account all he had done nothing, if he were not to attend to what remained to be done, God would reject him. This is your case; you live a life of security and indolence, and making all your vocation consist in a bare avoiding of notorious crimes, you do not even see the necessity of making a progress in holiness: consequently, if you regulate your ideas of assurance of salvation on these of St. Paul, you ought not to pretend to be sure of being saved.

Moreover, when these eminent saints fell by sudden surprize into those sins in which nominal Christians coolly and deliberately persist, they did not imagine, that a recollection of former virtue, or even of that faith and piety, the seeds of which none of their falls eradicated, was a sufficient ground of solid peace and joy. They complained they had lost the *joy of salvation*, Psal. li. 14. and under such complaints they continued till they were restored to communion with God, and till by reciprocal acts of love, they were convinced sin was pardoned. But if these saints, in some single improper actions reasoned thus; what ought to be the dispositions of those who consume their whole lives in vicious habits?

Let us add one word more. What mean these words of my text, of which false Christians make such a criminal abuse? "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, shall separate." Does this text

mean to affirm, if a man begin to surmount temptation, he shall be infallibly saved, although he cease to resist, and temptations prevail over him in the end? The words mean the direct contrary. St. Paul promises himself, that he shall always believe, not that he shall be saved if he fall into infidelity, but that he shall always resist sin, as far as human frailty will allow; not that he shall be saved if sin triumph over him. "I am persuaded, death shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is to say, the love of God hath struck such deep root in my soul, that death cannot eradicate my love to him. "I am persuaded, life shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is, the love of God hath struck such deep root in my soul, that all the charms of life can never prevent my loving him. "I am persuaded angels shall not separate me from the love of God;" that is to say, the love of God hath struck such deep root in my soul, that I defy all the power and policy of wicked angels to prevent my loving him. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" that is to say, the love of God hath made impressions on our souls so deep, that should he cause us to suffer the most cruel persecutions, should he command us to die with hunger, should we be slaughtered for his sake, we would not cease to love him. These are the sentiments of St. Paul in the text, and in the preceding verses. But you whom death or life, angels, principalities, or powers, separate every day from loving God, what right have you to say, "We are persua-

ded, that neither death, nor life, shall separate us from the love of God?"

I freely own, my brethren, I have not patience to hear nominal Christians, unregenerate persons, appropriate to themselves the words and sentiments of eminent saints. If this abuse be deplorable through life, is it not most of all so at the hour of death? We often hear people, whose whole lives have been spent in sin, speak the very language of others, whose whole days have been devoted to virtue. One says with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. But who are you talking thus? Do you know who uttered these words? Do you know who St. Paul was? He was a man filled with divine love; a man burning with love to the church; a man inviolably attached to all the rights of God and men. But you who sell justice for a bribe; you who stain the character of every neighbour; you who exercise a faithless ministry; do you adopt the style of this apostle? Instead of saying, *I have fought the good fight*, you ought to say, I have fought a bad fight; instead of saying, *I have kept the faith*, you ought to say, I have betrayed the faith; instead of saying, *I have finished my course*, you ought to say, I have not yet begun to set a step in it; instead of saying, *A crown of righteousness is laid up for me*, you ought to say, There are laid up for me chains of darkness, I am on the brink of hell, and I am looking, my God, whether there be any possible way of escaping it. But to say, with St.

Paul, *I am persuaded*, a man must be, if not in degree, at least in sincerity and truth, a saint as St. Paul was.

A second argument which establishes the doctrine of assurance, and destroys a system of carnal security, is the nature of regeneration. Recollect the reasons assigned before to shew, that a confirmed Christian might persuade himself he should triumph over all his trials; these reasons all prove, that unregenerate men, and suspected Christians, have just grounds of fear. An unregenerate man hath only a few transient acts of virtue, and he hath paid very little attention to the mortification of his natural propensities to sin; consequently he ought to fear, that habits of vice, and inward propensities to sin, will carry his superficial virtue away. An unregenerate man hath very little apprehension of the joy of salvation, consequently he ought to dread the influence of sensual pleasures. An unregenerate man hath but a few seeming sparks of divine love, and if he think them real, he ought to fear the extinction of them. A light so faint, a spark so small, are not likely amidst so many obstacles to continue long.

This fear is the more reasonable, because the church abounds with nominal Christians, who, after a shining profession of piety and sanctity, have forsaken truth and virtue. We have seen righteous men turn away from their righteousness, as the prophet Ezekiel expresseth it, chap. xviii. 24. We have seen temporary professors, who, after they have received the word with joy, have been offended when

persecution arose, as Jesus Christ speaks, Matt. xii. 20, 21. We have seen such as Hymeneus and Philletus, who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, as St. Paul words it, 2 Tim. ii. 17. We have seen some like Demas, after they have adhered a while to the truth, forsake it, having loved this present world, as the same apostle speaks, chap. iv. 10. We have seen people, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, again entangled therein; and overcome, as St. Peter says, 2 Epist. ii. 20. We have seen Christians, in appearance, of the highest order, who, after they had been once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, fell away, Heb. vi. 4. We have seen Judasses, who, after they had been in the sacred college of Jesus Christ, shamefully betrayed him. While our knowledge is so small, and our virtue so feeble, we have great reason to apply these examples, and to tremble for ourselves.

The third argument by which we established the doctrine of assurance, and which also militates against carnal security, is Christian prerogative. Two propositions are contained in it. First, We may be persuaded that we have true faith. Next, We may be sure true faith, will be assisted to persevere. These propositions which assure the believer ought to alarm a nominal Christian.

Here let us develope an ambiguity too common in our churches. For as we affirm, on the one side, that a believer hath characters proper to himself,

and by which he may determine his state; and as, on the other side, we assert, that they who have these characters, can never cease to be true believers; a nominal Christian may imagine the following sophism: I fast, I pray, I give alms; these are the virtues of a believer; I may then persuade myself, that I am a believer. Now, it seems he who once becomes a true believer, can never cease to believe; consequently, I who have fasted, prayed, and given alms, can never cease to be a believer.

What is still more astonishing, this ridiculous reasoning is often applied to others as well as to ourselves. A loose casuist asks his penitent, Do you repent of your sins? The penitent answers, I do repent. Have you recourse to the divine clemency? The penitent replies, I have recourse to it. Do you embrace the satisfaction of Christ? The penitent says, I do embrace it. On this slight foundation our casuist builds his system. Publications of grace are lavished, sources of mercy pour forth in abundance, and the penitent may, if he please, take his seat in heaven. My God! In what a manner they enter into the spirit of thy gospel!

But first, when we affirm, that only the true believer can perform acts of faith, and that the least good work supposes regeneration: we do not affirm, that there are not many actions common to both real and nominal Christians. A nominal Christian may pray, a nominal Christian may fast, a nominal Christian may give alms. It may even happen that men may embrace religion on base principles. Religion commands a subject to obey his king; a king may

embrace religion on this account, and he may place his supreme happiness in the obedience of his subjects. Religion discovers to us a merciful God ; a wicked man may embrace religion on this account, for the sake of calming those fears which his vicious practices excite, by ideas of divine mercy. The same may be said of other men. A man cannot conclude then, that he is a believer from his performance of virtuous actions, common to believers and unbelievers. He must have peculiar light into the deep depravity of his own heart ; he must be placed, at least in design, in circumstances that distinguish a good from a bad man.

Again, when we say a believer can never cease to believe, we do not mean to say, a Christian attached to religion only by external performances, and by appearances of piety, can never cast off his profession. The finest appearances of piety, the greatest knowledge, the most liberal alms-deeds, the most profound humiliations may be succeeded by foul and fatal practices.

Moreover, great knowledge, generous charity, profound humiliation, will aggravate the condemnation of those who cease to proceed in virtue, and to purify their motives of action ; because the performance of these virtues, and the acquisition of this great knowledge, suppose greater aid and more resistance. Hear St. Peter, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment*, 2 Epist. ii. 21. The case of those who commit the unpardonable sin, attests the same. Hear these thundering words, *If*

*we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries, Heb. x. 26.*

Finally, The argument from the testimony of the Spirit of God for the assurance of a true believer, ought to trouble the security of a nominal Christian. In effect, how does the Holy Spirit work in our hearts? Does he operate by magic? Does he present phantoms to our view? Does he inculcate propositions contrary to truth? This is all enthusiasm. The Holy Spirit bears witness in us in a manner conformable to our state and to the nature of things in general. If then the Spirit of God testify in your hearts while you are unregenerate, he will testify that you are unregenerate. If he bear witness while you are nominal Christians, he will bear witness that you are nominal Christians. If he bear witness while your faith is doubtful, he will bear witness to the doubtfulness of your faith. Such a testimony may be ascribed to the Spirit of God. But an assurance of salvation, which exceeds your evidences of Christianity, must be a vision, a fancy, a dream; and to suppose the Holy Spirit the author of such an assurance, is to suppose in the same Spirit testimony against testimony; it is to make the Spirit of God *divided against himself*, Mat. xii. 26. and so a destroyer of his own kingdom; it is to make his testimony in the heart contradict his testimony in scripture. In scripture it declares, *No man can serve two masters*, chap. vi. 24. in your hearts he declares, A

man may serve two masters. In Scripture he attests, *There is no concord between Christ and Belial*, 2 Cor. vi. 15. in your hearts he attests, *There is concord between Christ and Belial*. In Scripture he affirms, *Neither fornicators, nor covetous, nor revilers, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. in your hearts he affirms, *such shall inherit the kingdom of God*. Thus the four arguments, that prove the doctrine of assurance in favour of true believers, destroy the security of a mere nominal Christian.

The consolations which arise from the doctrine of assurance, are not then for all Christians indifferently. They are only for those who continually study obedience; they are for those only who have seen into a *heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. and have found even there marks of regeneration; they are for those only, who, by a life entirely devoted to the service of God, have demonstrated that they bear the characters of his children.

Is this your condition? The sophisms of sin that we have endeavoured to refute, these portraits of rash confidence, these false titles of virtue and regeneration, these images that we have traced, whence have we taken them? Have we gathered them from books? have we invented them in our closets? have we derived them from the study of theology? have we drawn them from monuments of ancient history? No, no, we have learnt them in the world, in the church, in your families, in your sick-beds, where nothing is so common as this false peace, nothing so rare as the true.

Whence the evil comes, I know not : but the fact is certain. Of all the churches in the world, there are none which abuse the doctrine of Christian assurance, and which draws consequences from it directly contrary to those which ought to be drawn, like some of ours. We lull ourselves into a fanciful confidence : we place on imaginary systems an assurance which ought to be founded only on *the rock of ages* ; we scruple, even while we are engaged in the most criminal habits, to say, we doubt of our salvation ; and, as if a persuasion of being saved, dispensed with the necessity of working out our salvation, we consider an assurance of arriving at heavenly felicity as a privilege, that supplies the want of every virtue.

Certainly, nothing is more great and happy than the disposition of a man who courageously expects to enjoy a glory to which he has a just title. A man who knows the misery of sin ; a man who groans under the weight of his own depravity, and enters into the sentiment, while he utters the language of the apostle, *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* Rom. vii. 24. a man, who, after he had experienced the terrible agitations of a conscience distressed on account of sin, hath been freed from all his sins at the foot of the cross, hath put on the yoke of Christ his Lord ; a man, who having seen in himself the true characters of a Christian, and the never-failing graces annexed to evangelical mercy, hath learned at length to pierce through all the clouds which Satan uses to conceal heaven from the Christian eye, to lay all the ghosts, that the

enemy of souls raises to haunt mankind into terror ; a man who rests on that *word of God*, which *standeth for ever*, even when *heaven and earth pass away*, may say, with St. Paul, *I am persuaded* ; such a man may assure himself that only glorified spirits enjoy a happiness superior to his ; he is arrived at the highest degree of felicity, to which in this valley of tears men can come.

But to consider religion always on the comfortable side ; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means ; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness, before they have been employed to fight the battle ; to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces, to which true consolation is annexed ; this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as crystal, smooth as glass, the air serene ; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy : but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light enflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of most men's assurance of salvation.

So then, instead of applying the words of our text to a great number of you, we are obliged to shed tears of compassion over you. Yes, we must lament your misery. You live under an economy in which the most transporting joys are set before you, and

you wilfully deprive yourselves of them. Yes, we must adopt the language of a prophet, *O that my people had harkened unto me!* We must say with Jesus Christ, *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!* Psal. lxxxi. 13. Luke xix. 42.

What can be happier, amidst the numberless vanities and vexations which accompany worldly pleasures, than to be able to derive from an assurance of our salvation pleasures suitable to intelligent creatures, immortal souls? What can be happier, amidst all the pains, labours, and miseries, with which life abounds, than to enjoy the plentiful consolations, that issue from a well-grounded hope of eternal felicity? Above all, what can be more capable of supporting us against the fear of death? Mortal and dying as we are, in a state, where the smallest alteration in the body reminds us of death, what can we wish for more conformable to our wants than to find in a firm hope of eternal felicity, a shield to secure us against the enemy, and a sword to destroy him? let us strive, let us pray, let us venture all, my brethren, to arrive at this happy state. And if, after we have believingly and sincerely laboured in this good work, there remain any doubt and suspicion, let us assure ourselves, that even our suspicions and fears shall contribute to our confirmation. They will not be accounted crimes, they will at most be only frailties; they will be infirmities productive of motives to go on in virtue, and to establish peace in the conscience. So be it. To God be honor and glory. Amen.



# SERMON XI.

*Judgment.*



HEBREWS ix. 27.

*It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment.*

**T**HE second proposition in my text conveys terror into the first. Judgment to come makes death terrible. I own, it is natural to love life. The Creator, it should seem, hath supplied the want of satisfactory pleasures in the world by giving us, I know not what, attachment to it. But when reason rises out of nature, when the good and evil of life are weighed, evil seems to out-weigh good, and we can hardly help exclaiming with the wise man, *the day of death is better than the day of one's birth! I hate life because of the work that is wrought under the sun!* Eccl. vii. 1. and ii. 17.

But to go from a bed of infirmity to a tribunal of justice; to look through the languors of a mortal malady to torments that have no end; and, after we have heard this sentence, *Return to destruction ye children of men*, Psal. xc. 3. to hear this other, *Give an account of thy stewardship*, Luke xvi. 2. these are just causes for intelligent beings to fear death.

Let us, however, acknowledge, although this fear is just, yet it may be excessive ; and, though it be madness to resist the thought, yet it would be weakness to be overwhelmed with it. I would prove this to-day, while in this point of light I endeavour to exhibit to your view the judgment that follows death.

We will not divert your attention from the chief design. We will only hint, that the proposition in the text is incidental, and not immediately connected with the principal subject, which the apostle was discussing. His design was to shew the pre-eminence of the sacrifice of the cross over all those of the le-vitical economy. One article, which argues the superiority of the first, is, that it was offered but once, whereas the Jewish sacrifices were reiterated. Christ *doth not offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of other sacrifices: but once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* For, *as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment ; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.*

Nor will we detain you longer by inquiring whether St. Paul speaks here of the particular judgment that each man undergoes immediately after death, or of that general judgment day, of which scripture says, *God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*, Acts xvii. 31. Whatever difference there may seem to be between these two hypotheses, it is easy to harmonize them. The general judgment will be a confirmation, and a con-

summation of each particular judgment, and we ought to consider both as different parts of one whole.

Once more I repeat it, we will not divert your attention from the principal design of this discourse. I am going first, not to allege arguments in proof of a judgment to come, I suppose them known to you, and that I am not preaching to novices: But I am going to assist you to carry them further than you usually do, and so to guard you against scepticism and infidelity, the pest of our days, and the infamy of our age. In a second article we will inquire, what will be the destiny of this assembly in that great day, in which God will declare the doom of all mankind. We discuss this question, not to indulge a vain curiosity: but to derive practical inferences, and particularly to moderate the excessive fear, that an object so very terrible produceth in some minds, and at the same time to trouble the extravagant security, in which some sleep, in spite of sounds so proper to awake them.

I. We have three directions to give you. The first regards the argument for judgment taken from the disorders of society. The second regards that which is taken from conscience. The third, that which is taken from revelation.

1. Our first direction regards the argument taken from the *disorders of society*. Do not confine your attention to those disorders which strike the senses, astonish reason, and subvert faith itself. Reflect on other irregularities, which, although they are less shocking to sense, and seemingly of much less con-

sequence, are yet no less deserving the attention of the Judge of the whole earth, and require no less than the first, a future judgment.

I grant, those notorious disorders, which human laws cannot repress, afford proof of a future judgment. A tyrant executes on a gibbet a poor unhappy man, whom the pain of hunger, and the frightful apprehension of sudden death, forced to break open an house. Here, if you will, disorder is punished, and society is satisfied. But who shall satisfy the just vengeance of society on this mad tyrant? This very tyrant, at the head of a hundred thousand thieves, ravages the whole world; he pillages on the right and on the left; he violates the most sacred rights, the most solemn treaties, he knows neither religion nor good faith. Go, see, follow his steps, countries desolated, plains covered with the bodies of the dead, palaces reduced to ashes, and people run mad with despair. Inquire for the author of all these miseries. Will you find him, think you, confined in a dark dungeon, or expiring on a wheel? Lo! he sits on a throne, in a superb royal palace; nature and art contribute to his pleasures; a circle of courtiers minister to his passions, and erect altars to him, whose equals in iniquity, yea, if I may be allowed to say so, whose inferiors in vice have justly suffered the most infamous punishments. And where is divine justice all this time? what is it doing? I answer with my text, *After death comes judgment. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, James i. 12.*

But, though the argument taken from the disorders of society is full and clear, when it is properly proposed, yet such examples as we have just mentioned do not exhaust it. It may be extended a great deal further, and we may add thousands of disorders, which every day are seen in society, against which men can make no laws, and which cannot be redressed until the great day of judgment, when God will give clear evidence of all.

Have human laws ever been made against hypocrites? see that man artfully covering himself with the veil of religion, that hypocrite, who excels in his art! behold his eyes, what seraphical looks they roll towards heaven! observe his features, made up, if I may venture to say so, of those of Moses, Ezra, Daniel, and Nehemiah! see his vivacity, or his flaming zeal shall I call it? to maintain the doctrines of religion, to forge thunderbolts, and to pour out anathemas against heretics! Not one grain of religion, not the least shadow of piety in all his whole conversation. It is a party-spirit, or a sordid interest, or a barbarous disposition to revenge, which animates him, and produces all his pretended piety. And yet I hear every body exclaim, He is a miracle of religion! he is a pillar of the church! I see altars every where erecting to this man; panegyrists, I see, are composing his encomium; flowers are gathering to be strewed over his tomb. And the justice of God, what is it doing? My text tells you, *After death comes judgment.*

Have human laws ever been made against the ungrateful? While I was in prosperity, I studied to

procure happiness to a man, who seemed entirely devoted to me ; I was happier in imparting my abundance to him than in enjoying it myself ; during that delightful period of my life he was faithful to me : but when fortune abandoned me, and adopted him, he turned his back on me ; now he suffers me to languish in poverty ; and, far from relieving my wants, he does not deign so much as to examine them. And divine justice, where is it ? Who shall punish this black crime ? I answer again, *After death comes judgment.*

Have men made laws against cowards ? I do not mean cowardice in war ; the infamy that follows this crime, is a just punishment of it. I speak of that mean cowardice of soul, which makes a man forsake an oppressed innocent sufferer, and keep a criminal silence in regard to the oppressor. Pursue this train of thought, and you will every where find arguments for a future judgment ; because there will every where appear disorders, which establish the necessity of it.

Our second direction regards the argument taken from *conscience*. Let not your faith be shaken by the examples of those pretended superior geniusses, who boast of having freed themselves from this restraint. Tell them, if they have no conscience, they ought to have ; and affirm, the truer their pretension the stronger your reason for taxing them with rage and extravagance. There is no better mode of destroying an objection than by proving, that he who proposes and admits it, is a fool for admitting and proposing it. If, then, I prove that a man, who

to demonstrate that conscience is a fancy, declares, he is entirely exempt from it ; if I prove, that such a man is a fool for proposing and admitting this proposition, shall I not subvert his whole system ? Now I think I am able to prove such a man a fool, and you will admit the truth of what I say, if you will give a little attention to the nature of conscience, a little closer attention, I mean, than is usually given to sermons.

What is conscience ? It is difficult to include an adequate idea of it in a definition ? This appears to me at once the most general and the most exact. Conscience is that faculty of our minds, by which we are able to distinguish right from wrong, and to know whether we neglect our duties, or discharge them.

There are, I grant, some operations of conscience, which seem to be rather instinct and sentiment than cool judgment arising from a train of reflections. Yet, we believe, all the operations of conscience proceed from judgment and reflection. But it sometimes happens, that the judgment of the mind is so ready, and its reflections so rapid, that it hardly sees what it judges, and reflects on, so that it seems to act by instinct and sentiment only. Thus when the mind compares two simple numbers together, the comparison is so easily made, that we think we know the difference by a kind of instinct belonging to our nature ; whereas when we compare complex numbers, we feel, so to speak, that our minds inquire, examine, and labour. In like manner in morality. There are some duties, the right of which is so clear

and palpable ; and there are some conditions, in which we, ourselves, are in regard to these duties which are so easy to be known, that the mind instantly perceives them without examination and discussion. But there are some duties, the right of which is so enveloped in obscurity ; and there are some stations, which are so very doubtful, that the mind requires great efforts of meditation before it can determine itself. For example, *Ought a subject to obey his lawful sovereign?* On this question, the mind instantly takes the affirmative side, on account of the clearness of the duty, and it seems to act by instinct, and without reflection. But here is another question, *Is it lawful for subjects to dethrone a tyrant?* Here the mind pauses, and before it determines enters into long discussions, and here we perceive, it acts by judgment and reflection. In both cases reflection and judgment are the ground of its operations. In the first case judgment is more rapid, reflection less slow : but it is reflection however. We have, then, rightly defined conscience, that faculty of our souls, by which we are capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and of knowing whether we neglect our duties, or discharge them.

But this is too vague, we must go further. We must examine the principles on which we ground our judgment of ourselves in regard to right and wrong. We must prove, by the nature of these principles, the truth of what we have affirmed ; that is, that a man, who calls conscience a fancy and who boasts of an entire freedom from it, is a fool for admitting and proposing this objection.

The judgment that constitutes the nature of conscience, is founded on three principles, either fully demonstrable or barely probable.

First, I am in a state of dependence.

Second, There is a supreme law ; or what is the same thing, there is something right and something wrong.

Third, I am either innocent or guilty.

On these three principles an intelligent spirit grounds a judgment, whether it deserves to be happy or miserable ; it rejoiceth, if it deserve to be happy ; it mourns, if it deserve to be miserable ; and this judgment, and this joy, or sorrow, which results from it, constitute what we call conscience.

But that which deserves particular regard, and in which partly consists the force of our reasoning, is, that it is not necessary to be able to demonstrate these principles, in order to prove, that conscience is not a fancy ; if they be probable, it is sufficient. We cannot reasonably free ourselves from conscience, till we have demonstrated the falsehood of these principles, and proved, that the consequences drawn from them are chimerical. For, if these principles be only probable ; if it be probable I may be happy, I have some reason to rejoice ; as I have some reason for uneasiness if my misery be probable. If the enjoyment of a great benefit be probable, I have some reason for great pleasure ; and I have some reason for extreme distress, if it be probable, that I shall fall into extreme misery. It is not necessary, therefore, in order to establish the empire of conscience, that the principles on which it is founded

should be demonstrable ; it is sufficient that they are probable. Now I affirm, that every man who maintains the improbability of these principles, and the vanity of the consequences that are drawn from them, is a fool and a madman, whose obstinate attachment to vice has blinded his eyes, and turned his brain. Consequently I affirm, that every man who maintains that conscience is a fancy, and who boasts of having shaken off the restraint of it, is a fool and a madman.

Take the first principle. *I am in a state of dependence.* I am subject to a Supreme Being, to whom I owe my existence, and who holds my destiny in his mighty hands. Do we exceed the truth when we say, a man who ventures to affirm this principle is neither demonstrable nor probable, is a madman and a fool ? I told you at the beginning of this discourse, that I intended to speak to you, not as scholars and novices : but as well-informed Christians, who have made some considerable progress in the knowledge of those truths, which equally support natural and revealed religion. But if you have any just notions of these truths, how can you form any other opinion of these men, of whom I am speaking, than that which I have formed ? A man who pretends that arguments drawn from the order of seasons, from the arrangements of the various parts of the universe, from the harmony of the members of our bodies, and all the other works of nature, by which we have so often established the doctrines of the being and attributes of God ; a man who affirms, that all these demonstrate nothing ; what am I saying ? a man who

affirms that all these prove nothing ; what am I saying again ? a man who affirms that all these do not afford the least degree of probability in favour of the existence and perfections of a Supreme Being ; who for his part is sure, for he has evidence to a demonstration, that all these originated in chance, and were not formed by the intervention of any intelligent cause ; such a man, what is he but a madman and a fool ? and consequently, is it not madness and folly to deny this first principle, *I am in a state of dependence ?*

Try the second principle. *There is a supreme law*, or, what comes to the same, there is something just, and something unjust. Whether this just and right be founded in the nature of things, or whether it proceed from the will of a Superior Being, is not needful to examine now ; be it as it may, there is a supreme law, there is something right and something wrong. A man who pretends that this proposition is evidently false ; a man who affirms, that all arguments brought in favour of this proposition are evidently false : a man who forms such an idea of all arguments drawn from the nature of intelligent beings, from the perfections of a first cause, from the laws that he hath given, and which constitute the body of religion ; a man who pretends, that all these arguments do not afford the least degree of probability, that a wise man ought to infer nothing from them to direct his life : and that for his part, it is clear to a demonstration to him, that what is called just and unjust, right and wrong, is indifferent in itself, and indifferent to the first cause ; that it is per-

fectly indifferent in itself whether we love a benefactor, or betray him, whether we be faithful to a friend, or perfidious, whether we be tender parents or cruel, whether we nourish our children, or smother them in the cradle; and that all these things at the most, relate only to a present interest; a man who advanceth such propositions, what is he but a fool and a madman? Is it necessary to reason to discover the extravagance and madness of these positions? Is it not sufficient to name them?

Take the third principle....But, it is enough to have pointed out the most proper method of answering the objections of a man who pretends conscience is a fancy, and who boasts of having none.

Let us pass then to our third direction. It concerns the proof taken from revelation. Do not rest the arguments drawn from this source on any particular passages, which, although they may be very full and explicit, may yet be subject to some sophistical exception: but rest them on the general design and scope of religion; this method is above all objections, and free from every difficulty. If this way be adopted, it will presently appear, that the doctrine of a future judgment is contained in a manner clear and convincing, not only in the writings of apostles and evangelists, but also in the revelations, with which God honoured the patriarchs, many ages before he gave a written law.

Yea, were we to allow that we have no formal passage to produce, in which this truth was taught the ancient servants of God, (which we are very far from allowing,) we might still maintain, that it was

included in the genius of those revelations, which were addressed to them. Jesus Christ taught us to reason thus on the doctrine of future rewards, and we may fairly apply the same method to the doctrine of future punishments. The doctrine of future rewards is not contained in the formal terms: but in the general design of this promise, *I am the God of Abraham*, Matt. xxii. 32. How splendid soever the condition of Abraham might have been, however abundant his riches, however numerous his servants, this promise proceeding from the mouth of God, *I am the God of Abraham*, could not have been accomplished in the temporal prosperity of a man who was dead, when the words were spoken, and whom death should retain in durance. As God declared himself *the God of Abraham*, and as Abraham was dead, when he declared it, Abraham must necessarily rise again. And this is our Saviour's reasoning, *God is not the God of the dead: but of the living*.

Let us say the same of those punishments, which God has denounced against sin, in regard to those ancient sinners, of whom God declared himself the judge; *God is not the judge of the dead: but of the living*. The wicked, during this life, are often free from adversity: but were they even miserable all the time of their abiding on earth, their miseries would not sufficiently express God's hatred of sin. Asaph renders to divine justice only one part of its deserved homage when he says, in order to justify it for tolerating some criminals, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into deso-

lation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors! As a dream, when one awaketh, so, O Lord, thou shalt despise their image," Psal. lxxiii. 18—20. No! the unexpected vicissitudes that sometimes confound the devices of the wicked, the fatal catastrophes in which we sometimes see them enveloped, the signal reverses of fortune, by which they are often precipitated from the highest elevation to the deepest distress; all these are too imperfect to verify those reiterated threatenings which the judge of mankind denounced against primitive criminals, to teach them that he was a just avenger of sin. To display this fully there must be a resurrection and a judgment. In this manner, even supposing there were no formal passages in proof of future judgment: (which we do not allow,) the genius, the drift and scope of religion would be sufficient to convince us of the truth of it.

II. What has been said shall suffice for proof of this truth, *after death comes judgment*. But what shall be the destiny of this audience? What sentence will the judge of the world pronounce on us in that formidable day, when he shall judge the world in righteousness? Will it be a sentence of mercy? will he pronounce our absolution? will he say to us, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" or will he say to us, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom?" Matt. xxv. 41, 34.

This is a difficult question: however, it is not so difficult as some of us may imagine. St. Paul lays down a principle that casts light on the enquiry; that

is, that men will be judged according to the economies under which they lived. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law," Rom. ii. 12. that is to say, as having lived under the Levitical economy. "They who have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;" to which we may fairly add, they who have lived under the gospel, shall be judged by the gospel. Now the gospel is an economy of light, an economy of proportion, and an economy of mercy. These three rules, by which God will regulate our eternal destiny, should quiet the excessive fears, which an idea of future judgment excites in some pious, but timorous souls. And, at the same time, they ought to disturb the false peace of those who sleep in indolence amidst objects so proper to awake them.

1. We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *light*. This proposition hath a comfortable aspect on a good man. We shall be judged according to what is clear in the gospel itself: and not according to what is abstruse and impenetrable in the systems of the schools. What inducement could we possibly have to endeavour to inform ourselves, were we prepossessed with a notion, that our sentence would be regulated by our ideas on a thousand questions which some men have boldly stated, rashly decided, and barbarously enforced on others? Were it necessary to have clear and complete ideas of the arrangement of the first decrees of the first cause, of the nature of the divine essence, of the manner in which God foresees contingent events, and of many

other such questions as obscure as useless ; were it necessary, in order to receive a favourable sentence, to be able to decide some cases of conscience, which have always been indeterminable by the ablest casuists ; were these necessary, who dare examine these questions ? But, Christian soul ! banish thy scruples. Thy God, thy judge, is the sovereign of his creatures : but he is not their tyrant. Thou art free : not a slave. The economy according to which thou shalt be judged, is an economy of light ; and whatever is impenetrable and undecided in the gospel, has no relation to that trial which thou wilt undergo.

But if this truth be amiable and comfortable to good people, it is also formidable, terrifying, and desperate to people of an opposite character. You will be judged as reasonable beings, who had it in their power to discover truth and virtue. In vain will you pretend ignorance of some articles. Your judge will open this sacred book in my hand, in which the decision of these articles is contained ; the elucidation of all the truths, of which you are wilfully ignorant. Will not your ignorance appear voluntary, when God judges you with the light of this gospel in his hand ?

Nothing is more common in the world, than to hear men exculpate their errors by pleading their sincerity. “ If I be deceived,” says one, “ in taking the book which you call *scripture* by excellence, for a mere human compilation, I am very sincere in my error, and it does not depend on me to alter my ideas.” And why does it not depend

on you to change your ideas? Have you examined those evidences of the divinity of the book, which shine in every part of it? Have you once in your life thoroughly examined the sense of any prophecy, to find out whether a spirit of prophecy inspired the sacred writers? Is it a sincere mistake to deceive one's self rather than apply to this important question that study, that time, and that examination, which it demands?

“If I be in an error,” says another, “in adhering to a particular communion, I err very sincerely, and I cannot change my ideas.” And why cannot you change your ideas? Have you availed yourself of the light of the times, in which you live? Have you consulted those ministers, who can inform you? Have you risen from that state of indolence, ease and prudence, which inclines people rather to take it for granted, that they were born in a true church, than to examine whether they were so? Does it require more sagacity, more genius, more labour to find out, that in our scriptures worshipping before images of wood or stone is forbidden; that purgatory is a mere human invention; that the traffic of indulgences is a mercenary scheme; that the authority of the Roman pontiff is founded only on worldly policy? I ask, Is more penetration necessary to determine these articles, than to command an army, to pursue a state-intrigue, to manage a trade, or to cultivate an art or a science?

In like manner, we every day see people in society, who, while they boldly violate the most plain and allowed precepts of the gospel, pretend to ex-

culpate themselves fully by saying, “ We do not “ think such a conduct sinful ; what crime can there “ be in such and such a practice ?”

An obstinate gamester says, “ I think, there is no “ harm in gaming.” And why do you think so ? Is not the gospel before your eyes ? Does not the gospel tell you, it is not allowable to deceive ? Does not the gospel clearly prohibit a waste of time ? Does not the gospel forbid you to ruin your neighbour ? Does not the gospel plainly forbid you to cheat ? And you, obstinate gamester ! do not you deceive in gaming ? Do not you waste your time ? Do not you do all in your power towards the ruin of your neighbour ? Do not you cheat, while you play, and defraud them who play with you, and practise a thousand other artifices which it would be improper to relate here : but which God will one day examine at his just tribunal ?

Thus a miser exclaims, “ O, there can be no harm “ in loving the world as I love it.” And what makes you think so ? Could you not easily undeceive yourself by casting your eyes on the gospel ? Does not the gospel clearly say, “ The covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ?” 1 Cor. vi. 10. Is it not clearly revealed in the gospel, that “ Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, the love of God doth not dwell in him ?” 1 John iii. 17. Does not the gospel plainly tell you, that God will one day say to those, who have been devoid of charity, “ Depart, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire! for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat?" Matt. xxv. 41, 42.

Thus a time-server says to us, "I think there is no sin in living where liberty of conscience is not allowed, provided I make no profession of superstition and idolatry." And why do you think so? Does not the gospel clearly require you *not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together*, Heb. x. 25. and do not you forsake our public assemblies? Does not the gospel expressly require you to *come out of Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 4. and do you not abide there? Are you not informed in the gospel, that *he who loveth father, or mother, or son, or daughter, more than Jesus Christ, is not worthy of the name of a Christian*? Matt. x. 37. And, pray, do you prefer your relations before Jesus Christ?

"I do not think," adds one, who maintains an illicit commerce, "there can be any harm in indulging those passions which arise from the fine feelings of our own hearts." And why do you not think so? Does God forbid impurity only when it is unconstitutional? In the general rule, which excludes the unclean from the kingdom of heaven, has the legislator made an exception in favour of those who follow the emotions of an irregular heart?

2. We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *proportion*; I mean to say, the virtues which God requireth of us under the gospel, are proportioned to the faculties that he hath given us to perform them. Let us not enfeeble this maxim by theological opinions, which do not belong to it. Let us not allege, that all duty is out of our power, that

of ourselves we can do nothing. For when we say, the laws of God are proportioned to our weakness, we speak of persons born in the church, instructed in the truths of revelation, and who are either assisted, by spiritual succours or may be, if they seek for these blessings as they ought to be sought. In regard to these persons, we affirm, the gospel is an economy of proportion, and this is the great consolation of a good man. I grant the perfection, to which God calls us, is infinitely beyond our natural power, and even beyond the supernatural assistance, that he imparts to us. But we shall be judged by the efforts we have made to arrive at this end. Endeavours to be perfect will be accounted perfection.

This very law of proportion, which will regulate the judgment of us, will overwhelm the wicked with misery. It is always an aggravation of a misery to reflect that we might have avoided it, and that we brought it upon ourselves. The least reproach of this kind is a deadly poison, that envenoms our sufferings, and this will constitute one of the most cruel torments of the damned. Ye devouring fires, which the justice of God hath kindled in hell, I have no need of the light of your flames to discover to me the miseries of a reprobate soul! Ye chains of darkness, which weigh him down, I have no need to examine the weight of you! The criminal's own reproaches of himself are sufficient to give me an idea of his state. He will remember, when he finds himself irretrievably lost, he will remember the time, when he might have prevented his loss. He will recollect how practicable

those laws were, for violating which he suffers. He will recollect the mighty assisting power which he once despised. Thou! thou wilt recollect the sage advice, that was given thee. Thou! this sermon, which I have been addressing to thee. Thou! thine education. Thou! the voice of the holy Spirit, that urged thee to change thy life. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself!* Hos. xiii. 9. This, this is the excruciating reflection of a nominal Christian condemned by divine justice to everlasting flames. Such a Christian suffering the vengeance of eternal fire will incessantly be his own tormentor. He will say to himself, I am the author of my own destruction! I might have been saved! I, I alone, condemned myself to everlasting confinement in these dungeons of horror to which I am now consigned.

3. Finally, We shall be judged as having lived under an economy of *mercy*. What can be more capable at once, of comforting a good man against an excessive fear of judgment, and of arousing a bad man from his fatal security?

All the sentiments of benevolence that you can expect in an equitable judge; we say more, all the sentiments of tenderness, which you can expect in a sincere friend; we say more still, all the sentiments of pity, compassion, and love, that can be expected in a tender parent, you will find in the person of the judge, who will pronounce your eternal doom.

Let us not elevate our passions into virtues. Fear of the judgments of God, which carried to a certain degree is a virtue, becomes a condemnable passion, at least a frailty that ought to be opposed, when it

exceeds due bounds. Do you render an acceptable homage to Almighty God, think you, by doubting his mercy, the most lovely ray of his glory? Do you render a proper homage to God, think you, by considering him as a tyrant? Do you think you render homage to the Deity by doubting his most express and sacred promises? Do you believe you pay an acceptable tribute to God by professing to think, that he will take pleasure in eternally tormenting a poor creature, who used all his efforts to please him; who mourned so often over his own defects; who shed the bitterest tears over the disorders of his life; and who for the whole world, (had the whole world been at his disposal,) would not have again offended a God, whose laws he always revered, even while he was so weak as to break them?

But this thought that Christians shall be judged by an economy of mercy; this very thought, so full of consolation to good men, will drive the wicked to the deepest despair. The mercy of God in the gospel hath certain bounds, and we ought to consider it, as it really is, connected with the other perfections of his nature. Whenever we place it in a view incongruous with the other perfections of the Supreme Being, we make it inconsistent with itself. Now this is done, when it is applied to one class of sinners. I repeat it again, it is this that fills up the bad man's measure of despair.

¶ Miserable wretch! how canst thou be saved, if the *fountain opened to the house of David* be shut against thee? if that love, which created the world, if that love which inclined the Son of God, (*the brightness*

*of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,)* to clothe himself with mortal flesh, and to expire on a cross; if this love be not sufficient to save thee, if this love be slighted by thee, by what means must thou be wrought on, or in what way must thou be saved? And if the Redeemer of the world condemn thee, to what judge canst thou flee for absolution?

Let us, my dear brethren, incessantly revolve in our minds these ideas of death and judgment. Let us use them to calm those excessive fears, which the necessity of dying, and being judged, sometimes excites in our souls.

But excessive fear is not the usual sin of this congregation. Our usual sins are indolence, carnal security, sleeping life away on the brink of an abyss, flames above our heads, and hell beneath our feet.

Let us quit this miserable station. *Happy is the man that feareth alway!* Prov. xxviii. 14. Happy the man, who in every temptation by which he is annoyed, in a world where all things seem to conspire to involve us in endless destruction: happy the man, who in all his trials knows how to derive consolation from this seemingly terrible truth, "It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment!" To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.



## SERMON XII.

*Heaven.*



1 JOHN iii. 2.

*We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*

ONE of the most beautiful ideas that can be formed of the gospel, is that which represents it as imparting to a Christian the attributes of God. St. Peter and St. Paul both express themselves in a manner truly sublime and emphatical on this subject. The first of these holy men says, the end of the promises of God is to make us *partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Epist. i. 4. The second assures us, that *all Christians beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. If we believe some critics, the original terms may be rendered, *we all become as mirrors*. A mirror, placed over against a luminous object, reflects its rays, and returns its image. This is agreeable to Christian experience under the gospel. Good men, attentive to the divine attributes, bowing like the seraphims, toward the mystical ark, placed opposite to the Supreme Being, meet with nothing to intercept his rays ; and, reflecting in their turn this

light, by imitating the moral attributes of God, they become as so many mirrors, exhibiting in themselves the objects of their own contemplation. Thus God, by an effect of his adorable condescension, after having clothed himself with our flesh and blood, after having been *made in the likeness of men*, Phil. ii. 7. in the establishment of the gospel, transforms this flesh and blood into a likeness of himself. Such is the sublimity and glory of the Christian religion ! We are *partakers of the divine nature* ; we are *changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. My brethren, we have often repeated a famous maxim of the schools, and we adopt it now, grace is glory begun. One of the most beautiful ideas that we can form of that ineffable glory, which God reserves for us in heaven, is that which the sacred authors give us of Christianity. Heaven and the church, the Christian in a state of grace and the Christian in a state of glory, differ only in degree. All the difference between the two changes is, that the first, I mean a Christian in a state of grace, retains the imperfection, which is essential to this life, whereas the other, I mean the Christian in a state of glory, is perfect in his kind, so that both are changed into the image of the Deity as far as creatures in their conditions are capable of being so.

This is the difficult, but interesting subject which we are now going to discuss. We are going to inquire into the question so famous, I dare not say so developed in the schools, concerning the beatific vision of God. We will endeavour to explain how

we see God in heaven, and how this happy vision will render us *like* him, who will be the object of it. St. John supplies us with these images. He displays the happiness of Christians thus: *Behold*, says he, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* But while he passes encomiums on the mercy of God, he observes, that we have only yet enjoyed foretastes of it; *we know*, adds he, *that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*

Our text has two senses ; the first regards the human nature of Jesus Christ, and the second the Deity. The first of these senses is very easy and natural: *when the Son of God shall appear, we shall see him as he is ;* that is to say, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge mankind, we shall see his glorified body. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is :* that is our bodies, having acquired at the resurrection the properties of glorified bodies, like that of Jesus Christ, shall have the faculty of contemplating his body. This sense deserves examination.

We have no distinct idea of what Scripture calls *a glorious body*, Phil. iii. 21. The most abstruse metaphysics, the most profound erudition, and the most sublime theology cannot enable us fully to explain this famous passage of St. Paul ; “ There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial : but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body

is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 40—44.

But how difficult soever this passage may be, we know by experience there are bodies to which our senses bear no proportion; and, if I may be allowed to speak in this manner, there are bodies inapprehensible by our faculty of seeing. There is no proportion between my eyes and bodies extremely small. My faculty of seeing does not extend to a mite; a mite is a non-entity to my eye. There is no proportion between my eyes, and bodies which have not a certain degree of consistence. My seeing faculty does not extend to an ærial body; an ærial body is a mere non-entity in regard to my sight. There is very little proportion between my eyes, and bodies extraordinarily rapid. My faculty of seeing does not extend to objects moving at a certain rate; a body must move so slow as to make a kind of rest before my eye in order to be perceived by it; and, as soon as a greater force communicates a quicker motion to it, it recedes, diminishes, disappears. But were the faculties of my body proportioned to these objects; had my body qualities similar to theirs; I should then be able to see them; *I should see them as they are, for I should be like them.*

Let us apply these general reflections to our subject. There may be perhaps no proportion between our bodies in their present earthly state and what the Scripture calls *glorious bodies*. Our faculty of

seeing perhaps may not extend to glorious bodies. Were the gross terrestrial bodies to which our souls are united, all on a sudden translated to that mansion of glory, in which the bodies of Enoch and Elias wait for the consummation of all things, probably we might not be able to see them clearly, and perhaps we might be quite blinded with the glory of them. The reasons just now mentioned may account for what we suppose; as any who have habituated themselves to reflection may easily comprehend. But when our bodies shall be *changed, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality*, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 54. in a word, when our bodies shall have the same faculties as the glorious body of Jesus Christ, *we shall see him as he is, for we shall be like him*. This is the first sense given to the words of the text, a sense that may serve to preclude a part of the difficulties which may arise; a sense entirely conformable to the analogy of faith, and to a great many other passages of Holy Scripture, such as these, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," Phil. iii. 20, 21. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the

image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," 1 Cor. xv. 47. &c.

Grand idea of heavenly felicity, my brethren! Glorified believers shall see with their eyes the glorious body of Jesus Christ. Yea, these eyes, restored to sight, and endowed with new powers, shall see the God-man; they shall see that body of the Saviour of the world, which once *increased in favour* here below, Luke ii. 52. and which is now arrived at the highest pitch of glory in heaven. They shall see those *lips, into which grace is poured*, Psal. xlv. 2. They shall see that Son of man, who is *fairer than all the rest of the children of men*. What joy to accomplish this object! What delight, if I may speak so, when the rays of the Deity, always too bright and confounding for mortal eyes to behold, shall be softened to our sight in the person of Jesus Christ! What transporting joy to see the greatest miracle that was ever included in the plans of the wisdom of God! What felicity to behold in the body of Jesus Christ a right of approaching with confidence to a familiarity with God! *We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

But, although this may be one meaning of our apostle, yet it is neither the only sense of his words, nor does it seem to be the principal one. Should any doubt what I now affirm; should any affirm, that when the apostle says, *we shall see him as he is*, he only means to speak of the body of Jesus Christ; I would beg leave to observe, that St. John evidently intends by the vision of which he speaks, that

which consummates our happiness. Now our happiness will not be consummated by only seeing the body of the Son of God, nor by the glorification of our bodies only. Another idea, therefore, must be included in the words of the text.

Beside, the original doth not say, *When* Jesus Christ shall appear, but *when* he shall appear, *we shall see him as he is*; which may be referred to God, of whom the apostle had been speaking in the preceding verses. We shall *see God*, and this sight will render us *like him*.

I even suppose the words of my text are a kind of quotation of an opinion advanced by some ancient Jewish Rabbies. We have found, as it were by chance, and when we were not studying this text, an opinion taken from the writings of the Jews, which seems either to allude to the words of the text, or, being more ancient than the text, to be alluded to by the apostle. A Consul of Rome required a Rabbi to explain the names of God to him. This is the answer of the Rabbi: "You ask me the meaning of the name of four letters, and the name of twelve letters, and the name of forty letters. (In this manner, my brethren, the Jews speak of the terms expressive of the attributes of God.) But, I must inform you, these are mysteries altogether divine, and which ought to be concealed from the generality of mankind. However, as I have been credibly assured, that you have rendered many good services to learned men, and as nothing ought to be concealed from such persons, it is requisite, I should endeavour to answer your question to your satisfac-

tion. I declare then, that, strictly speaking, there is no name given to God, by which we can be made fully to comprehend what he is. His name is his essence, of which we can form no distinct idea; for could we fully comprehend the essence of God we should be like God.”\* These words are full of meaning, and, were it necessary to explain them, they would open a wide field to our meditation. They lay down a principle of momentary use to us, that is, that we must be infinite in order fully to comprehend an infinite being. We will, however, take a slight cursory view of the subject. We will examine how we shall *see God*, and at the same time, how we shall be rendered like him by seeing him; for in the sense now given, we understand the text.

God is an *immaterial* being. This principle is unanimously established both by the light of nature, and by revealed religion. An immaterial being cannot be seen by material eyes. This is another incontestible principle. It must be, then, with the mind that *we shall see God as he is*, that is to say, we shall *know* him. It must be the mind, therefore, that must be rendered *like him*. This consequence immediately follows from both our principles; and this consequence is one ground of our reflections.

God is an *infinite* being. This also is a principle established by both natural and revealed religion. The soul of man is finite, and, to whatever perfection it may be advanced, it will always continue to be so. This is another indisputable principle. It would imply a contradiction to affirm, that an infinite

\* Rabbi Nehemias in Epistola sanctor. ad filium suum Hăcanan.

Spirit can be seen, or fully known, in a strict literal sense, *as it is*, by a finite spirit. The human soul, therefore, being a finite spirit, can never perfectly see, that is, fully comprehend, *as he is*, God, who is an infinite spirit. The proposition in our text then, necessarily requires some restriction. This inference arises immediately from the two principles now laid down, and this second consequence furnishes another ground of our reflections.

But, although it would be absurd to suppose that God, an infinite spirit, can be fully known by a finite human spirit, yet there is no absurdity in affirming, God can communicate himself to man in a very close and intimate manner, proper to transform him. This may be done four ways. There are, we conceive, four sorts of communications; a communication of ideas, a communication of love, a communication of virtue, and a communication of felicity. In these four ways *we shall see God*, and by thus seeing him *as he is*, *we shall be like him* in these four respects. We will endeavour by discussing each of these articles, to explain them clearly; and here all your attention will be necessary, for without this our whole discourse will be nothing to you but a sound destitute of reason and sense.

The first communication will be a communication of *ideas*. *We shall see God as he is*, because we shall participate his ideas; and by seeing God as he is, we shall become *like him*, because the knowledge of his ideas will rectify ours, and will render them like his. To know the ideas of an imperfect being, is not to participate his imperfections. An accurate mind

may know the ideas of an inaccurate mind without admitting them. But to know the ideas of a perfect spirit is to participate his perfections; because to know his ideas is to know them as they are, and to know them as they are is to perceive the evidence of them. When, therefore, God shall communicate his ideas to us, *we shall be like him*, by the conformity of our ideas to his.

What are the ideas of God? They are clear in their nature; they are clear in their images; they are perfect in their degree; they are complex in their relations; and they are complete in their number. In all these respects the ideas of God are infinitely superior to the ideas of men.

1. Men are full of *false* notions. Their ideas are often the very reverse of the objects, of which they should be clear representations. We have false ideas in physics, false ideas in polity, false ideas in religion. We have false ideas of honour and of disgrace, of felicity and of misery. Hence we often mistake fancy for reason, and shadow for substance. But God hath only *true* ideas. His idea of order is an exact representation of order. His idea of irregularity exactly answers to irregularity; and so of all other objects. He will make us know his ideas, and by making us know them he will rectify ours.

2. Men have often *obscure* ideas. They see only glimmerings. They perceive appearances rather than demonstrations. They are placed in a world of probabilities, and, in consideration of this state, in which it hath pleased the Creator to place them, they have more need of a course of reasoning on a

new plan, to teach them how a rational creature ought to conduct himself, when he is surrounded with probabilities, than of a course of reasoning and determining, which supposes him surrounded with demonstration. But God hath only *clear* ideas. No veil covers objects; no darkness obscures his ideas of them. When he shall *appear*, he will communicate his ideas to us, and they will rectify ours, he will cause the scales that hide objects from us, to fall from our eyes; and he will dissipate the clouds which prevent our clear conception of them.

3. Men have very few ideas perfect in *degree*. They see only the surface of objects. Who, in all the world, hath a perfect idea of matter? Who ever had perfect ideas of spirit? Who could ever exactly define either? Who was ever able to inform us how the idea of motion results from that of body; how the idea of sensation results from that of spirit? Who ever knew to which class space belongs? It would be very easy, my brethren, to increase this list, would time permit; and were I not prevented by knowing, that they, who are incapable of understanding these articles, have already in their own minds pronounced them destitute of all sense and reason. But God hath *perfect* ideas. His ideas comprehend the whole of all objects. He will communicate to us this disposition of mind, and will give us such a penetration as shall enable us to attain the knowledge of the essence of beings, and to contemplate them in their whole.

4. Men have very few ideas *complex* in their relations. I mean, their minds are so limited, that, al

though they may be capable of combining a certain number of ideas, yet they are confounded by combining a greater number. We have distinct ideas of units, and we are capable of combining a few : but as soon as we add hundred to hundred, million to million, the little capacity of our souls is overwhelmed with the multitude of these objects, and our weakness obliges us to sink under the weight. We have a few ideas of motion. We know what space a body, to which a certain degree of velocity is communicated, must pass through in a given time : but as soon as we suppose a greater degree of motion, as soon as we imagine an augmentation of velocity to this greater degree ; as soon as we try to apply our knowledge of moving powers to those enormous bodies, which the mighty hand of God guides in the immensity of space, we are involved in perplexity and confusion. But God conceives *infinite combinations*. He will make us participate, as far as our minds can, his ideas ; so that we shall be able to give a large expanse to our meditation without any fear of confusing ourselves.

5. In fine, the ideas of mankind are incomplete in their *number*. Most men think, there are only two sorts of beings, body and spirit ; and they have also determined, that there can be only two. A rash decision in itself : but more rash still in a creature so confined in his genius as man. But the ideas of God are *complete*. He knows all possible beings. He will make us participate this disposition of mind, and from it may arise ideas of myriads of beings, on which now we cannot reason, because now we

have no ideas of them. A communication of ideas is the first way in which God will make himself known to us. This will be the first trait of our resemblance of him. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

The second communication of God to a beatified soul is a communication of *love*. We cannot possibly partake of the ideas of God without participating his love. To participate the ideas of God is to possess just notions. To possess just notions is to place each object in the rank that is due to it; consequently, we shall regard the chief being as the only object of supreme love.

What is necessary to answer the idea, that an upright soul forms of the lovely? The lovely object must answer three ideas: the idea of the great and marvellous; the idea of the just; and the idea of the good: and, if I may venture to speak so, of the beatifying. Now, it is impossible to know God without entertaining these three ideas of him alone; consequently it is impossible to know God without loving him. And this is the reason of our profound admiration of the morality of the gospel. The morality of the gospel is the very quintessence of order. It informs us, no creature deserves supreme love. It makes this principle the substance of its laws. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*, Matt. xxii. 37.

How worthy of supreme love will this God appear, how fully will he answer the idea of the *great* and the *marvellous*, when *we shall see him as he is*!

He will answer it by his independence. Creatures exist: but they have only a borrowed being. God derives his existence from none. He is a self-existent Being. He will answer our idea of the magnificent by the immutability of his nature. Creatures exist: but they have no fixed and permanent being. They arise from nothing to existence. Their existence is rather variation and inconstancy than real being. But God, but *I the Lord*, says he of himself, *I change not*, Mal. iii. 6. *The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. He is, as it were, the fixed point, on which all creatures revolve, while he is neither moved by their motion, shaken by their action, nor in the least imaginable degree altered by all their countless vicissitudes. He will answer the idea of the great and marvellous by the efficiency of his will. Creatures have some efficient acts of volition: but not of themselves.—But go back to that period in which there was nothing. Figure to yourselves those immense voids, which preceded the formation of the universe, and represent to yourselves God alone. He forms the plan of the world. He regulates the whole design. He assigns an epoch of duration to it in a point of eternity. This act of his will produces this whole universe. Hence a sun, a moon, and stars. Hence earth and sea, rivers and fields. Hence kings, princes, and philosophers. *He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast. The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*, Psal. xxxiii. 9. God, then, perfectly answers our idea of the grand and the marvellous. He answers also the idea of the just.

It was he who gave us an idea of *justice* or order. It was he who made the greatest sacrifices to it. It was he who moved heaven and earth to re-establish it, and who testified how dear it was to him by sacrificing the most worthy victim that could possibly suffer, I mean his only Son.

Finally, God will perfectly answer our idea of the *good* and the *beatifying*. Who can come up to it except a God, who opens to his creatures an access to his treasures? A God, who reveals himself to them in order to take them away from their *broken cisterns*, and to conduct them to a *fountain of living waters*, Jer. ii. 13. A God, whose eternal wisdom cries to mankind, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live*, Isa. lv. 1—3.

We cannot, then, know God without loving him. And thus a communication of ideas leads to a communication of love. But this communication of love will render us *like* the God whom we admire. For the property of love, in a soul inflamed with it, is to transform it in some sort into the object of its admiration. This is particularly proper to divine love. We love God, because we know his attributes; when we know his attributes, we know we can no better contribute to the perfection of our

being than by imitating them, and the desire we have to perfect our being will necessitate us to apply wholly to imitate them, and to become *like him*.

Let us pass to our third consideration. The third communication of God to a beatified soul is a communication of his *virtues*. To love and to obey, in Scripture-style, is the same thing. *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, is a well-known expression of Jesus Christ, John xiv. 15. *He who saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*, is an expression of our apostle, 1 John ii. 4. This is not peculiar to the love of God. To love and to obey, even in civil society, are usually two things which have a very close connection. But, as no creature hath ever excited all the love, of which a soul is capable, so there is no creature to whom we have rendered a perfect obedience. It is only in regard to God, that there is an inseparable connection between obedience and love. For when we love God, because we know him, we are soon convinced, that he cannot ordain any thing to his creature but what is useful to him; when we are convinced he can ordain nothing to be performed by his creature but what is useful to him, it becomes as impossible not to obey him as it is not to love ourselves. To love and obey is one thing, then, when the object in question is a being supremely lovely. These are demonstrations; but to obey God, and to keep his commandments, is to be *like God*.

The commandments of God are formed on the idea of the divine perfections. God hath an idea of order; he loves it; he follows it; and this is all he

ever hath required, and all he ever will require of his intelligent creatures. He requires us to know order, to love it, to follow it. An intelligent creature, therefore, who shall be brought to obey the commandments of God, will be *like God*. *Be ye perfect as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect*, Matt. v. 48. *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, 1 Pet. i. 16. *Every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. These precepts are given us here on earth, and we obey them imperfectly now: but we shall yield a perfect obedience to them in heaven, when we shall *see him as he is*. Here our apostle affirms, *Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him*, ver. 6. that is to say, he who suffers sin to reign over him, doth not know God; for, if he knew God, he would have just ideas of God, he would love him; and, if he loved him, he would imitate him. But in heaven we shall see, and know him, we shall not sin, we shall imitate him, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*.

Lastly, The fourth communication of the Deity with beatified souls is a communication of *felicity*. In an economy of order, to be holy and to be happy are two things very closely connected. Now we are in an economy of disorder. Accordingly, virtue and felicity do not always keep company together, and it sometimes happens, that for *having hope in Christ we are*, for a while, *of all men most miserable*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. But this economy of disorder must be abolished. Order must be established. St. Peter, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, *The heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things*,

Acts iii. 21. When *all things* shall be restored, virtue and happiness will be closely united, and, consequently, by participating the holiness of God we shall participate his happiness.

God is supremely good. He is naturally inclined by his own perfections to do good. Rather than include himself in his own felicity, he went out of himself in the works of creation. He formed creatures capable of his favours. But these very perfections, which inclined him to do good, prevent his rendering impure and criminal creatures happy. *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil*, Hab. i. 13. This is the cause of the innumerable penal evils, under which we groan. For this reason there are miserable people. Remove this obstacle, and God will follow his inclination to bounty. All creatures capable of being happy would be rendered perfectly happy. In heaven this obstacle will be removed.

Moreover, we may offer, if I may be allowed to speak so, a more evangelical reason to confirm this article. One part of the covenant of grace between the eternal Father and the Son, when the Son became incarnate, was, that the Father should restore them to happiness, whom the Son should redeem. Hence this adorable Son of God, in the sacerdotal prayer, which he offered to the Father the evening before he offered himself a sacrifice to death on the cross, repeats this clause of the covenant; *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where*

*I am, that they may behold my glory, John xviii. 6, 24.*

God is, then, inclined by the nature of his perfections, and by the spirit of the covenant made with Jesus Christ, to render *like himself*, in regard to his felicity those, who are already made like him in regard to his ideas, in regard to his love, and in regard to his holiness ; and this is the fourth sense of the proposition in our text, *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* This is the fourth communication of God to beatified souls. He will communicate his felicity to them. What constitutes the felicity of God will constitute the felicity of beatified souls.

God is happy in contemplating his *works*. He approves all the plans that his intelligence hath conceived, and which his wisdom and power have so gloriously executed, *He seeth every thing that he hath made, and approves it as very good, Gen. i. 31.* God will discover these works to beatified souls. He will display before them all the pompous decorations of nature. He will direct their attention to the symmetry, the magnificence, the number of those luminous bodies, those flaming spheres, which appear to our weak eyes at present as only so many sparks.

God is happy in contemplating his *providence*, and the marvellous manner in which he governs the universe. God will discover this perfect government to beatified souls. Then will appear the folly of the many objections, which at present perplex our minds on the darkness of providence ; then will

the many injurious suspicions vanish, which we have entertained concerning the government of the world; then will all the sophisms be confounded, that rash human minds have formed concerning the manner in which God hath distributed good and evil.

God is happy in the contemplation of his *designs*. The active spirit of the first great cause will diversify his works infinitely, and for ever; he judgeth of what may be as of what is, and determines of the possible world as of that which actually exists, that *all is very good*. He will communicate these designs to beatified souls. *Shall I hide from Abraham the things which I do?* said God once to this patriarch, Gen. xviii. 17. Agreeably to which Jesus Christ said to his apostles, *Henceforth I call you not servants: but I have called you friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*, John xv. 15. God will hide nothing from beatified souls. He will open to them inexhaustible treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He will display in their sight all that would result from them. He will anticipate the future periods of eternity (if we may speak of future periods when we speak of eternity,) and he will shew them every moment of this infinite duration signalized by some emanation of his excellence.

God is happy in certain *sentiments*, which may probably bear some analogy to what we call in ourselves sensations. At least, we may assure ourselves, to be rendered capable of pure sensations would contribute very much to the perfection and happi-

ness of our souls. Sensations lively, affecting, and delicious, we know, contribute to our present felicity. They who have affected to refine and spiritualize our ideas of felicity, and to free them from every thing sensitive, I think, have mistaken the nature of spirit. God will impart to beatified souls all the sentiments of which they are capable. He will make them feel something more harmonious than the best compositions of music; something more delicious than the most exquisite tastes: and so of the rest, God is happy in the *society* of the spirits which surround him. He is the centre of all their felicity. He accepts their adoration and homage. He reflects their services to him on themselves. God will receive beatified souls into this society. He will unite us to angels and seraphims, thrones, dominions, and cherubims, and to all other happy intelligent beings, which are without number, and of infinite variety. Their felicity will make our felicity, as our happiness will make their happiness. *There will be joy in heaven over many repenting sinners*, Luke xv. 7.

But this subject carries me beyond all due bounds. The imagination of a hearer, less warmed than that of a preacher, cannot extend itself so far as he would conduct it. Only recollect, then, and unite the ideas, which we have been mentioning. *We know, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

This passage, we say, seems to offer two senses. The first regards the human nature of Jesus Christ. *We shall see the glorious body of Jesus Christ as it is*; because our bodies being rendered glorious like

his, will have faculties relative to his, and proper to enable us to perceive it.

The other sense regards the Deity. *We shall see God*, not with the eyes of our bodies, but with the eyes of the mind, that is to say, we shall know him. *We shall see him as he is*, not literally and fully, for God is an infinite Spirit, who cannot be fully comprehended by finite beings: but we shall know him, as much as it will be possible for us to know him, and our resemblance to him will bear a proportion to our knowledge of him. He will communicate himself to us. There will be four communications between God and beatified souls; a communication of ideas, of love, of holiness, and of happiness.

And, what deserves our particular regard, because it is most admirable, is, these four communications are connected together, and flow from one another. Because we shall *see God as he is*, *we shall be like him*. Because we shall know his ideas, we shall be possessed of a rectitude of thought like his. Because we shall possess a rectitude of thought like his, we shall know, that he is supremely lovely, and cannot but love him. Because we cannot help loving him, we cannot help imitating his holy conduct, as holiness will appear the perfection of our nature. Because we shall imitate his holiness, we shall participate his happiness; for he is naturally inclined by his own perfections to render those intelligent beings happy like himself, who like him are in a state of order. The three last communications are then immediate consequences of the first, and the first is the ground

of the rest ; *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Then will all the divine plan of human redemption by Jesus Christ be fully executed. Then all the privileges of our adoption, and of the love that elevated us to a condition so noble and glorious, will clearly appear. *Behold ! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*

This is the plan of God in regard to man : a plan diametrically opposite to that of Satan. The plan of Satan is to render man like Satan. The plan of God is to render man like God. Satan hath been too successful in the execution of his design. *A liar and a murderer from the beginning,* John viii. 44. he seduced our first parents ; he made them fall from truth to error, from error to vice ; already he hath robbed us of the glory of our first innocence ; already he hath darkened our understandings ; already succeeded in making us find that pleasure in vice, which ought to follow virtue only ; and, having communicated his vice to us, he hath made us partake of his miseries ; hence the air becomes infected, hence the ocean becomes a grave to mariners, hence animals rebel against him who was originally appointed to be their lord and king, hence passion, revenge and hatred, which begin a hell upon earth, hence maladies which consume our days in pain, and death, that most formidable weapon of the devil, to put a period to them, and hence *the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,* Rev. xxi. 8, in which this wicked

spirit will strive to alleviate the pain of his own punishment by the infernal pleasure of having companions of his misery.

The plan of the Son of God is opposite to that of Satan ; *for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 8. These words almost immediately follow the text. Already this adorable Son hath reconciled mankind to God by rendering the Deity accessible, by taking on him the nature, and the innocent infirmities of men ; already he hath appeased by his sacrifice the just wrath of a God, who, to punish men for imitating Satan, was about to deliver them up to him ; and already hath he given the death-wound to the empire of this usurper of the rights of God ; “ having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross,” Col. ii. 15. The Son of God hath already elevated the Christian above the vicissitudes of life, by detaching him from life, and by teaching him the blessed art of deriving advantages from his miseries ; already he hath dissipated the darkness of error, by causing the light of revelation to rectify all the abuses that even the greatest philosophers made of the light of nature ; already hath he attacked human depravity at its centre, and separated the souls of the elect from the seeds of sin, by causing *his seed to remain in them, so that they cannot sin, because they are born of God*, as our apostle expresseth it, 1 John iii. 9. already he hath imparted to their consciences that “ peace of God which passeth all understanding,” Phil. iv. 7. and by which they are “ raised up together, and made to sit to-

gether in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6. already he hath made them "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. and he hath already "changed them into the same image from glory to glory by his Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 18. He is preparing to finish his work. Shortly he will make that second appearance, which is the object of the hopes of his churches, and for which his children cry, "Come Lord Jesus! come quickly!" Rev. xxii. 20. Shortly he will reduce to dust these organs, this "flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. xv. 50. Shortly he will raise these bodies from the dust with new faculties. Shortly he will remove the veils that hide the essence of the Creator from us, and will shew it to us *as it is*, so that we may be rendered *like it*. These are two very different plans, my brethren; the one is the plan of God, and the other that of the devil; the one is the design of the enemy of mankind, the other that of their Redeemer.

Into which of these two plans do you propose to enter? Into the plan of God, or into that of the devil? Which of these two beings do you wish to resemble? Would you be *like God*, or would you have the features of Satan? This question may perhaps be already answered by some of you. Great God! to what are we reduced, to be obliged to suppose, at least to have great reason to fear, that in this church, built for the assembly of "saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 21. there are any imitators of the devil! To what are we reduced, to be obliged to suppose, at least to have just grounds of fear, that in this assembly, composed of

children of God, who come to appear in his presence, there are any children of the devil! But the frightful in a supposition does not take away the possibility of it.

Perhaps the question may have been fully answered already by some of our hearers. What idea must we form of a man, who employs all his talents to enervate truth, to attack religion, to render doubtful the being of a God; who attributes the creation of the world to blind chance; and brings into question the reality of a state of future rewards and punishments? What idea must be formed of a man, who employs himself wholly in increasing his fortune and establishing his family, how iniquitous soever the means may be which contribute to his end; who robs the widow and the orphan, embroils the state, elevates to the most eminent posts in society men who hardly deserve to live; who would subvert this whole republic, and erect a throne for himself and his family on its ruins? What must we think of a man, who daily blasphemes the God of heaven, and incessantly pours out murmurs and charges against the governor of the universe? What can we think of a man, who wallows in debauchery, who, in spite of those penalties of sin, which he bears about in his body, in spite of the infection and putrefaction that his infamous lasciviousness has caused in his body, indemnifies himself for his present pains by repeating his former pleasures, and yet searches among the ruins of his mortal body some portion, that, having escaped the punishment of his crimes, may yet serve his unbridled concupiscence? Were

such men descended from the most illustrious ancestors; had they, like Lucifer himself, an heavenly origin; did their power equal that of the prince of the air; were their attendants as numerous as the legions of that miserable spirit; could their riches and affluence raise winds and storms, that would shake the whole world; had they in their hands the sword of justice, and were they considered as *gods* upon earth, and *children of the most high*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. I should not be afraid to say, while they abandon themselves to these excesses, I detest and abhor them as devils.

But you, my brethren, you, who ought to be the most holy part of the church; you, who pretend to glory in bearing the name of Christian, and who aspire after all the privileges and recompences of Christianity; into which of the two plans do you propose to enter? Into the plan of Satan, or into that of God? Which of the two beings do you wish to resemble? Would you resemble God, or would you bear the features of the devil? Let not the mortifying in this question prevent your examination of it? It is far better to acknowledge a mortifying truth, than to persist in a flattering falsehood.

The purpose of God, as we just now said, is to render us *like himself*, by communicating his knowledge, by imparting sound ideas to us. Do you enter into this design? Are you labouring to form this feature, you, who neglect the cultivation of your minds; you, who suffer yourselves to be enslaved by prejudice; you, who, so far from being teachable, are angry, when we attempt to remove your er-

rors, and, consider those as your enemies who tell you the truth? The design of God, we just now told you, is to render us *like himself* by communicating his love to us. Do you enter into this plan? Are you endeavouring to form this feature, you who feel no other flame than that, which worldly objects kindle, and which the scripture calls *enmity with God*, James iv. 4. you, who at the most perform only some exterior duties and ceremonies of religion, and dedicate to these only a few hours on a Lord's-day, and who lay out all your vigour and zeal, performances, emotions and passions on the world? The design of God, we said, is to render us *like himself*, by enabling us to imitate his holiness. Do you enter into this part of his design? Do you desire to resemble God, you, who conform to this present world; you, who *run with them to the same excess of riot*, 1 Pet. iv. 4. you, who sacrifice your souls to fashion and custom? The design of God, we told you, is to render us *like himself* by communicating his felicity to us. Do you enter into this part of his plan? Are you labouring to attain this resemblance of the Deity? Are you seeking a divine felicity? Do you place *your hearts where your treasure is*? Matt. vi. 21. Do you *seek those things which are above*? Col. iii. 11. You, who are all taken up with worldly attachments, you, who are endeavouring by reputation and riches, and worldly grandeurs, to fasten yourselves for ever to the world as to the centre of human felicity; you, whose little souls are all confined to the narrow circle of the present life; you, who turn pale, when we speak of dying; you, who

shudder, when we treat of that eternal gulf, on the brink of which you stand, and which is just ready to swallow you up in everlasting woe ; do you enter into the design of participating the felicity of God ?

Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren ! We cannot share the second transformation, unless we partake of the first ; if we would be *like God* in heaven, we must resemble him here in his church below. A soul, having these first features, experiencing this first transformation, is prepared for eternity ; when it enters heaven, it will not alter its condition, it will only perfect it. The most beautiful object, that can present itself to the eyes of such a soul, is the divine Redeemer, the model of its virtues, the original of its ideas. Hast thou experienced the first transformation ? Hast thou already these features ? Dost thou ardently desire the appearance of the Son of God ; and, should God present himself to thee *as he is*, couldst thou bear the sight without trembling and horror ? Ah, my brethren ! how miserable is a mind, when it considers him as an object of horror, whom it ought to consider as an object of its desire and love ! How miserable is a soul, which, instead of *loving the appearing of the Lord, the righteous judge*, as St. Paul expresseth it, 2 Tim. iv. 8. hath just reasons to dread it ! How wretched is the case of the man, who, instead of crying, *Come Lord Jesus ! come quickly !* Rev. xxii. 20. cries, Put off thy coming ; defer a period, the approach of which I cannot bear ; thy coming will be the time of my destruction ; thine appearing will discover my shame ; thy glory will be my despair ; thy voice will

be the sentence of my eternal misery ; instead of hastening to meet thee, I will avoid thy presence ; I will strive to *flee from thy Spirit*, Psal. cxxxix. 7. I will call to my relief the *mountains* and the *rocks*, Rev. vi. 16. and, provided they can conceal me from thy terrible presence, it will signify nothing, should they crush me by their fall, and bury me for ever in their ruins.

Let not such frightful sentiments ever revolve in our minds, Christians. Let us now begin the great work of our transformation. Let us commune with God. Let us apply all our efforts to obtain the knowledge of him. Let us kindle in our souls the fire of his love. Let us propose his holiness for our example. Let us anticipate the felicity of heaven. Indeed, we shall often be interrupted in this great work. We shall often find reason to deplore the darkness that obscures our ideas, the chilling damps which cool our love, and the vices that mix with our virtues ; for the grief which these imperfections will cause will frequently lower our felicity. But hope will supply the place of fruition. Our souls will be all involved in evangelical consolations, and all our bitternesses will be sweetened with these thoughts of our apostle, “ Behold ! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him : for we shall see him as he is.” To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

# SERMON XIII.

*Hell.*



REVELATIONS xiv. 11.

*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever  
and ever.*

**VIOLENT** diseases require violent remedies. This is an incontestible maxim in the science of the human body, and it is equally true in religion, the science that regards the soul. If a wound be deep, it is in vain to heal the surface, the malady would become the more dangerous, because it would spread inwardly, gain the nobler parts, consume the vitals, and so become incurable. Such a wound must be cleansed, probed, cut and cauterized: and softening the most terrible pains by exciting in the patient a hope of being healed, he must be persuaded to endure a momentary pain in order to obtain a future firm established health. Thus in religion; when vice hath gained the heart, and subdued all the faculties of the soul, in vain do we place before the sinner a few ideas of equity; in vain do we display the magnificence of the heavens, the beauties of the church, and the charms of virtue; *the arrows of the Almighty* must be fastened in him, Job vi. 4. *terrors, as in a solemn day, must be called round about him,*

Lam. ii. 22. and, *knowing the terrors of the Lord*, we must *persuade* the man, as the holy scriptures express it.

My brethren, let us not waste our time in declaiming against the manners of the times. Let us not exaggerate the depravity of Christian societies, and pass encomiums on former ages by too censoriously condemning our own. Mankind have always been bad enough, and good people have always been too scarce. There are, however, we must allow, some times, and some places, in which Satan hath employed more means, and hath striven with more success to execute his fatal design of destroying mankind than in others. Observe this reflection. A violent malady must have a violent remedy; and this, which we bring you to-day, certainly excels in its kind. The Holy Spirit conducts us to-day in a road different from that in which he formerly led the Hebrews; and, to address you properly, we must change the order of St. Paul's words, and say, "Ye are not come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem: but ye are . . . . come unto a burning fire, unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest," chap. xii. 22. We are going to place before your eyes eternity with its abysses, the fiery lake with its flames, devils with their rage, and hell with its horrors.

Great God! suspend for a few moments the *small still voice* of thy gospel! 1 Kings xix. 12. For a few moments let not this auditory hear the church *shouting, Grace, grace unto it!* Zech. iv. 7. Let the blessed angels, that assist in our assemblies, for a while

leave us to attend to the miseries of the damned ! I speak literally ; I wish these miserable beings could shew you for a moment the weight of their chains, the voracity of their flames, the stench of their smoke. Happy ! if struck with these frightful objects, we imbibe a holy horror, and henceforth oppose against all our temptations the words of our text, *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever !*

I have borrowed these words of St. John. In the preceding verses he had been speaking of apostates and idolaters, and them he had particularly in view in this ; “ If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ; and the smoke of their torment,” adds the apostle in the text, “ ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

But do not think this sentence must be restrained to these sorts of sinners. It is denounced against other kinds of sinners in other passages of scripture. “ His fan is in his hand,” said the forerunner of Jesus Christ, “ and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner : but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” Mat. iii. 12.

It shall not be, then, to apostates, and idolaters only, that we will preach to-day ; although alas ! was it ever more necessary to speak to them than now ? Did any age of Christianity ever see so many apos-

tates as this, for which providence hath reserved us? O! could I transport myself to the ruins of our churches! I would thunder in the ears of our brethren, who have denied their faith and religion, the words of our apostle; "If any man worship the beast, and his image, he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of his torment shall ascend up for ever and ever!"

We will consider our text in a more general view, and we divide our discourse into three parts.

I. We will prove, that the doctrine of eternal punishment is clearly revealed.

II. We will examine the objections, which reason opposes against it; and we will shew, that there is nothing in it incompatible with the perfections of God, or the nature of man.

III. We will address the subject to such as admit the truth of the doctrine of eternal punishments: but live in indolence, and unaffected with it. This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. We affirm, there is a hell, punishments finite in degree: but infinite in duration. We do not intend to establish here in a vague manner, that there is a state of future rewards and punishments, by laying before you the many weighty arguments taken from the sentiments of conscience, the declarations of scripture, the confusions of society, the unanimous consent of mankind, and the attributes of God himself; arguments, which placing in the clearest light the truth of a judgment to come, and a future state, ought for ever to confound those unbelievers and libertines, who glory in doubting both. We are

going to address ourselves more immediately to another sort of people, who do not deny the truth of future punishments: but who diminish the duration of them; who either in regard to the attributes of God, or in favour of their own indolence, endeavour to persuade themselves, that if there be any punishments after death, they will neither be so general, nor so long, nor so terrible, as people imagine.

Of this sort was that father in the primitive church, who was so famous for the extent of his genius, and at the same time for the extravagance of it; admired on the one hand for attacking and refuting the errors of the enemies of religion, and blamed on the other for injuring the very religion that he defended by mixing with it errors monstrous in their kind, and almost infinite in their number.\* He affirmed, that eternal punishments were incompatible both with the perfections of God, and that instability which is the essential character of creatures; and mixing some chimeras with his errors, he added, that spirits, after they had been purified by the fire of hell, would return to the bosom of God, that at length they would detach themselves from him, and that God to punish their inconstancy would lodge them again in new bodies, and that thus eternity would be nothing but periodical revolutions of time.

Such also were some Jewish Rabbies, who acknowledge, in general, that there is a hell: but add, there is no place in it for Israelites, not even for the most criminal of them, excepting only those who abjure Judaism; and even these, they think, after

\* Origen.

they have suffered for one year, will be absolutely annihilated.

Such was, almost in our own days, the head of a famous sect, and such were many of his disciples. They thought, the souls of all men, good and bad, passed into a state of insensibility at death, with this difference only, that the wicked cease to be, and are absolutely annihilated, whereas the righteous will rise again into sensibility in a future period, and will be united to a glorious body; that those wicked persons, who shall be alive, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, will be the only persons, who will appear in judgment to receive their condemnation there; and that these, after they shall have been absorbed in the general conflagration, which they say, is the *gehenna*, or *hell-fire*, of which scripture speaks, Matt. v. 22. will be annihilated with the devils and the fires of hell; so that, according to them, nothing will remain in nature but the abode of happy spirits.

Such are the suppositions of those, who oppose the doctrine we are going to establish. Let us endeavour to refute them.

1. Scripture gives no countenance to this absurd opinion, that the wicked shall have no part in resurrection and judgment. What could St. Paul mean by these words, "Despisest thou the riches of the goodness of God? after thy hardness, and impenitent heart, dost thou treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" Rom. ii. 4. 5. What does he mean by these words, "We must all appear be-

fore the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad?" 2 Cor. v. 10. What does St. John intend by these words, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and they were judged every man according to their works; and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire?" Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15. What meant Jesus Christ, when he said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation?" John v. 28, 29. Any thing may be glossed over, and varnished: but was ever gloss more absurd than that of some, who pretend, that the *resurrection* spoken of in the last quoted words is not to be understood of a literal proper resurrection: but of sanctification, which is often called a resurrection in scripture? Does sanctification then raise some *unto a resurrection of life*, and others *unto a resurrection of damnation*?

2. Scripture clearly affirms, that the punishment of the damned shall not consist of annihilation: but of real and sensible pain. This appears by divers passages. Our Saviour, speaking of Judas, said "It would have been good for that man, if he had not been born," Matt. xxvi. 24. Hence we infer, a state worse than annihilation was reserved for this miserable traitor; for had the punishment of his crime

consisted in annihilation only, Judas, having already enjoyed many pleasures in this life, would have been happier to have been than not to have been. Again, Jesus Christ says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee," Matt. xi. 24. Hence we infer again, there are some punishments worse than annihilation; for if Sodom and Capernaum were both annihilated, it would not be true, that the one would be in a *more tolerable* state than the other.

Scripture images of hell, which are many, will not allow us to confine future punishment to annihilation. It is a *worm*, a *fire*, a *darkness*; they are *chains*, *weeping*, *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth*; expressions which we will explain by and by. Accordingly, the disciples of the head of the sect just now mentioned, and whose system we oppose, have renounced these two parts of their Master's doctrine, and, neither denying the generality of these punishments, nor the reality of them, are content to oppose their eternity.

But, 3. It appears by scripture, that future punishment will be eternal. The holy scripture represents another life as a state, in which there will be no room for repentance and mercy, and where the wicked shall know nothing but torment and despair. It compares the duration of the misery of the damned with the duration of the felicity of the blessed. Future punishment is always said to be eternal, and there is not the least hint given of its coming to an end. *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41.

*Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,* Mark ix. 44. *If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than, having two hands, to be cast into everlasting fire,* Matt. xviii. 8. *The devil, that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast, and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever,* Rev. xx. 10. Again in our text, *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.* These declarations are formal and express.

But, as the word *eternal* doth not always signify proper and literal eternity, it is presumed, the Spirit of God did not intend, by attributing eternity to future punishment, strictly and literally to affirm, that future punishment should never end: but only that it should endure many ages.

We grant, my brethren, the word *eternal* does not always signify properly and literally eternity. It has several meanings: but there are three principal. Sometimes eternity is attributed to those beings which are as old as the world. Thus we read of *everlasting hills, or mountains of eternity*, Gen. xlix. Sometimes it is put for a duration as long as the nature of the thing in question can permit. Thus it is said, A servant, who would not accept his liberty in the seventh year of his servitude, should serve his master *for ever*, Exod. xxi. 6. that is, until the time of the Jubilee, for then the Jewish republic was new modelled, and all slaves were set free. Sometimes it expresses any thing perfect in its kind, and which hath no succession. Thus the sacrifice of Melchisedec, and that of Jesus Christ, of which the

first was a shadow, *abide continually*, or *for ever*, Heb. vii. 3. This term, then, must be taken in a metaphorical sense in the three following cases.

1. *When that, which is called eternal in one place, is said in another to come to an end.* Thus, it was said, the ceremonial law was to endure *for ever*. This expression must not be taken literally; for all the prophets informed their countrymen, that the ceremonial economy was to end, and to give up to a better. Now the holy scripture does not restrain in any one passage what it establisheth in others concerning the eternity of future punishments.

2. A metaphorical sense must be given to the term, *when the sacred history assures us, that what it calls eternal has actually come to an end.* Thus, it is plain, the *fire* of Sodom was not *eternal*; for sacred history informs us, it was extinguished after it had consumed that wicked city, and it is called *eternal*, only because it burned till Sodom was all reduced to ashes, Jude 7. But what history can engage us to understand in this sense the eternity attributed to the torments of the wicked?

3. The term must be taken metaphorically, *when the subject spoken of is not capable of a proper eternal duration*, as in the case just now mentioned, that a mortal servant should *eternally* serve a mortal master. But, we presume, the eternity of future punishment in a strict literal sense implies no contradiction, and perfectly agrees with the objects of our contemplation. This leads us to our second part, in which we are to examine those objections, which reason opposes against the doctrine of eternal punishment.

II. If the doctrine of eternal punishment imply a contradiction, it must either regard man, the sufferer of the pain, or God, who threatens to inflict it.

1. The *nature of man* hath nothing incongruous with that degree and duration of punishment, of which we speak. Turn your attention to the following reflections.

Nothing but an express act of the will of God can annihilate a soul. No person in the world can assure himself, without a divine revelation, that God will do this act. Whatever we see, and know of our soul, its hopes and fears, its hatred and love, all afford a presumption, that it is made for an eternity of happiness or misery.

The will of God is the only cause of the sensations of our souls that alone establisheth a commerce between motion and sensation, sensation and motion. His will alone is the cause, that from a separation of the component parts of the hand by the action of fire there results a sensation of pain in the soul; so that, should it please him to unite a condemned soul to particles of inextinguishable fire, and should there result from the activity of this fire violent anguish in the soul, there would be nothing in all this contrary to daily natural experiment.

Further, weigh particularly the following reflection. Choose, of all the systems of philosophers, that which appears most reasonable; believe the soul is spiritual, believe it is matter; think, it must naturally dissolve with the body, believe it must subsist after the ruin of the body; take which side you will, you can never deny this principle, nor do I know,

that any philosopher hath ever denied it: that is, that God is able to preserve soul and body for ever, were they perishable by nature; and this act of his will would be equal to a continual creation. Now, this principle being granted, all arguments drawn from the nature of man to prove its incongruity with the scripture idea of eternal punishment vanish of themselves.

But Origen did not enter into these reflections. With all that fertility of genius, which enabled him to compose (if we believe St. Epiphanius,\*) six thousand books, and in spite of all his Greek and Hebrew, he was a sorry philosopher, and a very bad divine. The church has condemned his doctrine in the gross. All his philosophy was taken from the ideas of Plato: but, thanks be to God! my brethren, we live in ages more enlightened, and were educated by masters wiser than Aristotle and Plato. So much shall suffice for objections taken from the nature of man.

2. Let us attend now to others taken from *the nature of God*. A man who opposeth our doctrine, reasons in this manner. Which way soever I consider a being supremely perfect, I cannot persuade myself, that he will expose his creatures to eternal torments. All his perfections secure me from such terrors as this doctrine seems to inspire. If I consider the Deity as a being perfectly free, it should seem, although he have denounced sentences of condemnation, yet he retains a right of revoking, or of executing them to the utmost rigour; whence I in-

\* Advers. Hæres. lib. 2.

fer, that no man can determine what use he will make of his liberty. When I consider God as a good being, I cannot make eternal punishment agree with infinite mercy; *bowels of compassion* seem incongruous with *devouring flames*; the titles *merciful* and *gracious* seem incompatible with the execution of this sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*, Matt. xxv. 41. In short, when I consider God under the idea of an equitable legislator, I cannot comprehend how sins committed in a finite period can deserve an infinite punishment. Let us suppose a life the most long and criminal that ever was; let the vices of all mankind be assembled, if possible, in one man, let the duration of his depravity be extended from the beginning of the world to the dissolution of it: even in this case sin would be finite, and infinite everlasting punishment would far exceed the demerit of finite transgression, and consequently, the doctrine of everlasting punishment is inconsistent with divine justice.

There are libertines, who invent these difficulties, and take pains to confirm themselves in the belief of them, in order to diminish those just fears, which an idea of hell would excite in their souls, and to enable them to sin boldly. Let us not enter into a detail of answers and replies with people of this kind. Were we to grant all they seem to require, it would be easy to prove to a demonstration, that there is a world of extravagance in deriving the least liberty to sin from these objections. If, instead of a punishment enduring for ever, hell were only the suffering of a thousand years torments, were the sufferer dur-

ing these thousand years only placed in the condition of a man excruciated with the gout or the stone; must not a man give up all claim to common sense, before he could, even on these suppositions, abandon himself to sin? Are not all the charms employed by the devil to allure us to sin absorbed in the idea of a thousand years pain, to which, for argument's sake, we have supposed eternal punishment reduced? How pitiable is a man in dying agonies, who has nothing to oppose against the terrors of death but this opinion, Perhaps hell may be less in degree, and shorter in duration than the scriptures represent!

Some Christian divines, in zeal for the glory of God, have yielded to these objections; and, under pretence of having met with timorous people, whom the doctrine of eternal punishment had terrified into doubts concerning the divine perfections, they thought it their duty to remove this stumbling block. They have ventured to presume, that the idea which God hath given of eternal punishment, was only intended to alarm the impenitent, and that it was very probable God would at last relax the rigorous sentence. But if it were allowed that God had no other design in denouncing eternal punishments than that of alarming sinners, would it become us to oppose his wise purpose, and with our unhallowed hands to throw down the batteries, which he had erected against sin? Shall we pretend to dive into his mysterious views? or, having, as it were, extorted his confidence, should we be so indiscreet as to publish it, like the bold adventurer in the fable, who, not

content with having stolen fire from heaven for himself, endeavoured to encourage other men to do so ? Let us *think soberly, and not more highly than we ought to think ; let us not think above that which is written*, Rom. xii. 3. 1 Cor. iv. 6. Let us preach the gospel as God hath revealed it. God did not think the doctrine of everlasting punishment injurious to the holiness of his attributes. Let us not pretend to think it will injure them.

None of these reflections remove the difficulty. We proceed then to open four sources of solutions.

1. Observe this general truth. It is not probable, God would threaten mankind with a punishment, the infliction of which would be incompatible with his perfections. If the reality of such a hell as the scriptures describe be inconsistent with the perfections of the Creator, such a hell ought not to have been affirmed, yea it could not have been revealed. The eminence of the holiness of God will not allow him to terrify his creatures with the idea of a punishment, which he cannot inflict without injustice ; and, considering the weakness of our reason, and the narrow limits of our knowledge, we ought not to say, Such a thing is unjust, therefore it is not revealed : but, on the contrary, we should rather say, Such a thing is revealed, therefore it is just.

2. Take each part of the objection drawn from the attributes of God, and said to destroy our doctrine, and consider it separately. The argument taken from the liberty of God would carry us from error to error, and from one absurdity to another. For, if God be free to relax any part of the punishment de-

nounced, he is equally free to relax the whole. If we may infer, that he will certainly release the sufferer from a part, because he is at liberty to do so, we have an equal right to presume he will release from the whole, and there would be no absurdity in affirming the one, after we had allowed the other. If there be no absurdity in presuming that God will release the whole punishment denounced against the impenitent, behold! all systems of conscience, providence, and religion fall of themselves, and, if these systems fall, what, pray, become of all these perfections of God, which you pretend to defend?

The objection taken from the liberty of God might seem to have some colour, were hell spoken of only in passages where precepts were enforced by threatenings: but attend to the places, in which Jesus Christ speaks of it. Read, for example, the twenty-fifth of Matthew, and there you will perceive, are facts, prophecies, and exact and circumstantial narrations. There, it is said, the world shall end, Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven, there shall be a judgment of mankind, the righteous shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished, *shall go away into everlasting punishment*. How can these things be reconciled to the truth of God, if he fail to execute any one of these articles?

The difficulty taken from the goodness of God vanisheth, when we rectify popular notions of this excellence of the divine nature. Goodness in men is a virtue of constitution, which makes them suffer, when they see their fellow creatures in misery, and which excites them to relieve them. In God it is a perfec-

tion independent in its origen, free in its execution, and always restrained by laws of inviolable equity, and exact severity.

Justice is not incompatible with eternal punishment. It is not to be granted, that a sin committed in a limited time ought not to be punished through an infinite duration. It is not the length of time employed in committing a crime, that determines the degree and the duration of its punishment, it is the turpitude and atrociousness of it. The justice of God, far from opposing the punishment of the impenitent, requires it. Consider this earth, which supports us, that sun, which illuminates us, the elements, that nourish us, all the creatures which serve us ; are they not so many motives to men to devote their service to God ? Consider the patience of God, what opportunities of repentance he gives sinners, what motives and means he affords them. Above all, enter into the sanctuary ; meditate on the incarnate word, comprehend, if you can, what it is for a God to *make himself of no reputation*, and to *take upon him the form of a servant*, Phil. ii. 7. Consider the infinite excellence of God, approach his throne, behold his eyes sparkling with fire, the power and majesty that fill his sanctuary, the heavenly hosts which around his throne fulfil his will ; form, if it be possible, some idea of the Supreme Being. Then think, this God united himself to mortal flesh, and suffered for mankind all the rigours, that the madness of men, and the rage of devils could invent. I cannot tell, my brethren, what impressions these objects make on you. For my part, I ingenuously own, that, could any

thing render Christianity doubtful to me, what it affirms of this mystery would do so. I have need, I declare, of all my faith, and of all the authority of him, who speaks in scripture, to persuade me, that God would condescend to such an humiliation as this. If, amidst the darkness which conceals this mystery, I discover any glimmering that reduces it in a sort to my capacity, it ariseth from the sentence of eternal punishment, which God has threatened to inflict on all, who finally reject this great sacrifice. Having allowed the obligations under which the incarnation lays mankind, everlasting punishment seems to me to have nothing in it contrary to divine justice. No, the burning lake with its smoke, eternity with its abysses, devils with their rage, and all hell with all its horrors, seem to me not at all too rigorous for the punishment of men, who have *trod*den under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, crucified the Son of God afresh, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. and vi. 6. Were we to examine in this manner each part of the objection opposed against our doctrine, we should open a second source of solutions to answer it.

3. The doctrine of degrees of punishment affords us a third. I have often observed with astonishment the little use, that Christians in general make of this article, since the doctrine itself is taught in Scripture in the clearest manner. When we speak of future punishment, we call it all hell indifferently, and without distinction. We conceive of all the wicked as precipitated into the same gulf, loaded with the

same chains, devoured by the same worm. We do not seem to think, there will be as much difference in their state as there had been in their natural capacities, their exterior means of obtaining knowledge, and their various aids to assist them in their pursuit of it. We do not recollect, that, as perhaps there may not be two men in the world, who have alike partaken the gifts of heaven, so probably there will not be two wicked spirits in hell enduring an equal degree of punishment. There is an extreme difference between a Heathen and a Jew; there is an extreme distance between a Jew and a Christian; and a greater still between a Christian and a Heathen. The gospel rule is, *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*, Luke xii. 48. There must, therefore, be as great a difference in the other life between the punishment of a Jew and that of a Pagan, between that of a Pagan and that of a Jew, between that of a Pagan and that of a Christian, as there is between the states in which God hath placed them on earth. Moreover, there is a very great difference between one Jew and another, between Pagan and Pagan, Christian and Christian. Each hath in his own economy more or less talents. There must therefore be a like difference between the punishment of one Christian and that of another, the punishment of one Jew and that of another Jew, the suffering of one Pagan and that of another: and consequently, when we say, a Pagan wise according to his own economy, and a Christian foolish according to his, are both in hell, we speak in a very vague and equivocal manner.

To how many difficulties have men submitted by not attending to this doctrine of degrees of punishment! Of what use, for example, might it have been to answer objections concerning the destiny of Pagans! As eternal punishment has been considered under images, that excite all the most excruciating pains, it could not be imagined how God should condemn the wise heathens to a state that seemed suited only to monsters, who disfigure nature and subvert society. Some, therefore, to get rid of this difficulty, have widened the gate of heaven, and allowed other ways of arriving there, beside that *whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. Cato, Socrates, and Aristides have been mixed with the *multitude redeemed to God out of every people and nation*, Rev. v. 9. Had the doctrine of diversity of punishments been properly attended to, the condemnation of the heathens would not have appeared inconsistent with the perfections of God, provided it had been considered only as a punishment proportional to what was defective in their state, and criminal in their life. For no one has a right to tax God with injustice for punishing Pagans, unless he could prove that the degree of their pain exceeded that of their sin; and as no one is able to make this combination, because Scripture positively assures us, God will observe this proportion, so none can murmur against his conduct without being guilty of blasphemy.

But, above all, the doctrine of degrees of punishment elucidates that of the eternity of them. Take this principle, which Scripture establisheth in the clearest manner; press home all its consequences;

extend it as far as it can be carried ; give scope even to your imagination, till the punishments which such and such persons suffer in hell are reduced to a degree, that may serve to solve the difficulty of the doctrine of their eternity, whatever system you adopt on this article, I will even venture to say, whatever difficulty you may meet with in following it, it will always be more reasonable, I think, to make of one doctrine clearly revealed, a clue to guide through the difficulties of another doctrine clearly revealed too, than rashly to deny the former decisions of Scripture. I mean to say, it would be more rational to stretch the doctrine of degrees too far, if I may venture to speak so, than to deny that of their eternity.

4. The fourth source of solutions is a maxim from which a divine ought never to depart ; and which we wish particularly to inculcate among those who extend the operations of reason too far in matters of religion. Our maxim is this. We know indeed in general, what are the attributes of God : but we are extremely ignorant of their sphere, we cannot determine how far they extend. We know in general, God is free, he is just, he is merciful : but we are too ignorant to determine how far these perfections must go ; because the infinity of them absorbs the capacity of our minds. An example may render our meaning plain. Suppose two philosophers subsisting before the creation of this world, and conversing together on the plan of the world, which God was about to create. Suppose the first of these philosophers affirming—God is going to create in-

telligent creatures—he could communicate such a degree of knowledge to them as would necessarily conduct them to supreme happiness—but he intends to give them a reason, which may be abused, and may conduct them from ignorance to vice, and from vice to misery.—Moreover, God is going to create a world, in which virtue will be almost always in irons, and vice on a throne—tyrants will be crowned, and pious people confounded. Suppose the first of our philosophers to maintain these theses, how think you? Would not the second have reasoned against this plan? Would he not, in all appearance, have had a right to affirm—It is impossible God, being full of goodness, should create men, whose existence would be fatal to their happiness—It is impossible a being supremely holy, should suffer sin to enter the world? Yet, how plausible soever, the reasons of this philosopher might then have appeared, the event hath since justified the truth of the first plan. It is certain, God hath created the world on the plan of the first; and it is also as certain, that this world hath nothing incompatible with the perfections of God, how difficult soever we may find it to answer objections. It is our diminutiveness, the narrowness of our minds, and the immensity of the Deity, which prevent our knowing how far his attributes can go.

Apply this to our subject. The idea of hell seems to you repugnant to the attributes of God, you cannot comprehend how a just God can punish finite sins with infinite pain; how a merciful God can abandon his creatures to eternal miseries. Your diffi-

culties have some probability, I grant. Your reasons, I allow, seem well grounded. But dost thou remember, the attributes of God are infinite? Remember thy knowledge is finite. Remember the two philosophers disputing on the plan of the world. Remember the event hath discarded the difficulties of the last, and justified the plan of the first. Now, the revelation of future punishments in our system is equal to event in that of the first philosopher. They are revealed. You think future punishment inconsistent with the attributes of God: but your notion of inconsistency ought to vanish at the appearance of Scripture-light.

Thus we have indicated a few proofs of the doctrine of eternal punishments. We have endeavoured to convince you, that what the Scriptures teach us on the duration of the punishments of the wicked is neither repugnant to the nature of God, nor to the nature of man. We will now lay aside these ideas, and endeavour to improve the few moments that remain, by addressing your consciences. Having shewn you the doctrine of eternal punishments as taught in Scripture, and approved by reason, we will try to shew it you as an object terrible and affecting. But, while we are endeavouring as much as possible, to accommodate ourselves to your impatience, use some efforts with yourselves; and if ever, if ever through indulgence for our person, or through respect to our doctrine, you have opened access to your hearts, grant it, I intreat you, to what I am going to propose.

III. Observe the quality, and the duration of the punishments of hell. The quality is expressed in these words, *smoke, torment*. The duration in these, *ascend up for ever and ever*.

[1.] The *quality* of the punishment of hell is expressed in these terms, *smoke, torment*. These metaphorical terms include five ideas. Privation of heavenly happiness—sensation of pain—remorse of conscience—horror of society—increase of crime.

1. *A privation of celestial happiness* is the first idea of hell, an idea which we are incapable of forming fully in this life. We have eyes of flesh and blood. We judge of happiness and misery according to this flesh and blood, and as things relate to our families, our fortunes, our professions, and we seldom think we have immortal souls. In the great day of retribution all these veils will be taken away. Darkness will be dissipated, scales will fall from our eyes, the chief good will be known: but what will be the condition of him, who no sooner discovers the chief good than he discovers also, that he shall be forever deprived of it! Represent to yourselves a man constrained to see, and made by his own experience to know, that the pleasures, the grandeurs, and all the riches of this world are nothing but wind and smoke; and that true felicity consists in communion with God, in beholding his perfections, and participating his glory: or, to use emblems taken from Scripture, represent to yourselves a man, who shall see the nuptial chamber of the bridegroom, his triumphant pomp and his magnificent palace; and who shall see all these glorious objects as felicities.

which his crimes forbid him to enjoy. What regrets! What despair! Lord of nature! Being of beings! Adorable assemblage of all perfections! Eternal Father! Well-beloved Son! Holy Spirit! glorious body of my divine Redeemer! archangels! cherubims! seraphims! powers! dominions! general assembly of the first-born! myriads of angels! apostles! martyrs! saints of all ages, and of all nations! unfading crown! perfect knowledge! communion of a soul with its God! throne of glory! fulness of joy! rivers of pleasure! all which I see, all which I know, and wish to enjoy, even while avenging justice separates me from you; am I then for ever excluded from all your ineffable delights? Are you all shewn to me to make me more sensible of my misery? And do you display so much felicity only to render my pain more acute, and my destruction more terrible?

2. Consider *painful sensations*. To these belong all the expressions of Scripture just now mentioned, *darkness, blackness of darkness, thirst, fire, lake burning with fire and brimstone*, and all these to such a degree that the damned would esteem as an invaluable benefit one drop of water *to cool their tongues*, Luke xvi. 24. We dare not pretend to determine, that hell consists of material fire. But if you recollect that we just now observed the power of God to excite in our souls such sensations as he pleases, if to this reflection you add this remark, that Scripture almost always employs the idea of fire to express the pains of hell, you will be inclined to believe, that most of these unhappy sufferers literally endure torments like those, which men burning in

flames feel; whether God act immediately on their souls, or unite them to particles of material fire. The very name given in Scripture to the fire of hell hath something very significant in it. It is called *the fire of Gehenna*, Matt. v. 22. This word is compounded of words, which signify *the valley of Hinnon*. This valley was rendered famous by the abominable sacrifices which the idolatrous Jews offered to Moloch. They set up a hollow brazen figure, inclosed their children in it, kindled fires underneath, and in this horrible manner consumed the miserable infant victims of their cruel superstition. This is an image of hell. Terrible image! We have no need of abstract and metaphysical ideas. Who among us could patiently bear his hand one hour in fire? Who would not tremble to be condemned to pass one day in this monstrous machine? And who, who could bear to be eternally confined in it? When we see a criminal in chains, given up to an executioner of human justice, and just going to be burnt to death, nature shudders at the sight, the flesh of spectators shivers, and the cries of the sufferer rend their heart, and excite in painful compassion all the emotions of the soul. What must it be to be delivered up to an executioner of divine justice? What to be cast into the fire of hell? Delicate flesh! feeble organs of a human body! What will you do when you are cast into the quick and devouring flames of hell!

3. The third idea of future punishment is that of the *remorse* of conscience. The pains of the mind are as lively and sensible as those of the body. The

grief of one man, who loses a person dear to him, the inquietude of another afraid of apparitions and spectres, the gloomy terrors of a third in solitude, the emotions of a criminal receiving his sentence of death, and, above all, the agitation of a conscience filled with a sense of guilt, are pains as lively and sensible as those which are excited by the most cruel torments. What great effects has remorse produced! It has made tyrants tremble. It has smitten the knees of a Belshazzar together in the midst of his courtiers. It has rendered the voluptuous insensible to pleasure, and it has put many hardened wretches upon the rack. It has done more. It has forced some, who upon scaffolds and wheels have denied their crimes, after a release, to confess them, to find out a judge, to give evidence against themselves, and to implore the mercy of a violent death, more tolerable than the agonies of their guilty souls. This will be the state of the damned. This will be *the worm that never dies*, and which will consume their souls. This will be the cruel vulture that will devour their vitals. Conscience will be obliged to do homage to an avenging God. It will be forced to acknowledge, that the motives of the gospel were highly proper to affect every man, who had not made his *face as an adamant, his forehead harder than a flint*. It will be forced to acknowledge, that the goodness of God had been enough to penetrate every heart, even those which were least capable of gratitude. It will be constrained to own, that the succours of the Spirit of God had been more than sufficient of themselves. It will be driven to

own, that the destruction of man came of himself, and that he sacrificed his salvation to vain imaginations, more delusive than vanity itself. The testimony of a good conscience hath supported martyrs in fire and tortures. When a martyr said to himself, I suffer for truth, I plead a good cause, I bear my Saviour's cross, I am a martyr for God himself; he was happy in spite of seeming horrors. But when the reproaches of conscience are added to terrible torments, when the sufferer is obliged to say to himself, I am the author of my own punishment, I suffer for my own sins, I am a victim of vice, a victim for the devil; nothing can equal his horror and despair.

4. A fourth idea is taken from the horror of the *society* in hell. How great soever the misery of a man on earth may be, he bears it with patience, when wise discourse is addressed to him for his consolation, when a friend opens his bosom to him, when a father shares his sufferings, and a charitable hand endeavours to wipe away his tears. The conversation of a grave and sympathizing friend diminishes his troubles, softens his pains, and charms him under his afflictions, till he becomes easy and happy in them. But, good God! what society is that in hell! Imagine yourselves condemned to pass all your days with those odious men, who seem formed only to trouble the world. Imagine yourselves shut up in a close prison with a band of reprobates. Imagine yourselves lying on a death-bed, and having no other comforters than traitors and assassins. This is an image of hell! Good God! what a society! tyrants,

assassins, blasphemers, Satan with his angels, the prince of the air with all his infamous legions!

From all these ideas results a fifth, an *increase of sin*. Self-love is the governing passion of mankind. It is that, which put all the rest in motion. and all the rest either spring from it, or are supported by it. It is not in the power of man to love a being, who hath no relation to his happiness; and it is not possible for him to avoid hating one, who employs his power to make him miserable. As God will aggravate the sufferings of the damned by displaying his attributes, their hatred of him will be unbounded, their torment will excite their hatred, their hatred will aggravate their torment. Is not this the height of misery? To hate by necessity of nature the Perfect Being, the Supreme Being, the Sovereign Beauty, in a word, to hate God; doth not this idea present to your minds a state the most melancholy, the most miserable? One chief excellence of the glory of happy spirits is a consummate love to their Creator. One of the most horrible punishments of hell is the exclusion of divine love. O miserable state of the damned! In it they utter as many blasphemies against God as the happy souls in heaven shout hallelujahs to his praise.

These are the punishments of condemned souls. It remains only that we consider the length and duration of them. But by what means, my brethren, shall we describe these profound articles of contemplation? Can we number the innumerable, and measure that, which is beyond all mensuration? Can we

make you comprehend the incomprehensible ? And shall we amuse you with our imaginations ?

For my part, when I endeavour to represent eternity to myself, I avail myself of whatever I can conceive most long and durable. I heap imagination on imagination, conjecture on conjecture. First, I consider those long lives, which all men wish, and some attain ; I observe those old men, who live four or five generations, and who alone make the history of an age. I do more, I turn to ancient chronicles. I go back to the patriarchal age, and consider a life extending through a thousand years ; and I say to myself, All this is not eternity ; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

Having represented to myself real objects, I form ideas of imaginary ones. I go from our age to the time of publishing the gospel, from thence to the publication of the law, from the law to the flood, from the flood to the creation. I join this epoch to the present time, and I imagine Adam yet living. Had Adam lived till now, and had he lived in misery, had he passed all his time in a fire, or on a rack, what idea must we form of his condition ? At what price would we agree to expose ourselves to misery so great ? What imperial glory would appear glorious, were it followed by so much woe ? Yet this is not eternity ; all this is nothing in comparison of eternity.

I go further still. I proceed from imagination to imagination, from one supposition to another. I take the greatest number of years, that can be imagined. I add ages to ages, millions of ages to mill-

ions of ages. I form of all these one fixed number, and I stay my imagination. After this, I suppose God to create a world like this, which we inhabit, I suppose him creating it by forming one atom after another, and employing in the production of each atom the time fixed in my calculation just now mentioned. What numberless ages would the creation of such a world in such a manner require! Then I suppose the Creator to arrange these atoms, and to pursue the same plan of arranging them as of creating them. What numberless ages would such an arrangement require! Finally, I suppose him to dissolve and annihilate the whole, and observing the same method in this dissolution as he observed in the creation and disposition of the whole. What an immense duration would be consumed! Yet this is not eternity; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

Associate now all these suppositions, my brethren, and of all these periods make one fixed period; multiply it again, and suppose yourselves to pass in multiplying it a time equal to that, which the period contains; it is literally and strictly true, all this is not eternity; all this is only a point in comparison of eternity.

My God! one night passed in a burning fever, or in struggling in the waves of the sea between life and death, appears of an immense length! It seems to the sufferer as if the sun had forgot its course, and as if all the laws of nature itself were subverted. What then will be the state of those miserable victims to divine displeasure, who, after they shall

have passed through the ages, which we have been describing, will be obliged to make this overwhelming reflection; All this is only an atom of our misery! What will their despair be, when they shall be forced to say to themselves; Again we must revolve through these enormous periods; again we must suffer a privation of celestial happiness; devouring flames again; cruel remorse again; crimes and blasphemies over and over again! *For ever! For ever!* Ah my brethren! my brethren! how severe is this word even in this life! How great is a misfortune, when it is incapable of relief! How insupportable, when we are obliged to add for ever to it! These irons for ever! these chains for ever! this prison for ever! this universal contempt for ever! this domestic trouble for ever! Poor mortals! how short sighted are you to call sorrows eternal, which end with your lives! What! this life! this life, that passeth with the rapidity of a *weaver's shuttle!* Job. vii. 6. this life, which vanisheth *like a sleep!* Psal. xc. 5. is this what you call for ever! Ah! absorbing periods of eternity, accumulated myriads of ages; these, if I may be allowed to speak so, these will be the *ron ever* of the damned!

I sink under the weight of this subject; and I declare, when I see my friends, my relations, the people of my charge, this whole congregation; when I think, that I, that you, that we are all threatened with these torments; when I see in the lukewarmness of my devotions, in the languor of my love, in the levity of my resolutions and designs, the least evidence, though it be only probable, or presump-

tive, of my future misery, yet I find in the thought a mortal poison, which diffuseth itself into every period of my life, rendering society tiresome, nourishment insipid, pleasure disgustful, and life itself a cruel bitter. I cease to wonder, that a fear of hell hath made some melancholy, and others mad; that it hath inclined some to expose themselves to a living martyrdom by fleeing from all commerce with the rest of mankind, and others to suffer the most violent and terrible torments. But the more terror this idea inspires, the more inexcusable are we, if it produce no good fruits in us. The idea of eternity ought to subvert all our sinful projects. In order to avoid eternal misery, all should be suffered, all surmounted, all undertaken, sinful self should be crucified, and the whole man devoted in holy sacrifice to God. Let each particle of our bodies become a victim to penitence, let each moment of life expose us to a new martyrdom; still we should be happy, could we avoid the flaming sword, that hangs over our heads, and escape the gulfs of misery, which yawn beneath our feet.

My brethren, have you heard what I have been speaking? have you well reflected on what I said? Perhaps I may have weakened these great truths. Perhaps I may have left many proper things unsaid. Yet, methinks, if you have thoroughly comprehended what little I have said, you will become new men.

Remember we have not exceeded the truth; all we have said is taken from scripture, from those scriptures which you profess to believe, so, that if

you deny these truths, you must deny your own faith, Christianity, religion.

Remember, we have taken our evidences from that part of scripture, which you consider as the most kind and comfortable, I mean the gospel. Renounce, I beseech you, at once this miserable prejudice, that under the gospel we ought not to speak of hell. On the contrary, it is the gospel that reveals it in its clearest light; it is the gospel which proves it; it is the gospel that describes it; the gospel says, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*, Matt. xxv. 41. It is the gospel that says, *The servant which knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke xii. 47. It is the gospel that says, *If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*, Heb. x. 26, 27.

Remember the doctrine of degrees of punishment, which seems to diminish the horrors of hell in regard to Pagans, and Christians educated in superstition and ignorance, has every thing in it to augment the horror of future pain in regard to such Christians as most of us are.

Recollect what sort of persons God reserves for this state. Not only assassins, murderers, highway-robbers: but also apostates, who know the truth, but who sacrifice through worldly interests the profession of truth to idolatry; misers, usurers, unjust persons, gluttons; unclean, implacable, lifeless, luke-

warm, professors of Christianity ; all these are included in the guilt and punishment of sin.

Remember, we must be wilfully blind, if we deny, that in this town, in this church, in this flock, in this assembly, among you my hearers, who listen to me, and look at me, there are such persons as I just now mentioned, each of whom must come to this reflection ; I myself, I perhaps, am in a state of damnation, perhaps my name is one in the fatal list of those at whom these threatenings point.

Go further yet. Remember, this life is the only time given you to prevent these terrible punishments. After this life, no more exhortations, no more sermons, no more admission of sighs and tears, no more place for repentance.

After this, think on the brevity of life. Think, there may be perhaps only one year granted, perhaps only one month, perhaps only one day, perhaps only one hour, perhaps only one moment to avoid this misery ; so that perhaps (O Lord avert the dreadful supposition!) perhaps some one of us may this very day experience all these torments and pains.

Finally, consider the spirit, that this moment animates us, the drift of this discourse, and, to say more, consider what God is now doing in your favour. In a plenitude of compassion, and with bowels of the tenderest love, he entreats and exhorts you to escape these terrible miseries ; he conjures you not to destroy yourselves ; he saith to you, *O that my people would hearken unto me ! Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee ! Why, why*

*will ye die ? O house of Israel !* Psal. lxxxi. 8. Jer. vi. 8. O ! were we wise, these expostulations would reign over our hearts ! O ! if there remained the least spark of reason in us, the frightful image of hell would henceforth make the deepest impressions on our souls !

Frightful ideas of judgment and hell ! may you be always in my mind, when the world would decoy me to stain my ministry by its vain and glaring snares ! Frightful ideas of judgment and hell ! may you strike all these hearers so as to give success to this sermon, and weight to our ministry ! Frightful ideas of judgment and hell ! may you ever follow us, so that by knowing the terror of avenging justice, and the unspeakable value of grace set before us, we may be rendered capable of participating eternal glory ; which I wish you, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

*The Uniformity of God in his Government.*



HEBREWS xiii. 8.

*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

ST. Paul gives us a very beautiful idea of God, when he says, *The wisdom of God is manifold*, Eph. iii. 10. The first great cause, the Supreme Being, hath designs infinitely diversified. This appears by the various beings which he hath created, and by the different ways in which he governs them.

What a variety in created beings! A material world, and an intelligent world! Matter variously modified, or, as the apostle speaks, *One kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds, celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial, one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon*, and so on to an infinite multitude. There is a similar variety of spirit; men, angels, seraphims, cherubims, powers, dominions, archangels, and thrones.

What a variety in the manner in which God governs these beings! To restrain ourselves to men only, are not some loaded with benefits, and others depressed with adversities? Doth he not enlighten some

by nature, others by the law, and others by the gospel? Did he not allow the antediluvians one period of life, the cities of the plain another, and us another? the first he overwhelmed with water, the next consumed by fire, and the last by an endless variety of means.

But, although there be a diversity in the conduct of God, it is always a diversity of wisdom. Whether he creates a material or an intelligent world; whether he forms celestial or terrestrial bodies, men, angels, seraphims, or cherubims; whether he governs the universe by the same, or by different laws; in all cases, and at all times, he acts like a God, he hath only one principle, and that is order. There is a harmony in his perfections, which he never disconcerts. There is in his conduct an uniformity, which is the great character of his actions.. His variety is always wise, or, to repeat the words just now mentioned, *the wisdom of God is of many kinds.*

These great truths we intend to set before you to-day; for on these the apostle intended to treat in his epistle to the Hebrews. Look, said he, on the present period, reflect on past times, anticipate the future, run through all dimensions of time, dive into the abysses of eternity, you will always find the perfections of God in exact harmony, you will perceive an exact uniformity, characterise his actions, you will acknowledge, that Jesus Christ is the *true God and eternal life, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,* 1 John v. 20.

Are you disposed, my brethren, to elevate your minds a little while above sense and matter? Can you sufficiently suspend the impressions, which sensible objects made on your minds last week, to give such an attention to this subject as its nature and importance demand? Let us then enter into the matter, and God grant, while we are contemplating to-day the harmony of his perfections, and the uniformity of his government, we may be *changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by his Spirit*. God grant, as far as it is compatible with the inconstancy essential to human nature, we may be always the same, and amidst the perpetual vicissitudes of life may have only one principle, that is to obey and please him! Amen.

I shall connect, as well I can, the different explanations of my text; I would rather conciliate them in this manner, than consume my hour in relating, and comparing them, and in selecting the most probable from them.

These expositions may be reduced to three classes. Some say, the apostle speaks of the person of Jesus Christ; others of his doctrine; and a third class apply the passage to the protection that he affords his church.

The first class of expositors, who apply the text to the person of Jesus Christ, are not unanimous in the strict sense of the words; some think, the apostle speaks of the human nature of Jesus Christ, and others say, he speaks of his divine nature. The latter take the text for a proof of his eternity; and according to them the words are synonymous to these,

*I am Alpha and Omega, the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty, Rev. i. 8.*

The former consider the apostle as speaking of Christ either as man, or as mediator; and according to them St. Paul means to say, The Saviour, whom I propose to you, was the Saviour of Adam, of Abraham, and of the whole church, agreeably to what I have elsewhere affirmed, *Him hath God set forth a propitiation through faith, for the remission of sins that are past*, Rom. iii. 25. that is, his sacrifice always was the relief of sinners.

The second class of interpreters affirm, that St. Paul doth not speak of the person of Jesus Christ: but of his doctrine. In this view the text must be connected with the words which immediately follow, *be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines*. Why would not the apostle have Christians carried about with divers doctrines? Because Jesus Christ, that is Christianity, the religion taught by Jesus Christ, is always the same, and is not subject to the uncertainty of any human science.

But other expositors ascribe a quite different sense to the words, and say, the apostle speaks neither of the person of Christ, nor of his doctrine, but of that protection which he affords believers. According to this, the text has no connection with the following verse: but with that which goes before. St. Paul had been proposing to the believing Hebrews the examples of their ancestors and predecessors, some of whom had sealed the doctrine of the gospel with their blood. *Remember your guides*

*who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* In order to induce them to imitate these bright examples, he adds, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*; that is to say, He supported, and rewarded his primitive martyrs, and he will confirm and crown all who shall have courage to follow their example.

It would be easy to multiply this list of various opinions: but, as I said, I will connect the three different expositions which have been mentioned, and endeavour to shew you the admirable harmony of the perfections of God, and the uniformity of his actions in regard to mankind, first as they appear in the economy of time, and secondly in that of eternity; and we will attempt to prove that God is the same in both.

I. We see in the economy of *time* four remarkable varieties. 1. A variety in the degrees of knowledge given to the church. 2. A variety in the worship required of it. 3. A variety in the nature of the evidences, on which it hath pleased God to found the faith of the church. 4. A variety in the laws, that he hath thought proper to prescribe. At one time he gave only a small degree of knowledge; at another he drew aside the veil, and exposed to public view the whole body of truth and knowledge. At one time he prescribed the observation of a great many gross ceremonies along with that spiritual worship, which he required of men; at another time he required a worship altogether spiritual and free from ceremonial usages. At one time his laws tolerated

some remains of concupiscence ; at another time he commanded the eradication of every fibre of sin. At one time the church saw sensible miracles, and grounded faith on them ; at another time faith followed a train of reasoning, made up of principles and consequences. At one time the church participated worldly pomps and grandeurs ; at another it experienced all the misery and ignominy of the world.

A work so different, and, in some sort, so opposite in its parts, is however, the work of one and the same God. And what is more remarkable, a work, the parts of which are so different and so opposite, ariseth from one principle, that is, from the union and harmony of the divine perfections. The same principle, that inclined God to grant the church a small degree of light at one time, engaged him to grant a greater degree at another time. The same principle which induced him to require a gross worship under the economy of the law, inclined him to exact a worship wholly spiritual under the gospel ; and so of the rest.

1. We see in God's government of his church, various degrees of light communicated. Compare the time of Moses with that of the prophets, and that of the prophets with that of the evangelists and apostles, and the difference will be evident. Moses did not enter into a particular detail concerning God, the world in general, or man in particular. It should seem, the principal view of this legislator, in regard to God, was to establish the doctrine of his unity ; at most to give a vague idea of his perfections. It

should seem, his chief design in regard to the world in general, was to prove that it was the production of that God, whose unity he established. And, in regard to man in particular, it should seem, his principal drift was to teach, that, being a part of a world which had a beginning, he himself had a beginning that he derived his existence from the same Creator, and from him only could expect to enjoy a happy existence.

Pass from the reading of the writings of Moses to a survey of the prophecies, thence proceed to the gospels and the epistles, and you will see truth unfold as the sacred roll opens. You will be fully convinced, that as John the Baptist had more knowledge than any of his predecessors, so he himself had less than any of his followers.

In these various degrees of knowledge, communicated by God to men, I see that uniformity which is the distinguishing character of his actions, and the inviolable rule of his government. The same principle, that inclined him to grant a little light to the age of Moses, inclined him to afford more to the time of the prophets, and the greatest of all to the age in which the evangelists and apostles lived. What is this principle? It is a principle of order, which requires that the object proposed to a faculty be proportioned to this faculty; that a truth proposed to an intelligence be proportioned to this intelligence.

What proportion would there have been between the truths proposed to the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, and the state in which they then were,

had God revealed all the doctrines to them which he hath since revealed to us? Could a people born in slavery, employed in the meanest works, without education, meditation, and reading, attain a just notion of those sublime ideas, which the prophets have given us of the Deity? How could God have enabled them to conceive rightly of these truths unless he had more than assisted them, unless he had new made them? And how could he have re-created them, if I may speak so, as far as was necessary to fit them for understanding these truths, without annihilating their faculties, and without violating that law of order, which requires every one to make use of his own faculties? What proportion would there have been between the state of the Israelites and their abilities, had God revealed to them some doctrines taught us in the gospel? These would have been, through the stupidity of the people, useless, and even dangerous to them. Thus we may justly suppose of some prophecies concerning the Messiah; had they represented him in such a manner as the event has shewn him to us, the representation, far from attaching them to the worship of God, would have tempted them to conform to that of some other nations, which was more agreeable to their concupiscence. Particularly, of the doctrine of the Trinity, which makes so considerable a part of the Christian system, we may justly suppose what I have said. A people who had lived among idolaters, a people, who had been accustomed not only to multiply gods, but also to deify the meanest creatures, could such a people have been told without danger, that in the Divine essence

there was a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit? Would not this doctrine have been a snare too powerful for their reason? If they so often fell into polytheism, that is, into the notion of a plurality of gods, in spite of all the precautions that Moses used to preserve them from it, what, pray, would have been the case, had their religion itself seemed to favour it?

If we follow this reasoning, we shall see, that when the church was in a state of infancy, God proportioned his revelation to an infant state, as he proportioned it to a mature age, when the church had arrived at maturity. This is an idea of St. Paul, *when I was a child, I thought as a child*, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. I thought the perfections of the great God had some likeness to the imperfections of men, at least. I was not sufficiently struck with the immense distance between human imperfections and divine excellence; I represented God to myself as a being agitated with human passions, and capable of wrath, jealousy and repentance: *But when I became a man, I put away childish things*; God made me understand, that he described himself to be under these emblems for the sake of proportioning himself to my capacity, condescending, as it were, to lisp with me in order to learn me to speak plainly. *When I was a child, I thought as a child*; I thought it was a matter of great consequence to man to have fruitful fields, heavy harvests, and victorious armies; I thought a long life protracted through several ages, the greatest felicity that a mortal could enjoy: *But when I became a man, I put away childish things*; God then re-

vealed to me his design in proposing motives to me adapted to my weakness; it was to attract me to himself by these incitements; then I understood, that the longest life, how happy and splendid soever it might be, fell infinitely short of satisfying the wants and desires of a soul, conscious of its own dignity, and answering to the excellence of its origin; I was convinced, that a soul aspiring to eternal felicity, and filled with the noble ambition of participating the happiness of the immortal God, considers with equal indifference the highest and the meanest offices in society, riches and poverty, the short duration of twenty years, and the little longer of an hundred. *When I was a child, I thought as a child*; I thought the Messiah, so often promised in the prophecies, so often represented in types, and expected with so much ardour by the church, would come to hold a superb court, to march at the head of a numerous army, to erect a throne, to seat himself there, and to make the Romans, the conquerors of the whole earth, lick the dust: *But when I became a man, I put away childish things*; God informed me, that a Messiah, sent to make me happy, must come to restrain my avidity for the world, and not to gratify it, to check my passions, and not to irritate them; he instructed me, that a Messiah, appointed to redeem mankind, must be fastened to a cross, and not seated on a throne, must subdue the devil, death, and sin, and not the Romans, must be despised and rejected, and not encircled with a pompous court.

2. What justifies the government of God on one of these articles, on the various degrees of light be

stowed on his church, will fully justify him in regard to the *worship* required by him. Let Jesus Christ, as far as the subject will allow, be opposed to Moses; contrast Moses giving an hundred ceremonial precepts along with one precept of morality, with Jesus Christ giving an hundred moral precepts with one ceremony. Compare Moses, imposing on the Israelites *heavy burdens grievous to be borne*, Matth. xxiii. 4. with Jesus Christ, proposing *an easy yoke and a light burden*, chap. xi. 30. Oppose Moses enjoining festivals, purifications, sacrifices, and observances without number, to Jesus Christ reducing all the ritual of his religion to baptism and the Lord's supper, to a worship the least encumbered and the most artless and simple, that ever a religion proposed, declaring, *Now is the hour, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 23. Notwithstanding this seeming difference, God acts on the uniform principle of order. Uniformity, if I may express myself so, is in him the cause of variety, and the same principle, that engaged him to prescribe a gross sensible worship to the Israelites, engageth him to prescribe a worship of another kind to Christians.

Conceive of the Jews, as we have just now described them, enveloped in matter, loving to see the objects of their worship before their eyes, and, as they themselves said, to have *gods going before them*, Exod. xxxii. 1. Imagine these gross creatures coming into our assemblies, how could they, being all sense and imagination, (so to speak,) exercise the better powers of their souls without objects operat-

ing on fancy and sense? How could they have made reflection, meditation, and thought, supply the place of hands and eyes, they, who hardly knew what it was to meditate? How could they, who had hardly any idea of spirituality, have studied the nature of God abstractly, which yet is the only way of conducting us to a clear knowledge of a spiritual being?

If there ever were a religion proper to spiritualize men; if ever a religion were fitted to produce attention and emulation, and to fix our ideas on an invisible God, certainly it is the Christian religion. And yet how few Christians are capable of approaching God without the aid of sensible objects? Whence come rich altars, superb edifices, magnificent decorations, statutes of silver and gold adorned with precious stones, pompous processions, gaudy habits, and all that heap of ceremonies, with which one whole community employs the minds, or, shall I rather say, amuses the senses of its disciples? All these argue a general disinclination to piety without ceremony. Whence comes another kind of superstition, which, though less gross in appearance, is more so in effect? How is it, that some of you persuade yourselves, that God, though he doth not require any longer the pompous worship of the Jews, will yet be perfectly satisfied with the observation of the Christian ritual, although it be always unaccompanied with the exercise of the mind, and the emotions of the heart? Whence comes this kind of superstition? It proceeds from the same disposition, a disinclination, and a difficulty to approach God without the aid of sensible things. And yet, all

things considered, a pompous worship is more worthy of God than a plain worship. The Jew, who offers hecatombs to God, honours the Deity more than the Christian, who offers only prayers to him. The Jew, who cleanseth his hands, feet, and habits, when he goes to present himself before God, honours him much more than the Christian, who observes none of these ceremonies, when he approaches him. The Jew, who comes from the furthest part of the world to adore the Deity in an elegant temple, honours God much more than the Christian, who worships him in any mean edifice. But God retrenched pomp in the exterior of religion lest the capacities of men's minds, too much taken up with pomp, should not furnish those cool reflections of mind, and those just sentiments of heart, of which the Deity appears an object so proper to all, who know him as he is revealed in the gospel. If Christians then, who, through the nature of the revelation, with which God hath honoured them, know the Deity better than the Jews knew him, if they find a difficulty in rendering to God a worship of heart and mind proportional to this knowledge, what would have been the difficulties of the Jews, whose degrees of knowledge were so far inferior to ours? The same principle, then, that inclined the Supreme Being to exact of his church a gross ceremonial worship under ancient dispensations, engageth him to require a worship altogether spiritual, and detached from sensible objects, under the dispensation of the gospel.

3. The same may be said of the *evidences*, on which God hath founded the faith of his church;

and this is our third article. What a striking difference! Formerly the church saw sensible miracles, level to the weakest capacities; at present our faith is founded on a chain of principles and consequences, which find exercise for the most penetrating geniusses. How many times have infidels reproached us on account of this difference! How often have they inferred, that the church never saw miracles, because there are none wrought now! How often have they pretended to prove, that, had miracles ever been wrought, they ought to be performed still. But this triumph is imaginary, and only serves to display the absurdity of those, who make parade of it.

A wise being, who proposeth a truth to an intelligent creature, ought to proportion his proofs not only to the importance of the truth proposed, and to the capacity of him, to whom evidence is offered: but also to his own end in proposing it. If he intend only by proposing a truth to make it understood, he will give all his arguments as much clearness and facility as they are capable of having: but if he design by proposing a truth to exercise the faculties of him, to whom it was proposed; if he intend to put his obedience to the trial, and to render him in some sort worthy of the benefit, which he means to bestow; then it will be necessary indeed to place the arguments, on which the truth is founded, in a strong and conclusive point of view: but it will not be necessary to give them all the clearness and facility, of which they are capable.

Why then, you will say, did not God give to the contemporaries of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, such an exercise of capacity as he gives to Christians now? Why should a truth, made so very intelligible then by a seal of miracles, be inaccessible to us, except by the painful way of reasoning and discussion? I deny the principle, on which this objection goes. I do not allow, that God exercised them, who lived in the time of Christ and his apostles, less than he exerciseth us. Weigh their circumstances against yours; represent Christianity destitute of those arguments, which arise in favour of it from the rejection of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles; imagine men called to own for their God and Redeemer a man, who had *no form, nor comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2. a man dragged from one tribunal to another, from one province to another, and at last expiring on a cross. How needful were miracles in these sad times, and with all their aid how hard was it to believe! Represent to yourselves the whole world let loose against Christians; imagine the primitive disciples required to believe the heavenly origin of a religion, which called them first to be baptized in water, then in blood. How necessary were miracles in these adverse times, and how hard, with all the encouragement given by them, must the practice of duty be then! Weigh these circumstances against yours, and the balance will appear more equal, than you have imagined. There is, you will perceive, an uniformity in God's government of both, even when his government seems so very dissimilar.

4. In like manner, we observe, in the fourth place, a similar uniformity in the various *laws* prescribed to the church. One of the most famous questions, which the theological debates of the latter ages have produced, is that, which regards the difference between the morality of the Old and New Testament. Without pronouncing on the different manners, in which the question hath been answered, I will content myself with proposing what, I think, ought to be answered. The morality of both dispensations, it may truly be affirmed, in one sense is absolutely the same: but in another sense it is not so. The great principles of morality, both among Jews and Christians, are absolutely the same. There not only is no difference, but there can be none. It would be incompatible with the perfections of the Creator, to suppose, that, having formed an intelligent creature capable of knowing him, he should dispense with his obligation to this precept, the ground and source of all others, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*, Matt. xxii. 37. This was the morality of Adam and Abraham, Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles.

But, if we consider the consequences, that result from this principle, and the particular precepts which proceed from it, in these respects morality varies in different periods of the church. At all times, and in all places, God required his church to *love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind*: but he did not inform his people at all times and in all places the manner, in which he re-

quired love to express itself. Expressions of love must be regulated by ideas of Deity. Ideas of Deity are more or less pure as God reveals himself more or less clearly. We have seen what a difference there is between Christians and Jews in this respect. We have even proved, that it was founded on the perfections of God, on those laws of proportion, which he inviolably pursues. The laws of proportion, then, which God inviolably follows, and the eminence of his perfections also require, that as he hath made himself known to Christians more fully than he revealed himself to the Jews, so he should require of the disciples of Christ a morality more refined, and more enlarged. Variety, therefore, in this branch of divine government, cometh from uniformity, which, as I have often said, is the grand character of his actions.

Let us not pass over this article lightly, it will guard you against the attacks of some corrupters of morality. I speak of those, who, wishing to recal such times of licence as God permitted, or tolerated, before the gospel, retrench the present morality under pretence that what was once allowable is always allowable. These persons are never weary of repeating, that some favourites of heaven were not subject to certain laws; that it does not appear in any part of their history, either that God censured their way of living, or that they repented when they were dying. Hence they infer, that some maxims, which are laid down in our usual sermons, and treatises of morality, originate in the gloom of a casuist, or the caprice of a preacher, and not in the will

of God. But remember this saying of Jesus Christ, *In the beginning it was not so*, Matt. xix. 8. The end of religion is to reform and refine man up to the state, in which he was at *the beginning*, that is, in a state of innocence. This work is done by degrees. It began in the first age of the church, it will be finished in the last. As God made himself known to believers before the gospel only in part, he regulated the requisite expressions of love to himself by that degree of knowledge of his perfections, which he had given them; for his attributes are the ground of this love. He hath made known these attributes more clearly under the gospel, and he apportions the expressions of love accordingly.

But if this article affords us armour against some corrupters of morality, it affords us at the same time, some against you, my dear brethren. When we endeavour to animate you to pious actions by the examples of Moses, David, and many others, who lived under the old dispensation, you allege, that they were saints of the highest class, and that an attainment of such piety as theirs is impossible to you. But recollect our principle. The expressions of our love to God must be regulated by our knowledge of his perfections. The perfections of God are revealed more clearly to Christians than they were to Jews. *Among those, that were born of women, there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he, that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he*, Luke vii. 23. The least in love, then, (if I may venture to speak so,) the least in love in the kingdom of heaven must be greater than John the Bap-

tist, as John the Baptist was greater than his predecessors. As John, therefore, had a purer morality than the prophets and the patriarchs, so I ought to have a morality purer than that of the patriarchs and the prophets, yea, than John the Baptist himself. A degree of love to God, then, which would have been accounted flame in them, is lukewarmness and ice in me, to whom God hath revealed himself as a being so amiable, and so proper to inflame his intelligent creatures with love to him. A certain attachment to life, and to sensible objects, then, which would have been tolerable in them, would be intolerable in me, who, replete as I am with just and high ideas of the Deity, ought only to be aspiring after that state, in which I shall be united to God more closely, than in this valley of imperfections and miseries I am allowed to be.

5. Our fifth article is intended to justify the various *conditions*, in which it hath pleased God to place his church. At one time the church enjoys temporal pomp and felicity, at another it is exposed to whatever the world can invent of misery and ignominy. Once the church filled the highest posts in Egypt in the persons of Joseph and his family; and afterwards it was loaded with Egyptian fetters in the persons of this patriarch's descendants: One while leading a languishing life in a desert; another time attaining the height of its wishes by seeing the waters of Jordan divide to give a passage, by entering the land of promise, by beholding the walls of Jericho fall at the sound of trumpets, by over-

shadowing with an awful fear the minds of Hittites and Perizzites, Jebusites and Amorites, Canaanites and Amalekites: sometimes torn from this very country, to which a train of miracles had opened an access, led into captivity by Sennacheribs and Nebuchadnezzars, and leaving Jerusalem and its temple an heap of ruins; at other times re-established by Cyrus, and other princes like him, re-assembling fugitives who had been scattered over the face of the whole earth, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and re-adorning the temple: now exposed to the most cruel torments, that such as Nero and Domitian, Trajan, Dioclesian, and Decius could invent; then rising from ruin by the liberal aid of Constantine and Theodosius, and princes, who like them became patrons of the cause. Of this article, as of the former, I affirm, uniformity produced variety; the same principle that produced the happy days of the triumphs of the church, gave birth also to the calamitous times, which caused so many tears.

Let us reason in regard to the church in general, as we reason in regard to each private member of it. Do you think, (I speak now to each individual,) there is a dungeon so deep, a chain so heavy, a misery so great, a malady so desperate, from which God cannot deliver you, were your deliverance suitable to the eminence of his perfections? Is there, think you, any condition so noble that he cannot elevate you to it, any title so desirable that he cannot grace you with it, any treasure too immense for him to bestow, would the law of proportion, his invari-

able rule, permit him? Or dost thou really think, God takes pleasure in imbittering thy life, in taking away thy children, in tarnishing thy glory, in subverting thine establishments, in crushing thy house, and in precipitating thee from the highest human grandeur to the lowest and most mortifying station? Do you think God takes pleasure in seeing a poor wretch stretched on a bed of infirmity, and tormented with the gout, or the stone? Has he any delight in hearing the agonizing mortal exhale his life in sighs and groans? Why then doth he at any time reduce us to these dismal extremities? Order requires God, who intends to save you, to employ those means, which are most likely to conduct you to salvation, or, if you refuse to profit by them, to harden you under them. He wills your salvation, and therefore he removes all your obstacles to salvation. He takes away a child, because it is become an idol; he tarnishes grandeur, because it dazzles and infatuates its possessors; he subverts palaces, because they make men forget graves, their last homes; he precipitates men from pinnacles of earthly glory, because they make them reasons for vanity and insolence; he involves his creatures in pain and torture, because these alone make men feel their diminutiveness, their dependence, their nullity. As order requires God, who wills your salvation, to employ the most proper means to conduct you to it; so the same order requires him to punish contempt of it. It is right, that the blackest ingratitude, and the most invincible obduracy, should be punished with extreme ills.

It is just, if God be not glorified in your conversion, he should be in your destruction.

Let us reason in regard to the church in general, as we do in regard to the individuals who compose it. A change in the condition of the church, doth not argue any change in the attributes of God. Is his *arm shortened*, since he elevated to a throne those illustrious potentates, who elevated truth and piety along with themselves? Is his hand shortened since he ingulfed Pharaoh in the waves? since he obliged Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like a beast? Since he sent a destroying angel to slay the army of Sennacherib? Since he struck the soul of Belshazzar with terror, by writing with a miraculous hand on the very walls of his profane festal room the sentence of his condemnation? The same eminence of perfections, which engageth him sometimes to make all concur to the prosperity of his church, engageth him at other times to unite all adversities against it.

II. We have considered Jesus Christ in the economy of time, now let us consider him in the economy of eternity. We shall see in this as in the former, that harmony of perfections, that uniformity of government, which made our apostle say, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

The same principle, that formed his plan of human government in the economy of time, will form a plan altogether different in that of eternity. The same principle of proportion, which inclines him to confine our faculties within a narrow circle during this life,

will incline him infinitely to extend the sphere of them in a future state.

The same principle which induces him now to communicate himself to us in a small degree, will then induce him to communicate himself to us in a far more eminent degree.

The same principle, that inclines him now to assemble us in material buildings, to cherish our devotion by exercises savouring of the frailty of our state, by the singing of psalms, and by the participation of sacraments, will incline him hereafter to cherish it by means more noble, more sublime, better suited to the dignity of our origin, and to the price of our redemption.

The same principle, which inclines him to involve us now in indigence, misery, contempt, sickness, and death, will then induce him to free us from all these ills, and to introduce us into that happy state, where there will *be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying*, and where *all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes*, Rev. xxi. 4. Proportion requires, that intelligent creatures should be some time in a state of probation, and this is the nature of the present dispensation: but the same law of proportion requires also, that after intelligent creatures have been some time in a state of trial, and have answered the end of their being placed in such a state, there should be a state of retribution in an eternal economy. The same principle, then, that inclines Jesus Christ to adopt the plan of his present government, will incline him to adopt a different plan in a future state. There is, therefore, a harmony of perfection, an uniformi-

ty of action in all the varieties of the two economies. In the economy of time, then, as well as in the economy of eternity, *Jesus Christ is the same.*

.But who can exhaust this profound subject in the time prescribed for a single sermon? Our time is nearly elapsed, and I must leave you, my brethren, to enlarge on such conclusions as I shall just mention. God is always the same; he pursues one plan of government, arising from one invariable principle. By this truth let us regulate our faith, our morality, and our ideas of our future destiny.

1. Our *faith*. I will venture to affirm, one chief cause of the weakness of our faith is our inattention to this harmony of perfections, this uniformity of government in God. We generally consider the perfections of God and his actions separately, and independent on those infinite relations, which the last have to the first. Hence, when God displays what we call his justice, he seems to us to cease to be kind, and when he displays what we call goodness, he seems to suspend his rigid justice. Hence it seems to us, his attributes perpetually clash, so that he cannot exercise one without doing violence to another. Hence we sometimes fear God without loving him, and at other times love him without fearing him. Hence we imagine, so to speak, many different gods in one deity, and are ignorant whether the good God will favour us with his benefits, or the just God will punish us with his avenging strokes.

False ideas! more tolerable in people involved in pagan regions of darkness and shadows of death than in such as live where the light of the gospel

shines with so much splendor. Let us adore only one God, and let us acknowledge in him only one perfection, that is to say, a harmony, which results from all his perfections. When he displays what we call his bounty, let us adore what we call his justice; and when he displays what we call his justice, let us adore what we call his goodness. Let us allow, that the exercise of one attribute is no way injurious to another. If this idea be impressed upon our minds, our faith will never be shaken, at least it will never be destroyed by the vicissitudes of the world, or by those of the church. Why? Because we shall be fully convinced, that the vicissitudes of both proceed from the same cause, I mean the immutability of that God, who saith by the mouth of one of his prophets, *I, the Lord, change not*, Mal. iii. 6.

2. But, when I began this discourse, I besought God, that by considering this subject, we might be *changed into the same image by his Spirit*, and this petition I address to him again for you. God hath only one principle of his actions, that is, proportion, order, fitness of things. Let love of order be the principle of all your actions, my dear brethren, it is the character of a Christian, and would to God it were the character of all my hearers. A Christian hath only one principle of action. We often see him perform actions, which seem to have no relation; however, they all proceed from the same principle. The same motive, that carries him to church, engageth him to go to court; he goes into the army on the same principle, that induces him to visit an hospital; the motive, which engageth him to per-

form acts of repentance and mortification, inclines him to make one in a party of pleasure ; because if order, or fitness of things, requires him sometimes to perform mortifying actions, it also requires him at other times to take some recreation : because as order requires him sometimes to visit the sick, it requires him at other times to defend his country by war ; because if order calls him sometimes to church, it calls him at other times to court ; and so of the rest. In Scripture-style this disposition of mind is called *walking with God, setting the Lord always before us*, Gen. v. 24. Psal. xvi. 8. Glorious character of a Christian, always uniform, and like himself ! He does nothing, if I may be allowed to speak so, but arrange his actions differently, as his circumstances vary.

3. Finally, this idea of God is very proper to regulate that of your future destiny. There is, as we have been proving in this discourse, one principle of order, that governs both the economies of time and eternity. But, we have elsewhere observed, there are two sorts of order ; there is an absolute and a relative order. Relative order, or fitness, considered in itself, and independently on its relation to another economy, is a real disorder. In virtue of this relative order, we may live happily here a while in the practice of sin : But, as this kind of order is a violent state, it cannot be of long duration. If, therefore, you would judge of your eternal destiny, your judgment must be regulated not by an idea of relative order, which will soon end : but by that of real, absolute order, which must have an eternal du-

ration ; and in virtue of which vice must be punished with misery, and virtue must have a recompence of felicity.

Put these questions sometimes to yourselves, and let each ask ; What will my condition be in a state of absolute fitness ? I, who have devoted my whole life to counteract the great design of religion, to misrepresent its nature, to check its progress, to enervate its arguments, to subvert its dominion, shall I shine then as a star of the first magnitude, along with them, who have turned many to righteousness, or shall I partake of the punishment of the tempter and his infamous legions ? I who tremble at the thought of giving any thing away, I, who enrich myself at the private expence of individuals, and at the public expence of my country, at the expence of my friends, and even of my children, shall I share in a future state the felicity of that generous society, which breathes benevolence only, and which considers the happiness of others as its own ; of that society, which is happy in the persons of all, who participate their felicity ; or shall I share the misery of those infernal societies, which seek pleasure in the miseries of others, and so become mutually self-tormentors ?

Do we wish for a full assurance of a claim to eternal happiness ? Let us then by our conduct form an inseparable relation between our eternal felicity and the invariable perfections of that God, who changeth not ; let us spare no pains to arrive at that happy state ; let us address to God our most fervent prayers to engage him to bless the efforts, which we

make to enjoy it; and after we have seriously engaged in this great work, let us fear nothing. The same principle, which induced God to restore Isaac to Abraham, to raise, as it were, that dear child by a kind of resurrection from his father's knife; the same principle, that engaged him to elevate David from the condition of a simple shepherd to the rank of a king; let us say more, the same principle, which engaged him to open the gates of heaven to the *author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. after the consummation of the work, for which he came; the same principle will incline him to unfold the gates of heaven to us, when we shall have finished the work for which we were born. Our felicity will be founded on the rock of ages; it will be incorporated with the essence of an unchangeable God; we shall stand fast in perilous times, and, when the world, the whole world tumbles into ruins, we shall exclaim with the highest joy, *My God! thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They perish: but thou shalt endure. They all shall wax old like a garment: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue; and their seed shall be established before thee*, Psal. cii. 24. &c. God grant this may be our happy lot! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.











