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SUMMARIES

OF THE

SERMONS AND DISCOURSES

OF

SHERLOCK AND JEREMY TAYLOR.

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SUMMARIES

OF

SHERLOCK'S DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

JOHN, CHAP. VI. VERSES 67—69.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

PART I.

THREE reasons for the constancy and adherence of the disciples to Christ: I. The miserable condition of those who should forsake him, having no other in whom they could trust; II. The excellency of his religion, and the means afforded by it for obtaining eternal happiness; III. His authority and divine commission, as a ground of confidence and faith. These three reasons referred to three general principles or maxims: 1. That religion, which is the only means of true happiness and perfection in the present circumstances of the world, does not depend on human reasoning or invention; we cannot learn it from ourselves or others: 2. The great end of religion is future happiness; consequently the best religion is that which most surely directs us to it: 3. The authority and word of God is the only sure foundation of religion and reasonable ground of our hopes. First head considered: the necessity of religion in general is taken for granted; the only question is, from what source we must derive it: improvements which the gospel has introduced into the world stated: sceptics of the present age are apt to refer these to natural religion: this pretence examined and shown to be false: men are chiefly indebted to the gospel even for that natural religion which they boast of: the question then put—is there no such thing as natural religion? Answered by an exposition of the state of mankind under it, —which is not to be estimated by a few bright examples, while millions

are left in ignorance and vice; also by a comparison of it with the gospel revelation,—which latter was given to restore human nature and deliver reason from bondage by grace. Conclusion—the bad return made for so great a blessing by those who set up reason and nature in opposition to it. The success of such an attempt however will not be greater than its wisdom and piety.

PART II.

Second head considered: religion shown to be founded in the principles of reason and nature; hence it must be formed with a view of securing our future happiness: that therefore is the best religion which will most surely conduct us to the end proposed: the nature of religion enlarged on: eternal happiness out of our own power; it is the gift of God alone: if eternal life therefore be the end of religion, and likewise the gift of God, religion is nothing but the means of obtaining from God this most excellent gift: thus far all religions that have appeared in the world are shown to agree: from this account of the nature of religion, that it is to know the living God and to serve him acceptably, some consequences follow—First, Since to please God, and to act according to the will of God, are but one and the same thing, that must be the most perfect religion which instructs us best in the knowledge of his will: defect of reason and nature in this point of view—Secondly, It is wrong to compare natural religion and revelation together, for the purpose of inquiring which is preferable; for this is to inquire whether we know God's will better than he himself knows it. Since revelation must needs be the surest guide in religion, every man is bound to consider its pretensions when offered to him: this inquiry excluded by those who argue against all revelation, *à priori*, as inconsistent with God's wisdom. Sum of the argument against revelation *à priori* stated—viz. *that God, having given to us reason, has bound us to obey its dictates, and will judge us by its rule; otherwise he would have given an imperfect rule, which is inconsistent with his wisdom: but, the rule being sufficient, revelation must be useless and impertinent, and therefore not derived from God: moreover, as reason and natural religion never yet prevailed universally, it must be supposed that whatever happens in the world is designed by God, and those who have least reason are in that state for which he designed them; it is therefore absurd to suppose a revelation would be given to take them out of that state.*—On this argument four observations are briefly made; involving—1. The principle that the creature is always bound to obey the Creator:—2. That human reason cannot be said to be *absolutely*, but only *relatively* perfect, as a rule; and it is begging the question to suppose there is no other rule but reason given; which must be proved, not supposed:—3. To add to a law once considered perfect as a rule, when an alteration of circumstances requires it, is oftentimes the effect of wisdom and necessity:—4. To say that revelation is unnecessary because reason is a perfect

rule, and yet to affirm that those who have an imperfect use of reason have need of a revelation, is a contradiction: again to say, that those who are in such a state that they do not and cannot obey the laws of reason, are yet in such a state as God designed for them, is not only making God the author of evil, but ascribing to him two inconsistent intentions: we do not argue now in behalf of any particular revelation: this alone is urged, that revelation is the surest foundation of religion: hence it is incumbent on every man of sense and reason to inquire whether there be a revelation or no: for the precepts of natural religion cannot be taken into consideration until it be certain that there is no revelation to guide us; there can be no comparison made to determine our choice; for the revelation must be rejected, before natural religion can pretend to take the lead: the beaten but false path, which unbelievers tread, explained: the conclusion of their reasonings shown to be—that because there may be a false revelation, there cannot be a true one: application of what has been said to the Christian revelation: its pretensions are worthy of the deepest consideration: reasons given why such pretensions are not to be turned off with general and loose observations: neglect of this consideration shown to be inexcusable: want of sincerity in religious professions, and desire of salvation, give a wrong turn to controversies about religion: different conduct is pursued with respect to those worldly objects which we highly value: concluding exhortation.

PART III.

There cannot be a fairer trial of any religion than a consideration of its efficacy in leading us to eternal life, which is the end of all religion: the difficulty is, how to apply this rule so as to direct our choice, since all religions pretend to *have the words of eternal life*: our object therefore must be to enable ourselves to determine, which are, and which are not, *words of eternal life*. Some principles in all religions are allowed, which may help our determination: such are these—that life eternal can be had only from God; and that from him the only way to obtain it is to live agreeably to his holy will; whence it follows, that since to do God's will is the only way to obtain eternal life, the words which instruct us in the knowledge of his will must be *the words of eternal life*: when therefore we inquire from what principle we ought to derive our religion, we do in truth inquire from what we may best derive our knowledge of God's will, since this is the true measure of our religious obedience. Two ways only by which we can arrive at this knowledge: one, by following the dictates of reason and nature; the other, by learning it either from God's own declaration, or from persons sufficiently authorised by him, which is what we call revelation. Between these two general principles, it is no hard matter to judge which is the safest: as nature is a better guide than any pretended revelation, so every true revelation, as far as it goes, is better than nature: absurd to compare natural religion and revelation together, as considered in

themselves: since, if the revelation be false, no arguments are necessary to make it yield to nature; if true, none can be sufficient. On the same principle other general objections against the gospel of Jesus Christ examined: its methods of salvation, which human sagacity cannot fathom, are matters of complaint with unbelievers: they think it unreasonable that God should propose such as objects of faith, and from this presupposed unreasonableness conclude they were not of God's contrivance, but the tricks of impostors: this objection, however, is opposed to all revelation in general, considered as a principle of religion, which adds any thing to what reason teaches us: the question then will be—can it be reasonable for God to propose any articles of faith or conditions of salvation, the reason and propriety of which do not appear to man? This the case of the gospel. In the sense of the gospel, what is a mystery and what is not: it must be remembered that not human reason, but God's will is the rule and measure of religious obedience; and therefore the terms of it must be tried by their agreement with God's will rather than the narrow compass of man's reason. If reason can by any means discover that the conditions of salvation proposed to us are the will of God, its work is over, and we are bound to use the means prescribed in order to obtain the desired end: and how little soever reason may be able to penetrate into mysteries, yet if it can discover them indeed to be the mysteries of God, and proposed by him as terms of salvation, it discovers to us that these mysteries are *the words of eternal life*; and what more does a man look for in his religion? This, it may be said, is true, on the supposition that God requires the belief of mysteries; but how does this prove it reasonable for him so to do? Certain allowances being made on each side, the question is reduced to this—whether it can ever be necessary to reveal mysteries, in order to perfect the salvation of mankind? whenever it is necessary, it must be reasonable, unless it be unreasonable for God to save the world. Nature of a mystery stated: no real or positive thing in nature, but merely negative with respect to ourselves: what the complaint against mysteries amounts to shown. Return to the question, whether it can be ever necessary for God to use such means for the salvation of the world, the agreeableness of which to the end proposed human reason cannot discover: this shown to be necessary by various arguments, particularly by the difficulty of reconciling it with the wisdom and justice of God so freely to pardon sin as not to leave the marks of his displeasure on it, and vindicate in the face of creation the honor of his laws and government: no religion but that which is able to adjust these difficulties can have *the words of eternal life*: mysteries are so far from being an objection to the gospel, that without a mystery it is impossible for us to be saved: a religion without them might serve for this life, since they are not necessary parts of religion considered only as a rule of action; but they are most necessary when considered as means of obtaining pardon and eternal glory.

PART IV.

Religion acting on the soul, compared with a regimen necessary for the body—one sort proper for a sound constitution, and another for repairing a broken one : an innocent man has nothing to do but to preserve his innocency, which is his title to God's favor ; his religion therefore is only a rule of life, and there is no room in it for mystery ; but on the supposition of mankind becoming sinful and liable to God's wrath, religion itself becomes a new thing. Unbelievers may think that too much is required to believe *that all are sinners and are fallen short of the glory of God* : but this is the principle on which the gospel uniformly proceeds, and on this it must be judged. Three things, necessary to be done for a sinner in order to restore him to eternal life, considered : 1. That God be reconciled to him : 2. That he be purged from the impurity of sin : 3. That for the future he be enabled to obey God's holy laws : necessity of these conditions briefly shown. Allowing them to be necessary, and likewise that religion must contain *the words* or means of *eternal life*, it follows that the sinner's religion must contain the means of fulfilling these conditions : our notion therefore of such a religion is very imperfect, when we consider it only as a rule of action : as far as a rule of action is necessary, the gospel is shown to have it in the strictest sense of the words, and in the purest form : but a rule of life is not the only notion of religion : according to the other ideas which belong to it, it is not necessarily absurd if supposed mysterious : examined in this point of view with reference to the first of the three conditions above-mentioned, or as containing the means by which God is reconciled to sinners. Though we cannot practise a law without understanding it, yet God may be reconciled to us without our comprehending every thing done for that purpose, as a malefactor may receive and profit by a pardon, without knowing what induced his prince to grant it : if a sinner could not receive mercy unless he comprehended all the reasons of it, then only would it be necessary for religion to exclude all mysteries : since the knowledge of the essence of things, and that of the existence of things, are quite distinct, our ignorance of the latter can be no argument against our belief in the former : this explained more fully. The argument carried still further ; it being shown that this part of religion must necessarily be mysterious, and the means of reconciliation such as reason and nature cannot comprehend. Reason challenged to discover any means of reconciliation, if these certain and allowed principles be laid down—viz. that it is just for God to punish sinners, and that God can do nothing but what is just : difficulty must ever remain as long as we attempt to scan the divine justice by our narrow conceptions of it : and this it is which occasions many things in the gospel to be mysterious. To redeem the world is the work of God only : he alone could find the means, and apply them : religion founded on redemption must consist of two parts—viz., an account of the redemption wrought by God, and instructions to men on what terms they may reap its benefits : as far as our own part in the gospel

goes there is nothing mysterious; we know how to act: as to the other parts of it, we are not required to comprehend and account for the means of salvation, but only to accept them: mysteries of God in redemption compared with his wonderful and mysterious works of creation, in which his ways are past finding out: strange that salvation should be the only instance in which men refuse mercy because they cannot understand the methods of obtaining it. The other two points, viz., the cleansing sinners from their iniquity, and the enabling them to live virtuously for the future, are omitted, because the same arguments will apply to them, *mutatis mutandis*. Conclusion—the only fair way of appreciating the gospel, is to consider the true state of mankind in the world.

DISCOURSE II.

HEBREWS, CHAP. VII. VERSE 25.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

WHEN we consider the wonderful work of our redemption, we cannot imagine it to be the effect of mere will and arbitrary appointment, not founded in the reason and propriety of things: from our natural notions of God and his attributes, it is absurd to suppose that he could do any thing by chance, or from mere will and humor: this as true in works of grace as in those of nature; it is one thing, not to be able to discern the reasons of Providence, and another to suppose them void of reason: no religion can subsist with an opinion of this latter kind. The gospel has made an alteration in the scheme of religion by revealing the Son of God: the knowledge of his power in the creating and upholding all things became necessary for the foundation of our faith in him as the Redeemer; for that character would be ill supported by one who had not power equal to the undertaking: the doctrines therefore of the New Testament relate to that character, of which there was no explicit declaration either before or under the Law of Moses. Natural religion leads us to acknowledge one supreme intelligent Creator of all things; and therefore all the religious duties of man in that state relate to this Being alone: but suppose it could discover that this Being had an eternal Son, *by whom he made the worlds*; would there not on that supposition necessarily arise an alteration in natural religion? It cannot be supposed that we were created by the Son, are under his government, and shall be under his judgment, and at the same time be maintained that no service is due to him from his creatures and subjects: the conclusion therefore is, that the religion of a Christian is a natural and reasonable service. When we consider what expectations we have from our Redeemer, and what are his promises to us, it is but reasonable to ask, by what

authority he does these things? The foundation of our expectations is shown to be reasonable from Scriptural authorities; and we have thence reason to conclude that he is now as able to restore life, as he was at first to give it. The relation of Christ to mankind as Creator and Governor considered: the work of redemption could not properly have been undertaken by any other hand: this shown to be the case both from reason and from Scripture. Though the redemption of mankind be a work which seems to concern men only, yet, considered as a vindication of God's justice and goodness, it is exposed to the consideration of every intelligent being in the universe: hence, though it relates immediately to men, it must be agreeable to all the reason and relation of things discoverable by the highest intellectual beings; and there are many such not discoverable by us. The existence of orders superior to man agrees both with reason and with Scripture; and since God's justice and equity in redemption are things which angels desire and are concerned to look into, his reasons in that great affair may be discoverable by the highest, though not by the lowest order of beings: this shown to be probable: it is next explained how well these principles and doctrines of the gospel agree together; from whence we may discern how reasonable and natural the religion of the gospel is. The belief that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and arise to life, is the fundamental article of a Christian's faith. The hopes which nature imparts with respect to our prospects beyond the grave considered: also how these hopes are supported, confirmed, and enlarged by the gospel. Conclusion: the question put, who is this who was subject to death, and yet had power over death? How could so much power and weakness meet together? Answered; he was a man, and therefore he died; he was the Son of God, and therefore he rose from the dead, and will give life to all his true disciples. Had the gospel required us to expect from Christ the redemption of our souls and bodies, without giving us any reason to think he was endued with power equal to the task, Christians might have been justly reproached with believing they know not what. That the world was made by the Son of God, is not contrary to reason; and that he who made the world should be able to renew it, is highly consonant to reason: all the mystery lies in this—that so high a person should condescend so far for the sake of man; but it becomes not us to complain of his mysterious love.

DISCOURSE III.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XI. VERSE 6.

Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

PART I.

CONNEXION of the words of the text with those preceding it explained: hence arise two subjects of inquiry:—I. What are the offences which are generally taken at the gospel of Christ: II. From what sources these offences come. The earliest, and it may probably be the latest objection to the gospel, was the poverty and meanness in which our Saviour appeared. Though he came with such high purposes, and to exact such strict obedience, yet he came with less attendance and show than an ordinary messenger: hence the upbraidings and reproaches he constantly met with throughout his life, and at his death: and so blinded are men with false notions, that this prejudice has prevailed in every age: when Christ *crucified* was preached by St. Paul, he was to the Jews a *stumbling-block*, and to the Greeks *foolishness*: in this case God did not act as the Greeks made their Jupiter to act, in thunder and lightning, or as God is represented in the Old Testament, *with clouds and darkness round about him*: here every thing had a different turn; Christ came in the likeness of a man, and in the form of a servant; whilst his doctrine was framed rather to purify the heart than to exercise the head. But these things the wise and great of this world find difficult to reconcile to their notions of God's wisdom and majesty: they ask why Christ did not appear in the power and majesty of his father—they compare his appearance with that of an ambassador sent by a prince, with honor and a large retinue, to awe and reclaim rebellious subjects—and they ask why, if faith be a means of salvation, more reason for confidence was not given? What foundation there is in reason for this prejudice considered: no wonder to hear men reason upon the notions that are familiar to them: power and authority are connected with ideas of pomp and splendor; and when we talk of the works of God, we naturally turn to view his wonderful works of Providence: hence men are so slow to discern his hand in the ordinary course of nature, wherein are things familiar to us. The case of Naaman the Syrian stated: not unlike to his folly is theirs who take offence at the poverty and meanness of the Author of our redemption. This prejudice, when searched to the bottom, found to arise from a false conception of the power and majesty of God; as if the success of his purposes depended on the visible fitness of his instruments: with men the case is so; but not with God, whose *foolishness*, says the Apostle, *is wiser than men, and weakness is stronger than men*; teaching us that we should not presume to sit in judgment upon the methods of Providence, since how foolish or how weak soever they may seem to us, they will be found in his hand to be the wisest and the strongest:

and this reasoning the Apostle applies to the case before us : however the Jews or however the Greeks conceived of the crucified Jesus, yet to every true believer he is the mighty *power of God unto salvation*, because God ordained him to be so ; and this gives full efficacy to his Cross, however contemptible and unfit for the purpose it may seem to be. If we would judge truly, the more simple and plain the methods of Providence are, the more do they speak his power ; as when he said, *Let there be light, and there was light* : so when our Lord said, *I will, be thou clean*, and the person was cleansed, his divinity shone forth more bright than if he had been assisted by all the powers above. And the same may be said respecting the redemption of the world committed to Jesus, a man of sorrow and affliction, but endued with such mighty powers.

In the next place it is considered, with respect to men, whether the advantages would have been greater, had Christ appeared in greater splendor and with more visible power. One thing is certain, that the majesty of God is not to be approached by human eyes ; therefore when it descends to treat with men, it must be veiled under such representations as they can bear : but, it may be said, is there no medium between his immediate presence, and so vile a state both of life and death ? No doubt there are many degrees of visible glory, in any of which Christ might have appeared ; but none in which he could have come with greater advantage to religion : this shown to be the case. But, it may be said, though he came not with worldly state and temporal dominion, he might at least have exhibited some visible manifestation of his divine authority : in answer to this, his miraculous works are enumerated, than which higher signs of a divine commission cannot be required : under all the meanness of his appearance therefore, the evidence of his divine authority is the same as it would have been had he come in the greatest pomp and power. To us, who are removed at a distance from the scene of action, the evidence is much greater. Had he come in surprising glory, we might have suspected the relations of men who saw and heard every thing while their faculties were lost in astonishment : but now we have the evidence of those who lived with him familiarly, and saw his mighty works without astonishment, being reconciled to them by daily use, and the long-experienced gentleness and love of their master : from his poverty and meanness therefore arises the stability of our faith, which standeth not in words or works of man's wisdom or power, but in the power and wisdom of him who knows how to produce strength out of weakness.

PART II.

From the offence taken at the mean condition of our Lord, the cross became to the *Jews a stumbling-block* : it became also *foolishness to the Greeks* ; for they *sought after wisdom* ; and not finding that wisdom which they sought after in the gospel, it was esteemed by them as foolishness. The nature of God, the manner of the soul's

existence, the nature of rewards and punishments in a future life, are not philosophically explained in the gospel: yet it is said by some—Who would not have expected from a person sent from God, to have had all difficulties solved which affect the belief and practice of religion? As it is, we are taught only the plain doctrines of morality, and are bid to take his word for the rest. To clear up this great and unreasonable offence against the gospel, three subjects of consideration are proposed. First; This objection does not lie against the gospel of Christ; but, if there be any force in it, it strikes at the wisdom and goodness of God in the creation. As long as men keep to the plain simple points in which religion is concerned, there is no danger of their splitting on these insuperable difficulties: if they seek after God, the whole creation will lead them to him: if they search after the immortality of the soul and the certainty of future retribution, these truths will be suggested to them by their natural sense of good and evil, and their notions of God's wisdom and justice and goodness, compared with the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishments: but if they are not content with knowing that God *is*, without knowing *what* he is; or if, not satisfied with the moral certainty of a future state, they wish to look into the texture of the soul, it is no wonder if they make shipwreck both of their reason and their faith at once; for this knowlege is too high for us; nor has God given us faculties to comprehend such mysteries of nature; not even are the seeds of such knowlege implanted in us, and therefore no cultivation can ever produce it. This being the condition of men, it had been to little purpose, if our Lord had attempted to let them into those great secrets. His business was to instruct them in the ways of virtue, awaken them to a sense of goodness, and show them the way to happiness, by setting before them the precepts of God and nature in their true uncorrupted purity; and this he has done, even by the confession of his greatest enemies. It is the great business of a teacher to speak to the sense and understanding of the people; otherwise his words are mere air and sound; and therefore whatever wisdom and knowlege were in our blessed Saviour, it is folly to expect from him any greater degrees of either than we can comprehend: instead of improving the nature of man, he must have destroyed it, and re-created him, to have made him capable of a clear insight into all the mysteries which the curious seem desirous of knowing. If more be required on this head, the cause must be pleaded with God, and not with Christ; we must inquire of God why he made us no wiser. And, it may be said, would it not have been better, if he had done so? To this it may be answered; that I would rather be an angel than a man; but I know of no right I had to be either; and that I am either, is owing purely to the goodness of my Creator. Had God given us only the faculties of men, and required of us the service of angels, then indeed we might have complained with some justice. Our present faculties, rightly applied, will lead us to a knowlege of God's being and excellency, and will instruct us in what our reasonable service to him consists: when we know that there is an all-sufficient being, and that it is our duty to serve him, to suspend

our duty because we cannot comprehend his nature and manner of existence, is as unreasonable as it would be for a merchant not to trade to the Indies, until he can account to himself for the nature of all the surprising objects of those wealthy regions. God has given us knowledge enough for the foundation of our duty; and if we use the light we have, we shall be happy: the great mistake is, that men suppose they should have better evidence for the things of another world, could they overcome these difficulties which cross them in a search after nature: and this would be an advantage to religion, if it were so; but that it is not, appears from the following considerations; for, Secondly, The difficulties which arise in considering the natural properties of things, affect not the certainty and reality of their existence: if they did, we could be certain of the real existence of no one thing: there cannot be two more distinct inquiries, than when we examine whether a thing really *is*, and when we examine *what* it is; these things do not at all depend one on the other: as we can imagine the properties of some things, without reflecting whether there ever were such things or no, (as for instance, an *exact* circle or square,) so we can examine and come to the certainty of the existence of things without knowing, or attempting to know, their properties; for the peasant knows there is a sun and moon as surely as the astronomer. Nor is this true only in things that are objects of sense; but also in those, the existence of which we collect from reason. From visible effects to invisible causes the argument is conclusive; though in many cases it extends only to the reality of the cause, and does not in the least lead to the knowledge of its nature: thus when we see distempers cured by plants or drugs, we are sure that some virtue is in them, on which the effect depends, though what, we seldom or never can tell.

Now, in the case before us, what sort of knowledge is necessary to support religion in the world? If we are sure there is a God who will judge the world, is not that a sufficient foundation for holiness? if such an event will certainly take place, it concerns not us to know *how*. Since then our Saviour has given us the best evidence of the certainty of a future state and of the soul's existence after death, it is impertinent and unphilosophical to confront it with difficulties arising from our conceptions as to the nature and manner of these things: it is in truth to set up ignorance against knowledge.

Since, then, religion depends on the certainty and reality of these and other like articles, and not in the least on a knowledge of their nature or philosophical account of them, it had been absurd in our Saviour, who was a preacher of religion only, to have entered into those difficulties which did not belong to his province; and it is ridiculous in us to expect the solution of them in the gospel, when, if solved, they would not serve any one point in which the gospel is concerned. It may, however, be said—all this is true, where the existence of things is out of doubt; but when this is doubtful, these seeming contradictions, which arise in considering the nature of things, shake greatly the presumption of their existence. In the third place, therefore, it is shown that the gospel has given us the best evidence

of our own immortality and a future state, that can be conceived or desired. Two things on which our resurrection to life depends; as we learn from our Saviour's answer to the Sadducees—*ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.* We can desire to know nothing more than that he *can* raise us, and that he *will*: the first is to be learnt from our natural notions of God, the second from his declared will, i. e. the holy Scriptures: as to the power of God, it cannot be brought into question without throwing off all pretence to natural religion; it remains therefore to inquire after his will: now we have our Saviour's promise for our resurrection often repeated: he also raised persons from the dead, and he raised himself; he therefore has the power: take both propositions then together, and they will amount to this, that he who has the power of raising the dead has promised to raise us. God, we know, cannot lie, and therefore must ratify every word which he spoke by his holy child Jesus; and hence arises a security which no doubts can shake. As to difficulties in nature and philosophy, he answered them when he himself rose from the grave.

PART III.

The prejudices which men conceive against the gospel vary according to the views under which they consider it: as some take offence at the gospel for not clearing up the doubts and difficulties which religion contained before, so others take offence at the new doctrines introduced by it: this attached itself even to many of Christ's disciples: what purpose of religion or morality, it is said, can be served by our receiving articles of faith which we cannot understand? This charge, if it were as true as it is heavy, might possibly shake the foundations of the gospel: but to set the matter in a clear light, we must consider the different notions of the word *mystery*, as used in the gospel, and as in common use amongst men at this time: hence it will appear, I. That the objection does not reach the gospel sense of the word, and cannot affect its mysteries: II. That the use and sense of the word which is liable to this objection, does not belong to the gospel; as it does not contain any such mysteries as may justify the complaint.

First, then, The whole design of the gospel in the salvation of mankind, is styled a mystery, because *it was kept secret since the world began*, in allusion to this time of secrecy and silence; but on the revelation of it by Jesus Christ it is no longer looked on as such, but as the *manifestation* of God's will and goodness to men; see Rom. xvi. 26.: the opposition here is between mystery and revelation; in this sense therefore there can lie no objection against the gospel. As the gospel itself is in this sense styled a mystery, so also are the several parts of it: *I show you a mystery*, says St. Paul, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Other instances of the same kind enumerated. Against this gospel-sense of mystery the common objections have no place. It is therefore, in the second

place, shown that the notion of mysteries, against which the objection lies, does not belong to the gospel. It represents a mystery as a thing inconceivable, and altogether irreconcilable to human reason: but such mysteries are not in the gospel of Christ: men may have run into contradictions by endeavoring to explain the mysteries of God farther than he has explained them; but let not the gospel be charged with their errors: nothing is more fatal to religion than attempts to explain and account for the hidden wisdom of God on principles of human reason. Concerning the persons of the Godhead there are indeed great mysteries, which are not revealed: God has not told us *how* his Son and his Spirit dwell in him, or *how* they came from him: these therefore are properly mysteries, hidden in his secret wisdom, and which we are no where called on to inquire into: we might readily take God's word for them, without entering into natural and philosophical inquiries; especially as they are well qualified to be objects of faith. Common sense might teach us not to call God to account, or pretend to enter into the reason of his doings.

DISCOURSE IV.

I CORINTHIANS, CHAP. I. VERSE 21.

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

PART I.

THE expression, *in the wisdom of God*, considered. Two main assertions in the text:—I. That the world by wisdom knew not God: II. That it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save believers. The meaning of the term *foolishness of preaching* explained: adopted by the Apostle as having been used by the ancient philosophers in derision of the gospel: he calls on them in their own language to compare their boasted wisdom with this foolishness of preaching, and to judge by the effects. It is hard to account for the great corruption of religion, and the absurd superstitious rites that prevailed in the world; but being once introduced and propagated, it is easy to account for the difficulty of removing them. The corruption of the world was so general, that those who were most endowed with wisdom were unable to extricate themselves or others from the prevailing superstition and idolatry: hence the truth of the first proposition, that 'the world by wisdom knew not God.' With regard to the second proposition, as far as true notions of God and religion go, the truth of it will be admitted: even the enemies of revelation, in spite of themselves, bear witness in some measure to this truth: they now see clearly the great truths of reli-

gion; they can now demonstrate the being and attributes of God, and can deduce from thence the worship that is to be paid to him: yet whence this wisdom? are they wiser than all the sages of antiquity? what single advantage, indeed, have they above them, except this, that in their days the light of the gospel has been spread over the world? But this comparison between the wise and learned of different ages will not determine the case: religion is not made for scholars only, but to influence the general practice of mankind: the great question, therefore, lies between the religion of the world in general as affecting its morality before the coming of Christ, and since: condition of the world in the one instance contrasted with its condition in the other: whence then comes this change? If it is for the better, surely the world is indebted to the hand that rooted out false notions, destructive of virtue and happiness, and planted in their stead such as produce contrary effects. It may be said that the common people are now only influenced by custom and education, like the heathens: suppose the case to be so, and we are even then greatly obliged to revelation. Two things must surely be admitted: —I. That it was the work of a very extraordinary power to root out such ancient errors: II. That it was also an act of great wisdom and goodness to introduce and establish such just principles and notions as throw the weight of custom and education on the side of virtue and true religion. The first proposition cannot be disputed; for the power that destroys the force of custom and education must be very great: no instance in history of a nation reasoned out of its religious errors; and the gospel not having been introduced by external force, the work must be ascribed to a power of another kind. With regard to the second proposition, it may be thought that true religion is no longer religion when it stands by the force of custom and education: yet the precepts of the holy writers call on us *to train up a child in the way he should go*, for this very reason, *that when he is old he will not depart from it*; which, as well as God's declaration to Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. proves that true religion is not the worse for the support it has from example and education: but farther, inasmuch as principles, opinions, and practices of mankind will ever be strongly influenced by custom and education, how could the wisdom and goodness of God be manifested more than by directing such influence to the side of virtue, religion and happiness? The true end of religion is to make men better, and to lead them to perform their duty to God and man: true principles, therefore, being instilled into them, they are as capable of discharging those duties as the greatest philosophers, and as beneficially to the world. It is not to be inferred from hence that religion should be founded on prejudice: the gospel was at first promulgated by the strongest appeal to reason, when it was introduced by the hand of God in signs and wonders, called by the Apostle 'demonstration of the spirit,' in opposition to 'the wisdom of the world;' and it stands on the same reason still, though it may be maintained under the natural influence which custom and education have on mankind: hence, perhaps, we may see the reason why miracles were so frequent in the beginning of the gospel, and why

they afterwards ceased : they were necessary till truth had possession of the world ; but truth, thoroughly established, was left to be propagated by the natural means of instruction and education. Any one may see that evil is produced by false and corrupt principles, which owe not their influence to reason, but to the possession which they have of the mind ; and that good principles, with the same advantage of possession, will be as powerful to good purposes, though the mind discerns not the reason from whence they flow : to answer this end of religion, were the preachers of the gospel sent into the world ; and the errand was worthy of him who sent them.

PART II.

The subject of the text re-considered ; and the circumstance, that a few of the learned heathens extricated themselves from popular errors, discovered a Supreme Being, and acquired clear notions of morality, shown to be no argument against the necessity of a revelation : for, in the first place, religion, if it be of any use at all, is of use equally to all men : since all men live under a sense of being accountable for their actions, all equally stand in need of directions to guide them : to show that reason served the purpose of four or five persons out of millions, is no proof that it rendered the publication of the gospel unnecessary : neither will the argument hold good—that what reason did for a few, it was capable of doing for all, and was therefore a sufficient foundation for true religion ; inasmuch as true religion was lost, not from a defect in reason, but by the abuse and misapplication of it ; for the general abuse of reason stood in need of a remedy, as an eye which, though sound, is covered with a film, requires this obstruction of the sight to be removed : moreover, when reason is considered abstractedly, as a principle of action, that degree of it which illuminates the minds of extraordinary men must not be taken as a measure of what is to direct the mass : yet among even the learned and philosophic sages of antiquity, few formed just notions of religion and morals ; the people in general had neither time nor capacity to make the attempt : reasoning, in short, will not do for them ; and therefore the gospel set out differently, by proposing the great truths of religion, plainly, simply, and authoritatively. The custom of dressing up the doctrines and proofs of religion in axioms, theorems, and demonstrations, may be useful to men of thought and contemplation, but not so to mankind in general : by this method religion would have lost that plainness of doctrine and simplicity of evidence which are strong proofs of its divine original. The foregoing observations are made on the supposition that a few wise and learned men had extricated themselves from all popular superstitions ; but this has never been proved : indeed St. Paul justly lays it to the charge of the wise men of the world, *that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, &c.* Socrates, the best of them, when accused of despising, and of teaching the Athenian youth to despise, the gods of his country, acknowledged himself

an idolater in the court of Areopagus, and made his observance of sacrificial rites on the Pagan altars a part of his defence. But how different was the defence of St. Paul, accused in the same court and of the same crime, when he made his appeal to the ALTAR OF THE UNKNOWN GOD! The very death of Socrates shows that he did not dissemble his opinions through fear: was it then possible for any one to oppose heathen idolatry on his authority? Moreover, the character of Socrates, as well as of his accusers, was afterwards put in a true light; his memory was held in reverence; and his doctrines were published by his great and philosophic pupils; yet for the space of near four hundred years to the birth of Christ, what was the effect produced thereby on the morals of mankind? The manner and effect of St. Paul's preaching at Athens, and of other Apostles in various parts of the world, contrasted with those of Socrates and his school. Concluding observations:

I. If during so many ages reason was unable to reform the world, let us not be so vain as to imagine we could have done more in similar circumstances, &c.

II. When we consider the means used by God in restoring true religion, and pretend to judge of their fitness, let us avoid being misled by the conceit of some, who think themselves wise enough to give such directions in so momentous a matter, &c.

III. Since we see how unable human reason is to struggle against the inveterate follies of superstition, and also how much it is indebted to the light of the gospel, let us be careful to preserve this light, for fear of falling back again into the wretched state from which it delivered us, &c.

DISCOURSE V.

JOHN, CHAP. III. VERSE 16.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

WHATEVER difficulties men find in the gospel, we might suppose it would be admitted at least to be a good representation of God's mercy towards mankind. Yet there are some who think that Nature holds out better hopes to her children, in teaching them that the infirmities of humanity are unavoidable, and the mercy of God infinite; whence they conceive all promises of mercy to be unnecessary, and therefore liable to suspicion: and this is made an argument against revelation, past or to come. The credit and authority of revelation are much strengthened by its being reconciled to the natural hopes and expectations of mankind. The answers of a Christian and a Deist, when asked the grounds of their respective

hopes and expectations, shown nearly to coincide. The gospel is no enemy to the hopes of nature; but the question is, whether these give such security of pardon and immortality as will justify us in rejecting the light of revelation. Whoever depends on God's forgiveness, admits himself to be a sinner: upon this admission three considerations laid down:—I. That natural religion could not be originally founded in the consideration of man's being a sinner, and in expectation of pardon: II. That the hopes which we are able to form in our present circumstances, are too imperfect to give us intire satisfaction: III. That the coming of Christ has supplied these defects, perfecting and completing the hopes of nature.

The original religion of nature was agreeable to the original state of nature; consequently, if natural religion be founded in the consideration of man's sin and wickedness, it follows that man was originally formed sinful and weak: supposing men originally to be what we see they are, on what grounds are we to hope for an alteration for the better? for if it was consistent with God's goodness to put men into this state originally, it is not inconsistent with his goodness to continue them in it: hence mere reason cannot entertain hopes of being delivered from the present state of the world. Even allowing that such an order of things removed all responsibility from our actions, yet no religion could be built on it: though we might escape punishment, we could never show any plea for being put into a better state. Farther, as natural religion is only obedience to the laws of nature; if natural religion be considered as nothing else from the beginning but an expectation of pardon for sin, God must have made laws only that his subjects might break them, and he himself show his goodness in pardoning their transgressions; which is absurd.

In a view of the second consideration, two things may be affirmed of the present state of mankind; one is, that they have a sense of their obligation to obey the laws of reason and nature; the other is, that very few do tolerably, and some perfectly, pay this obedience: it is impossible, therefore, to found the hopes of religion on innocence and obedience; for obedience is not paid: impunity cannot be claimed for all sins; much less any degree of happiness, present or future, in behalf of offenders: we have nothing but the probability of God's mercy accepting imperfect endeavors and attainments: but what security can arise out of this? Since all our natural powers are the gift of God, and our best services but a debt, the claims of natural religion are only those of unprofitable servants, to whom nothing can be due.

With respect to the third consideration, in viewing the conditions and promises of the gospel, what reason have we to be offended? The laws which are made the conditions of happiness are not new impositions, but as old as reason itself, and the same which natural religion stands bound to obey. In this point we are no losers; but in all other respects we are gainers. Those hopes, which we could not have from innocence, the gospel offers to us through the mercy of God: nature had no refuge after sin, but in repentance; yet nature

could not tell us the efficacy of that repentance, which is disclosed only by the gospel : all the hopes of nature beyond the grave, that land of doubt and uncertainty, are confirmed by the gospel, which has abolished death, and redeemed us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Its promises extend to more than nature could ever claim ; they take in all her wishes ; establish all her hopes ; and they are offered by a hand that is able to make them good. Conclusion : the reason we have to adore the goodness of God in these transactions.

DISCOURSE VI.

2 TIMOTHY, CHAP. I. VERSE 10.

—And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

SOME maintain that the words of this text exclude all arguments for a future state of immortality, drawn either from the light of reason and nature, or from the writings of Moses. Thus far indeed they reason justly, that, if the text is to be understood in this exclusive sense, the authority of any former revelation will be affected equally with that of sense and reason : but the converse of this will hold good ; the words of our Saviour (Luke xx. 37.), *Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush*, indicate that the text does not impeach the authority of Moses, nor consequently exclude the proofs of natural religion. It remains therefore to explain the literal meaning of the text, in which the word *φωριζειν* has been improperly translated : its true signification is, *to enlighten, illustrate, or clear up* any thing ; as it is used John i. 3. The real meaning therefore of our Saviour is, that the gospel has given a more full and sure proof of a future life and immortality than either the law of nature or that of Moses. This view of the text leaves us at full liberty to consider the evidence which mankind had for those doctrines, as well as that which the gospel now affords ; to show in what the former failed, and how it is supplied by the latter.

Natural evidence not to be estimated so much from the acuteness of this or that writer, as from the common sense and apprehension of mankind : it owes its authority, not to the abstract reasonings of any school, but to some general sense and notion found in all men, or to some common and uncontroverted maxim of reason. The argument therefore of unbelievers, drawn from the inconsistencies of Plato, Aristotle, or Tully, is not available against the united voice of all mankind. The common belief and persuasion of mankind shown to be the foundation of all inquiry into this natural evidence of immortality ; inquiry did not lead men originally to the train of evidence. The belief and persuasion of a future life would arise from the common sense that men have of good and evil, and their natural apprehension of accountableness attached to their actions, of which

account is not taken in this world. Such an internal, heartfelt argument as this, has greater weight than all the reasonings of philosophy. Error of those explained who imagine that the notion of a future life originated in the descriptions of poets. We might as soon suppose that eating and drinking had the same origin, and that men would never have thought of it but for the five entertainments described by such writers. The poets corrupted the genuine sentiments of nature by the wild conceits of folly and superstition; but still the root was natural, though the fruit was strange. Moreover an expectation of rewards and punishments prevailed where the fables of Greece never came. Belief of immortality, then, originated neither with poets nor philosophers, though both parties, finding it a common principle among mankind, built their theories on this foundation. How far any of these inquirers succeeded in their attempts, is another question: natural evidence is prior to their investigations. Infidelity in fact is coeval with and caused by philosophy: doubts did not arise till men began to search for physical reasons for the soul's immortality: the subject enlarged on: speculations of ancient philosophers: the opinions of Plato and Cicero opposed to the doctrine of the corporealists: this brought the controversy to turn on the nature of the soul; and the belief of immortality either prevailed or declined, according as men conceived of the soul's natural dignity and power: hence we may judge of the difficulties attending the cause of immortality on the footing of natural religion: these difficulties enlarged on: another also remains, that no notion of immortality, as regards the soul unconnected with the body, can serve the end of religion, because it is one which the generality of mankind never can arrive at: abstract metaphysical notions are above the comprehension of the vulgar. Herein nature seems deficient and unable to support the hopes of immortality which she gives to her children: the expectation of the vulgar that they shall live again and be just the same flesh and blood, is justified by no principles of reason or nature; whilst the philosophic idea that the intellectual soul shall be the whole man, is not the common sense of nature, and therefore no part of natural religion. Inquiry how nature comes to be defective on so material a point: sacred history alone clears up the fact: immortality was the original condition of the creation, and death came by surprise on nature: on the original plan of nature, the common notion of immortality was the true one; for take death out of the question, which is the only separation of body and soul we know of, and there is no pretence for distinguishing between the man and the intellectual mind. The vulgar retained the true original notion of nature; but when the original state of nature was lost, the notion grew absurd; and thus the coming in of death obscured the hopes of immortality.

If we consider how our Saviour has enlightened this doctrine, it will appear that he has removed the difficulty at which nature stumbled. As death was no part of the state of nature, so the difficulties arising from it were not provided for in the religion of nature: to remove these was the proper work of revelation, which

Christ has done by his gospel ; for this shows us that the body and spirit may, and shall be, re-united before his judgment-seat : this is stated in the words preceding the text : now if the abolishing of death was the bringing to light life and immortality, the coming in of death must have been that which so darkened nature. Conclusion : two things, as we learn from our Saviour's answer to the Sadducees (Mat. xxii. 29.), necessary to confirm us in the belief of a resurrection ; viz., knowlege of the power of God, and of the will of God.

DISCOURSE VII.

ROMANS, CHAP. IV. VERSE 25.

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

THE manner of expression used in the text is different from what is generally met with in the New Testament on the like occasion. It is the constant tenor of Scripture that the death of Christ was our redemption, and his blood the price paid for us ; so that, when we consider redemption (which includes justification) with respect to Christ, it must be ascribed to his death and passion ; but as to ourselves, our justification, though purchased by the blood of Christ, must be appropriated to ourselves through faith in his blood : for the same Apostle who says that we are *justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, says also, *that God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood*. Hence we are said to be justified by faith ; not that our faith is the purchase of justification, but because through faith we obtain the benefit of the redemption wrought by Christ. Now, though the death of Christ was the reconciling of the world to God, yet this resurrection is the great foundation of our hope and faith in him : hence it is very properly said that *he rose again for our justification* : for his resurrection it is which has wiped away the scandal of the cross, and made it a rational act of faith to hope for life and immortality from him who died on the tree. For truth of this exposition appeal made to 1 Cor. xv. 17., which teaches that faith in the death of Christ, not grounded on the assurance of his resurrection, is a vain faith. The power of the resurrection, with the atonement for sin made by the death of Christ, very beautifully expressed in Rom. viii. 34.

This, which is the true interpretation of the text, shows of what great moment the resurrection of our Lord was, which was to be the basis of the Christian institution, and the ground of our hope and faith in him. Had he died like one of the prophets, and been no more heard of, how should we have believed that his death had atoned for all the blood spilt from the foundation of the world, and that remission of all sin had been granted, through the destruction of

him, the greatest of all the prophets? But when he rose from the grave and brought back with him the pardon which he had sealed with his blood, taking on himself to be the Mediator and Intercessor for mankind as he had been their sacrifice, there was no room to doubt the efficacy of his death so confirmed. Our Lord's first coming was attended with mean and low circumstances; *he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; and when he fell a victim to the malice of his foes, his best friends and companions gave him over for lost; *they esteemed him stricken and smitten of God*; all their hopes died with him, and their remembrance of his miracles; and nothing less was thought of, than that *this was he who should redeem Israel*. But when he rose again, having subdued the powers of darkness and of death, then was he declared to be the Son of God with power; and thenceforward our faith has stood in the power and demonstration of the spirit of life: now we may say, *we know in whom we have trusted*.

But if the resurrection of Christ be the support of the Christian faith, how is itself supported? To our apprehension nothing is more incredible than that a man dead and buried should be restored to life again. The particulars of the evidence of this great event too long to be introduced here. Moreover, one ground of objection ought to be removed before they are considered: the great difficulty at which many stick, does not so much arise from the nature of the evidence proposed, as from the nature of the thing itself: they are persuaded that it is not capable of being supported by any evidence at all. This prejudice was a very early one: *why* (says the Apostle to Agrippa) *should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* The force of this expostulation considered: whether it is strong enough to encounter the prejudice. The credibility of a thing depends intirely on knowing whether there is, or is not, a power adequate to the undertaking. The resurrection of the dead is a stupendous work: if it depended on us, it would be incredible indeed: it is the work of God, and of him only; and surely we have named one of credit and power sufficient to be trusted: and this is St. Paul's argument, why should it be thought incredible that *God* should raise the dead? Whoever affirms that a resurrection is in itself incredible, must affirm that God has not power to raise the dead. And who is it that can deny to him this power? no one who admits that he made the world: for if he gave us life, what should hinder him from restoring it to us? If there be any contradiction therefore in the notion of a resurrection, there must be the same in that of a creation: hence natural religion is as much concerned in this point as revelation: if we doubt God's power of creation, we must bid adieu to all religion at once.

The power of God being admitted equal to this work, Christ's resurrection comes to be a question of fact, a fact as capable of evidence as any whatever, inasmuch as it is an object of sense. We are told that Christ *died, and rose again*: of his death there can be no great doubt; nor can there be any more difficulty in seeing and knowing that *he* was dead, than in knowing when others were dead:

those therefore about him might be trusted when they report that he died. But he came to life again : very true ; and it was very easy for those who conversed with him to know whether he was alive or not. His having been dead and buried could not alter the case, or create any difficulty in judging whether he was really alive. Lay these things then together, the promise of God to give us life eternal, his power to make good his word, the confirmation he has given of our hopes by the resurrection of Christ, and what is wanting to make the belief of this article a rational act of faith ? The promises of God have never borrowed help from moral probabilities : the promises made to Abraham did not : but his reliance on those promises, against all the presumptions of human experience and probability, was the very thing that *was imputed to him for righteousness*. This compared with the case of Christians. We have a great promise made to us by God in Christ, the promise of a resurrection to life : past ages have afforded no instance of the kind, and daily experience is, as it were, a witness against this hope : under these difficulties whither shall we go for support ? whither, but to the promises themselves, and to the full persuasion, *that what he has promised he is able to perform* ? Here is the great article of the Christian faith, even of that faith which will be imputed to us, as it was to Abraham, for righteousness. Conclusion : as the blessed fruit of this faith is to all true believers life and immortality, so it highly concerns us to consider what the event of unbelief must be : for whether we like it or not, *all who are in the grave shall come forth*, some to life, and some to condemnation.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ROMANS, CHAP. VIII. VERSE 16.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

WHAT it is to be the children of God explained : it implies all the advantages that belong to, and all the qualities necessary to make a good Christian : *if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ* : as this is a new state, which belongs not to us by nature, our entrance into it is styled a *new birth* : and this new life we receive by the ministration of the Holy Spirit ; and therefore we are said *to be born of the Spirit* : he is the earnest of our inheritance, the pledge and security which we receive from God of our future immortality : but the difficulty is, how to make the first step, and to know assuredly that we are the children of God. Here the Apostle tells us, *that the Spirit itself*, i. e. the same Spirit by which

we are made children, *beareth witness with our spirit, &c.* It is a matter of dispute what sort of evidence the Apostle here means, and what kind of certainty arises from it: some opinions stated: present discussion confined to St. Paul, and the endeavor to collect his meaning in the text. In this three things considered:—I. How many witnesses St. Paul points out, and who they are: II. What kind of evidence each of them gives in this case: III. What the result of their evidence is, and with what kind of certainty we know *that we are the children of God.* I. According to our translation, the witnesses are evidently two in number; the Spirit of adoption which Christians receive is one witness, and our own spirit is the other. The vulgar Latin, and several other translators, render the words to the following effect: *the Spirit itself beareth witness to our spirit*: according to this sense, which is held by Grotius, Crellius, and some others, there is but one witness, the Spirit of adoption, who beareth witness to our spirit: but our translation is right: this shown by the invariable signification of the word *συμμαρτυρεῖν* in the New Testament, instanced in Romans ii. 15. ix. 1. We have therefore two witnesses: and who they are is next considered. Who the first Spirit is must be learnt from what goes before: in verses 2, 9, 11, and 15 of this chapter, we read of *the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of God and of Christ, the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus, and the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry Abba, Father.* In the verse of the text, reference is made to this Spirit: but the question is, whether *Spirit* in all these places be the name of a person, or whether it denotes only a quality or temper belonging to Christians, as in Phil. ii. 5. which sense Crellius and others maintain, and explain the text thus: *our evangelical spirit, or temper, is a sufficient argument to our own minds that we are the children of God.* This point is not disputed here, as it would occasion too long a controversy: but though the Spirit of Christ sometimes is used in this sense, is it so used in the text? This Spirit is the Spirit of life, *by which we are made free* from the heavy yoke of sin, which the Apostle had been describing in the preceding chapter: now an evangelical spirit is not the cause, but the consequent of this freedom. Again, it is the Spirit of him who raised up Christ, i. e. the Spirit *by which he wrought that miracle*, as is evident from taking the whole of the eleventh verse together; it is the Holy Spirit, who is mighty in works and wonders. Lastly, it is the Spirit of adoption, by which we are made sons: the Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of which we are born in Christ; of which birth an evangelical temper is the effect, not the cause: so that it appears this first witness is the Holy Spirit of God; the second is our own spirit, that is, our mind and conscience. *Who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him?* II. Inquiry into what evidence each of them gives in this case. For this we must look back to the latter part of the foregoing chapter, to which this verse of the text relates: for in all this eighth chapter there is not one word said before of our own mind or spirit, nor the least hint of any evidence which it gives of our being the children of God. The great privileges mentioned in this chapter, such as the being made free from the

law of sin and death, the walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, these being such as we receive from the Spirit of God, are evidences of the Spirit for our regeneration: where then must we look for the evidence of our own spirit? This difficulty put the Greek commentators on a very forced interpretation of the passage: for observing that all the signs of adoption proceeded from the power and working of the Holy Spirit, in effect they made the two witnesses of the text but one. Thus Chrysostom by *the Spirit itself* understands the Holy Spirit; and by *our spirit*, the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. This interpretation refuted. Keeping, then, to the sense already laid down, we must consider what St. Paul had in view when he penned the place in question. In this Apostle's writings we must often search for the connexion at a considerable distance from the passage: with respect to the one before us, in the latter part of chapter vii. he describes the state of an unregenerate Jew, or heathen, in order to show to his converts the necessity of redemption through Christ, as neither the law of Moses nor of nature could free them from the power of sin, nor from death which follows it: then in this 8th chapter he sets forth the power of redemption, showing how it supplies the infirmities both of the Law and of Nature: to clear the matter still more, what he says of the unregenerate man's condition in chap. vii. is more particularly examined: he is described as under the most wretched slavery to sin, though with the greatest reluctance to his own mind and reason; as loving God and his Law, but obeying the tyrant sin: so that the evidence of reason even in a state of nature, shows that we are the servants and sons of God; but power constrains us, last rules over us, and experience shows that we are the slaves of sin: to complete this evidence of our minds, nothing more is wanting than to destroy the power of sin, which will enable us to follow the dictates of reason, and obey the laws of God: for this is complete evidence that a man is a son and servant of God, that he loves and obeys him. In the 8th chapter, then, St. Paul tells us, that the redemption by Christ has put an end to our wretched captivity: the power of the Spirit has destroyed the power of sin: but the power of the Spirit is on reason's side and works with it; so that to be under this power is a state of freedom; and therefore it is justly said, that the law of the Spirit of life hath made us free: the consequence is, that *we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—that we mind the things of the Spirit—mortify the deeds of the body—are the sons of God—cry Abba, Father*: now this is to walk according to our own mind acted on by reason; and to cry Abba, Father, proceeds from a filial duty and reverence: this we owe to the Spirit; for before, though our minds consented to his laws, we were still sinners, and conscience kept us back from our Father: but now, like children, we run to his embrace with words of affection: and thus (says the Apostle) *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*

In the last place it is considered, what the result of this evidence is, and with what certainty we may know that we are children of God. First, it must be observed, that these two evidences strengthen

each other, and must both meet to give us the assurance we expect: we must have the evidence of our own spirit that we love and approve God's laws, and that of the Spirit of God working in us by obedience. Two ways of judging ourselves; *inward* and *outward* signs of grace: inward purity and love, with acts of obedience and conformity thereto; hence it appears that the evidence of the Spirit is not any secret inspiration, or any assurance conveyed to the mind, but the evidence of works, such as by the Spirit we perform: hence also, it appears that some go too far on the other side, by denying that any man may know himself to be in a state of grace: for all the children of God are in that state; and the evidence of the Spirit of God and our own spirit may make us certain, when they concur, that we are the children of God: *if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* But lastly, this certainty does not extend to future and final salvation; for to be in a state of grace, is to be an heir of salvation; but an heir may be defeated, if by any after-act he incapacitate himself to inherit: our certainty reaches to our present condition, which is enough to keep our minds easy: other certainty than this might make us remiss: this may encourage us *to run with patience the race that is set before us.*

DISCOURSE IX.

JOHN, CHAP. XX. VERSES 30, 31.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name,

THIS account given by St. John to prevent the suspicions which some might entertain of their preachers, when they found the great evidences insisted on by them not mentioned by him, who, as the latest Evangelist, might be supposed to be the most accurate. But why, speaking of the miracles of Jesus, does he notice only that *they were done in the presence of the disciples?* whereas they were done in the most open and public manner; by which much credibility is added to them, as the Apostle well knew. The reason of this is, that it was not to St. John's purpose on their publicity: he is speaking of the authoritative promulgation of the gospel, and this led him no further than to observe that its publishers were eye-witnesses of what they attested, and therefore unexceptionable witnesses. Reason also assigned in the text, which moved St. John to publish his gospel, and which extends to all the other writings of the New Testament. The gospels were published to be a standing evidence to all ages of God's purpose to redeem the world by his Son, who *might die for our sins, and rise again for our justification:* and it was absolutely necessary to convey this knowledge to the world by a proper authority: impossible to obey any law before we know what the law is: this equally

applicable to revelation ; and an insufficient promulgation is no promulgation : all the necessary qualifications to constitute a proper witness to revelation need not be stated : sufficient to observe that no man is *naturally* qualified for it, because all natural qualifications may be counterfeited. Things in common life are readily believed on the report of honest men, but the moral probability of such things goes far in rendering them credible : it requires another kind of evidence to make the mind submit to the belief of things out of the course of nature : hence men must be extraordinarily qualified to promulgate a revelation : we rely not, in such case, merely on their moral honesty, but on their authority proved by miracles, and on their integrity established by what they did and suffered in the cause. But, it may be asked, how shall we distinguish between the many and various pretences to revelation ? is it not the more sure way to take up with natural religion, which is every where the same, and in which there is no danger of our being misled by imposture ! To form a true judgment on this case it is necessary to state the question rightly on the footing of this objection. First then, the question must relate to revelation considered only as the rule and measure of religion : it is absurd to bring instances of any revelations which do not pretend to this property, and were never pretended to be given as a rule of religion, such as the oracles recorded in the Greek and Roman histories, or even the particular messages which God sent by different prophets to the Jews : for these revelations, being confined to particular occasions, have no relation to our inquiry concerning a rule of religion : this in great measure overthrows the truth of the fact on which the objection is built : for though in the heathen world there were sundry pretences to revelation, yet not any one was set up as a common standard for the religion of mankind : that none claimed such privilege, is evident from the answer of the oracle to the inquiry, which religion was best ? This was, that every man should worship according to the custom of the country where he was : so that all religions were esteemed equally good, and the most that each pretended to was a local authority.

But it may be said, that though these religions do not oblige us ; yet if any of them were true, they effectually overthrow all others ; for God cannot contradict himself ; and on this ground these several pretences come within our inquiry. This reasoning may be good ; but then it goes effectually to exclude all these pretences ; for the voice of nature is the voice of God, and therefore cannot be contradicted by God : no revelation therefore can be considered which contradicts any one plain principle of natural religion ; and there is not one form of those alluded to, that does not split on this rock : but farther, which of them all so much as pretends to the essentials necessary to constitute a law, human or divine ? Take the instance of Rome : what was Numa ? a king, and therefore submitted to in religious innovations : but what mark of a divine commission can be produced ? Still it may be urged, that the many pretences to inspiration which have been admitted, are so many instances of the inability of men to distinguish between true and false in the present case : how can we trust our judgment, when so many,

who thought they acted rationally, have been mistaken! Why, then, should we expose ourselves to almost certain error by following the same steps? Whatever force there is in this argument, it must recoil on natural religion; on many points of which men in all ages have grossly and universally erred: what security have we that we shall not commit the same mistakes? Even the errors of the heathen are chargeable on this blindness and ignorance of nature; had she done her part, men could not have been imposed on by such gross superstitions.

What is it now that discovers to us these impostures, which were not seen before? What, but that true sense of reason and nature which is newly kindled and lighted up in the mind by the gospel? the want of which darkened the old world: it is therefore absurd to suppose that we are in the same danger of being deceived by pretended revelations: for ask any one, who makes this objection, if he thinks one of the heathen forms of worship could be imposed on himself.

From these pretences, then, let us turn to the true revelations of the same period, and see how far they relate to the present case: those given to particular men on particular occasions are of course omitted: the law of Moses considered: this must be viewed on different principles by the Jews and by us: to them it was given and declared; they are under its obligations; and they are concerned to inquire, not only about the truth of a subsequent revelation, but whether it abrogates their law, or is to subsist with it; as also whether their law has precluded them from receiving any farther revelations. With us the question is, how we are concerned with the law; for it is plain that no revelation can oblige those to whom it is not addressed: and in the very promulgation of the law of Moses we find it confined to the people of Israel—*Hear, O Israel:* and this was known to be the case under the law: Deut. iv. 8. Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. The law of Moses then has no claim to our obedience, farther than the moral part of it, when understood, will oblige every rational being: this however is not the obligation we are now considering. But the law affords to us abundant evidence for the truth of the gospel.

But what alteration happened after the coming of Christ to unsettle our judgments in this important matter? Many instances of pretenders to revelations in history; but all vanished and were forgotten: the want of general promulgation shows that God had no hand in them, and therefore absurd to instance them.

So the case stood, and the gospel had no competitor till the successful impostor Mahomet arose: he pretended a commission to all the world, found means to publish his pretences, and asserted his authority on the strength of revelation. With respect to this instance, it is not very likely to bias our choice. Go to natural religion: lay before her Mahomet and his disciples arrayed in armor and blood, &c. Show them to her in their retirement, the slaves of lust, &c., which they justify by a divine commission—then show her the blessed Jesus, humble, and meek, and doing good to all men; injured, but

not provoked; and praying for his very enemies in the agony of death: when she has viewed both, ask, which is the prophet of God? But we have already had her answer from the lips of the centurion at the cross—*Truly this man was the Son of God.*

DISCOURSE X.

ACTS, CHAP. II. VERSE 22.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.

THE great evidence of Christianity lies in the miracles done to confirm the authority and commission of Jesus. This the only reasonable evidence of his coming from God; see John xv. 24.: without this undeniable proof, men would have been acquitted for not believing him; see John x. 37. Christ refers the messengers, whom John sent, to the works which he did.

The truth of Christianity, therefore, resting on miracles, it is shown—

I. Wherein the true force of this argument from miracles consists, and what it is they prove.

II. What sort of works are to be admitted for miracles, in proving the truth of any religion.

First: Miracles are not intended to prove the being of a God, nor the doctrines of morality; inasmuch as natural religion has for its evidence the works of nature; and in the most degenerate times God did not leave himself without witness, &c. No revelation can bring greater works to prove its authority, than those by which the clear dictates of natural religion are proved; nor is there any other distinction between miracles and the works of nature than this, that the latter are works of great power *constantly* produced, the former are such wrought in an unusual way. Hence, no revelation can contradict or make void any clear dictate of natural religion; and therefore the principles of natural religion must be supposed from the foundation of revealed, as in Heb. ii. 6.

But to ascertain the use of miracles we must consider when and why they were introduced. In early times we meet with none; for there was no occasion for them while men preserved a right notion of God; were acquainted, as it were, with him; and knew his voice when he spoke. But when idolatry prevailed, and every nation had its deity, to whom it gave the name of god, then it was necessary, for the preservation of true religion, to distinguish between the true God and pretended ones. Then God thought proper to show his superiority over the heathen deities, and to assume a character of distinction by his mighty works. The first miracles of which we

have any account, were those wrought in Egypt, at which time God declared himself to be the God of the Hebrews. The question arises, Why did he, who is the God of *all the world*, so style himself? To account for this, the state of religion in the world at that time must be considered. All the nations of the earth had at that time their local deities. Here the question was between God under the character of God of the Hebrews, and that of God of the Egyptians, which of them was supreme; and this could only be determined by a superiority of power shown in miracles; and those wrought by Moses were such as plainly pointed out the hand of the Almighty Creator. But the purpose of God in sending Moses to show his wonders in Egypt, was not only to deliver the Hebrews, but to make his name known over all nations. Egypt was a *great* country, *notorious* for idolatry, from whence the infection spread to others: hence the properest scene on which God could exert his power for the conviction of all people. And the miracles wrought there were such as all the world had a concern in, being so near akin to the works of creation, that by a just comparison they might be known to come from the same hand; for who but the Author of Nature could stir up things animate and inanimate to punish offenders? Did not God, by these signs, speak plainly to them and say, 'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive,' &c. Deut. xxxii. 39. This use of miracles appears throughout the history of the Jews: instanced in the contest of Elijah and the priests of Baal, 1 Kings xviii. 21. The case of the destruction of the Assyrian army in the reign of Hezekiah, seems to carry with it a severity hard to be accounted for; since other princes had laid siege to Jerusalem without incurring so terrible a calamity. But Sennacherib sent a defiance to God, and boasted of victories obtained against him: he acted like Pharaoh, and suffered like him; being made an example to show the supremacy of God to all nations. This indeed appears to be the first and original use of miracles. The miracles of the magicians shown to have added to, rather than detracted from, the authority of the works done by Moses.

With respect to the Jews, miracles had a double use. By their long continuance in Egypt they became infected with idolatry, so that they wanted a proof that the God of their fathers was the Supreme Being, as much as the Egyptians themselves; thus Ezekiel xx. 5. &c. But there was also a use of miracles peculiar to them, in which the Egyptians had no concern: Moses was sent, not only to be their deliverer, but their lawgiver. The Jews were called out of Egypt to be the peculiar people of God, under a new covenant, &c. for which Moses could give them no assurance but by the evidence of works, which plainly appeared to come from the hand of God.

The Jewish government, being a theocracy, leads us to expect a series of miracles in its administration: and such was the case; and these were constant and standing proofs to them, and to the nations around, that their God was the Lord. But Moses had no successor

as a lawgiver, until the great Prophet, like unto Moses, came, in the full power and authority of God, to make a new covenant, not with one people, but with all nations; *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, &c.*

As before observed, the great doctrines of natural religion have for evidence the works of nature, and want not the support of miracles. But when any new doctrine, of which nature has given no notice, is published, such must be established by new proofs. Reason, indeed, shows that God is to be trusted and obeyed in what he promises or commands; but still a proof is required, that such promises or commands do come from him: hence miracles necessary to the introduction of a new revelation. Miracles do not prove the truth of any doctrine, but that the commission of him who does them, comes from him by whose power alone they could be performed. The law of Moses requiring submission to commands and doctrines that are not established by the light of nature, it was necessary to found them on the authority of God, to which no submission could be due till sufficient evidence was given of it, to guard men from imposition, &c.; and whoever considers of what consequence it was to mankind to have a standing evidence of the unity and supremacy of God manifested in his government of the Jews, and how the Mosaic Dispensation prepared the way for the salvation of the world by the gospel, will see reason to think that the end proposed was worthy of God, and that his acts herein were not only those of power, but of great benevolence.

The miracles of the gospel had the same, or a greater end in view. As Moses overcame the magicians of Egypt, and their false gods, our Saviour destroyed the power of Satan and wicked spirits, and idolatrous rites. If Moses had a divine commission to the Jews, Jesus had a more ample one, to publish salvation to all mankind; and as the terms of it were such as human wisdom could never suggest, hence the necessity of miracles.

No miracles can alter the clear dictates of natural religion; and such is the case also with respect to any former divine revelation: admitting therefore the Mosaic and Christian revelation to be both divine, they must be consistent, each in its proper place carrying on the views of Providence: this evidently was the case of Moses; and to this purpose are the words of our Saviour, Matthew v. 17. 18.: he also constantly appealed to the Law and the Prophets: so also St. Paul before Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 22. Indeed one revelation admitted to be of divine authority, must be a touchstone to try all succeeding revelations; for God cannot contradict himself: the miracles of Moses and our Saviour not only prove their divine authority, but are a bar to all succeeding pretenders. The miracles reported to have been done in the heathen world are unworthy of God, who does not work miracles merely to astonish men, but to serve the great ends of Providence; and he did not rest the authority of his law on one or more single miracles, but on a long series; and if miracles are properly applied as a proof of God's will, then such as are wrought without any declaration of his will, in which we have

any concern, are not to be set up in opposition to those of Moses and Christ, which involve the happiness of mankind here and hereafter. Miracles worked for the establishment of the gospel, compared with the pretended ones of the heathen.

Some miracles mentioned in the Old Testament as wrought in behalf of particular people and for particular purposes, though of divine authority, not to be set in competition with those of the gospel; they are to be considered merely as acts of God's government in his capacity of King of Israel.

Secondly, It is considered what sort of works are to be admitted for miracles, in proving the truth of a religion.

The first inquiry is, Whether the miracles might not proceed from human art or cunning: but it scarcely can be necessary to prove that such miracles as raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, &c. exceed the power of man. But perhaps they were not done, and were only false appearances; as when the man born blind was restored to sight, he did not recover his eyes, but the people lost theirs: now this would have been the greater miracle of the two.

But must they of necessity proceed from God, because they could not be wrought by men? Is there no order of beings capable of performing them? Can we safely say that no being but the All-wise and Almighty God could perform them, seeing that neither the miracles of the gospel, nor the works of nature, directly prove an infinite power or wisdom?

This matter rightly stated: the works of nature, though they may not appear works of an infinite power, do prove an all-powerful cause, or the being of a God, because they of necessity prove a first cause of all things; which cause being unlimited, nothing is or can be done which it cannot do. It must then be remembered that a revelation is not introduced to prove the being of a God; that our Saviour's miracles were not wrought for that purpose; but supposing the being of a God, to prove him the author of the revelation: if then as good arguments be brought to prove God the author of the revelation, as can be brought to prove his being, all who believe the one must believe the other. The miracles of the gospel examined in this point of view, and shown to prove—First, That God is the maker of the world: Secondly, That he is the governor of it: Thirdly, That he has the essential attributes of justice, righteousness, holiness, and goodness.

But it is asked, how do we know that the miracles of the gospel did not proceed from an evil power, since there are instances, as some think, of miracles so wrought? This question answered: we know it in the same way that any man knows the works of nature to proceed from a good being: the love of virtue, and hatred of vice, is as inseparable from the gospel of Christ as from the reason of man; and the former more distinctly teaches us to know and acknowledge the holiness and goodness of God, than reason or the works of nature can do. But this, it is said, is to argue in a circle, is to prove the doctrines first by miracles, and then the miracles by the doctrines: the objection a mistake, which lies in this; that men do not distin-

guish between the doctrines *proved* by miracles, and the doctrines by which miracles *are tried*; for they are not the same. God never wrought miracles to prove the difference between good and evil: this existed and was known before the gospel; but the doctrines proved by miracles are the new revealed doctrines of Christianity, unknown to and undiscoverable by man's reason. Concluding exhortation to those who hold fast and admire the principles of natural religion, but despise or overlook the proofs of Christianity: the same reasons which oblige them to believe in God, oblige them to believe in Christ also.

DISCOURSE XI.

PSALM VIII. VERSE 4.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

THE reflection of the text naturally suggested by a consideration of the care of Providence, exemplified either in the works of nature or of grace. In the works of nature the glories of the heavens and the earth, plainly intended for our benefit, naturally lead us to wonder at the goodness of God in thus providing for beings so insignificant. The same reflection may be made on the works of grace. Why should God continue his care towards sinful and disobedient creatures, and not only forgive them, but send his own Son to redeem them with his blood? These reflections, which should naturally lead us to adore God's goodness, sometimes induce men to suspect the truth of the whole history of the redemption: their reasoning on this point shown to be erroneous; it being as hard to conceive that God should create this world for creatures like us, as it is that he should send his Son to redeem us: since it was as agreeable to God's goodness to *make* such creatures, it was consistent also that he should exert his power to *save* them. It is shown that a great opinion of ourselves and of the figure we make in the universe would be injurious to religion, serving only to exclude a sense of dependence and gratitude to God. The Psalmist's reflection in the text evinces a sense of dependence on God, admiration of his mercies, and a consciousness of unworthiness: yet it has been used to other purposes; and as it has been said that the great works of nature are too wonderful to have been formed for so inconsiderable a part of creation as the race of men, so also, with regard to the work of our redemption, that the end is not proportionate to the stupendous means used to attain it. It is considered whether these reflections be a sufficient ground for questioning the truth of the gospel. Are we proper judges in this matter? Although in human affairs we may form a

judgment by comparing the means and the end, and knowing the power of the agent, yet this will not apply to the works of nature, where the power of the agent is infinite; and as we cannot perfectly comprehend the end proposed, we are not qualified to judge rightly in the case before us: as all things are equally easy to be effected by God, we act most absurdly when we pretend to judge of his works by comparing them with the ends which we can discover to be served by them. This reasoning equally strong when applied to the works of grace. The wonders of the redemption are great and mysterious to us; but nothing is difficult with God. In judging of this matter we are also liable to fall into the error of supposing that we are the only persons concerned in the redemption, which, however immediately it concerns us, is intimated in many parts of Scripture to be adapted to answer the general ends of God's government in the universal moral world. The propriety of this will not be discovered by us, till we are enabled by a clearer light to see the whole scheme of Providence together. It has been shown that the objections against God's government in the natural and moral world, founded on the disproportion between the means used and the ends proposed, arise from the short-sightedness of men, and their propensity to judge on subjects on which they are ill-informed. It is considered whether the reflections which have given rise to these objections do not admit of very different conclusions. Since God has provided abundantly for us in this life, it is reasonable to infer from thence that he will also provide for our well-being as moral and religious creatures. This shown also to be consistent with what the gospel has revealed to us. If we consider the advantages we enjoy from the works of nature, and compare them with the greater works of grace manifested in the gospel, it will appear that the methods of Providence, by which we hope to be saved, and which we have from revelation, are liable to no other objections than those are by which we live and which we see daily with our eyes. In both cases we may justly express ourselves in the words of the text.

DISCOURSE XII.

ACTS, CHAP. X. VERSES 34, 35.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

SOME men have been bold enough to despise and reject the offer of salvation by the gospel, conceiving themselves authorised by this text to live according to the principles and light of nature: hence worth while to examine its real meaning. It is shown that the Jews

had a notion, that the blessings of the promised Messiah were to be *confined* to themselves; which notion the disciples, and especially St. Peter, entertained: the former however were soon convinced that *God had also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life* (Acts xi. 18), and the latter, comparing Cornelius's vision with his own, expresses his own conviction of the same truth in the words of the text. In his confession, *to be accepted with God*, has the same meaning as the expression, *repentance unto life*, in theirs; both mean admission into the covenant of God through Christ: so that the text signifies, that 'God has not confined his mercies to a particular nation; but that all are capable of inheriting his promises in Christ, who are duly prepared by righteousness and the fear of God.'

This farther shown by an examination of the case of Cornelius, and what the acceptance was which he found. He was a Gentile, and one of the best; yet this did not make it unnecessary for him to become a Christian; indeed the vision was sent for a contrary purpose—to inform him where he might seek and find a proper instructor: nor could St. Peter mean that those who did their best, on the light of nature, had no need of any other teacher; else he would not have instructed him in the knowlege, and baptised him in the name of Christ. St. Peter meant that all Gentiles, duly prepared, were capable of the mercies of the gospel, in opposition to his former error, that the Jews only had this privilege.

Hence we may learn what is the true notion of that acceptance to which the Gentiles are thus entitled.

But a difficulty arises from the terms to which St. Peter limits this privilege; viz. to those only who *fear God and work righteousness*; which seems to take it for granted that we are possessed of the main thing for which the privilege is given; inasmuch as it is one great end of Christianity to teach us those things. To clear up this matter, a consideration of Heb. xi. 6. recommended: a man cannot offer himself to God, much less enter into the covenant of his mercy, without a firm persuasion of his Being, and a due notion of his attributes: without this the gospel cannot be so much as tendered to him; for it does not teach, but supposes this doctrine: St. Peter therefore must not be understood as limiting the mercies of God to certain persons of the best character, but rather as declaring the natural order of things: it is frequently taught that Christ came to save sinners; and therefore he exhorted to repentance, as John the Baptist did before him.

But should the case of the *devout* Cornelius incline us to think that St. Peter meant a greater degree of goodness than was commonly to be found, this will show that the best of men stand in need of the assistance of the gospel to secure to themselves the end of their hopes: those who are of a different opinion, are recommended to consider the high moral character of Cornelius, and then ask themselves, why God should send a vision to him and to St. Peter for the purpose of making him a Christian.

It may be asked perhaps, what would have become of Cornelius, had he died, as he lived, without coming to the knowlege of Christ?

a question of speculation more than profit, and which can no way affect us who *are* called to that knowledge. We may well take it for granted, that, had he so died, he would have found rest to his soul through God's mercy. It concerns us more to consider, what his case would have been, if he had rejected the call made by St. Peter, and insisted on his own merits and virtue in opposition to the grace offered him by the gospel: would this have been a pardonable error? could he have maintained his former character after such contempt? and what would his future works have been worth, after he had renounced that sacrifice which alone could sanctify them? Yet bad as his supposed case would have been, it is the case of those who, having been betimes instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, reject it under the color of preserving the purity of natural religion; for the voice of God is the same, whether he speaks by his Apostles, or by his Angels.

DISCOURSE XIII.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXII. VERSE 40.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

MEANING of the text is, that the whole reason of religion lies in these two general commandments, or that in them all its particular duties and precepts are founded. Two heads of this discourse as follows: I. The true meaning and import of these commandments shown. II. Some useful remarks made on the whole.

In St. Mark's Gospel the same thing is said in different words: *there is none other commandment greater than these*: Mark xii. 31. As beyond them there is nothing greater, by these two principles all the duties of religion must be governed. The reason of this is plain: for the relation between God and man being once known, the first conclusion is, *that we ought to love the Lord our God with all our heart, &c.*; and until this general principle be established, the particular duties owing to God cannot fall under our consideration. The same reason holds respecting the second general head: for the relation of man to man, and the common relation of all to one great master, being supposed, the result is, that we ought *to love our neighbor as ourselves*, that is, to do all we can to promote the happiness of each other.

These general principles being established, the particular duties flow from them naturally, and form a complete system of religion. The duties of religion are all relative, and there is no relative duty that love does not readily transform itself into, according to the circumstances of the person concerned: thus, love to a superior becomes honor and respect; to an equal, friendship and benevolence;

to an inferior, courtesy and condescension; to the miserable, pity and compassion. In negative duties this principle is no less effectual than in positive. Love will not permit us to injure or offend our brother, to neglect our betters, or despise our inferiors, &c. for *love worketh no ill to his neighbor*. This deduction of particular duties from the general principle is made by St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 8. &c. This notion of love, as being the fulness of the law, &c., explains a passage in St. James, chap. ii. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all*. The common interpretation of this passage shown to be erroneous. It has another appearance when fairly examined. In order to do this, we must look back to that which gave occasion to it, and follow the Apostle's argument step by step. The whole depends on the notion, which is common to the writers of the New Testament, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. St. James considers the whole duty of man as contained in one law, viz., *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*; and then he argues rightly, that he who offends in one point is guilty of the whole law: for whether it be theft, or murder, or adultery, that you commit, it matters not; for any of these crimes is inconsistent with the law, which contains, and is, the whole, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*: this farther shown from the 8th verse, where this law is called the *Royal Law*, because it is the first supreme law from which all others proceed, &c. This different version of the 11th verse of St. James given in the margin of the Bible. Being thus understood, there is no occasion for any nice distinctions to show how a man, by offending against one law, may become guilty of all; for this is no longer found to be a part of the Apostle's doctrine; which is, that he who sins in any particular instance against his brother, will be found to be a transgressor against this great vital principle of religion, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*.

The other general head referred to in the text considered; viz., *the love of God*: this called *the first and great commandment*: from this head is to be deduced all the service, worship, and honor which we owe and pay to our Creator. All the duties of religion are relative; which is true here; for the duties we owe to God spring from the relation between God and us: also love naturally transforms itself into all relative duties according to circumstances: thus, if we love God, and consider him as Lord and Governor of the world, our love will soon become obedience; if we consider him wise, good, and gracious, it will become honor and adoration; and so on.

In the second place, Some reflections made which seem to arise naturally from the subject.

First; These two principles, from which all religion flows, must be consistent with one another, otherwise they could not both be principles of the same religion: the love of God therefore can in no case oblige us to act contrary to the love of our neighbor. One thing in our Saviour's argument, which may perhaps mislead some men, and therefore should be considered: of the love of God, it is said that it *is the first and great commandment*; the love of our neighbor is styled *the second, like unto it*: whence it might be inferred that the

first is a law of superior obligation to the second, and may in some instances control and overrule it: it is shown however that this is not the case; and that our Saviour's saying that the love of God is the first commandment, is no reason for thinking that it is or can be inconsistent with the second: on the contrary, the love of our neighbor being deducible from the love of God, must ever agree with it: faults of ancient writers on morality shown, in that they have not gone higher for principles to build their precepts on, than to the common desires of nature and the several relations of man to man.

Secondly; Our Saviour having declared that *on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*, nothing is or ought to be esteemed religion, that is not reducible to one or other of these principles. What then, it may be said, become of the institutions of religion, which cannot properly be referred to either? are they then no part of religion? It is answered to this, that there is a manifest difference between religion and the means of religion: whatever is part of religion, and yet not so on account of moral reason, can only be esteemed as means, ordained not for their own sake, but for the sake of that religion which is founded on moral reason. This distinction might teach men where to point their best endeavors, and where to place their hopes: for if our zeal be spent only on the means, and goes no farther, we are yet in our sins.

Hence also it is shown that there can be no competition or disagreement between the duties called moral and those called positive.

DISCOURSE XIV.

HEBREWS, CHAP. III. VERSE 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

PART I.

THE text evidently contains an earnest exhortation, the subject of which is faith towards God; for faith is the principle destroyed by *an evil heart of unbelief*: but some think that faith is not a proper subject of exhortation, since it is a mere act of the mind judging on motives of credibility; and it is as reasonable to exhort a man to see with his eyes, as to judge with his understanding: the warmest admonition will not enlarge the sight, &c.; and in faith the case is much the same.

If then this be the true notion of faith, how comes it that in every page we find praises of it in the gospel? What is there in this to deserve the blessings promised to the faithful? Whence is it that the

whole of our salvation is put on this ground, and that so many prerogatives belong to faith, if faith be nothing else but the believing things in themselves credible? Why are we not said to be justified by sight, as well as by faith?

But farther: if faith be what has been stated, how comes it described in Scripture as having its seat in the heart? Here shown that it is so described in various instances: hence it is necessary, for the right understanding of the text, to inquire what is the true notion of faith: from which will appear the propriety of the exhortation, *Take heed, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief.*

With respect to the true notion of faith, every step by which we advance to the last degree of perfection in it, is an act of faith, though of a different kind, and not entitled to the praises or rewards of the gospel: hence much of that confusion and inconsistency which has obscured the question. To render this more plain, the degrees and steps of faith by which men arrive at gospel righteousness are considered: for instance, a belief in the gospel accounts—a belief in the miracles of Christ and his apostles—a belief that the spirit of God was given to them without measure: but no one of these degrees is the exact faith we seek after—that faith which is the principle of the gospel, respects the declarations and promises of God, and includes a firm reliance on him for the performance: beyond this there is no farther act of faith: this is its completion, and leads us to the practice of virtue as the condition on which the promises are founded. It is shown that natural religion requires almost the same faith, without giving us the same evidence: the professor of any religion must believe that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him: is it then become less credible that God will reward the righteous, because he has sent his Son to declare his full purpose to do so? Is it harder to trust him now, since he has appeared in signs and mighty works, than when we saw him only by the glimmering light of nature? &c.

Religion is a struggle between sense and faith: the temptations to sin are present pleasures; the incitements to virtue are future joys: these only seen by faith; those the objects of every sense: where the heart is established in faith, virtue triumphs over the works of darkness; where sense predominates, sin enters through every evil passion of the heart: hence not more absurd to say we are saved by faith, than that we are ruined by sense and passion. With this account of faith, the Apostle's definition, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, shown to agree.

Since then all the blessings of holiness and hopes of religion are founded in faith, is it not natural to say that he who follows after holiness, induced by the glorious prospects of futurity, is saved by faith? This subject enlarged on.

Where faith is not strong enough to bring the things of futurity into competition with present pleasures, the world must triumph, and the sinner be lost for want of faith. On the other hand, what is it that makes men willingly endure afflictions and persecutions, though

they know that pleasure is better than pain, ease than torment? What but faith in God, which makes them esteem his promises, as if present before their eyes? This point enlarged on, and illustrated by instances from Scripture.

Hence then it is easy to understand what the Scripture means by *faith overcoming the world*: for religion is a contest between the world and faith, between things present and things to come. With this notion of faith, what St. Paul says in his comparison between faith, hope, charity, and other spiritual gifts, is shown to agree; and from this account we may also perceive how the heart comes to have such an influence in a Christian's faith. It is the love of the world that is the enemy of faith; and is not the heart of man the magazine from which the world supplies itself with arms? are not lust, envy, &c. the evil treasure of an evil heart, and the fiercest combatants against faith? and may not a heart so stocked be styled *a heart of unbelief*?

In other matters of faith which are of a more abstract nature, and depend more on the reason and judgment, the heart too often interposes with success: even here we have reason to remember the apostolical admonition in the text.

PART II.

Consideration of the character given in the text of an unbelieving heart; viz. that it makes us depart from the living God. On this subject three heads:—I. It is for want of faith, as a principle of religion, that men *depart from the living God*. II. Faith cannot be such a principle, until it has its effects and operations in the heart. III. The motions and operations of the heart are greatly under our own power and government. Hence it will appear how much it is the business of a religious life to be watchful over the heart, &c.

On the first head, it is shown what is meant by *departing from God* by equivalent expressions in the chapter of which the text is a part: the propriety of which expressions will appear, if we consider God, as represented by the parable of the Prodigal, in the character of the father of the family, and sinners as prodigal sons, who forsake his house, and seduced by luxury and riot enter into the service of strange masters, till the sense of want and misery brings them back to beg admittance again: so the nations of old forsook the service of their heavenly Father for strange deities, and became apostates and slaves: when they received the gospel, it was not taking a new master, but returning to their old one, and yielding an obedience that was always due. Since then by faith in the gospel we become servants of the living God, and are once more entered into his family, it is easy to see why the text charges an unbelieving heart with apostasy from the living God: for if Christian faith unites us to him, whatever destroys this principle dissolves the union; and we cannot lose our faith without departing from God.

But may not the heart possibly depart from God, through the influence of vice and pleasure, while faith stands uncorrupted? We see many, whose life is a continued scene of guilty enjoyments, who yet profess to believe the doctrines of the gospel, and, for aught we know, do believe them: but the gospel says, *every one that believeth shall be saved, and all the workers of iniquity shall be destroyed*: if then these characters can subsist together, the gospel contains a contradiction.

The difficulty here shown to arise from confounding together ideas which are distinct; from not distinguishing between faith, as a principle of knowledge, and as a principle of religion: this point enlarged on: the knowledge of God is like other natural knowledge, as long as it resides in the head only; to become a principle of religion it must descend into the heart, and teach us to love the Lord *with all our minds, &c.*; and if this be true of the knowledge of God, which is the greatest of all divine truths, it must be true in all other instances; the faith then of the gospel, to which the wicked man is a stranger, is that which makes us *cleave steadfastly to the Lord with full purpose of heart*.

On the second head, if we consider religion under the notion of action, this proposition has nothing strange in it; as the same is true of every principle of knowledge and action; is as true of *sense* as it is of *faith*. As faith makes us cleave to God, so sense makes us cleave to the world; but till sense has possession of the heart, it has no power, is of no use to *the world*: we learn from sense the reality of things temporal: yet this assent of the mind to the evidence of sense never made a man wicked or worldly-minded: but when sense stirs up the desires of the heart, then it becomes a principle of action, and a combatant for the world against the powers of faith. As is the wicked man with regard to his faith in divine truths, so is the righteous man in respect to things of sense: as the wicked man has the knowledge of faith, but nothing religious, so has the righteous man all the knowledge of sense, but nothing sensual; the difference between them is, that the one pursues objects of sense, the other objects of faith. This parallel traced farther, to gain a right conception of the nature of faith: it is shown that, to make a man perform the actions either of religion or of common life, his desires, which are the springs of action, must be moved; and since nothing can move the desires, which is not first the object of the understanding, he must have the knowledge of the things of this life and of religion, and consider them under the notion of good or evil with respect to himself. Now, to enjoy the things of this life is the business of the sensual man; those of a future life are the good man's concern. As the objects are different, so the means of obtaining the knowledge of them are different: the world has as many ways of making itself familiar to us, as we have senses: religion has only those dark glimpses of futurity, which reason, feeble as she is, can discover: the only thing then that is wanting to set religion on as high ground, and to enable it to bear up against the impressions of sense, is a certain

principle of knowledge with respect to its objects: for could we as evidently possess ourselves of the reality of the things of another life, as of the things of this, there would be no more competition between sense and religion than there is comparison between the things of this life and of eternity. To supply this darkness of our knowledge in religion, is the very end and design of revelation. Now, as sense is to be distinguished into a principle of knowledge and a principle of action, so is faith likewise: this distinction in the case of sense may be seen in any instance: an honest man knows the value of riches, as well as a thief: it is not therefore the knowledge of the object, but the immoderate desire of it, that makes the difference. The same is the case in religion: faith, as a mere object of the mind, is no principle of religion; and one is no more a religious man for knowing the articles of religion, than he is a sensual man for walking with his eyes open, and seeing the world: this point enlarged on.

On the whole, since religion is not a mere science and speculation, but is to be the employment of our lives, in the love of God and man; since the knowledge of any thing, or belief of any thing, as mere acts of the mind, are no principles of action; but every action proposes to itself some end, which is the object of some desire; it follows that faith cannot be a principle of religion, till it becomes the object of our desires, i. e. till it has its effects and operations in the heart.

The great advantage which the world has over religion lies in the certainty and reality of its objects: to supply this defect in religion, revelation assures us of the reality of things future, to influence and keep steady our affections. The objects of faith then support religion, as the objects of sense encourage the love of the world.

All the articles of the gospel tend to one of these ends; either to assure us of the certainty of the revelation and redemption by Christ, or to set before us the very substance and image of the things hoped for: this enlarged on: to reject therefore these articles, is to reject the revelation and redemption of Christ, and to act purely on the ground of natural religion.

The third head is a plain case, in which every man's own experience is his best instructor. We find daily that we can check our passions and inclinations to serve the purposes of this life; and if we would do as much for that which is to come, we should answer all which the text requires of us, *in taking heed of an evil heart of unbelief*. Were it not in our power to suspend the influence of our passions, a man would have no more liberty than a stone, and consequently would be incapable of religion: though we cannot see things as we will, it is in our power to pursue and court them as we please: we can make our inclinations yield to our will, as men do when they sacrifice present enjoyments to distant prospects of honor or preferment; for the future things of this life are no more objects of sense than those of another life; and it is not sense, but judgment, that refuses the present good for a distant advantage: it is but an instance of the same reason and judgment to restrain the sensual

appetites, and to make room for the hopes of immortality to enter and possess the heart: and this is truly the work of religion.

DISCOURSE XV.

ACTS, CHAP. XV. VERSES 1, 2.

And certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question.

WE learn from this and other texts, that from the earliest times controversies have existed in religion: even the authority of the Apostles was not sufficient to lay the heats and prejudices of men: they themselves, though agreed in the main point, differed in their methods of dealing with opposition, whence St. Paul says, 'he withstood Peter to the face.' To the same cause may be referred much of the obscurity found in the New Testament: passages are dark to us, because we know not the errors or misconceits which the holy penmen opposed, and how far they argue on the truth of Christianity, or on the concessions of their adversaries. Hence length of time, far from diminishing disputes, has rather enlarged the field of controversy; this is also increased by those passions and weaknesses from which the best of men are not free, and which often darken things clear in themselves; hence the difficulties of an honest Christian: whom shall he choose to follow? and when he has chosen, with what security and confidence can he proceed? In these difficulties, when urged as arguments against religion, two things are to be considered:—I. How far they affect the authority of the gospel, which, if it be so dark and obscure, that common honesty, with common sense, is unable to discern the will of God in it, cannot be designed by God as a measure of religion. II. With respect to ourselves, how we may attain to a certain rule of religion under the gospel revelation, notwithstanding many, and sometimes inexcusable, controversies. On the whole, if these difficulties appear not to affect the authority of the gospel, nor preclude us from a knowlege of the faith and obedience required under it, the controversies cannot in reason be urged as objections against revealed religion.

I. The authority of revelation depends on this, that it is the will and word of God; and he who knows that he possesses the word of God, knows he possesses a revelation of certain authority: hence arises the question, how far these two distinct acts of knowlege are attainable? that is, to know who spoke such or such words, and the true sense and import of them; since these are two independent things. This shown by ordinary cases, and by the parables which

our Saviour delivered to his Apostles; so that in revelation the case is the same as in human laws; for a man may be certain of the authority of these, and yet be unable to expound them. This farther confirmed by the proper proofs of a revelation, and their operation on the mind prior to our distinctly understanding all its parts; this want of understanding being no objection to its authority, which is founded on proofs which the objection cannot reach; on the qualities of the person sent to make the revelation, or the main end and purpose of his coming, and on the miracles he gives in evidence of his commission: so that, although we do not fully comprehend it, we are bound to receive it as the word of God. Doctrines are not proved by miracles; miracles proving only the authority of the person, which is the ground of our receiving the doctrine; so that the authority of the person is one thing, and to know what he says another: his authority makes the law; our want of knowledge with regard to his meaning will not unmake it; otherwise ignorance would be the supreme authority. The question—why then should the law of God be obscure, which from its nature we must suppose was to be understood, and to be our rule of life?—brings us to consider whether the supposed difficulties and obscurities of the gospel render it unworthy of the wisdom of God. The Christian revelation is contained in the books of the New Testament, which, being of different kinds, must be differently considered; had they been so considered, the difficulties of some parts would not have been urged as an objection to the revelation itself: these books are either historical, doctrinal, controversial, or a mixture of the two last. The first relate a plain and simple story, the different accounts of which vary no more than might naturally be expected from different pens: the second contain those matters of faith and rules of duty which regard not particular cases, but are intended for the use of the whole world: and these are most clearly expressed: take for example the honor and worship which we are enjoined to pay to God—the plain terms in which idolatry is condemned—the duties we owe to each other—or the peculiar benefits which we receive from Christ's death, God's pardon, assistance, &c.: all are declared without any obscurity; and with regard to them there is a perfect harmony among the inspired writers. Still it is said there are difficulties in Scripture: so there are; but they are such as do not interfere with the clear revelation made by Christ: and if there had been no disputes with the Jews or others, the difficulties contained in the third or controversial class had not existed. St. Paul, as in duty bound, spoke of election or reprobation; but if he had not spoken of them, our gospel had not been less complete: but both he and the other apostles had to root out prejudices and errors which stood in the way of the gospel. Many difficulties arise from our applying things pointedly spoken by the apostles, to the general doctrines of Christianity. Hence many disputes in which men have forgot the plain parts of Scripture, to worry each other about obscure ones: this point enlarged on. There are other difficulties also which belong to religious men rather than religion; such as the disputes and nice inquiries of the schools; but what have these

to do with the gospel? so also there are doubts about the sacraments, how or what grace they may confer; but this one point is clear—*he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* These difficulties however, it may be said, are so blended with the cause of religion, that they render the gospel of little use as a rule; the straightness of which by these means cannot be discerned by the generality of mankind. This leads us to the second head, i. e. a consideration of *these difficulties with respect to ourselves.* The Scriptures contain a plain intelligible system, and there would be no great difficulty if men would follow what they do and may understand; but they will make rules of life for themselves from passages which they fancy they understand, but do not: how is this to be counteracted? It is at every man's peril, if he makes any rule to himself, contrary to the plain express commands of God, which he does or may easily understand. Human and divine laws in this case compared, and the same shown to hold good. The understandings however of men being different, there may be a latitude even here, which we cannot determine, but which God, who is to be the judge, both can and will: and the great difficulty which men make in this case, seems to arise from their misapprehension of the judgment of God. Among men all are judged by the same rule: no allowance is made for different capacities and circumstances: but all who are esteemed to have reason enough to govern themselves are concluded under one law: if then you consider the judgment of God to be like that of men, no wonder you ask how ignorant persons should come to the knowlege of their duty.

Conclusion: God, who, though he gave to all men one law, has given to each his peculiar capacity and share of reason, will judge accordingly; we may therefore safely trust this difficulty with God, and doubt not but he will judge righteously.

DISCOURSE XVI.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. II. VERSE 18.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

THE text rightly understood will give us a distinct conception of the Christian religion as distinguished from all others, natural, or pretending to revelation; inasmuch as the access unto God which this opens to us, is different from that exhibited by the others. All religions having the same end, viz. to please God, by serving him according to his will, for the sake of happiness here and hereafter, they differ in the means which they prescribe for this purpose. Two things to be regarded in the choice and appointment of these means; the holiness and majesty of God, and the nature and condition of man: reasons for this given. In all places where the gospel is unknown, or schemes are set up in opposition to the gospel, men

split on one or other of these rocks: the gentile religion is inconsistent with God's holiness, as allowing of impure rites and vicious practices; injurious also to his majesty, as dividing the honor due to him among the creatures; natural religion again, founded on the purity and holiness of God's nature, prescribes a worship pure and holy, but prescribes it to men who have lost these qualities, and are unable to perform the rigorous conditions: thus it requires brick, as it were, without straw; and can afford no settled peace or satisfaction. Hence it appears how deplorable the condition of mankind must have been without the interposition of God by a new revelation; since every religion that could be framed would be deficient in one or other of these respects: this point enlarged on. The Christian religion alone has effectually provided against both objections: this shown at some length.

Some observations drawn from the text, and what has been already said on it. First; These means of salvation which Christianity has provided, viz. the assistance of the Spirit, and the mediation of the Son, were necessary to the life of the world, the state and condition of man considered. Not meant that they were so absolutely necessary that an all-powerful and all-wise God could not save the world by any other method; but that the condition of man before the coming of Christ was such that he could not, by the help of reason and nature, so apply himself to God as to be secure of his pardon and mercy; but there was a necessity of providing other means; and those we have being made choice of by God, we may safely affirm that such were necessary for the salvation of the world. The truth of the proposition thus limited, plainly shows the reasonableness of the gospel, and God's wisdom in the revelation of it: for suppose the contrary to be true, that men were able of themselves to do God's will, engage his favor, and obtain salvation, and it will then be hard to account for the reasonableness of Christianity and God's wisdom, which provides preternatural assistances to serve ends which could be accomplished without them: but if we consider man in the state in which Scripture represents him, we shall see the want there was of the Mediator for our reconciliation with God, and the Holy Spirit for his influence in subduing our unruly passions. The economy of God in the gospel dispensation, closely shut up in the words of the text, explained: for a distinct conception of it, we must conceive the Spirit of God as always present with us; the Son as always in the presence of the Father; each exercising their respective offices: this will teach us what it is *to have access by the Spirit, through Christ*: this point enlarged on. But,

Secondly; These being the necessary means of salvation, it was likewise necessary to reveal to the world the doctrines concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit: and the belief of them is necessary to every Christian, as far as the right use of the means depends on the right faith and belief of the doctrines. *Whosoever denieth the Son, saith St. John, hath not the Father*: for since we can only come to the Father through the Son, to deny the Son is to cut off all communication between us and the Father. The same may be said of

the blessed Spirit, through whom we are in Christ: *if any man, says St. Paul, have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: our Saviour himself has told us, this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.*

When we were to be put under the conduct of the Spirit, and all our hopes rested on obedience to his holy motions, was it not necessary to inform us who this Spirit is? and that he is sufficient to the office allotted him, viz. to instruct us in the ways of God, and to rescue us from the powers of evil? Human reason may find it hard to conceive that this holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit of God, &c.; but it would be harder still to believe that the Spirit could do what is ascribed to him in Scripture, unless he were this glorious person: this point enlarged on: God therefore has dealt with us more like reasonable creatures, in declaring the dignity and power of the persons in whom we are to trust, than if he had required from us the same faith in them without such a declaration: and this shows how foolishly men sometimes charge God, when they complain of the heavy burden laid on their faith and understanding by the gospel doctrines in this respect.

We see now what every Christian has to hope for from the assistance of the Spirit, and intercession of the Son: we were all strangers to God, and children of disobedience; but are now reconciled to him, and can approach him as our loving Father. Having this access, our all depends on the use we make of this great privilege. By having access to God, we are not placed in a state of security, but in one of probation: this idea enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE XVII.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. II. VERSE 8.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

INTRODUCTION: showing what is taught in the compass of the text: in discoursing on the proposition, that faith is the gift of God, it is shown, First, What the Scripture doctrine on this head is. Secondly, Some considerations proper to the subject are suggested.—**I.** The faith spoken of in the text is such a faith as is necessary to salvation: various significations of the word *faith* in Scripture laid down; shown not to be that faith of which the Apostle speaks: how far the natural gifts of sense and reason can carry us, explained: the result is barely the assent or dissent of the mind to the things under inquiry. With regard even to these first rudiments of faith, our will and inclination are necessary for the exercise of that reason and knowledge which may lead us to them: our will and inclination shown

to be generally averse to this inquiry: example drawn from men's conduct at the first preaching of the gospel: to enable us fairly to examine the truth of a divine revelation, a right disposition of mind is required, according to our Saviour's own words, John vii. 17.: this disposition is not natural to man: to prepare his mind therefore for the reception of gospel truth, is the work of the Spirit; this shown by many examples to be the language of Scripture. Faith also shown to signify trust and reliance on God, and on his promises made by his Son: *saving* faith described as an active principle, influencing the mind to obedience to the law of God: this the faith to which we owe our growth in Christian graces and virtues: this the faith spoken of by St. Paul. Faith shown to be made up of the concurrence of the will and understanding; the latter of which is the rule to judge truth by; but the former not the right rule of action without the aid of the Holy Spirit: this shown from Scripture.—

II. Considerations on the subject suggested. It is shown that our ascribing faith to the operation of the Spirit, does not make it cease to be a reasonable act of the mind; and that the gift of the Spirit leaves a man free to examine the proofs of religion, influencing his mind neither one way nor the other in judging of the truth. Faith is not perfected but through obedience: it is one thing to *judge* with reason, and another to *act* with reason: the Spirit is given to us that we may not only think, but act, like reasonable creatures. If God had ever promised to force and subdue our reason to a belief of the gospel, he might have spared the signs, and wonders, and miracles which accompanied it. The method by which we arrive at the knowledge of spiritual truths shown from the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. Second consideration: the Scripture is not express regarding the measure in which the Spirit is given: yet all to whom it is given do not obey it; whence it is evident that all who are lost are not lost for want of God's aid. He has engaged to give us all things necessary to salvation: as far therefore as the Spirit is necessary, we are sure of it: as men improve in holiness, they contract a greater familiarity with the Spirit: the inference from this is, that we should endeavor to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in us, &c.*; and if we cease, he will withdraw his grace. Conclusion: signs and marks of divine grace in the regenerate are obedience to the will of God and good works.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. II. VERSES 12, 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

INTRODUCTION: statement of the unhappy disputes in the Christian church relating to the natural powers of man to work out his

own salvation, and those relating to the grace and assistance promised in the gospel. Inconsistent as these things may seem to be, St. Paul has thought fit to join them together: his doctrine considered, and the natural consequences which a Christian should draw from it. The text consists of two parts—an Exhortation, and an Argument to enforce it: the argument at first sight may appear to be false, as leading to confidence and assurance rather than to fear and trembling. This explained by the different significations of the word *fear*: there is a fear of our enemies, and also a fear of losing the love and good offices of our friends; which latter fear excites us to conform ourselves to their inclinations. That this is the fear of which the Apostle speaks, shown from the beginning of the chapter, where he so strongly presses humility on his converts; and also from the two verses following the text, *do all things without murmuring and repinings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, &c.* The Christian law indeed is fortified with rewards and punishments, as motives of obedience: it is shown however that the fear arising from them is not meant: the exhortation in the text belongs to all men, even the most perfect Christians: it is different therefore from the fear which belongs to criminals and slaves, and which *perfect love casteth out*. The reason why we ought to fear, viz. because *God worketh in us both to will and to do*, examined. Totally dependent as we are on God, this fear has more of care and solicitude in it, than of terror and amazement: the text shown to be parallel to that passage in St. Peter, *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure*. Farther, this fear shown to arise from a proper sense of our own insufficiency and dependence on God; according to the Apostle's expression, *let him that standeth take heed lest he fall*: this shown to be a just and holy fear, not injurious to the love of God towards us, nor to our faith and hope in him. From this account of holy fear, the meaning of the expression, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, will easily appear to consist in care and diligence to set ourselves to perform the will and commands of God. It is shown that there is something in the language used to explain the doctrine of grace, liable to be abused by ignorant or crafty men; this language tried in a common case, to guard men against being misled by mere sounds. Consequences of the doctrine and exhortation in the text considered.—I. It appears that the Christian state is not a state of security; for if so, the Apostle's exhortation would have no meaning: the Philippians themselves had received grace; and if grace once received cannot be lost, what had they to fear? That we fear, is no argument of mistrusting God; our fear regards ourselves; and our best security is this fear.—II. From the Apostle's command, *work out your salvation*, we see how necessary good works are. The good works of Christians do not deserve all the hard words that have been bestowed on them, if the words, *he worketh in us*, &c., be duly considered; for they are the fruits of his Spirit. Conclusion: the manner in which God works for the faithful explained. By the argument drawn from it for fear and diligence, it is evident that he does not work irresistibly:

he enables us to work ; our danger therefore is from ourselves, and we alone can defeat our own hopes.

DISCOURSE XIX.

LUKE, CHAP. XIII. VERSES 23, 24.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved ? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

INTRODUCTION ; concerning the many nice speculations that have arisen regarding God's final judgment of mankind. One of these proposed to our Saviour in the text ; in which and the following verses his answer is recorded ; an answer applicable not only to this, but to other questions of the like import : for the better understanding of this answer we must consider why men, not content to examine themselves by the law of God, are for launching out into the mysteries of his judgment. They are commonly influenced by a consideration of their own circumstances. Every man leaves the way open to his own salvation, though he may bar it against others : this the case with the great advocates of election and reprobation : being secured themselves, they despise the virtues and moral attainments of all men, and doom them to destruction. The conceit of him who asked the question in the text shown to be akin to this, from the peculiar prejudices of the privileged Jews. Our Lord's answer is levelled against these prejudices, and is a declaration that the salvation of God should be extended to all people. The controversy among Christians concerning the salvation of the heathen world, shown to turn on a different point from that of the Jewish prejudice ; and to carry not with it the same contempt of mankind : still the limitation of God's mercy may be found to be as presumptuous in the one case as in the other. The answer of our Lord in the text given to such inquirers, both for instruction and for rebuke. The opinions already mentioned confine the mercy of God ; but there is another which goes to the contrary extreme, and sets the doors of heaven open to all comers : they who entertain it seem to rely intirely on God's mercy and the infirmity of human nature, both of which they paint in the strongest colors : they suppose that God will never make all, or most men miserable, and therefore think to escape in the crowd. Such inquirers as these shown to make a mistake in their reckoning ; for if it were just to punish sinners, no reason why twenty should not be punished as well as ten, or one hundred as well as twenty : men shown not to be of so great value in the eyes of God : these persons therefore are exhorted to leave others to God's justice and mercy, and *strive themselves to enter in at the strait gate.*

As our Saviour did not think fit to satisfy the curiosity of the inquirer, it is very presumptuous in any one else to pretend to answer his question: natural religion will not satisfy us on this head, nor can it be expected that Scripture should do so. Two things however there are in which every man has a right to require satisfaction: one relates to the method of God's dealing with men, and comes to this,—whether all men are capable; and, if not, who are capable of salvation? The other relates to our own conduct and behavior; and is—on what terms may we expect salvation? These two necessary inquiries our Saviour clearly and expressly answers: as to the first, he tells us that salvation belongs to all men, of all climes: as to the second, he declares that all the workers of iniquity will be excluded from the presence of God, and therefore exhorts us to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*; and in order to quicken us, he says farther, that *many who seek to enter, shall not be able*. Being thus instructed, what right have we to demand more? It is not necessary either for a teacher of religion to declare more, or for a learner to know more: the effect of knowing more would be injurious, both to good and to bad men: this point enlarged on; and if it can serve no good purpose to know the certainty of our own future condition, what can it serve to know that of others? such a curiosity irreligious: no wonder therefore that it is not gratified. Absurd to expect judgment before trial. The scope which men give to their imaginations on this subject, when they leave their only sure guide, the word of God, shown to be always dangerous, sometimes fatal. Conclusion: the necessity of each person resolving to take care of himself, which is a sufficient employment.

DISCOURSE XX.

LUKE, CHAP. XII. VERSE 48.

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

THE equity of the general rule in the text is so apparent as to need no explanation: the single mite of a poor widow is an offering fit for God, which from a rich man would hardly be decent charity to a poor widow: and this is the case wherever the rule is applicable. Yet we are very apt to mistake this general maxim in its application to particular cases; for then self-love and self-interest overlook the true proportion of those things from which its equity arises: this proved by the mutual claims of men on each other, who always overrate the abilities of others, or undervalue their own, as suits their purpose: hence we seldom please our superiors, or satisfy our inferiors. As this rule has place in all the offices of life, it ought especially to influence the distribution of rewards and punishments;

but the weakness and the wickedness of men have almost wholly excluded it from human courts of judicature: this point enlarged on. Could we but introduce a judge endowed with a perfect knowledge of men's hearts, the text would be the rule of court: and since there is such a judge and such a court, we must attend to the application of it to ourselves, since mistakes will finally be fatal; and there is so much the more reason for our care, as we are apt to make such unreasonable allowances for ourselves. We often see men, who have no hopes of being justified by the terms of the gospel, take shelter in the general declaration of the text, and imagine they see an equity in their case, which shall stand between them and the rigor of the gospel law: perceiving plainly a connexion between crime and punishment, and being conscious of crimes, they have no way to ward off punishment: but when they think on the text, they immediately infer that to whomsoever *little* is given, of him *little* shall be required; hence they conclude that all their errors and mistakes are well secured, &c. This is one step towards justification; but this is overruled by conscience: they then urge that the power of executing what is commanded is necessary to make men accountable; they recollect all their temptations and excitements; and being partial judges, conclude it was not possible for them to do otherwise than they did; and thus secured, they fancy themselves fit to appear before Christ, and there to plead his own rule of equity against the precepts of the gospel. Allow this plea, and it will justify all men; though it must reflect dishonor on their Maker, who has by reason and revelation declared a judgment to come. Few men are so bad as to choose wickedness for its own sake; error or passion are pleaded in all cases. The Canaanites were greatly in error, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had violent passions; yet the fire of heaven spared not these, nor the sword of Joshua those. Did they then sin, or was the judge unjust? But if men's passions are so strong that reason is of no use but to contrive means for their gratification, God cannot be justified in giving to such creatures any notion of a judgment to come; and how irreconcilable it is with his goodness, to arm the little reason we have against us, so that it shall always place fears before us, which yet can have no relation to us. To clear this matter, we must consider two things: I. to what instances this rule of the text is extended by our Saviour and his Apostles: II. how far we may extend and apply it by parity of reason to other cases. To bring this inquiry within proper bounds, we must observe, in the first place, that the rule of the text is never applied in Scripture to excuse immoral actions on account of the violence of temptation; since even to indulge the passion is imputed as sin: *he that hateth his brother, says the Apostle, is a murderer*: this topic enlarged on. St. James also, (i. 13—15.) describes all sin as the effect of inordinate passion, which is not only no excuse, but is said to *bring forth death*. Scripture has recorded the immoral actions of many persons, but lust and passions were no excuse for them: this exemplified in the case of Ahab, who slew Naboth, and of David, who slew Uriah. In the verses before the text our

Saviour puts the case of those who received much, and those who received less: of the latter he says, *they shall be beaten* for doing things *worthy of stripes*; whence it appears that the strength of passion gives to rational beings no hope of being saved. Now the comparison in Scripture lies between those who enjoy the light of the gospel, who are said in the text *to have received much*, and those who are directed only by the light of reason; and these are they *who have received little*. Now the verses before the text, together with the text itself, state exactly the condition of these two sorts of people; from which we learn that to know the will of the Lord consists in having the light of God's word to direct us: for they *who knew not* the will of their Lord, are yet supposed to *do things worthy of stripes*; which supposes them possessed of the light of reason, and the knowledge of good and evil. Secondly: sinners, under all circumstances, are condemned to punishment; both they who know their Lord's will, but do not according to it, and they who do things *worthy of stripes*, i. e. who not knowing his will, act contrary to the light which they possess: this exactly agrees with what St. Paul has declared in Rom. ii. 12. All however will be judged and punished in proportion to their knowledge; which general determination agrees with a more particular one in Luke x. 13. 14. Explanation of these verses, showing the opinion of the Jews and of Christ himself on them. If we consider the world as divided into two parts, the one living under the light and direction of God's word, the other guided by mere reason and nature, we may learn from the maxim of the text—I. that no man shall be judged by a law of which he had no knowledge; it being true of every moral action, what St. Paul affirms of alms-giving; *it shall be accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*:—II. that immoral actions admit of no excuse, but will subject every man to the judgment of God; morality not being founded primarily on the authority of revelation, but of reason, for the use of which every one must answer: to plead therefore passion or temptation as an excuse for acting against reason, is the same as to plead our iniquity as an excuse against punishment; therefore, says St. James, *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin*. It may be said that custom and education have rendered the notions of morality different, so that the things which appear worthy of stripes to some, seem to others to contain nothing criminal in them. Be it so: yet this avails nothing in the present argument: where there is no consciousness of sin, there is no room to look for excuses; and whatever allowance may be made for those who sin without knowledge, it is certain that all who contrive excuses can take no advantage of this: for the very excuse itself shows the consciousness of sin: it is a foolish thing to deceive ourselves into an opinion that we require not pardon: repentance may cause forgiveness of sins, but no wit of man can ever justify them.—III. It appears that all who know the will of God, and live under the light of the gospel, shall be judged thereby. Men act sometimes as if they might choose what law they would be judged by; for as soon as they profess natural religion, they seem satisfied that they shall be judged

by their own notions ; but if the gospel of Christ be, as it is indeed, the will of God, it will not be so easily dismissed : we may neglect the advice of a friend, but the law of our superior must be obeyed. True, you may perhaps say ; but this is the very thing we cannot admit, viz. that it is the law of our superior. Beware, from the dreadful examples of Chorazin and Bethsaida, of Tyre and Sidon, that your persuasion be not your crime. Here then is your case ; you have the gospel of Christ before you ; it claims your obedience on the most extraordinary credentials ; it cannot therefore be an indifferent matter whether you receive or reject this law ; and you therefore come under the rule of the text. The gospel is a call to repentance from dead works, a summons to turn to the living God in works of righteousness and holiness : this the forewarning of John the Baptist ; this the doctrine of our Lord and his Apostles. If then the great promises of Christ belong only to penitents, who in newness of heart turn to God, how sadly do men impose on themselves, who trust to be saved by God's mercy, without doing his work, and continue in sin that grace may abound : this subject enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE XXI.

LUKE, CHAP. IV. VERSES 1, 2.

And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.

SHOULD we be asked (as the Apostles asked our Saviour the meaning of his washing their feet, which is related by St. John, xiii. 12—17.) the reason of what is related in this text, our answer is, *he hath given us an example that we should do as he hath done.* Even with good men who complain of the dangers which beset them, and that their prayers bring no blessing with them, we might expostulate, in the name and words of our Saviour, *if I your Lord and Master* have been tempted in all things like unto you, whence come your complaints ? To profit by these things which are written for our instruction, we should keep from nice questions ; we should not pry into the secret methods of God's providence, since the gospel contains sufficient inducement for us to admire his wisdom and goodness. In the case before us we want not matter of this kind : for the flattering hopes by which the tempter allured our first parents to disobedience, that they should be as gods, have been realised by means of our Saviour : this topic fully explained : here then we behold the wisdom and the goodness of God : by man came death, by man came also the plenteousness of redemption. Thus with respect to God, this temptation affords an ample subject of

praise and glory; with respect to ourselves, it instructs us regarding our spiritual warfare, and supports us under it. All the tempter's art without doubt was displayed against our Saviour: hence we may learn the dangers through which we must pass in our way to happiness, and secure ourselves against the surprises which are so often fatal to heedless unguarded innocence: here also we may learn from the best example how to make the best defence.

The lessons of Christian prudence and fortitude which are to be learned from our Saviour's conduct under the different trials being omitted, the circumstances of the temptation are considered, as recorded in the text, which relates that, immediately after his baptism, he was led to be tempted, *being full of the Holy Ghost*. We see the power of baptism and its blessings, to which all are entitled who partake of the baptism of Christ; for he was neither born nor baptised for his own sake, but that we might become, through faith, heirs together with him of the promises of God. The spiritual advantages of baptism enumerated, affording us great privileges and room for vast expectations: yet how unsuitable to these claims do the circumstances of a Christian's life often appear! This point enlarged on in the matter of a Christian's pilgrimage through life; who, though he boasts of more than human strength, yet sometimes sinks even below the character and dignity of a man. Thus the promises of God become of none effect; baptism sinks into a mere outward ceremony, which can no longer reach to the purifying the heart and mind; and hence the enemies of the gospel take occasion to blaspheme and ridicule the grace of God, as being nothing real. On the other side, it is certain that these prejudices have arisen from the mistaken notions of men concerning the grace of God: for having promised to themselves more than ever God promised, and finding grace to be not what they hoped it was, they rashly conclude that it is nothing; and argue against the truth of God's promises, from the vanity and delusion of their own. The absurdity of expecting the grace of God to ward off temptations without our own care, shown from human warfare. The Christian is called to the proof and exercise of his virtue, armed with the graces of the spirit, given him purposely by God; which, had there been no enemy to fear, he had not needed; having enough of his own to sit still and do nothing: but assistance is given us according to our dangers, and *to whom much is given, of him shall much be required*. From these premises two deductions are made: I. that the temptations which good men have to struggle with, are no proof that they want the Spirit of God, or that his favor and kindness is in any degree lessened towards them: II. that the sins which Christians fall into and continue in, are no proof that they had not the Spirit, and grace sufficient to have preserved their innocence. These two cases considered: the dread of the first is that bitter root whence the misery of good men mostly springs, who are apt to imagine that, had they the Spirit of God, the wicked one would not dare to approach them; or if he did, that they should soon be able to quench his fiery darts: but when the temptation, though often repulsed, still renews its

assault with redoubled force, then, through their own fear that they are deserted by the Spirit of God and given up to destruction, they lose the power of vigorous opposition, and become an easy prey to the invader: our first care then must be, rightly to apprehend our own condition, and the dangers or difficulties we are to meet with, that we may be able to stand, collected both in courage and counsel, for a just defence, like the Author of our Salvation: hence we may learn that our temptations, so far from being a proof that we want the Spirit of God, are rather a proof to the contrary, and that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear: our Saviour was not tempted till he had received the Spirit. The circumstances of the temptation fully drawn out. Having read these, shall we complain that every day brings its trial, and every night its temptation? shall we fear that God has given us up to anguish and despair in this world, and to inevitable ruin in the next? Ought not each of us, remembering that Christ has led the way, say with the Holy Psalmist, *it is mine own infirmity?* There is more reason to suspect ourselves, and to fear concerning the love of God, when all things are calm and serene about us, when our body is free from pain, and our mind from care; then should we fear the enemy, when he thinks himself secure of us by leaving us alone in prosperity, the greatest of his temptations: hence the necessity to us who are prosperous, constantly exercising ourselves in the virtues proper to our station; if we see others led to virtue through hardships and poverty, we can only attain to this through charity and humility: if God has called others to defend their virtue against the assaults of vice, we, who enjoy a free and unmolested virtue, must take care that prosperity be not our ruin: if others are obliged constantly to be on their guard, and have work enough to secure an unblemished innocence, we who are in the securest recesses of our Lord's vineyard, having no dangers to molest our peace, must zealously labor to till and improve the soil, that we may give a good account of the talent committed to us. Secondly, from our Lord's temptation it appears that trials and temptations may be great and severe, where the gifts of the Spirit are administered in the largest proportion; and since those who are tempted may fall, (for otherwise temptations would be no trials,) it appears that grace may be sufficient; yet men may fall through the want of care and diligence on their own part. Our natural infirmities therefore, and a want of God's grace, is a false comfort and no excuse; for God suffers none to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear. The instruction to be learnt from these things, if we are so unhappy as to offend, is not to try to palliate our offences, or to charge God foolishly, but to labor, through a timely repentance, to correct what is done amiss, and thus return to our duty: God causes us to be tempted as a proof and trial of our virtue; and if we offend, the only remedy is repentance through faith in Christ Jesus; which coming from a sincere heart will never be rejected.

DISCOURSE XXII.

2 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. VII. VERSE 10.

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

RELIGIOUS and worldly sorrow compared in the text. The sorrow which arises from a sense of our iniquity is the cure as well as the consequence of the evil we suffer in worldly grief: sorrow shown to be a remedy worse than the disease, and to add weight to our misfortunes. The considerations of philosophy, which place wisdom in an absence of passion, and teach us to submit with indifference to the evils of life, not applicable to religion: in natural evils sorrow gives us the sharpest sense of our affliction, and leaves us enfeebled both in mind and body: but in spiritual evils religious sorrow produces and increases the means of our recovery, chases sin and guilt from the soul, and renders it capable of the expectation of future glory. It is shown to be the part of a friend to awaken in us a godly sorrow: example of St. Paul to the Corinthians: the blessed fruits of godly sorrow shown by the Apostle's words in the text. First, sorrow is distinguished from repentance, as it *worketh* repentance: secondly, sorrow worketh salvation by means of repentance: thirdly, worldly sorrow produceth death: fourthly, the death wrought by worldly sorrow, being opposed to the salvation which follows repentance, may signify eternal as well as temporal death: these observations explained and enlarged on. First, godly sorrow is said to work repentance, and is therefore distinguished from it; for if by repentance be understood sorrow for sin, we should say that godly sorrow produces sorrow for sin, i. e. godly sorrow produces itself: repentance therefore, denoting change of mind, is the *effect* of godly sorrow, and the necessary condition of salvation: alliance between sorrow and repentance is explained, and the nature of sorrow in general considered. The cause of our sorrow must needs be the object of our aversion: cases shown where sorrow is a ridiculous passion. Worldly sorrow makes us in general feel our misfortunes, but does not enable us to redress them: this not the case in spiritual concerns, where sin is the object of our aversion, and the misery we suffer through vice the best guide to virtue. Secondly, godly sorrow not said to *work salvation* immediately, but by means of repentance; thus showing that a change of mind and life is necessary towards the obtaining God's mercy and forgiveness. A sense of guilt and misery leads us to the sorrow which produces repentance, and, by making us abhor our iniquities, produces that blessed change which is true repentance *unto salvation never to be repented of*. Fear may produce sorrow, but not always repentance; as in the case of Judas. The sorrow which does not bring forth repentance and reformation, is of no account in the sight of God. Godly sorrow is that which respects God; and this will always produce repentance, and be followed by

salvation, in virtue of God's promises. Repentance unto life the greatest gift of God to a sinful world. Thirdly, a comparison is drawn between godly and worldly sorrow, showing the difference between them. Worldly sorrow is said immediately to *work death*: it brings forth nothing analogous to repentance: but confirms the evil disposition from which it flows: the causes from which worldly and godly sorrow arise being considered, the different effects which they produce are shown. Fourthly, the death which is wrought by worldly sorrow is opposed to the salvation which follows repentance, and may therefore signify eternal death. The natural effect of grief in general is to deaden the faculties, and render us useless to ourselves and others; but the effect of godly sorrow is to destroy itself, and leave the mind in ease and tranquillity. Even in this life sorrow for sin produces the pleasures of righteousness, whilst the worldly man, pursuing false enjoyments, is ever reaping misery: in the world to come the tears of repentance will be wiped away; but the guilty tears of worldly sorrow will stand in judgment against us, and exclude us from the joys of heaven; as it is forcibly expressed in the words of the text, 'the sorrow of the world worketh death.'

DISCOURSE XXIII.

I PETER, CHAP. II. VERSE 11.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

PART I.

THE exhortation of the text so common in Scripture, that there is no need of many words to explain the subject. The Apostle therein points out the general source from whence impure vices arise, viz. *from fleshly lusts*: these are made, not to govern, but to serve the man: some are willing to call them *natural desires*; and then they ask, how is it so heinous an offence to comply with those desires, which God, for wise reasons, has made part of our nature? This might be asked with respect to brutes: but man must also ask, why was reason and understanding given to him? Does he act up to the dignity of his nature by following the example of the brutes, though they may fulfil the intent of their being? This point enlarged on.

It may be farther urged, why were these desires given, which are the cause of so much mischief, and iniquity, and of disturbance to the virtue even of the best men? In reply to this, we must consider, how far these desires are natural. The desires which are common, and therefore may be called natural, are such as are necessary to the preservation, first of individuals, next of the species: at the same time that we find these natural desires, we also discover the ends which nature has to serve by them; and reason thence discerns the true rule

for the government of them. Our bodies cannot be supported without constant nourishment; hunger and thirst therefore are natural appetites, given as constant calls on us to administer this support: ask any man of common sense how far they ought to be indulged; and he cannot help seeing that nature calls for no more than is proper for the health and preservation of the body, and that reason prescribes the same bounds: excess therefore in these appetites is not natural, but vicious, &c.: the craving of an habitual drunkard is not natural, but the effect of long practised intemperance; and such an appetite is a crime rather than an excuse.

In other instances of a like nature, they who have inflamed desires, commonly owe the excess of them to their own misconduct: there is a great difference between men of the same temper, where one shuns, and the other seeks temptation, &c.; and since the relish for sin often outlasts the temptation, this shows that there is in sensualists a greater corruption than can be charged on natural inclination.

Since then the desires of nature are in themselves innocent, and implanted in us for good ends; since God has given us reason to moderate and direct our passions, it is in vain to plead them in defence of sensuality, unless we could also plead that we are void of reason; for if it be the work of reason to keep the passions within due bounds, the reasonable creature must be accountable for the work of his passion: this exemplified in the case of human judicature. Such then being the case, what motives have we to guard against the irregularities of the passions? In the strong and earnest exhortation of the text two are offered to us: I. that we are *strangers and pilgrims*: II. that *fleshly lusts war against the soul*. On the first point, it is observed that St. Peter directs this epistle to the *strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c.*; whence some have thought that the text was applied to them exclusively, on account of their dispersion on the earth: it is shown that there is no force in this observation. A more suitable meaning of the words may be found in the first chapter of this epistle, verse 17. and in Heb. xi. 13. The notion extends to all mankind, and shows that the Apostle looked on all as strangers and pilgrims on the earth; consequently the exhortation concerns all alike, and reaches as far as the obligations of morality extend: and this consideration, placed in this view, has great weight, with respect to all who have faith enough to *desire a better, that is, a heavenly country, &c.*: this is putting all our hopes and fears with respect to futurity, in balance against the solicitations of sensual pleasure; this is appealing to our reason to show the absurdity of seizing momentary enjoyments, in a place where we have no permanent abode, at the hazard of forfeiting an everlasting inheritance. The subject enlarged on, and supported by various suppositions.

But why dwell on suppositions, when the truth of the case, fairly represented, will appear in a stronger light than any supposition can place it?

If we have immortal souls, and that we have nature herself declares within us, this place cannot be their native country: nothing immortal can belong to this globe, where all things tend to decay;

and which itself shall one day be consumed. If this were the only place to which we have any relation, we then might justly complain of nature on account of the provision she has made for man, who alone of all creatures here below would want a happiness suited to his capacity : but if something more is in reserve for him, his desires are well suited to his condition : and God's wisdom is evident in his having given to man desires fitted for nobler enjoyments than this world affords, since for man much nobler enjoyments are prepared. This being the case, what has a wise man to do, but to get through this world as he can, that he may arrive at those everlasting pleasures which are in store for him? What can he think of the enjoyments of this world, but that they are below the care of one who is born to so great expectations? Thus he must think even with respect to innocent delights : they are frail and transient ; he is immortal, &c. : but guilty pleasures must appear to him in a far more ugly form : he is hastening to the place where his heart is fixed ; they are robbers, which lie in wait on his road to intercept him ; to take away his life and his treasure, &c.

Consider this case fairly, look to the glory and immortality placed before you, and then to the temptations which surround you in the world, to intercept your hopes ; and then say, if there could be a more powerful argument to abstain from fleshly lusts than this, that ye are *strangers and pilgrims*, &c. ?

Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, say the disciples of Epicurus ; whose exhortation is suitable to their principle. No inconsistency in exhorting men to make the best of this world, when you teach them that no other is to be expected : but absurd to support the same doctrine, without asserting the same principle. Suppose, however, this world to be only a state of trial, and that our appetites were given us partly for a proof of our virtue : the consequences of this admission considered.

But perhaps it may farther be asked, how is it consistent with God's goodness to work such temptations into the very nature of mankind? which comes in fact to this—How is it consistent with his goodness to make any thing which is not absolutely perfect ; to make rational creatures, for instance, capable of doing amiss? This point enlarged on.

Conclusion : the desires of nature are ordained to serve the ends of nature : reason is given to man to govern the lower appetites and keep them within due bounds ; in this consists the virtue of man ; this the trial to which he is called ; and the prize is nothing less than immortality.

PART II.

The exhortation in the text is enforced by two considerations, nearly allied to each other : that we are *strangers and pilgrims* here on earth, and consequently have a better interest in another country which ought not to be neglected for the low gratifications of this :

whoever allows the principle, must allow the consequence. This leads us to an inquiry worthy of all our pains, how far we may pursue the pleasures of this life, consistently with our hopes of a better: some enjoyments there are not below the care of a wise and good man in this world, both in the cultivation of the mind, and in the pleasures of sense properly restrained: but whenever our appetites are too strong for our reason, and carry us beyond the bounds of temperance, to the injury of ourselves and others, then it is that our *fleshly lusts do war against the soul*; then we wound our own souls, and, for the sake of momentary pleasures, expose ourselves to eternal death. The express command of the gospel against drunkenness, fornication, and such vices, coming as it does from one who has power to execute his decrees, ought to be a sufficient argument to Christians: but the Apostle in the text goes farther, and lays before us the reason in which the command to *abstain from fleshly lusts* is founded: this point enlarged on. If we consider wherein the dignity of man consists, and what are his means to make himself happy, we shall see clearly the ill effects of sensual lusts: no need of abstracted speculations on the subject.

There is no man so little acquainted with himself, but that he sometimes finds a difference between the dictates of his reason, and the cravings of appetite: this discord is the foundation of the difference observable among men with regard to moral character and behavior: this point enlarged on. If our passions are to govern us, and reason only to furnish means and opportunities of gratifying them, it will be hard to account for the wisdom of God in making such a creature as man. If we have no higher purposes to serve than the brutes, why have we more understanding than they? but it would be well if we could say as much for some sensual men, as we can for the brutes, who are ten times less mischievous, in having only appetites, without reason and the powers of contrivance, &c.

Hence it is evident in what manner sensual lusts do war against the soul, considered as the seat of reason and all the nobler faculties. If we look into past or present ages, we shall see numberless instances of the pernicious effects of passion, assisted by a corrupt and depraved reason: this point enlarged on.

But let us consider, that the only part of man capable of improvement is the soul: we can do little or nothing for the body; and if we could do more it would be little worth: if therefore we have any ambition of being better than we are, either in this world or in the next, we must cultivate the mind. The excellency of a rational creature consists in knowledge and virtue, one the foundation of the other: these are what we ought to labor for: but sensual lusts prohibit our improvement in either, and do therefore war against the soul.

As to knowledge, the best and most useful is the knowledge of ourselves, of the relation in which we stand to God and man, and of the duties thence arising. Now this knowledge is such an enemy to sensual lusts, that a sensual man will be much indisposed to receive it, because to him it is self-condemnation: hence the many

prejudices in the world against the first principles of natural religion, and the many arguments to destroy the distinction between soul and body, and all hopes of a future state. If the fear of God be, as in truth it is, the beginning of wisdom, sensuality cuts us off from all hopes of improvement, as rational beings, by choking the spring from whence all wisdom flows: it ties us down to the world, materializes the soul, and makes it incapable of conceptions worthy of itself: this point enlarged on.

Secondly, virtue and morality are the distinguishing characters of rational beings; but these will always be lost where the appetites have dominion.

In all cases where our thoughts are confined to ourselves, and we aim only at our own interest and pleasure, we act on a principle destructive of morality: the ability we have of extending our views beyond ourselves, and considering what is fit, proper, and reasonable, with regard to others, is the foundation of morality: this subject extended, and various instances given, in which sensuality makes a man overlook what is due to others, and lose all regard for justice, equity, and compassion.

Hence it is plain that the virtue of a man consists in bounding his desires within the limits of reason and morality: these limits the *lusts of the flesh* are perpetually transgressing; every such transgression is a wound to the soul, which weakens its natural faculties, and renders it less able to discharge its proper office, &c. Hence arises another consideration, showing how effectually sensual lusts do war against the soul, by extinguishing natural conscience, and not leaving a man reason and religion enough to repent of his iniquities: for the mind grows sensual by degrees, loses all relish for serious thought and contemplation, and contracts a brutal courage that cares neither for God nor man: this point enlarged on. The sensual man has but one hope with respect to futurity, and a sad one it is, that he may die like the beasts that perish: but nature, reason, religion, deny him this comfort, and with one voice proclaim, *that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world.* The terrors of that day to sensualists and sinners described. Conclusion: a return to the argument: the sensual man's condition briefly reviewed: the sum of his account is, that he has his portion of enjoyment in this world with the brutes, and in the next his punishment with wicked spirits: this is the war which the lusts of the flesh wage against the soul: from such enemies a wise man ought to fly, for they have power *to cast both body and soul into hell.*

DISCOURSE XXIV.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVII. VERSE 38.

Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left.

THE text shows what different effects the judgments of God have on the minds of men: this strongly exemplified in the end of the two malefactors: hence appears the adorable wisdom of God, who, by these examples of justice and mercy brought so near together, has taught us to fear without despair, and to hope without presumption. Who does not tremble for himself, when he sees a man perish by his Saviour's side, and wanting only faith to be saved? What would not the dying sinner give to have his Saviour thus near him? Yet the thief who had this advantage died in his sins, void of hope and comfort. Must the sinner then despair, and has God forgotten to be merciful? No; behold him who is on the other side of the cross! His state enlarged on: thus the case stands, with all the allowances made to it, which seem most to favor a death-bed repentance: and yet, as if Scripture had not noticed the wretch who died blaspheming Christ, nor given us cause to fear that a wicked life may end in a hardened death, the case of the penitent only is drawn into example, and such hopes built on it as are inconsistent with the laws of God, and the terms of salvation. The penitent, as soon as he knew Christ, repented of his sins: if the example pleases you, *go and do likewise*; if you act otherwise, you like nothing but the lateness of the repentance; and you would imitate the thief rather than the penitent Christian. If you fancy you can imitate and enjoy both these characters, you deceive yourself; his case cannot be yours; his example therefore cannot be your security: but suppose it were parallel to that of the dying Christian, yet it affords no certain hope; since the proof is as strong from the impenitent thief, that you will die in your sins, as from the other case, that you will repent of them. Time does not allow us to consider this case in all its views; but only to point out the circumstances that distinguish it from that of the dying Christian; and then to show what little hope this example affords, allowing the case to be what it is generally supposed to be. First, in all this perhaps there may be nothing which resembles a death-bed repentance: malefactors often lie in prison long before their trial and execution; and if that be the present case, here is time for conversion; circumstances incline this way: these enlarged on; whence it is probable that he had learned the dignity and character of Christ elsewhere, and came persuaded of the truth of his mission: but how unlike to him are those who desire not to lie down Christians, though they would willingly die penitents. Secondly, no example can be drawn by Christian sinners from this great work, even if it was begun and finished on the cross; since the conversion of a Jew or a heathen is one thing, and the repentance of a Christian is another. God has

promised, through Christ, that the sins of a repentant and converted unbeliever shall be forgiven: this the penitent's case: his pardon answers to baptismal regeneration, but has nothing to do with a death-bed repentance, and therefore affects not those who have fallen from grace once received. Thirdly, the crimes of this unconverted sinner were not so aggravated as the sins of Christians; he sinned against the light of nature, and the rules of reason and morality: this topic enlarged on: he therefore had a better plea for mercy than the Christian who sins in despite of knowledge and the Holy Spirit; for to sin in hopes of pardon and the prospect of a late repentance, aggravates the crime, and is an abuse of God's mercy. The guilt of the heathen and Christian sinner compared: for the former of these Nature herself pleads before her great Creator. If the penitent first learned Christ on the cross, how much more had he to say for himself than the Christian, who comes to make his peace at the hour of death! Example given of this penitent's pleading before his Lord: 'Lord, I am one of those sinners, for whom thy Son now expires: I was conceived in sin: I have wandered in darkness, without the light of thy gospel and the help of thy Spirit: accept the poor remains of life, since it is all I have had to offer: receive my latest breath, which confesses my own guilt, and declares my Saviour's innocence: join me to him, as in death, so in life everlasting.' But can the dying Christian plead these things, after a hardened life of sin and impenitence, against the light of the gospel, and the proffered assistance of God's Spirit? This matter more fully treated of. May not the Lord then say to such a one calling for mercy at his last moments, 'How long have I waited in vain for these prayers? how have you despised all my calls? But though you could fly from the mercy of God, his justice will overtake you.' Hence the wicked Christian's case is worse than that of the penitent on the cross; which therefore is no example whereby he may expect mercy. Other circumstances fit to be observed, which render a death-bed repentance insecure. First, he that sins in hope of repenting at last, may sin so far as to become hardened and incapable of repentance: this reflection grounded on the case of the impenitent thief; who, though he had all the advantages which the other had, died reproaching Christ, and joined in that bitter jeer, *if thou be the Christ, come down from the cross*. This example might be backed by many more in our own time: the cause of this is, that the Holy Spirit will not always strive with sinners, but leaves them to perish in the hardness of their own hearts; for an habitual enjoyment of the pleasures of sin, in the hope of repenting, renders a man at last incapable of it; he learns *to make a mock of sin*, till his hardened conscience is unable to feel the languishing remains of grace: hence the incapability of sinners to ask pardon on a sick-bed. Neither can a man resolve how far he will sin, any more than how tall or short he will be: daily experience proves this; and happy are they who want this fatal experience! The moment a man gives himself up to sin, he gives himself out of his own power; sets the passions free; and drowns the voice of conscience: and when reason

and conscience are destroyed, religion must soon follow after them : in this general rout, how can one poor resolution, that of repentance, escape ? This point enlarged on. Let those therefore who have it still in their power, consider their danger, and reason with their own hearts, even for a few moments, on which all eternity depends. Secondly, if you could preserve your resolutions of repentance, it is not in your own power to secure an opportunity of executing them. The thief on the cross died a violent death, happy in this at least, that he had no pretence to defer his repentance, in prospect of a farther opportunity ; nor was his heart to be allured by the pleasures of life, when life itself was so near expiring. From this death may we all be defended : yet without it which of us can hope for such favorable circumstances for repentance ? Whenever the sinner thinks of repentance, he finds it a work of such trouble that he is unwilling to set about it : no man is so old, but he thinks he may live one year more : hence the procrastination of his repentance, till sickness and infirmities render it impossible. This elicited the moving petition of the Psalmist : *so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* The way that men generally number their days causes only folly and wickedness ; and the years to come, which they rejoice in, render them careless of the great concerns of immortality ; hence their delusion. But suppose yourself in the thief's case, and a day fixed, on which you are to die ; could you then delay your repentance ? could you then say, to-morrow will be time enough ? and if you would not do it then, why will you do it now ? only because you think you will have time enough for this work hereafter ; in this expectation death or its previous sickness arrives ; and thus very few think of repentance till they are confined to a sick-bed : so that the unfortunate death of the converted penitent on the cross was an advantage which few Christians will give to themselves. Thirdly, the death-bed repentance of a Christian will want another advantage peculiar to that of the thief on the cross ; a sound body and mind, capable of performing such acts of faith and devotion as are necessary to repentance and conversion : the different case of a sick, feeble, languid sinner compared with this : whence it comes that repentance is often impracticable to a sinner : but if he possess his sense and reason, yet the general result of his repentance is horror and despair : the fearful consequences of this state enlarged on ; so that even supposing all circumstances most favorable, you give him no security ; if he is not sensible of his sins and impenitence, he will die like the wicked thief on the cross ; and if he becomes sensible of them, how shall he be preserved from such despair as will render him neither fit to live nor fit to die ? Nothing but an extraordinary degree of grace can preserve this man in a temper fit for repentance, neither too presumptuous, nor too slavish : but who can tell whether God will grant this at the last, to such as have rejected his constant calls ? It cannot be supposed that God intends to save Christians thus, which would be to make void all the rules and duties of the gospel. This matter more fully explained : if you do your best to obtain the promises of the gospel, happy are you ; but if you seek

new ways to salvation, joining the pleasures of sin to the hopes of the gospel, you deceive yourselves; for *God is not mocked*. Conclusion; exhorting all who love their own souls, to work for their salvation while they have the light, *for the night cometh, when no man can work*.

DISCOURSE XXV.

PSALM LXXVII. VERSES 9, 10.

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?

And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

PART I.

THE text shows that the author of this psalm was manifestly under great dejection of mind when he penned it; as he speaks of himself here and in the following verses as deserted of God, and preyed on by the sorrows of his own tormented heart. The particular grief is not mentioned; the sting of it however lay in this, that the Psalmist apprehended himself to be forsaken of God, which is doubtless the most insupportable and incurable of all afflictions, and one which neither medicine nor reason can assuage; for *the soul refuses to be comforted*. These fears and sorrows belong not to the vicious and profligate, who *have not God in all their thoughts*: they live without reflection, and therefore without concern, and can be diverted by hearing or seeing what modest and humble sinners suffer from a sense of religion: but their day of fear is not far off; and when it comes, it will convince them that *the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth*. There is a great difference between the misgivings and misapprehensions of a religious mind, and the fear which sinners often experience: this difference explained; whence we can distinguish between the fears to which religious men are subject, and the fears of the guilty; the former of which alone our text leads us to consider. The Psalmist manifestly speaks of the sorrows of a well-disposed heart, from the description which he gives of his conduct under distress; though he might doubt as to his own condition, and the favor of God towards him, yet of the being, power, and wisdom of God he never doubted. This faith was the sheet-anchor of his salvation. A consideration of this afflicted good man's train of thought, and of what he regarded his only comfort and support, recommended. Whether the calamities which afflicted him were public or private, yet as long as his thoughts dwelt on them, and led him to expostulate with God

for the severity of his judgments, he found no ease nor relief: a weak man cannot judge rightly of the actions of a man wiser than himself; much less can a man judge of the ways of God, to whose councils he is not admitted: this topic enlarged on. Since then it is weakness to complain, and folly to judge, of the methods of God's providence, what part must we take? Must religion be senseless and stupid, and shut out all reflection on the ways of God? No: one way is open to us; to trust and depend on God; which is so far from being senseless and stupid, that in the pursuit of it we shall see opening before us the noblest views which reason or religion can afford. The method here prescribed is that which the Psalmist prescribed to himself. *God has not left himself without witness*: the great works of nature and of grace proclaim his loving-kindness to men; hence we must admire his power and adore his goodness; and therefore throw ourselves on his protection. Here then was the comfort of the Psalmist: here the cure of his grief, though the scene around him was dark and gloomy. The text then leads us to consider: I. That all complaints against Providence proceed from weakness and the infirmity of human reason: II. That a settled peace of mind with respect to God must arise from a due contemplation of the great works of Providence, which God has laid open for our consideration and instruction. Under the first head are included all the suspicions which are apt to rise in men's minds against Providence, as well as formal complaints: the first of this sort is, that God is too great and too excellent a being to humble himself to behold the things that are on earth. This one mistake seems to have been the whole of Epicurus's divinity: this topic enlarged on. To make his gods happy, he removed them from the government of men, whom he left alone without God or Providence: this thought, which has in all times been the refuge of sinners, has even entered into better minds, broken with grief, and tempted by their misfortunes to think thus. The grounds of this suspicion are weak and unreasonable: the fault is that men consider God's abilities to be like their own: but as it is absurd to argue from the powers of men to the powers of God, so is it to argue from the passions of men to the affections of the Deity: this point fully explained. Epicurus and his followers, who denied God's government of the world, denied also that he made it, and so far were consistent: but if we begin by considering the works of creation; if we *call to remembrance those years of the right hand of the Most High*; we shall, from these manifest and undeniable works of God, be led to conclude justly with respect to the methods of divine Providence: this point illustrated from the economy of the natural world. Another reason for suspicion of the conduct of Providence is, that men cannot discern any certain marks of God's interposition: they think that the inanimate and irrational parts of the world follow invariably a certain course of nature, and that men act as though given up to their own devices, and undirected by a superior power. The scoffers in St. Peter's time supported themselves on a similar observation, that *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*; concluding that they would

go on so for ever, and that there was no future state to engage their concern. But here are two great mistakes: First, the conclusion is not rightly drawn from the observation, supposing the observation true: Secondly, supposing the conclusion true, it does not answer the purposes intended. That the material world continues to answer the end designed, is the strongest evidence that it was made, and is conducted, by the highest wisdom and power: this fact illustrated from the edifices of human artists. Another objection is, that the world continues in one unwearied course, and a repetition of the same thing is no sign of wisdom or contrivance. This observation can arise only from what we see among men, where there is some foundation for it: but it is great weakness and want of thought to transfer this observation to God's works: this point enlarged on. But suppose the observation true, and the world to be now where it was at the beginning; yet no conclusion can be drawn from thence as to its future continuance: the absurdity of arguing from the past and present state of things to their end, explained. The other part of the objection, pointed against God's moral government of the world, examined. The great irregularity observable in human actions, and the mischiefs and iniquities which abound in the world, have tempted some to think that God does not concern himself with the actions of men, but has given them up to follow their own desires. It is justly observed, that there is a difference between the material and rational parts of the world: this difference explained. Matter, being capable of no action of itself, necessarily follows the impressions it receives: if, therefore, God is the mover, nothing but order and regularity can be expected. To suppose the material world to move irregularly and inconsistently with the end to be served, would be supposing God to act irregularly and inconsistently with the end of his own creation; but in the moral world the case is otherwise: men have a power of acting for themselves, or else they could not be moral or rational agents: this topic enlarged on. The very difference observable in the conducting the material and the moral world, is the strongest presumption that they are under the direction of an all-wise being: this enlarged on. Moral agents cannot be invariably directed, from their very nature; and the actions of such beings will be wise and regular in proportion to their wisdom: it is then only want of thought and reflection which furnishes objections, from the present state of things, against a divine Providence. But farther; though men are moral agents, yet this excludes not God's providence from human affairs, because this may be exerted consistently with their freedom; and the distribution of rewards and punishments may be effected without overruling the wills or actions of the good and bad. God's power of life and death alone is sufficient for conducting the great affairs of the world: and the great variety of accidents, which cannot happen but as God thinks fit, may be effectual to punish or reward individuals, without any visible interposition of Providence. These secret methods do not indeed justify God's righteousness in the eyes of men, nor is it pretended that they are adopted for an exact administration of justice in every case: it is sufficient that they are,

or may be so used, over moral beings in a state of probation ; which is a very different thing from the final administration of justice. Nor can the apparent unequal distribution of good and evil in this life be any objection to God's government over the world, unless it be proved that there will not be a day of reckoning hereafter : for supposing a future state, the present condition of things is quite consistent with divine justice ; which sleeps not, but waits to see full proof of the righteousness or the unrighteousness of men. At the appointed dissolution of this frame of things, the material world will have done its office, and may lie by till called out again by the Creator : but not so the moral world, for which another scene is prepared ; where all must answer for the use they made of God's gifts. Conclusion : exhorting men from all these considerations to contemplate divine Providence ; whence they will see reason to confess their own weakness, and to say with the Psalmist, *it is mine own infirmity.*

PART II.

The suspicions which incline men to doubt whether God does at all concern himself in human affairs having been considered, we now come to consider the suspicions which, consistently with admitting a general care of Providence over the world, lead men to fear that they are neglected or unkindly treated by God : this the case of the Psalmist, and these his fears. Of God's government he doubted not ; he applied to him in his trouble, but his grief was, that he found no return to his prayers ; *when he remembered God, he was troubled ; when he complained, his Spirit was overwhelmed ;* but this good man was so well grounded in religion, that in spite of doubts and fears, he pronounced rightly in his own case of his suspicions, *this is my infirmity ;* he called to his aid the reflection, *I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* Admitting then God's providence to extend over the whole world, it may be doubted whether this care descends to particulars, and regards the actions and well-being of individuals ; which, singly considered, have very little influence on the well-being of the whole. With respect to the material world, we may easily discern that this suspicion is groundless, and built on the weak conceit that it is too troublesome to Providence to attend to the minute things of the world : this topic enlarged on. The case is not so plain with respect to moral agents and God's government over them : the reason of this shown from their very nature. With respect to the care of Providence over particular men, we may consider that every man consists of two parts ; one material, which is the body ; the other rational, which is the mind : with regard to the former, every single man manifestly depends on the preservation and care of Providence, as manifestly as the great bodies of the world do : this point enlarged on : hence our Saviour's question, as related by St. Matthew vi. 26. : this passage fully explained. Nor do we want more direct proofs of

God's care for men as moral agents : of this sort are the impressions and intimations which we receive from nature, that is, from the hand of our Creator, for our government and direction : the knowledge of good and evil, the power of conscience, the passions of hope and fear, the sense of honor and shame, which are natural to man, are proofs of God's care, considered as moral agents ; and not the less so from their being common to all men ; though possibly for that reason they have been less considered in this light. Was God to speak directly to every man, and rebuke every sinner, we should not doubt of his care for particular moral agents ; but we might reasonably doubt, how consistent such methods would be with the freedom necessary to the morality of human actions : and yet this same care is taken, and the same things are done in a manner and method which do not interfere with the freedom of moral agents. This point fully explained from a consideration of the moral sense and human passions : these are undeniable proofs of God's care for moral agents, and they reach to every particular man's case, who has not extinguished the power of conscience. That this providence also extends farther, and interposes to bless and prosper the righteous, to punish and confound the wicked, cannot be doubted in a general way ; though to particularise it is difficult and sometimes presumptuous, as the appearances of things will not answer to the observation : this point enlarged on. Another difficulty is, that the blessings of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked in this world, seem to be conveyed by such natural means, and to be so according to the common course of things, that men seldom think of an immediate interposition of Providence, and there are hardly grounds to prove it ; but to balance this difficulty, let it be considered : First, that an immediate and visible interposition of Providence in behalf of the righteous, and for the punishment of the wicked, would interfere with the freedom of moral agents, and not leave room for their trial : this is a sufficient reason for not using this method : Secondly, that this reason only excludes such methods of rewards and punishments here as are inconsistent with free actions ; but does not exclude any methods not liable to this objection : Thirdly, that the natural course of things being under the direction of God, it is reasonable to believe that they are often disposed for the benefit of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked ; though we cannot observe it, as every thing appears natural and ordinary. The first proposition has been considered ; and the second is but a consequence of it : of the third no man can doubt who believes at all in the providence of God : this made out from a consideration of storms and plagues, and earthquakes, and such like events. If this then can be done, it is reasonable to think that it is done ; it being altogether agreeable with the goodness and justice of God, and not inconsistent with his government of moral agents : the truth of this observation is equally applicable to nations and individuals ; for there are a thousand accidents in life (so we call them) on which the fortunes of men depend ; and how easy must it be for the power that presides over these accidents, to determine the fate of men, and at the same time to escape their

observation! Though it be unreasonable, because inconsistent with God's government, to expect that he should appear openly in support of good men, yet it is rational to expect, from his providence, *that all things shall work together for the good of those who love him.* This leads to the great difficulty of the case, which relates to the sufferings of good men, and the suspicions which they are apt to entertain of God's kindness to them when under affliction. These complaints to be met with in Scripture are of two sorts: one regards the national calamities of the Jews; the other the sufferings of particular men. The first is made the subject of the Psalmist's complaint in the text, as is probable from the conclusion of the psalm; but however the Psalmist might be affected by the calamities of the people to whom he was so nearly related, yet from the scripture history of this people, we can hardly think their sufferings an objection to Providence: the reason of this explained. But the case of suffering nations in general is rendered so intricate by a great variety of circumstances, that it is hard to form a distinct judgment on it: this case fully made out from the following observations.

I. Vice and immorality naturally tend to destroy nations and governments, which is agreeable to our notion of God's justice and goodness. II. It is also agreeable to our sense of justice and goodness, that nations quite corrupt and degenerate should not be suffered to prosper, and thus spread the contagion of their iniquities. III. These principles allowed, the difficulty is in the application of them to particular cases: which application depending on circumstances which we cannot know, the objection arises, not from the reason of the case, but from our ignorance of it: and where is the wonder that there should be many things in the divine government which we cannot comprehend? This topic enlarged on: whoever therefore enters into this complaint, may say with the Psalmist, *it is my infirmity.* The miseries of which good men have a share in all public calamities next considered. Complaints in this case must be considered as made by others in behalf of those who suffer, or by the sufferers themselves; in the former case, a fact is assumed of which there is no proof, that the sufferers are righteous and innocent: hence it is a great weakness and infirmity to complain against Providence in such a case. The characters of men, in the eye of the world, depend on their outward behavior; and we must judge and act according to this rule, which in God's dealings with mankind it is unsafe to follow, as it may easily misguide us, since the inward principles and sentiments of a man are only known to God, *who searcheth the heart and reins*: this topic enlarged on. But farther, even the sufferings of him who appears to be and is a good man, may give no just occasion for complaint; since good men sometimes want admonitions to awaken their care, and trials to perfect their faith: unless therefore you can judge certainly of the end and purposes of Providence in permitting a good man to suffer, you can never with reason pass sentence on the ways of God. This is also true, when the righteous perish, to the eyes of the world, miserably: of which case the holy martyrs are instances. The truth is, since all men must die, in the time and

manner of death the difference cannot be great; and though it may be hard to reconcile ourselves to death, especially to unnatural and violent death, yet it can really be no loss to a good man to die sooner: and this will account for the case of the righteous, supposed to suffer in the destruction of a wicked nation: they fall like other men, but they fall into the hands of God, who knows how to distinguish their case, and to compensate their miseries. On the principles, therefore, of reason and religion, no objection can lie against divine Providence on account of their sufferings. But who will say of a sufferer complaining in his own behalf, that a righteous man is suffering unjustly? We pray daily to God, *not to enter into judgment with us*: before a man then enters into judgment with God, let him ask himself, whether he has been guilty of no offence to deserve the punishment which he suffers? whether he is sufficiently perfect and approved as to want no trial? As to the suspicions of Providence, and the care of God over us, which have in them a mixture of religious melancholy, they are of another consideration: they are often great bodily infirmities, and deserve compassion and assistance: but these disorders do not usually break out against Providence, but rather turn on the sufferers themselves, who despair of mercy from not thinking themselves worthy of it: they therefore belong not to the present subject.

Conclusion: showing the danger of censuring the methods of God's government: this point enlarged on, from a consideration of human governments. The great works of God, if duly attended to, declare his wisdom, goodness, and power; and the voice of nature speaks in the language of the wise king, *trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding*. Happy are they who listen to this voice! whilst others, full of their own wisdom, daily condemn what they understand not; and if ever they recover their right reason, their first step must be to confess with the Psalmist, *it is my own infirmity*.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

PSALM XCIV. VERSE 19.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.

The old translation renders it thus:

In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul.

It is shown that the two versions of the text give light to each other, as well as that each expresses the sense of the original. *The multitude of sorrows* mentioned in one translation must be peculiar to men of reflection, since they are called in the other *the multitude*

of thoughts. We learn that there are such sorrows from the words of the Preacher, Eccl. i. 18. If we follow his train of thought, and view the life of man under all its circumstances, every step we take will yield a proof of his proposition, &c. But there is no end to such inquiries, nor much reason for them. Those who possess common understanding and common sense, must see and feel the evils that are in the world. The distemper then is plain; but who can cure it? The wisest men in all ages have endeavored without success to find a remedy: but yet the world is not the happier for their inquiries. The futility of their suggestions shown, who advise us to lay hold on the pleasures of life, or to rise above pain and sorrow, as though they were but phantoms of the imagination. We are not however to despair; there is still one remedy for us, unknown to philosophers, and unsought by sensualists: and this we learn from the words of the text. The plain meaning of this is, that religion is our only real support against all human evils: with this no state of life is insupportable, and without it no condition is tolerable. The truth of this assertion examined. There are some natural evils from which no circumstances of life can deliver us: such is the fear of death, which is common to all, and never forsakes us. Divest a man of all the hopes of religion, and of confidence in God, and what has he to mitigate or lessen this evil? If there be any pleasure in the idea of annihilation, it must arise from some very unnatural cause. This cause is sin, which, by making men afraid of judgment, makes them willing to compound to be nothing: this is not curing the fear of death; but is choosing death from dread of a much greater evil. Death does not cease to be a natural evil; nor does the fear of it vanish, when men hope to die for ever rather than come to judgment. Irreligion therefore is a support against the *fear of guilt*, but none against the fear of death. Supposing the unbeliever to be clear of all guilt which may create a fear of future judgment, what comfort has he against the natural fear of death? Exhorting him to cast away all thoughts of death, is but bidding him not to see what is before him; and if blindness and want of thought are securities against the natural evils of life, we must cease to be men, and to exercise our faculties, before we can lose the sense of these evils. When persons reason thus, they confess that they must destroy the man to cure the distemper; and thus they prove either the physician a fool, or the evil incurable. Which of the two is the true case will appear, when we consider whether religion affords a proper remedy against this evil or no. Since death is inevitable, this world can afford no cure for the apprehension of it: the fear of it can be allayed by nothing but the hope of living again; and this is the very hope which religion holds out to us. The man who believes in God and his attributes, cannot suppose that a Being so excellent sent him into the world merely to pass a few years in misery, or merely to live in perpetual fear of going out of it again. Though mortality is common to all creatures, the fear of death is peculiar to man; and this fear, if it serves no purpose beyond this world, would render our condition worse than that of the brutes which perish, and would lead us to

suppose that man alone was created for misery. The creatures made for this world have such fears only as are necessary for their preservation in it; but man, ordained to eternal life, has such desires of life and fears of death, as are necessary to preserve to him that immortality for which he was created, and to lead him to wean himself from the world, and look out for a more certain abiding place. This is the language of God, speaking to us by the fears and hopes of nature: these the comforts that refresh the soul in the multitude of thoughts which distract it. But does not this hope bring with it a great increase of fear? for though the unbeliever may sometimes shrink at the thoughts of death, the believer has the terror of damnation and the consciousness of sin for ever in his sight. This allowed, which is the happier man? Though there is no comparison between the fear of temporal and of eternal death, we are to consider that men cannot prevent this fear of a judgment to come. The irreligious man, though he may lose all hopes of futurity by his irreligion, cannot thereby get rid of the terrors and apprehensions of it; whilst the fear of the religious man, though he may often have reason to fear, is yet a symptom of health; for it leads him to repentance, and to put his trust in God. The religious man, if he fears, must blame himself, and not his religion. The fear of death arises from nature, is common to all, and admits of no cure but through religion. The condition of human life considered, it is shown that we must look beyond this world for solid happiness, and that the only true remedy against the ills of life is a sense of religion, and of the power and goodness of God: possessing which, we shall look with calmness on the calamities of the world, and with pleasure into the scenes of futurity. These are the comforts which, in the multitude of surrounding sorrows, will refresh the soul. As the comforts arising from true religion are our only true support, so the loss of them frequently occasions despair, which is of two kinds: the one has God for its object, but considers him as an all-powerful revengeful being, devoid of mercy; or thinks of itself as a vessel of wrath doomed to destruction: the other, judging hastily from the disorders and afflictions of the world, concludes that there is no God, or that he regards none of these things. The extreme wretchedness of these conditions shown and compared; compared also with the comforts arising from a trust and confidence in God. Two conclusions drawn from what has been said: First, as the evils of life force us to resort to the comforts of religion, they are proofs of God's goodness to us, and agreeable to the wise ends of his Providence; warning us not to set up our rest here, but to remember God, and keep a stedfast eye on the things he has prepared for those who love him: Secondly, since the evils of life cannot be avoided, and can only be cured by the help of religion, what a sad choice we make when we throw from us its comforts! If we add to the terrors of death by renouncing the hopes of futurity, our condition even in this world will be deplorable. The comforts of religion can alone give a relish to the pleasures of this life, and enable us to bear manfully its afflictions. As in the *multitude of our thoughts* we shall find a multitude of sorrows, let us therefore keep God our friend, *whose comforts will refresh our souls.*

DISCOURSE XXVII.

PSALM LXXXVIII. VERSE 15.

While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.

PART I.

As the comforts of true religion are our only support against the calamities of the world, so the terrors of religion, exclusive of these comforts, add weight to all our miseries. But these terrors do not spring naturally from religion; for it is much easier to believe that all we see is chance, than that an all-wise, all-powerful Being has formed us to be miserable, and given us a knowledge of himself that we may live in perpetual fear and distraction: yet this is often the case. Many are rendered unhappy by such fears, which, of all those that are incident to man, are most to be dreaded, and are, as the Psalmist says, *distraction*. A man in this sad state employs his time in finding reasons to justify his fears, and rejects every argument advanced for his consolation. This evil is the more to be lamented, because even virtue and innocence are not always a security against it, but, on the contrary, make us sometimes think ourselves worse than we are. But this wretched state, in which we sustain at once the burden of the righteous as well as of the wicked, is not always the worst of the case; for those who are thus severe with themselves, God will one day judge justly and righteously; whereas, there are others who, not being able to bear these fears, desert religion altogether, and, imagining themselves not good enough to obtain its rewards, do all they can to deserve its punishments. This is the case of those who drown their apprehensions of futurity in vice and intemperance; also in some measure of those who harden their minds against a sense of religion, and reject the belief of a God. This latter irreligious phrenzy is the greater of the two, and more fatal in its consequences: for the weak man who fears God more than he ought, is more worthy of compassion than the bold man who despises him.

In every view the effects of these religious terrors afford us but a melancholy prospect: were they the natural effects of true religion, religion itself would be distraction, and not the reasonable service of a reasonable creature: unless we imagine that he who made us, takes a pleasure in seeing us lose our reason and understanding. The several kinds of these terrors, as well as their real causes, shown; also the true cure for them pointed out, and shown to arise from the following sources: I. From uncertainty in religion: or, II. From false notions of God, and of the honor and worship due to him: or, III. From a conscience wounded with a sense of guilt: or, Lastly, From some accidental infirmities of mind or body. If there be any of the human race so degenerate as to be void of all sense of religion, they

are evidently out of the question : but there are many whose minds are disturbed with a perpetual variety of opinions, like a ship tossed in a tempestuous sea. The concern which every man has in the issue of true religion, is too great to be left to chance and uncertainty : the question is, whether we shall die like the beasts that perish, or rise to immortality. If a man holds his mind in doubt, he divests himself of all the hopes and comforts of religion, and its fears and terrors take possession of his heart ; every thought of which, laboring under such uncertainty, deprives him of all present joy, and gives him no assurance of any hereafter. None can long endure this state, and all hasten to deliver themselves from these torments by various ways ; some by flying to business or pleasure ; others by forcing themselves to fix on some peculiar choice ; and thus some reject all religion, and some take all, without being able to give a reason for what they do. But all these methods, being artificial and without foundation, are overturned by the storms of life, and end in destruction. Let the man who has shut out of his mind all thought and reflection, be but awakened from his lethargy, and all his fears and terrors will return with double force ; and he will find that his attempt to deliver himself from the uncertainties of religion, has deprived him of its hopes and comforts only. So again, the mind of the unbeliever, if he meets with any shock to disturb his peace, will return to its natural state. Whoever in the great concerns of life neglects to consult reason, will ultimately find his reason return, and his second state much worse than the first. The question is, not whether those who prefer religion, notwithstanding all their doubts, are in a safe way, but how they are affected by its fears and terrors. The varieties in this case are so great and many, that the same considerations will not apply to all. Some may believe the being of a God and his providence, but have doubts as to their own state hereafter : this is the best of this case ; here religion is all labor without any benefit ; and no man who does not think it certain of a future reward, finds any security in it ; neither does he meet with any remedy against the natural fear of death, or consolation against the evils and afflictions of life. A man cannot have a true and just notion of God under this persuasion. While men are at ease in their worldly affairs, they may find some satisfaction in this kind of belief ; but distress will shake them, and their religion will be void of comfort.

But the worst of this case is, that when men are religious from fear, they carry their fears with them even to the grave. Not so when religion arises from a just notion of God ; for then every act of it is followed by a contentment which nothing can disturb. He who is religious, not because he knows it is right for him to be so, but because he dreads to be otherwise, is apt to fall into superstition. Hence we see, that some who are most devoutly disposed, are under a perpetual uneasiness of mind. Others, seeing them in this state, conclude that religion is burdensome, and remain satisfied without inquiring into it : it is not easy to determine which is the wiser of the two. The religious man fears God, because he knows that, as a

wise, just, and good Father, he ought to be feared. *His* fear is full of love and reverence; but the fear of the superstitious man is what the Psalmist calls *distraction*.

Hence we see how unsuccessful all these attempts are to cure the fears which arise from doubts in religion. What is to be done then? God has given us reason, and provided the manifold works of nature and providence for its employment. The inquiry into the visible things of God will guide us by a sure clue to the acknowledgement of their invisible Author, and afford us a cure for those terrors which are apt to seize on unsettled minds. The man who thus acquires a just notion of God and his attributes, will find his way to peace, be the darkness about him ever so thick. It is in vain to seek for satisfaction till we know God, and can say in our hearts, *We know in whom we have trusted*. This will make our religion become an holy and reverential fear, unmixed with terror or confusion, and making us wise unto salvation.

II. False notions of God, and of the honor and worship due to him, are another source of religious terror. What has been already said proves how destructive the former are to the peace of mankind; and the latter being derived from these false notions, the same observations are applicable to it: this indeed may be illustrated by historical evidence; viz. the sacrifice of children by their parents in the heathen world, and pilgrimages or processions in the modern; as well as by those unnatural mortifications practised and recommended in some parts of the Christian church. All these are marks of a slavish fear, and of a religion of terror. To this head may be referred the terrors of those who are disappointed in their expectations of worldly success, when they enter the service of God. One who resolves to be good, expects to be prosperous; and if any calamity befalls him, he thinks himself forsaken by God, and all his comforts vanish. Another having fallen into distress, applies to God by prayer; and if he meets with no deliverance, he falls into the same fears, like the Psalmist, who said, *I have cried day and night before thee. Why castest thou off my soul?* &c.

Such persons neither seek nor admit a remedy; but giving themselves up to despair, think they make a sacrifice to God. If true religion taught us to expect temporal prosperity in the service of God, we should rightly ascribe our sufferings to it: but as it does not do so, we ought not to charge God foolishly, and call that unfaithfulness in him, which is in fact the weakness and folly of man.

Now these terrors being difficult of cure, inasmuch as they are not approachable to reason and advice, it is the more incumbent on us to guard against them before they come. As we ought in all conditions of life to limit our hopes and expectations within the bounds of probability; so the same rule should be observed in religion. We ought never to expect more from God than he has expressly promised, or than he may consistently grant. If we exceed these bounds, religion will become our torment, and not our comfort: but *we*, and not religion, will be to blame. We should consider that our

afflictions are trials, and therefore that God will not relieve us from them at our request. In the great end, the salvation of our souls, we can only be disappointed by our own fault. This is our true comfort, and is sufficient to support us under present evils, and to relieve us from the fears of the life to come.

Conclusion : we see that religion, though it may afford an occasion, is not the cause of these terrors. If it be said, that, if there were no sense of religion, there could be no such terrors, we answer, it is equally true that, were there no reason, there would be no such apprehensions ; but we do not blame God for giving us reason : let us not then blame him for giving us religion ; but let us use our reason to search after and know him, and then religion will be our comfort ; and we shall be able to say to ourselves, and declare to others, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

PART II.

Two other kinds of religious terrors, with their causes, remain to be considered : Firstly, those of guilt, which can alone pretend to be consonant to true notions of religion, and to derive themselves justly from it. If there be any truth in religion, it is certain *that God will judge the world in righteousness, &c.* As this belief in virtuous and pious men is attended with peace of mind, so does it necessarily produce *tribulation and anguish in every soul that doth evil*: this point enlarged on. The power of conscience is seen in all men : when we offend wilfully against our sense of good and evil, this never ceases to torment us with the apprehension of future misery, though nature has not furnished us with a distinct knowledge of what that misery will be. These natural fears of conscience are also rational fears : some natural fears may be overcome or lessened, as that of death by the comforts of religion : but the case is quite otherwise in the terrors of guilt ; for the more we advise either with reason or religion, the more certain shall we be that they are no delusions. So hard is it to get rid of these terrors, that they grow too strong for all the assistance that can be administered ; and when this is the case, the sinner becomes a woful spectacle : his days are without pleasure, and his nights without rest : his life is one scene of misery, and he lives only because he is afraid to die.

This misery being so great, no wonder that the invention of man has been racked to find a remedy. Natural conscience and reason make the connexion between guilt and fear : remove these, and the fears will cease : this then is one of the devices of profligate sinners ; and this method may do while there is health and strength ; but time will show the folly of it. Others, incapable of such impiety, give themselves up to excess of vice and intemperance, and find ease in losing their understanding and power of reflection : dreadful are the terrors of guilt, which make men willing to forget themselves, that they may forget their fears ! But these are unnatural methods, and which few only are capable of using : yet the case before us is a very

general one. Let us then consider the more general and rational methods which have been approved for the cure of this evil : these are to be found in the several forms of religion which do or have prevailed in the world : it would be endless to enumerate all the particular methods : it is more important to inquire whether reason and natural religion can furnish a remedy or no.

All methods applicable to this purpose may be reduced to two heads ; external rights, and internal acts of the mind. The first are to be found in great abundance in almost all parts of the world : how they came to be applied to the purposes of religion among the heathen nations is not easily accounted for : their impropriety and insufficiency fully shown. The sacrifices and oblations under the law of Moses were of divine institution ; and whatever virtue they had in them, they had it in consequence of the institution, and the promise annexed to it ; which is a point in which mere natural religion can have no concern. The inefficiency of heathen sacrifices dilated on. The religion of a sinner is an application for pardon ; and is useless unless it can prescribe a proper method for obtaining it : the two attributes of God with which this religion is chiefly concerned, are his justice and mercy : let us suppose then (and it is the very truth) that these both meet in the rules of reason and equity ; or that the judgments of God are righteous judgments, free from any weak inclination to mercy, or any rigorous affectation of justice. Now all that natural religion has to offer unto God in behalf of a sinner, is the sorrow of his heart for what is past, and the purpose of his mind to sin no more. This case considered : sorrow for sin shown to be a very natural passion, but to have no virtue in it : it never was made part of a virtuous man's character, that he lived in fear of the gallows : besides, the generality of mankind are not philosophers ; are not able to look back on their iniquities with such calmness and judgment as are necessary to create a just abhorrence of vice, and restore the pure love of God and virtue. In the case of all human governments, laws are fortified with penalties, that the fear of punishment may keep the subject from offending ; but it is never imagined that all such as discover a fear of punishment shall be spared, after having incurred it by disobedience : how then should reason teach us to think it reasonable in God to do that which we do not think it right to do ourselves ? It may be said that God can, though man cannot, distinguish between the mere fear of punishment and true sorrow for sin : admit this difference, and still the far greater number of sinners will be in a helpless state under natural religion.

The case of one who is thoroughly convinced of the iniquity of sin, and purposes to forsake it, considered. This supposes him to have sinned so as justly to deserve punishment : the question is, whether a sincere alteration of mind can give him security of a pardon : this shown at large not to be the case : misery and happiness are set before us on *some* terms ; and it must be allowed reasonable for God to act on such terms as reason itself, the interpreter of his will, proposes to us : now we come into this world reasonable creatures ; we find ourselves accountable for our behaviour to God, our Maker and

Judge : from which principles it follows that obedience to the moral law is the condition of salvation : how then can we come to the desired consequence, that he who has lived in disobedience shall be saved, if ever he becomes sensible of his sin and folly ? Is this condition implied in any law of the universe ? would it be fit for God to propose ?—would it not enervate all his laws ? How then comes it fit for him to do that which it is unfit he should ever promise or profess ? But you say, we depend on God's equity and goodness : where do you learn this equity ?—how do you find it equitable that men should live by one rule and be judged by another ?—how does reason teach us to think that God and his laws will be satisfied by our sinning and repenting ? But, it may be said, pardon may be expected from a consideration of God's goodness, and our imperfection, weakness, and inability to pay a punctual obedience to his laws : this admitted, the most which it can assure us of is, that we shall be intitled to equitable allowances in the case of imperfect obedience.

On the whole, it does not appear that natural religion has any certain cure for the terrors of guilt : because, the title by obedience being forfeited, there are no certain principles of reason to show how far, and to what instances, God's mercy will extend ; because we can have no certain assurance of ourselves that we are deserving of mercy ; and because the whole matter is too refined to be of use to mankind in general. Hence the wisdom and goodness of God appears, by his proposing a safe and general method of salvation to sinners in the gospel of Christ, the sinner's great charter of pardon. Here then is a safe retreat for the guilty conscience : here God appears, and gives his own unalterable word for our security : here the Son of God is Mediator and high priest, to offer up and sanctify the sorrows of a contrite heart, and to bring down spiritual strength and comfort. After so much done for the security of sinners on God's part, it is lamentable that there should be any who are still incapable of comfort : yet such there are, of whom it was proposed to speak in the last place, whose religious fears arise from accidental disorders of mind or body : this case is not subject to reason, and therefore much cannot be said on it. Whatever be the union of soul and body, so united are they, that the disorders of one often derive themselves from the other ; instances given : hence some religious fears may be ascribed to the body, though properly they belong to the mind : many degrees of madness ; among which a distempered mind on the subject of religious fear may sometimes be reckoned : such persons not chargeable with seeking false comfort, for it is a part of their disease to refuse all comfort : true comfort they are unable to receive : their terrors cannot be imputed as a blemish to religion.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

PSALM XIX. VERSE 14.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

THIS text chosen for the purpose of laying open the scheme of thought running through the whole Psalm, which contains one of the completest and most useful forms of devotion to be found in this part of Scripture. When a king stands before the altar, we are led to expect a royal sacrifice, and songs of praise conceived in no common strain: but here the crown and sceptre are laid by, the royal dignity is forgotten, and the Psalmist's whole mind is employed in contemplating the mighty things of Providence, displayed in the works of nature and of grace.

The piety of this Psalm is so natural and yet so exalted, so plain and so pathetic, that it is hardly possible to read it, without feeling something of the spirit in which it was indited: *The heavens declare the glory of God*, says the pious king, *and the firmament showeth his handy work*, &c. He begins with the works of creation, to magnify the power and wisdom of the Creator: this topic enlarged on. From the mighty scene of nature the Psalmist turns to consider the still greater works of grace. The rational world, as in itself the noblest, so has it obtained the more peculiar care of Providence in preserving and adorning it: this topic enlarged on. The holy Psalmist next sings the triumphs of grace, and the mercy of God in the restoration of mankind: *the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*, &c.

Is it possible, while we praise God for all his mercies, to forget how undeserved they are? Can we help reflecting, that although God has thus secured us with a law that is perfect, with commandments that are pure, with judgments that are true and righteous, yet still our own folly or wickedness is perpetually betraying us into error, or driving us into sins? The Psalmist saw the justness of this reflection; and while his heart glowed with a sense of God's mercies, he turned short on himself with this complaint, *Who can understand his errors?*

This is followed by a fervent prayer to God for pardon and protection: from the prospect of God's power and goodness, and our own weakness and misery, the soul easily melts into sorrow and devotion, lamenting what it feels, and imploring what it wants from the hand which alone is able to save. *O cleanse thou me*, says the royal penitent, *from my secret faults!* secret he calls his faults, not to extenuate them, but with respect to their number; so often had he offended, that his memory was too frail to keep an exact register of his errors: this sense well expressed in our old translation.

But though our sins are very numerous, yet some are distinguished

by uncommon guilt, and will ever be present to our minds when we approach the throne of grace for pardon : these we should particularly lament ; against these we should particularly pray ; and in this strain the Psalmist continues his devotion : *keep thy servant also from presumptuous sins, &c.* Having thus extolled his Maker for his power and mercy, and humbled himself on account of his own iniquities, he closes the scene in the language of the text.

The scheme of thought which runs through this excellent composition, sets in a fine light the beauty of praise and prayer, when duly performed, and accompanied with proper affections of the heart. A scene of misery, drawn by the poet's or the painter's skill, has force to move our pity and compassion ; much less can we stand by unconcerned, when we behold the misery of a soul afflicted for sin, hear the ardent prayers poured forth to God for pardon and mercy, or see the tears which flow from the pangs of a wounded spirit ; for this case, this condition, is our own ; and those tears and cries for mercy should be ours also.

There is the same reason for our being affected with the praises of God, and joining to give glory to his name, when we read the songs of thanksgiving recorded in Scripture ; for his mercies are equally dispensed ; and when we share the blessings, how can we refuse to bear our part in offering up the incense of praise ? This Psalm, how nobly is it penned ! yet there is not one act of providence mentioned, of which *we* do not as largely reap the benefit, and for which we are not as much in duty bound to be thankful, as David himself. Nay, the advantage is on our side : the heavens indeed, and all the works of creation, have remained the same since David's time ; but the Sun of Righteousness himself has risen in our firmament. And can we be silent, who enjoy the fulness of God's mercies, whilst the holy Psalmist speaks with such rapture and pleasure of his laws and judgment : *more desirable, they were to him, than the finest gold ; sweeter than honey, &c.* ; and yet he lived under the Mosaic law, a yoke hard to be borne. Had he known the gospel, and tasted the righteousness of this new law, what strains of holy eloquence would have flowed : this point enlarged on. As our theme has been thus exalted, so should our praises be likewise ; so should the affections of our souls be raised. Our praises are at best a poor tribute for what we have received ; and they have their imperfections even when best performed : and this reflection seems to have led the Psalmist to the words which close his excellent composition : *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.* If these words are considered with a retrospect on what went before, the meaning of them must be what has been suggested : he had been praising God for all his goodness ; had been fervently imploring his protection from the allurements of sin : but what were his prayers and praises in the sight of the Almighty ? what valuable sacrifice could dust and ashes offer up ? Struck with this just sense of humility, he stirs not from the place or subject of his devotion, before he has begged pardon for the imperfection of his sacrifice, and implored God's

acceptance of the poor tribute he was able to pay him. An example worthy of our imitation! and which yet we are hardly worthy enough to imitate: for if we consider our coldness in prayers and praise, our inattention, and the obtrusion of worldly thoughts in our worship of God, we must needs think it the highest presumption to desire his acceptance of such a tribute. This was not the Psalmist's case: and if even his devotion required an excuse to appear before the presence of God, what must become of ours?

But, secondly, the text is capable of a more enlarged sense: the Psalmist had begged mercy for his secret faults; had implored God's aid to preserve him from presumptuous sin: and if the thought be continued to the words of the text, in them he beseeches God to take under his direction likewise the words of his mouth, and the thoughts of his heart, that he might continue blameless in thought, and word, and deed. This sense expresses the greatest regard to virtue and innocence, and a full dependence on God's grace and protection. He knew that the Almighty not only saw his open acts, but spied out all his secret thoughts: he knew that it was in vain to wash his hands in innocency, unless he also purged his heart from evil desires: to God therefore he applied to guard the passage of his heart, and the door of his lips, that nothing unclean might enter into one, or proceed out of the other: this topic enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE XXIX.

LUKE, CHAP. XII. VERSE 21.

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

THE riches of the world being often the fruits of injustice or oppression, and yet being sometimes represented in Scripture as the blessing of God on honest labor, and the reward of goodness, a great fortune being often employed for very ill purposes, and yet being applicable to the best uses in the world, the possession of riches has been either valued or despised, condemned or approved, by moralists and divines, according to the several methods by which they are obtained and employed. *The hand of the diligent, saith Solomon, maketh rich; and again, the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it; yet he has also said, There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* From this observation it may be concluded, that where riches are ill got or ill used, they are a hurt to the owner; but when honestly got and worthily enjoyed, a blessing. It is farther considered what the iniquity is which generally follows a large possession. The crimes of a rich man commonly arise from profuseness or covetousness; the first producing luxury, intempe-

rance ; the second, fraud, oppression, and uncharitableness. A rich man may be free from these vices, and still be wicked ; virtue consisting not merely in the outward act, but in the principles from whence actions flow. The poor are often benefited by the scatterings of the prodigal ; but is he therefore possessed of Christian charity ? The parable of the rich man in Luke xxii. considered, and the true meaning of it inquired into. It is commonly supposed, from our Lord's warning and exhortation in the 15th and 33rd verses, that covetousness was the crime of the rich man, and that the only way to be rich towards God is to sell our goods, and distribute them to the poor : but our Lord had before given a reason against covetousness : *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth* : and the parable was added to illustrate this reason, and not to display the folly or vice of covetousness in general. The rich man is not described in the colors of a covetous man ; neither can we conclude, from the circumstances of the parable, that he was void of charity. It is likewise unreasonable to limit the notion of being rich towards God, to works of charity only : all good works in proportion make us rich towards God. St. Paul speaks of the richness of good works, and St. James of the richness of faith ; and in the text, to be rich to God, signifies particularly to trust in his providence, in opposition to a reliance on treasures of our own heaping up ; as will be shown. The true meaning of the parable next pointed out. When our Saviour exhorted his hearers to beware of covetousness, he added, *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth* : and this he illustrates in the parable. The aim of it then is to show that wealth is no security against the accidents and evils of life, from which nothing can protect us but the good providence of God. The rich man flowing in plenty, imagined that he had in his own hands a security against all evils ; and for his presumptuous folly is reproved by God : *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?* They would fall into the power of another. *So is he*, says our Lord, *who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* These words then are the moral of this parable : to lay up treasures for ourselves, must signify to lay up treasures for our own security ; and to be rich towards God is in opposition to this, and denotes our trust in the Almighty, and our endeavoring to procure his favor and protection ; as knowing that in them only is all our hope and stability. From this we may perceive the great danger attending riches. Poverty constantly reminds us of our dependence on God ; but the man who lives in the midst of plenty is too apt to forget the need which he has of God's assistance : and thus riches steal the heart from God, render it insensible to the duties of religion, and thereby destroy all virtue and holiness. It is this irreligious state of mind, and thus disregard to God, which too generally attend wealth, that have made riches to be so hardly spoken of in Scripture. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches us the dangerous state of great men who live without the fear of God in their hearts ; and the much happier con-

dition of the poor, who have their share of misery in this world, which often leads to glory and immortality hereafter : this is the true aim of the parable. When the rich man applies to Abraham on account of his brethren, he desires that Lazarus might go to them as a prophet, to testify the reality of a future life, lest they should come into the same sad state as himself; plainly showing that *his* condemnation was the effect of irreligion and unbelief. He also tacitly owns his and his brethren's contempt for Moses and the Prophets, in his reply to Abraham : *Nay, but if one went from the dead, they will repent.* From this it is evidently the purport of the parable not to represent the heinousness of any one particular crime for which the rich man suffered, but to show how fatally riches influence the mind to irreligion. A sense of dependence creates in the poor man a fear to offend, and a desire to please God; whilst the rich man, wanting as he thinks nothing from God, grows negligent in religion, and from thence proceeds easily to infidelity. *Love of the world* is said in Scripture to be *enmity with God*; and means not any particular vice, but that temper and disposition produced by riches, which inclines men to disobey God's commands. Our Lord has also the same meaning, when he says, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon, &c.*; i. e. wealth is the rival of God: for if it once gets possession of the mind, it will expel all trust in him, all regard to religion. From the above observations we may learn where a rich man ought to place his guard: he must beware of the pride of self-sufficiency, and learn to know that in riches is no security, and that he wants the protection of heaven as much as the poorest wretch in the world. A rich man who has a proper sense of this, will in consequence have the other virtues proper to his state. We may learn this submission to God from our Saviour's argument: *The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* The utmost riches can do, is to provide food and raiment, and other such necessaries and conveniences of life: but can food ward off death, or changes of raiment stop the approaches of disease? The rich man as well as the beggar must depend on God for health and strength. Since then we must trust in God for our life and strength, had we not better still farther trust in him, and ease ourselves of unreasonable care for the things of life? To trust in God, and rely on his goodness, is to be rich towards God, and is that species which will make us happy in this life, and in that which is to come. By these means we may still enjoy our fortunes, and, as we are taught to pray, *May so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.*

DISCOURSE XXX.

LUKE, CHAP. XXII. VERSES 61, 62.

And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

THE fall of St. Peter would be a very melancholy instance of human infirmity, did it not also set before us a signal example of divine mercy, and a triumph of grace over human weakness. It is shown, from various instances, that St. Peter was superior to the other disciples in natural courage, resolution, and faith. When his Master's life was assaulted, he attempted to defend him, and had it been a cause proper for the decision of the sword, he would have died with glory; but his subsequent conduct, when he found the succors of natural courage useless, and the hopes of defence taken away, plainly shows that this courage is not the true source of confidence in spiritual trials, where they only can conquer whose strength is not of man but of God. Peter afterwards (forgetting his earnest profession to our Saviour) thrice denied his Master; and it was not till *the cock crew, and the Lord turned and looked on him*, that he felt his presumption and baseness, and *wept bitterly*. Not long after this we find him boldly preaching Christ before the high priests and elders, and continuing constant under all trials, until he at length suffered martyrdom. Some reflections suggested by the example of St. Peter. First: Confidence and presumption do not argue stedfastness in religion: the courage natural to some men, which gives them great reliance on themselves, being generally attended with great passions that prevent thought and reflection, is not favorable to true religion, which produces fear of God, and mistrust of ourselves: hence it is that some fierce spirits become despisers of religion. Christian courage, arising from a sure trust in God, and submission to his will, can alone enable us to act with zeal and firmness under all trials and afflictions. Human courage requires the incitements of glory and success: St. Peter's example shows us that the courage of a Christian is very different from that of a natural man; and that we can only hope to overcome trials and temptations through the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. Secondly: St. Peter's example shows us that we are not to expect this assistance against temptations which are of our own seeking: God has commanded us to avoid temptations, and we cannot hope for his assistance when we are acting in disobedience to his commands. When God warns us to flee from temptations, it shows that we are not able to encounter them; and it is clearly intimated that he will assist us by his grace, not to meet, but to avoid them. A notion that we are above all temptations, and may safely venture among them, is a proof of spiritual pride and presumption: this confidence, if it arise from ourselves, is vain; and if from dependence on God's grace,

is unwarranted by Scripture, and contradictory to St. Paul, who admonishes us to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do :* and if that, which is our strength, is likewise an admonition to be cautious and wary, whence can presumption grow? for if the sense of Christ's assistance must teach us to be humble and watchful, what else can encourage presumption and confidence? Let no man therefore think that he is beyond the power of sin, but let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and implore the Almighty, should he bring our virtue to the trial, that he *would with the temptation also make a way for us to escape.* Thirdly: St. Peter's example shows the great advantage of habitual holiness: those whose minds are not hardened by sin are easily led to repentance. St. Peter's repentance was as remarkable as his fall: the eye of his Lord, though full of compassion, was a sufficient rebuke, and struck him with undissembled sorrow. St. Peter's case is that of every good man under the same unhappy circumstances. The hardened sinner despises the calls of conscience; but where there is a sense of virtue and religion, they are easily admitted. The rulers of the Jews, though witnesses of all the wonders attending Christ's death and resurrection, did not repent: one compassionate look recovered St. Peter; but the Jews were not convinced though one rose from the dead. Every man may sin, but those only will repent who seriously endeavor after righteousness: the wicked, as they advance in guilt, gradually subdue conscience, till repentance becomes impossible. Fourthly: The sins of the best men are expiated with the greatest sense of sorrow: those who have been long strangers to religion, easily argue themselves into unconcern for their past iniquities; but we cannot think of ourselves and of God as we ought, without feeling the deepest sorrow for our offences. When men are truly concerned, they naturally vent their grief, without considering what profit their sorrow will yield them, like St. Peter in the text. Some have learned to make a trade of repentance, and equally to balance sin and sorrow. But this is not taught us in the gospel, where we learn only how much it is our interest and duty to obey God, and how base and miserable we are when we offend. When we are truly affected with a sense of our sins, we have the best indication that the spirit of religion is still alive within us, and that we are not given up to a reprobate obdurate heart. Lastly: An observation of more general concern naturally offers itself on a view of this case. The gospel was the work of God; and though we were to receive it by the hands of men, our faith was not to be founded in their strength, but in the wisdom and power of God. The disciples, on whom the weight of it was to rest, were distinguished only by their simplicity and honesty. Our Lord elected them, knowing that the weaker the instruments were, the more evidently the hand of God would appear in the mighty works performed by them. Of all the disciples St. Peter was the most distinguished for spirit and resolution; and we have seen how little able he was of himself to encounter the difficulties that attended the first preaching of the gospel: yet this same man soon after boldly

declares before his judges, that Jesus whom they had slain was exalted to the right hand of God. This mighty difference can be ascribed only to that great Spirit before whose coming the disciples were commanded not to enter on their office. If the gospel had been an imposture; if St. Peter had not seen Christ come from the grave, and had not received the power of the Spirit, what would have induced him thus to expose himself? This plainly shows that the hand of God was with him, and is evidence that our faith is the work of God, and not of man. Thus St. Peter's case, considered as one of instruction to ourselves, affords us much encouragement in our spiritual warfare; and in a more general view, as affecting his character as an Apostle of Christ, yields us great confidence in our faith; since through the weakness of the man we evidently discern the power of God, which wrought effectually with him; so that, knowing in whom we have trusted, we need not be ashamed.

DISCOURSE XXXI.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XIV. VERSES 1, 2.

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

INTRODUCTION, showing how it came to pass that, whilst others were rejoicing in the hopes of having a great prophet among them, Herod alone was perplexed and dismayed; and how, when there were such various accounts of the great personage who had appeared, he alone took up with the most improbable of them all, and for which there was not the least foundation: the reason of this was his guilty conscience: he had murdered a holy man to please a lewd woman; and no sooner did he hear that there was one in the country who wrought miracles, but he concluded that John the Baptist was come from the grave to take vengeance for his iniquities.

The use here made of this passage of holy Scripture, is to set forth such considerations as naturally arise from it, and are applicable for the direction of ourselves.

First, We may observe from hence the great force and efficacy of conscience. It is reasonable to suppose that, if God intended us for his service, and designed us for another state of happiness or misery, according to our present good or ill behavior, he should make himself known to us by some clear manifestation, and should promulge the laws which were to be the rule of our obedience, so that all might know and acknowledge their duty. There are many demonstrations of his existence in the works of nature and the operations of our own minds: but the plainest of these proofs sometimes escape the lower

classes of mankind, who are not in the habit of exercising their reason: but then there is an internal proof of a Deity arising from conscience, and reflection on the good or evil we do, which amounts to the fullest declaration of the power of God, and is the completest promulgation of his law to mankind that can be desired; for it is made at every man's door, nay, in his very heart. As speculation helps us to other proofs, so does it also help some persons to get rid of them: a man of subtle wit may refine on any subject, till there be little left for the mind to rest on with any satisfaction; but this proof of a superior Being, to whom we are accountable, which dwells in every man's breast, no art or subtilty can ever expel. As long as men continue to judge of their actions; as long as good or evil is attended with peace and satisfaction, or anxiety and fear; so long it will be plain that God has not left himself without a witness: this point enlarged on.

Secondly, The moral law is promulged in the same manner to every rational creature: the work of the law is written in the heart, as the conscience beareth witness, and the thoughts, which either accuse or excuse. The promulgation here is stronger than that of any human laws, for it is renewed to every individual; and the meaning is so preserved, that nothing but great skill, joined with little honesty, can pervert or obscure it; for the rebukes of conscience will, sooner or later, restore its true sense to the law, which was darkened by false reason serving the inclinations of a sinful heart. An honest man would grieve to see how the plainest laws have been treated by corrupt casuists; particularly in the obligation of an oath, of which the text furnishes us with an instance: but conscience proves generally an honest casuist, and pulls off the thin disguise. Herod had promised with an oath to give whatever she should ask to the daughter of Herodias: and though he was troubled when she asked the head of John the Baptist, yet, *for his oath's sake, &c. he commanded it to be given her*; calmly dipping his hands in blood, under the comfort of a conscientious regard for his oath! But the scene is quickly changed: Herod is alarmed at the fame of one who wrought miracles in the country; he starts at the news, and cries out, *This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead*. This natural sense of good and evil, guarded against false interpretations by the power of conscience, is a great justification of God's goodness and equity in promulging his laws, and making our duty clear and evident.

Thirdly; We may observe what care the wise Author of our nature has taken, not only to manifest himself and his laws to us, but likewise to secure our obedience, and thereby our eternal welfare. It is thought a disadvantage to religion, that its hopes and fears are so distant, whilst the temptations to sin are so constantly present with us. To balance this, though the rewards and punishments of religion are at such a distance, yet its hopes and fears are always present, and influence our happiness even here, as much or more than any other good or evil that can befall us. As little as a man may think now of the consequence of his iniquity, a very short time, or a very trivial accident, may open a passage to other reflections: this instanced in

the case of Joseph's brethren, who sold him for a slave. Misfortunes may befall the good as well as the bad; but under the same circumstances there is a mighty difference in their sufferings, arising from their different reflections: this topic enlarged on. So that, if we consider the case fairly, we shall find, that though the final rewards of virtue, and punishments of vice, are reserved to another time and place, yet there are such annexed to them here, in the very frame and constitution of our minds, as are sufficient to determine the choice of a reasonable man. Let those who pretend to doubts respecting a future state, consider whether that defect, which they suppose to be in the foundation of religion, is not supplied by what is now spoken of: for, were they ever so certain of a future state, their duty would consist in those very things which their own reason requires of them, and which are necessary to that peace of mind on which all their happiness depends. Concluding exhortation: as we value reason, the comforts of this life, and the glories of the next, let us take heed to preserve innocence and virtue, or that godliness, which, as the Apostle tells us, *is great gain, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.*

DISCOURSE XXXII.

ROMANS, CHAP. VI. VERSE 21.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

THOUGH the hopes introduced by the gospel are fitted to support and encourage virtue and true religion, and are only to be truly enjoyed by those who make a title to them by the innocency of their lives; yet they have been perverted to ill purposes by such as, hating to be reformed by the precepts of the gospel, are willing to put their sins under the protection of its promises: that this policy prevailed early in the church is shown from several passages of St. Paul. To prevent the use which ill-disposed men were ready to make of God's goodness to sinners, who imagine their iniquities to be privileged, since grace had so abounded; the Apostle in this chapter enters into the question, whether the hopes of the gospel are reconcileable to a continuance in sin; showing by various arguments the complete inconsistency of a state of grace and a state of sin; from whence he appeals to conscience and reason against the presumptuous conceit that the Son of God could be the minister of sin, or that the gospel could countenance iniquities of which nature was ever ashamed, and which the common reason of mankind condemned: *What fruit had ye in those things whercof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

These words suggest to our consideration several particulars. I. That the shame and remorse which attend on sin and guilt, arise from natural impressions on the mind of man. Experience teaches us that we can no more direct by our choice the sensations of our mind than we can those of the body: when the fire burns, flesh and blood must feel pain; and a rational mind, compelled to act against its own conviction, must ever be afflicted. These natural connexions are unalterably fixed by the Author of nature, to be the means of our preservation: this point enlarged on. Hence it is evident that the mental pain and grief which we suffer from a sense of having done ill, flow from the constitution of our nature, as we are rational agents: nor can there be a stronger argument of God's utter aversion to sin, than his having given us such a nature, that we cannot be reconciled to it ourselves: hence it is that profligate sinners fly to any excess that may help them to forget themselves, and hide them from the light of reason: but there is no remedy: as long as we have the power of thinking, so long must we think ill of ourselves when we do ill: the only cure for such uneasiness is to live without thought; for we can never enjoy the happiness of a brute, till we have sunk into the same degree of understanding.

It may indeed be said that there have been some profligate sinners who have gone through life without discovering any uneasiness on account of their guilt: so there have been instances of men who could play with fire without showing any sense of pain: but neither will the art of one be an argument against the sense of feeling, nor the obduracy of the other be a proof against the natural sense of a rational mind: this point enlarged and illustrated.

II. The expectation of punishment for sin is the result of the reason given to us: *the end of those things is death*. There are no certain principles from which we can infer the sort of punishment designed by God for sinners: reason has left us in the dark, and revelation has not cleared up this secret. The representations of Scripture on this head are metaphorical; the images strong and full of horror, leading to the certain conclusion that endless misery will be the lot of the wicked; but they do not satisfy the curiosity of inquisitive persons. The opinions of all nations on this subject prove the natural expectation of punishment for iniquity; nor does it signify if men have entertained mistaken notions about the kind of it: this point enlarged on. The power of conscience, and the fear which every sinner feels, are great evidences of the general expectation of judgment to come. But this argument need not be pressed; the fact of this expectation is hardly disputed: we are however told that it is the effect of weakness and superstition. The question then is, whether this common sense of nature is derived from infirmity of mind, or whether it is the result of right reason.

If the former of these opinions be a just one, another conclusion must be allowed, namely, that sin shall not be punished. Now whatever can be said in maintenance of this assertion, must resolve itself into one or other of these propositions; either that sin does not deserve to be punished; or that God has no means of punishing it.

As to the first, no one has yet been found an advocate for wickedness: even those who seem unwilling to admit a state of future rewards and punishments, never use the plea that sin deserves no punishment; but the only reason why they think it will not be punished, is, because they have no notion of a future state. Could they be persuaded of this, they would have no doubt regarding the sinner's condition in it. The truth then of this maxim being supposed, viz. that sin *is deserving* of punishment, we are led to the conclusion that sin *shall be* punished: for what reason can be assigned why that should not be done which reason tells us is fit to be done? Why should God act contrary to what he leads us to suppose agreeable to his wisdom and justice? The latter proposition therefore is considered, viz. whether God has any means of punishing sin: and it is on this that all hopes of impunity are built; not that all who hope for impunity are so absurd as to suppose that God wants the power to punish, but they conceive that man has no relation to any state of being except in this life only; and that when he dies, all his hopes and fears die with him. But by what principles of reason are men led into this supposition? That God might have provided another state after this, a state also of retribution, no one can doubt, who believes in the being of a God. If he has ordered it otherwise, it was because it seemed best to his wisdom: but how could it seem best to leave no means of making a distinction between virtue and vice, by suitable rewards and punishments, and yet to teach us, by the light of reason, that it is highly suitable to his wisdom and justice to make such distinction? That he does not make it in this world is evident: if then nothing remains hereafter, there is no justice with the Most High; the wicked have the advantage, and the righteous hath *cleansed his heart in vain*. But can this be agreeable to his wisdom, who himself hath taught us to think it disagreeable to all the rules of reason and justice? Those who think so, may perhaps have some notion of an overruling fate and necessity; or if they go so far as to think there is a rational being, who is the author and governor of all things, yet can they hardly allow him any thing but will, and power, and understanding; for they leave no room for the exercise of moral attributes. If we can draw any conclusion from our own feelings, we are accountable creatures: our natural notions of God point him out as our judge: on our own part we find reason and freedom, which make us fit subjects for judgment; on the part of God we find wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and every other perfection: and if after all we are not to be judged, there must be something very wrong in these expectations of mankind. But there is one step more to take, and to show,

III. That these common notions are the foundation of all religion, and must be supposed and admitted in revealed religion, and therefore cannot be contradicted by it.

Some there have been, who, finding no hopes for impunity to sinners under the light of reason and nature, have taken shelter in revelation; not desiring to correct and reform their vices, but to enjoy them, and yet to hide them from the wrath to come: these are great

extollers of the mercy of God in the gospel; great assertors of the unbounded merits of Christ's blood; making it a reproach to those who teach that the hopes of Christians can be frustrated after his atonement; imagining that by this they do honor to God, and pay great regard to their redeemer. But would they consider, they would find that they are offering to God the sacrifice of fools, whilst they divest him of all his other moral attributes in compliment to his mercy; representing him as a good-natured indolent being, unconcerned at what is going on, and prepared equally to receive the righteous and the sinner. This topic enlarged on: and the same may be said of the Redeemer. Not necessary to show at length how inconsistent these notions are with the true doctrine of the gospel: all its precepts, all its representations, all the hopes and fears proposed to Christians, teach us a different lesson, and declare, *that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* This is the gospel doctrine; nor can a true revelation possibly teach otherwise; for God cannot contradict himself, nor gainsay by his prophets that common light of reason which he planted in men to be their guide: natural religion is the foundation of revelation, which may supply the defects of nature, but can never overthrow its established principles: this topic enlarged on. The conclusion is, that without holiness no man shall see God; that Christ, by redeeming us from sin itself, redeemed us from the punishment of sin; and if we refuse the redemption from sin, we never can partake of the redemption from its punishment, &c.

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XIX. VERSE 27.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowlege.

By *the words of knowlege* we are to understand the principles and dictates of virtue and religion: this being admitted, the advice in the text amounts to this; that we should guard against the arts of such as set up for teachers of infidelity and irreligion. These teachers are spoken of, not as men of excessive profligacy and guilt, but as instructors and reasoners against *the words of knowlege.* Two things on this subject recommended to our consideration: I. The several temptations which men lie under to listen to such instructors: II. The great danger there is in listening to them. First: It is one step towards security to see the dangers we are exposed to, that we may double our diligence against surprise. It will be of service to us therefore to know the weaknesses of our own minds, and understand the prejudices and passions which conspire to give us up to those who wish our ruin. Infidelity has no rewards or punishments

to bestow : it affords at best but a very hopeless and comfortless prospect, and the passion which some men have to maintain and propagate it is surprising : wicked men indeed are under some temptation to wish well to its cause, because it sets them free from the dread of futurity and the rebukes of conscience : since then the fears and apprehensions of guilt are the strong motives to infidelity, the innocence of the heart is absolutely necessary to preserve the freedom of the mind ; which, if duly weighed, is a good reason why a man, as long as he finds himself swayed by appetite and the pleasures of vice, should suspect his own judgment.

We should also consider that, in the unhappy circumstances of sin and guilt, religion opens to us a much safer and more certain retreat than infidelity can afford, and will far more effectually extinguish our fears and restore our tranquillity ; for after all our pains taken to subdue the belief of an overruling power and a future state of retribution, we cannot be secure of enjoying long the comforts arising from infidelity in this life ; for we may not always have strength enough, in the loss of health or fortune, to subdue natural sense and reason : this topic enlarged on. Since then the hopes which sinners entertain from unbelief even in this world are so very uncertain, and since they cannot alter their condition, except for the worse, in the life to come, it must needs be allowed that they make a bad choice when they sacrifice the powers of the mind to the passions of the heart.

But vice is not the only root from which infidelity springs : it sometimes happens that, whilst we act with a superiority to the vanities of the world and the allurements of pleasure, reason is betrayed by the vanity of our hearts, and sinks under the pride and affectation of knowledge. He who would appear to know more than other men, is ready to contradict the sense and reason of all men ; as he who is desirous of being thought more courageous than others, is ready to fight with every one he meets : and to this temptation many sacrifice the innocence of their minds, whilst they wish to recommend themselves to the world as persons of more than ordinary discernment.

He who sits down to examine truth and search after real knowledge, will equally sift all his opinions ; will reject none that he has been long possessed of without good reason ; will admit no new ones without sufficient authority and weight of argument. But when men aim at being thought more knowing than others, and labor only to spread an opinion of their own sagacity, they can have no satisfaction in discovering the truth and reasonableness of any opinion that is commonly received in the world : for how will they appear wiser than other men by professing to believe what others believe as well as they ? This point enlarged on : other sciences are the attainments of only a small part of mankind ; and to triumph over their errors is at best but a limited glory ; whereas, religion being the general persuasion of the world, to conquer in this cause looks like universal monarchy, &c. : and thus weak and vain men often make profession of greater infidelity than in truth they are guilty of. Let this case be considered well, in the instances which we meet with ; and let the folly of others teach us wisdom.

Another temptation is a kind of false shame, which often, in young people especially, prevails over the fear of God and the sense of religion. When they find what honor is often paid to unbelievers, while religion is scoffed at as ignorance and superstition, they grow ashamed of their profession, and by degrees are hardened so far as to deny their God; and encouraged by example and precept, to brave his vengeance.

These are the most common temptations that betray men to *those instructors which cause to err from the words of knowledge*. How it concerns us to guard against them, will appear when we consider, Secondly, The danger there is in listening to them.

And here those only are addressed who have not yet made shipwreck of their reason and conscience; for though the hardened unbelievers are in greatest danger, yet they are farthest removed from the power of conviction. It is unpardonable folly and perverseness for men to forsake religion out of vanity, as if irreligion were a mark of honor and distinction. To fear where there is just cause of fear, where our souls and eternal happiness are at stake, is not below the dignity of a man. To outbrave God and his justice is a sad instance of courage. We must answer for the vanity of our reasoning as well as for the vanity of our pleasures: if we take pains to invent reasoning to oppose the plain evidences which God has given us of his being and power, we shall not go unpunished: if we debase reason, which was given us for a guide, and force it to submit to our unruly appetites, much more shall we be liable to the vengeance of Heaven.

How far men of irreligious lives and principles are chargeable with these abuses they can best inform themselves: and surely the hopes of immortality and fears of hell should drive them to ask the question. If there really be a future state of retribution, both the punishments and the rewards must be very inconsiderable indeed not to make it worth a man's while to live up to the conditions of being happy. Allowing the punishment less than it really will be, still it must in all cases exceed the advantage gained by transgressing the law; or else there would be encouragement for men to offend: therefore we may be sure that God, who is the wisest of lawgivers, has taken such care to guard his laws and statutes, that there shall be no encouragement to offenders: so that all sinners must be guilty of folly in choosing the sin with the punishment, when this must of necessity exceed the advantage of sinning.

These are the easiest terms that sinners can flatter themselves with; and yet, even on this view, the pleasures of sin will prove a dear bargain. But should the punishments of another life be what we have reason to fear they will be, words cannot express the folly of sin. Short are our days in this world; and should religion prove a deceit, we know the worst of it: it is an error for which we cannot suffer after death; nor will the infidels be able to reproach us with our mistake: but should our hopes and their fears prove true, what miserable torments must they then undergo! this subject enlarged on. Let us consider therefore, when we judge of religion, that something more

depends on our choice than the credit of our judgment and the opinion of the world. Let us trust ourselves with ourselves, and retreat from the influence of dissolute companions, and take the advice of the Psalmist, *stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.*

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

LUKE, CHAP. XVI. VERSE 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

IT is shown that in matters of reason, as well as in objects of sense, we may at first be deceived by the fair appearance of things which on examination prove worthless. This seems to be the case of the argument in which the text is concerned. Who would not think that the coming of one from the dead would effectually convince an unbeliever? Yet we are told by our Saviour it would have no effect: he who is not convinced by the evidence which God has already given of a future judgment, *would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* Our Saviour does not mean to deny that the coming of one from the dead is an evidence of a future state; but that they who would not submit to the authority of a divine revelation, would not submit to this. The reason of this judgment is considered: I. If the evidence of revelation be in itself greater and more convincing than the evidence given by one from the dead could possibly be, then there is no reason to expect that he who rejects the greater should submit to the less authority: II. If the unbeliever's objections to the authority of revelation be stronger against the authority of one coming from the dead, he cannot pass over that in one case which he stumbles at in the other: III. If unbelief arises from the corruption of a mind which hates to be reformed, and rejects the evidence because it will not admit the doctrine, not the doctrine because it cannot admit the evidence; in this case all proofs will be alike; and it is on this that our Saviour chiefly grounds his judgment. In the first place, as the authority of a dead man is no more than that of a traveller who relates things of countries through which he has passed, how are we sure that he will not deceive us? are we even sure that it is impossible for any being of the other world to personate a dead man whom we formerly knew? To prove that there is another world, and beings belonging to it, is not proving a future state, that is, a world in which dead men shall live. Christ's resurrection was not merely the apparition of a dead man: he foretold the time and circumstances of it, and put the proof of his mission and doctrine on its performance. His resurrection therefore became a proof that the doctrine he taught was the doctrine of him who had

power to raise the dead ; so that the authority of our Saviour's word after his resurrection, being the authority of him who has power to raise the dead, must be greater than that of any man dead or living ; and proves a commission from the highest power to teach the world ; which cannot be proved merely by the appearance of one from the dead. To the question why Lazarus and the rest did not publish their knowledge of the other world, it may be answered, they were merely passive in their resurrection, and brought no more authority from the grave than they carried to it, and therefore had no right to set up for teachers : in proof of Christ's resurrection, there was warning given to expect it ; and the duration and frequency of his appearance after he had risen, enabled those who saw him to become familiar with it, and qualified them to judge rightly of what they heard and saw ; and as this appearance was in consequence of his own prediction, we cannot doubt that it was a true and proper resurrection of his body ; it being easier to imagine that he should rise to fulfil his prediction, than that, being really dead, he should contrive and execute any thing that should seem to fulfil it. To satisfy those who affirm that they cannot depend on the credit of others in a case of this nature, it is considered, whether he who believes on the credit of a private apparition to himself, believes on a surer evidence than he who receives the gospel account on that evidence on which it at present stands : it is shown that the very surprise and fright that would be caused by our seeing one come from the dead, would be a great reason for us to suspect afterwards the report which our senses made of what they had seen—thus it was with those who saw our Lord on his first appearance ; nor could any thing but his staying so long with them have cured this, and qualified them to judge for themselves, or report to others with authority what they saw : we may therefore judge whether it is safer to believe the concurring testimony of many persons in their right senses so well qualified to judge, or rely on ourselves when we were hardly masters of our senses. The question, however, is not whether we can be convinced of the fact of such an appearance, but whether we should in that case have a better foundation for faith and religion than the present revelation affords ? This is answered by our Saviour in the text, and will appear by considering, Secondly, That the objections of unbelievers to the authority of revelation will lie stronger against the authority of one coming from the dead. Whatever has been said against the authority of the gospel revelation, will be applicable also to this kind of it : consequently those who on the foot of natural religion object to the doctrine of the gospel, must much more object to the authority of one coming from the dead. With the atheist, who stands out against the evidence of all nature, no inferior evidence can weigh ; he would as easily account for one dead man's recovering life and motion, as he does for the life and motion of so many men whom he daily sees. But what can an unprejudiced person make of this evidence, allowing the dead man's appearance to be real, and his design honest ? Should he tell us that the Christian faith is true, we should have less reason to believe him than we have to believe Christ

and his Apostles; and should an unbeliever receive the gospel on such evidence, on what would he rest his faith? The mission of Christ is proved by the completion of prophecies, by the signs and wonders which he wrought by the hand of God, and by his resurrection. We can appeal to the known history of the founders of our religion, in proof of their freedom from worldly cunning and policy. But how can we support the suspected credit of one from the dead? Unless we can prove that there are no evil spirits, or no evil men dead, we cannot clear him from suspicion. Thus, if we cannot digest the evidence of the gospel, in vain do we call for help from the other world. The truth of our Saviour's words will farther appear by considering, Thirdly, The temper of infidelity: where unbelief arises from a corrupt mind, which rejects the evidence from hatred of the doctrine, all proofs will be alike; and this is the case our Lord seems to have had in view: for the request to Abraham was made in behalf of men who lived wantonly and luxuriously. Abraham answers, that they had already sufficient evidence of these things if they would make use of it; and the rich man still insists, *but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent*: then follows the text, which is the last resolution of this case. We have reason to suspect that no new lights or evidences would be effectual in reclaiming hardened sinners: they might be terrified for a time; but when the infidel had conquered his own fears, he would conclude that all religion is made up of that fear which he felt himself, and which others cannot so manfully get rid of: that it is in the nature of man to withstand such evidences, may be learned from the example of Pharoah, and of the guards who were eye-witnesses of our Lord's resurrection. It is shown that belief does not imply obedience, as all sinners are not infidels; and why should obedience be the consequence of belief in one case more than another? The strongest arguments for obedience are afforded by the gospel; therefore he who believes and yet disobeys it, will not be reformed by any other evidence: so that our Saviour's judgment is just with regard to all infidels and sinners. God having once sent his own Son from the dead to admonish us, has already given a sufficient evidence of all things which we are concerned to know; and all other intercourse with the other world would be useless.

DISCOURSE XXXV.

PSALM XIX. VERSE 12.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.

SELF-EXAMINATION, the only method of obtaining a distinct knowledge of our sins: hence the frequency of exhortation to undertake

it. As in temporal concerns, men whose prodigality has reduced them to extreme poverty and distress, find themselves unable to state their accounts, and come to an exact knowledge of their affairs; so in spiritual matters, those that have been long acquainted with vice and strangers to reflection, when they begin seriously to repent, know in general that they have a heavy weight of sin on their souls, though the particulars they are able to recollect fall very short of the sense which they have of their condition: thus, not being able to satisfy themselves that their repentance is perfect, they do not always enjoy that peace and tranquillity which they expected as the fruit of it.

The holy Psalmist had this sense of his condition when he expressed himself in the words of the text, and addressed God as his only refuge. The great comfort to be derived from God's wisdom, in setting before us the examples of good men in their lowest and most imperfect state, considered. The words of the text, considered without regard to the person who spoke them, do not admit of such consolatory conclusions, as when they are considered to have been uttered by David, of whose repentance and acceptance we do not doubt; for in this point of view they afford us two propositions: I. That the security and efficacy of repentance do not depend on a particular recollection of all our errors: II. That for such errors as we cannot recollect, a general confession and repentance will be sufficient.

These two propositions contain the plain doctrine of the text: but that we may not mistake in the application of it to ourselves, and suppose that a wilful ignorance of our sins will insure forgiveness, it is necessary to examine the nature of what may fairly be called *secret sins*. And—I. We may reckon among them those for which our liturgy has taught us to ask repentance and forgiveness, under the general names of negligences and ignorances; for neglect of our duty, and negligence in discharging it, are two different things; the one arising from aversion to the work, and consent of the mind,—the other from want of thought and resolution. The best men often complain that, in the midst of their devotion, some chance object, some favorite care, diverts their attention, and distracts their thoughts: offences of this kind are so frequent in every part of our duty, that it is impossible to bring every single act to our remembrance. Secondly; Sins of ignorance are likewise secret sins: *where there is no law*, says the Apostle, *there is no transgression*. But when men venture boldly on actions, conscious that they know not whether they are going right or wrong, their sin is presumption, and not ignorance: repentance for this not to be reckoned with that for our secret sins: for if a man thinks virtue and vice so indifferent, that he may venture to follow them blindfold, this is a proof that his heart is not right with God. But though this ignorance may be presumptuous and incur responsibility, the follies and sins it leads to may be unknown to us; and these, though aggravated by circumstances, can only be lamented under the character of *secret sins*. Thirdly, Nothing shows corruption of heart more than confirmed habits of sinning; and yet in this perfection of vice we lose the very sense of sin: instance of this effect

of habit in profane swearers : but when such sinners call themselves to judgment, they can only tell that they have grievously offended : they know not the measure of their iniquity, nor the aggravations of it : the utmost therefore that a penitent in this case can do is to lament the offences of his heart and tongue, and pray that God would blot out the remembrance of them.

Fourthly, The Apostle has advised us *not to be partakers of other men's sins* ; which shows that when others sin through our example or encouragement, we share their guilt. How far our influence in this respect extends, is more than we can tell, yet not more than we shall answer for. The higher our station and the greater our authority, the more reason have we to fear being involved in this kind of guilt. Power, honor, and riches contrasted with this (in a digression) as great means of salvation in the hands of a wise man.

Fifthly, The great measure of folly and vanity and self-love in our best actions is what seldom falls under our notice ; and yet who is free from such errors ? How much of our virtue and religion arises from regard to our own credit and reputation ? and when we are most eager in pursuit of some good end, how often are we only gratifying some private passion ? To this account may be added the many vain imaginations which are conceived in the heart, though never brought into action : as those of the ambitious man ; of the sensualist ; and of the revengeful man. Lastly, When we come to repent of our sins, many of them may be secret to us merely through the weakness and imperfection of memory : these, although we may have been heretofore conscious of them, are with respect to our repentance as secret as if we had never known them, and can only be confessed and lamented in general terms. These then are the several kinds of our secret sins : of all which there is one general character, that they are such as we cannot, not such as we will not, remember.

II. In the second place we are to consider what guilt we contract by our secret sins, lest it should be thought that the sins which escape our knowledge ought not to burden our conscience. Where there is no guilt, there needs no remission ; and if we cannot be justly charged with our secret sins, there is no sense in the Psalmist's petition, *cleanse thou me from my secret faults* : in another place also he tells us that God *sets our secret sins in the light of his countenance*. In the instances already given we may observe that our secret sins are sometimes the most heinous : thus it is in the case of habitual sins ; we are too well acquainted with them to take notice of them : but shall this plead their excuse ? shall only fearful sinners and modest beginners be punished, whilst that iniquity which is become void of shame and sense of sin escapes judgment ? This is not consistent with any rule of equity. The same might be made to appear in other instances : for every *idle word*, how soon soever it slips out of the memory, for every vain imagination, how soon soever it vanishes away, we shall *give an account at the day of judgment* : for the guilt of sin arises not from the power of our memory, and is

extinguished not by the weakness of it. If we forget, there is One before whom our iniquities are ever present.

Conclusion : since many of our sins are secret to us, they can only be repented of in general ; and since many are very heinous, they must be repented of seriously. By general repentance then we are not to understand a slight or superficial repentance only. The petition of the Psalmist proceeded from a heart deeply affected with the sense of its guilt, and does not express the sentiments of one who was excusing or lessening his faults.

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XII. VERSE 36.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

PART I.

IT is evident from the context, that our Saviour intended to distinguish between the heinous offences of blasphemy, perjury, &c. and the idle words mentioned in the text. Of these there are many sorts. First ; Such as proceed from the vanity and deceitfulness of men's minds, the empty boastings or pretences of pride, and the sly insinuations of craft and hypocrisy. Secondly ; Reports which often proceed from mere curiosity, and a desire of hearing and telling news, to the injury of our neighbor's credit or reputation. Thirdly ; Such words as are the impure conceptions of a polluted mind, which often pass for wit among those who *make a mock of sin*. Lastly ; Useless and insignificant words, which comprehend great part of the conversation of those who aim at nothing but present amusements, unworthy of a rational creature. These are the common sins of speech, comprehended under the general term of *idle words*, which, if persisted in, may prove of dangerous consequence to our souls. What these sins are, is represented under the several heads above mentioned.

I. *Idle words*, proceeding from vanity or deceit, will comprehend the pretences and plausible speeches of the cunning, and the empty boastings of the vain-glorious man. In both these cases there is a want of truth, on which we ought to build whatever we say one to another. Truth and falsehood have the relation to each other of good and evil ; and this is an essential difference ; so that there always is evil where there is not truth : many nice cases have been put on this question, whether we are always obliged to speak the truth ? and though some have maintained that truth may be dispensed with when it is evidently for our neighbor's benefit that he

should be kept in ignorance, yet it never was pretended that vanity or cunning would excuse the want of it. Our Saviour tells us that evil things proceed from an evil heart: now the evil that lies at the heart of a vain-glorious man is pride. There is no attempt in which men are more generally unsuccessful than in that of praising and extolling themselves: yet in spite of the sin and folly and disappointment that attend on it, pride will have its work; and wherever this evil has rooted itself in the heart, it will produce such sin and folly in the mouth as will be remembered at the day of judgment.

But vanity may be sometimes the vice of men otherwise good and virtuous; yet even theirs are, in this case, *idle words*; and men must answer for the praise and glory which they assume to themselves. It is dangerous at all times to speak of ourselves; if we have done ill, to excuse or deny it inflames the account; if we have done well, our Saviour tells us that we must call ourselves unprofitable servants. Nor is there much difference between a boasting pride and an affected humility, which lets others know what good we have done by lessening and discommending that which we think they ought to admire: so that in this respect the rule of prudence and the rule of virtue are coincident, and the less we talk of ourselves the better.

In the next degree is placed cunning and artifice, which make men very forgetful of the respect that is due to truth, whilst they direct their speech to serve some design of their own. There are many degrees of this cunning; that which aims at making a prize of the ignorance of others needs not be mentioned here. But the charge of *idle words* lies against a cunning less desperate and malicious, which distinguishes such men as deceive you by a show of kindness which is not real: he who courts and caresses all that come near him, must allow himself a great latitude, and often be guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy. The man of general civility and address destroys the credit of language: but the advantage he has is from the folly and self-love of mankind; for most men cannot suppose a man insincere who commends and extols them.

But what account shall a man give of himself for living perpetually in a disguise; for deceiving all about him, and using the speech that God gave him for better purposes, in imposing on the folly and weakness of mankind? An account he must give, unless he can show the use and benefit of his fair speeches: this point enlarged on. But,

II. *Idle words* may comprehend the reports of envy and malice. A distinction made under this head between those who invent and contrive wicked stories to the scandal and defamation of their neighbor, and those who credulously take them up when so invented, and spread them. The first is a vice that the text has no name for: it exceeds all that can be meant by *idle words*, and must be numbered with blacker crimes. But even to believe without sufficient ground, or to report, when we do believe, the ill we hear of others, cannot be divested of malice and envy: it is a mark of an evil disposition; and the restlessness of some minds to disburden themselves of an ill report which they have picked up, shows their readiness to do this work and drudgery of the devil; but when men spread such stories with plea-

sure, and rejoice in the scandal, then they share the contriver's malice or envy, and are to be ranked with him in guilt.

But there are others who, out of an itch of knowing and talking of other people's concerns, have their heads and tongues continually running on the affairs of their neighbors; often doing much mischief without being chargeable with any malice or design to injure; but *in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin*; and when men's curiosity leads them beyond their proper sphere, they must answer for the mischief they do: it is not enough that we mean to do no ill; it must be our care and study to do none. Were it not for such busy talking creatures, it would not be worth a malicious man's while to invent a story of his enemy. God has provided every man with business proper to employ his time: what we can spare from the necessary cares of life, and those relaxations and amusements which nature requires, is little enough to lay out on the thoughts of eternity; nor are there ever wanting opportunities of doing good, in which all active spirits might be usefully employed: this point enlarged on.

III. *Idle words* may imply such as are the product of an idle and impure mind, &c. There is nothing more directly contrary to morality and good manners, than the liberty which some men take of entertaining company with subjects unfit for the mouth and ears of a Christian. Whether this be an employment which even common sense and reason should submit to, any one who is not quite lost to shame may determine. It is a great argument of the impurity of men's minds, when things of this nature lie uppermost, and are always at their tongue's end: and therefore for their own sakes they should confine such thoughts.

This impudent wit, in all persons abominable; is never more truly infamous than when found in company with grey hairs; when men seem to be feeding on the dregs of the pollutions of their youth, when the decay of nature calls for other thoughts. In calling these *idle words*, the expression does not reach to the heinousness of the crime; for nothing is more contrary to the modesty and purity of our holy religion, nothing more destructive of morality, than this lewd wit, whose present glory is shame, and whose future reward shall be confusion.

If men have the power of clothing their unchaste thoughts in cleanly language, it cannot be justly pleaded in mitigation of their crime; this possibly may be to sin more like a gentleman, but it carries an aggravation with it that cannot easily be forgiven. To improve on vice, and take off that mark of infamy which God has set on it, is the highest abuse of reason and sense. To make lewdness agreeable, and recommend it by an artful address and pleasant wit, what is it but to convey the poison in a precious mixture, that may tempt the palate to admit it? Modesty is the outguard of virtue, and gives notice of the approach of vice: and when lewdness is so dressed up as to pass unsuspected, it proves but the more dangerous enemy within; therefore we must expect to give a severe account for the time and words which we spend in this diversion, to that Judge *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*.

PART II.

Fourth division of the first part of this Discourse referred to. By *idle words* we may understand useless and insignificant words; which are spent to no great purpose either good or bad.

This sense will comprehend a great part of the conversation of the world, which aims at nothing but present amusement. Now it is worth while to inquire what guilt a man contracts by this kind of *idle words*. To discover whether useless though innocent conversation comes within the judgment of the text, the following particulars must be considered: I. The scope of our Saviour's argument in this place: II. The end and design of speech, which is the gift of God to mankind: III. The nature of man in general, and the different degrees of sense and understanding given to different men.

First, As to the scope of our Saviour's argument, it is evident that he descends from the greater to the less evils of speech; from blasphemy he comes to the other evils which are generated in the heart, and from thence derived to the tongue. The form with which the words of the text are introduced, looks as if they were intended as an addition and improvement to the old doctrines of the law. The Jews knew that perjuries, blasphemies, and such like crimes, would be punished; and therefore our Saviour merely mentions them without speaking of the punishment: then he adds, *but I say unto you*, which emphatical words denote the doctrine to be new, and founded on his authority: which same form is used in Matt. ch. v. and in other instances, where Christ enlarges our duty, and debars us from the least approaches to vice. Allowing this to be the case in the text, it follows that we have therein a rule implied for the government of Christian conversation, of the greatest purity, restraining us not only from all evil, but from the very appearance of it; from every thing with the serious demeanor required in a Christian; from such faults as bear no greater proportion to the evil things mentioned before the text, than anger does to murder, or a wanton look to adultery.

The text thus understood leads us to inquire, what are these faults and levities of speech that are misbecoming a disciple of the gospel, as being inconsistent with a Christian frame of mind? for though it may not be our duty always to be meditating on the mystery of our redemption and the surprising love of God, yet ought we to preserve a consistency of character, *in conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ*: for we should consider that we are adopted sons of God, and candidates for heaven; and should such spend their time in uttering foolish jests, and entertaining idle minds with idle talk, till they are lost in a forgetfulness of God and themselves?

The part of a common wit or jester does not well become a man, much less a Christian: it is below the dignity of reason; still more so, when reason is improved by grace: and to this purpose is

St. Paul's prohibition, when he forbids all *foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient*. What our translation renders *jesting*, the original styles *εὐτραπείλια*, which Aristotle reckons among his virtues, and defines it to be the *habit of jesting handsomely*. So that what passed in the heathen world for a virtue is forbidden to Christians; and it is probable that our Saviour, by *idle words*, meant those jests which were so delighted in and bore so good a character: this subject enlarged on.

Secondly, With regard to the end and design of speech, which is the gift of God to mankind.

Speech was given us for the communication of our thoughts to each other: but though it be given for this purpose, yet *all* our thoughts are not to be disclosed as fit objects of discourse: we must judge what are proper, and must be answerable for the government of our tongues. A man may be innocent in having some thoughts in his mind, which he cannot innocently disclose; for though he cannot always choose his thoughts, he may choose what he will talk of. As to the proper ends of speech we may reason thus: God has made us reasonable creatures and fitted us for his service, and therefore expects a reasonable service from us: as he has given us all the good we enjoy, our duty is to praise him for his goodness, and raise in others a sense of gratitude: this is one end of speech. As he has made us liable to many wants, it is our duty to pray to him to supply them: this another end. Farther, the wants and necessities of nature, which are present, call for our help; we must by industry obtain the necessaries and conveniences of life; as this subject must employ a great part of our thoughts, so it is properly a frequent one of our discourse. Moreover, God has made us to delight in each other's company: we are sociable creatures, and there is a pleasure in conversation; whence it follows, that men may commendably meet for the maintaining and improving mutual love and friendship: another end therefore of speech is to be a bond of society, a means of bringing and keeping men together. If then it appears that men may meet for mutual society and conversation, it follows that nothing can render conversation unlawful that is not sinful: for God has made us for the society of each other, and has commanded us to love each other; and therefore, if our discourses are friendly and social, they are so far virtuous, as they serve the end of nature: this subject enlarged on.

Lastly: The nature of man is considered, and the different degrees of sense and understanding in different men.

This consideration must have place in this question, because the tongue cannot speak better than the understanding can conceive; which infers a proportion between the abilities of our mind and the soundness of our speech. To discourse profitably on the most profitable subjects, requires a clear conception and a distinguishing judgment; without which men only lower noble subjects. What then must the great body of mankind do? They must talk of such things as lie level to their capacities, since even they are fitted for conversation and have a delight therein: let them be prevailed on to

abstain from envious and malicious discourse, from lewd and filthy jesting, which are too often ingredients of their conversation: for since God has designed them for society as well as others, and given them no great share of understanding, you can neither restrain them from society, nor exact more wisdom from them than they have received. This consideration will reach wiser men: you must not despise your weak brother, to whom charity obliges you to be civil and courteous. From all these considerations together, it appears that the conversation of the world on common and trivial subjects, is not blameworthy. It is a diversion in which we must not spend too much time: as, if we so offend, we shall be answerable for our neglect of weightier matters; but otherwise, if we transgress not the bounds of innocence and virtue, we trust that our harmless though weak and unprofitable words shall not rise up in judgment against us.

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. IV. VERSE 28.

Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

PART I.

THIS text contains a confirmation and explication of the eighth commandment: for, since all men are not equally supplied with the necessaries of life, and those who are without them are forbidden to steal, they can be obtained only by purchase or exchange; and as the only thing which a poor man has to exchange is the labor of his hands, it follows that, as he must not steal, he must work: he has as many ways to maintain himself as the rich man has wants or desires: but this latter has often very wicked desires and sinful pleasures; and though to serve the rich be the poor man's maintenance, yet to these he is forbidden to administer: he must work with his hands only *the thing that is good*.

Moreover, since labor to the poor is the business and employment which God has given them to do, a man is not to rest satisfied with working merely as far as the wants of nature oblige him, and spending the rest of his time idly and wantonly; but if, through God's goodness, he is enabled to gain more than is sufficient for himself, he becomes a debtor to other duties, he owes a tribute to his Maker; and he is bound still to labor, *that he may have to give to him that needeth*. It is shown that both the rich and the poor are equally obliged to make returns to God suitable to their abilities. The text consists of four distinct parts: I. A prohibition; *let him that stole,*

steal no more: II. A consequent injunction; *but rather let him labor*: III. A limitation of this duty to things honest and lawful; *working with his hands the thing which is good*: IV. The rule and measure of the same; *that he may have to give to him that needeth*. First, As to the prohibition: by this we are forbidden the use of all such means for our own maintenance and support, as are injurious to our neighbor. The command, *thou shalt not steal*, was given to secure every man in the possession of his goods; and therefore the reason of the law reaches all sorts of fraud and deceit; and there are many things which, strictly speaking, we do not call stealing, but which must be understood as comprehended in this law, in virtue of the reason on which it is founded: this point explained. Some are apt to repine at the unequal distribution of the goods of fortune; and thinking that they have as good a natural right to a share as their possessors have, they assert that right whenever it is in their power to do so. Hence sprang the sect called Levellers, who were for having the world equally divided among its inhabitants. Their opinion is destructive of all law and justice, and makes void the command given against theft. It renders labor and industry useless, since he that labors can acquire nothing that he had not before; and if it prevailed generally, it would render the world a nest of idle vagabonds. It requires but few words to show the vanity of such a doctrine; for though we cannot produce a divine law ordering the distribution of this world's goods, yet property is evidently of divine right: for when God gave the command, *thou shalt not steal*, he confirmed to every one the possession of his goods: this point enlarged on. From whence it follows that no man can acquire the possession of any thing which is at present another's, without his consent fairly obtained; and to this right of his own establishing even God himself submits. The poor are his peculiar charge, and he stands engaged for their support; but neither does he force us to part with our estates to them, nor does he give to the poor any right to serve themselves out of the abundance of others; but he has left them to be supported by voluntary charity: since God therefore has not, for the sake of the most necessitous, thought fit to break into the sacred law of property, no man can be warranted, whatever may be his wants, in transgressing it: but in consequence of this, it follows that he who has not enough of the good things of this life for his maintenance and support, is obliged to work for his living. And this is the

Second thing to be considered, as the injunction of the text; *but rather let him labor*. His wants must be supplied from the abundance of others; and therefore he must find some honest way of transferring to himself what at present is not his. This must be done by consent of the present possessor, which must be obtained by purchase or intreaty. A man may, if he pleases, part with his goods freely to others by way of gift; and it should seem that, what another freely gives, we may freely and innocently take. This raises a question concerning the lawfulness of begging; for if a man may lawfully beg, and can by that means raise a sufficient maintenance, then it does not necessarily follow that, because we must not

steal, therefore we must labor. In this question we must distinguish concerning persons; for some have a right to be maintained by charity, and these have a right to ask for it. Charity is the inheritance of the poor: it is, as it were, their property: and therefore, if any one who is not an object of it, lives by charity, he invades the rights and property of the poor; and this is the worst way of stealing. Who are not objects of charity the Apostle tells us in another place; *if any man will not work, neither let him eat*; that is, if a man can work and will not, he ought to starve. Now no man ought to starve, who ought to be maintained by charity; for such have a right to eat thereof: from whence it follows that such as can labor, but will not, have no right to charity, and consequently have no right to ask it; and therefore begging, for such as are able to labor, is an unlawful calling, or a more specious theft: this subject enlarged on.

Since then it is not lawful either to beg or to steal, it follows that a man must labor, and by his own industry maintain himself and those who have a right to be maintained by him. The Apostle adds that he must labor, *working with his hands*;* which is our duty when we are not capable of any better work; for such as cannot live without it, must live by bodily labor. But the injunction is more general, and includes all kinds of labor, toil, or study, by which men may be serviceable to themselves or others: and it may properly be asked how far this duty extends, and whether such only are obliged to labor as cannot live without it.

Man was not made to be idle. God has not given him sense and understanding to sit still and do nothing. If he was made only to eat and drink, then indeed it would follow that those who have enough, need do nothing else; but if he is made for and is capable of nobler employment, then it is an absurd thing to ask, whether a man may be idle, provided he wants nothing? The necessary affairs of the world cannot be managed by the labor of the hands alone: the head must also be employed in things of the highest consequence: and every man owes it as a duty to God and his country to render himself useful in his station, &c.: hence all men are obliged to that kind of labor and work which is suitable to their rank. We generally say, that God has made nothing in vain: yet what is the rich man made for, if his business be only to eat and drink, and spend his estate? Sense and reason are great gifts of God: and if he has exempted our hands from toil, he will expect that we should improve our nobler parts, and will exact an account of the talents committed to our trust.

PART II.

We here proceed to the third thing, which is the limitation, by which we are confined to work only the things that are good, fore-

* Of this St. Paul himself was an illustrious example: see Acts xviii. 3.—ED.

going all unlawful means of supporting ourselves: *let him labor, working with his hands the things that are good.* Had not this condition been expressed, it might have been collected from the nature of the command; for if the law of God be superior to our necessities in any point, it must be in all. Our Saviour tells us that *man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*: if so, then we must not for bread transgress any part of God's word; which would be to destroy life under the pretence of preserving it. As we are men, we are the servants of God, and his law is our highest obligation: as we are poor, we must serve men, which is the law of our condition; and this can never supersede the law of our nature: therefore no necessity can justify us in despising or neglecting God's ordinances: this point enlarged on. Hence we may learn what value there is in the excuse which servants and poor men usually make, when they are sensible that they are employed otherwise than they ought to be: they dare not desert the service of their master, on whom they depend for their livelihood; the work they do is his, and his is the guilt: the first part of this excuse shown to be false, as God is superior to man: the second, as reason, which is given to us for a guide, makes us principals in all the evil we do. It is therefore manifest that, as the law of our condition obliges us to labor for our maintenance, so the superior law of reason and nature obliges us to work only the things that are lawful and honest.

But it may be asked, what are lawful and honest employments? Now the labor of the poor depends on the wants and desires of the rich: but the things which men want are either the necessaries, or conveniences, or pleasures of life; and all trades or callings are subservient to one or other of these. 1. God has made nothing necessary to us which is not lawful and honest: therefore all such works as those of husbandry, &c. may be pursued. 2. When men are furnished with necessaries, they may then look out for conveniences; and if the rich may lawfully desire and enjoy them, then the poor may lawfully provide them: this point enlarged on. 3. The next thing which may furnish employment are the pleasures of life. Some of these are very innocent, and some very wicked; and the rule in this case must follow this distinction: such pleasures as the rich may innocently enjoy, the poor may lawfully provide; such as are wicked may neither be enjoyed nor provided without guilt.

But there are some things, which, according as they are used, may administer to innocent pleasure, or to vice and immorality: as wine may either *make glad the heart of man*, or sink him below the level of a brute; hence the question, how far we may lawfully provide things of this kind? Now since the innocence or wickedness of these lies together in the use of them, he that uses them may be to blame, and he that provides them may be innocent: this point enlarged on.

When things in their own nature evidently tend to corrupt and debauch men's manners, they are capable of no defence. Whatever exposes religion to contempt, or virtue to ridicule, whatever makes vice glorious, or gives to lust dominion over reason, is of this kind.

The stage considered in this point of view : inquiry also made whether gaming can be a lawful calling or profession for men to maintain themselves by. From previous observations it may be collected what is an honest labor : and we must follow our honest callings honestly. The next thing to be considered is, what is the measure of this duty ; whether we are obliged to labor merely to supply our wants, or whether there be other duties which are to be answered by our toil. This the Apostle has settled in the last place ; enjoining us to labor, *that we may have to give to him that needeth* ; so that we are to labor not only to support ourselves and families, but that we may also contribute to the necessities of such as are not able to work for themselves : nor will objects of our charity ever fail ; since the more we gain, the more ought we to give ; and for this end should we labor.

But there are many things which a poor man ought to provide for, before he can come to the exercise of charity : he must supply his own wants ; he must also by his industry provide against the casualties and misfortunes of life : and this in consequence of the Apostle's rule ; for the first piece of charity which a man is bound to, is to keep himself from being a charge and burden on charity ; that there may be a greater maintenance for such as are truly necessitous : next to himself a man is likewise bound to provide for his family, children, and near relations : and this is a duty of nature ; for the Apostle tells us, that *if any man provide not for his own, he is worse than an heathen, &c.* Nor must their present maintenance be his only care, but likewise their future welfare. But, it may be asked, what is the measure of this provision for futurity ; and when shall we satisfy this duty ? Answered : he who can get no more than is necessary for himself and family, is under no obligation to works of charity : but when he gets beyond this necessity, he is then obliged to provide for his own *future* wants and the *present* wants of the poor ; so that to lay up in store for ourselves, and to give in charity to others, are concurrent duties.

But it must be allowed that charity is naturally the duty of the rich rather than the poor ; and if it be the duty of the poor to give out of the little which they can earn by their hands, how much more will it be expected from those to whom God has given more than enough ? who are appointed, as it were, his stewards ; and to whom are committed the good things of this world, that they may use them to the glory and honor of his name. The time will come when we must quit lands and houses, and all the possessions of this life : let us therefore *make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.*

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

I PETER, CHAP. IV. VERSE 8.

And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves ; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

PART I.

THE high esteem in which the great virtue of charity was held by St. Peter is shown by the distinguishing manner in which he introduces the exhortation in the text. The excellency of charity is explicitly set forth by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xiii., where he does not merely compare it with, and prefer it before all spiritual gifts, but declares that without it all these are of no profit to salvation. It is of the utmost consequence therefore, that we should rightly understand this great virtue, that we may use the proper methods of attaining to it. Its nature must be considered, that the text may be rightly understood. St. Peter affirms that charity *shall cover the multitude of sins* ; and as it is evident that this great promise must be ascribed to that virtue only which the writer of the text had in his mind, if we apply it to any thing else, we abuse his authority and deceive ourselves. The discourse confined to two inquiries : I. What that fervent charity is, which the Apostle recommends : II. What is the meaning of his affirmation that it *shall cover the multitude of sins*.

First: It will appear by the words used, that he is not recommending any particular duty ; much less any particular acts of duty. The words in the original, rendered by our translators *fervent charity* are ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ, *continual or uninterrupted love*. It is therefore the principle of charity, or a general beneficence of mind, which the Apostle recommends : and this must be constant and regular, not subject to passion or resentment, but presiding over all the desires of the heart : charity is thus distinguished from good-nature, a quality which results rather from a man's constitution than his reason, and which often needs correction in its very principles ; being sometimes an agreeable and easy weakness of mind, or an indolence and carelessness with respect to persons or things. Charity is reason made perfect by grace ; it is a beneficence which arises from a contemplation of the world, from a knowledge of the great Creator, and the relation we bear to him and to our fellow-creatures : the character, the temper, and the duty of a disciple of the gospel are all comprehended in this virtue. Actions of the same sort may proceed from different principles : thus liberality and hospitality, the natural effects of charity, may be produced by pride and vanity. This leads to an inquiry, how we may certainly distinguish the principles from which our actions proceed : the ready answer to this is, that we must consult our own hearts : but since to search the heart, and to examine the principles of action, are the same thing, this will not forward our inquiry. The difficulty of arriving at the knowledge of our own hearts shown. Though in ac-

tions which require deliberation, an honest man may judge of his own motives, yet there are many things which men do habitually, and with such ease and readiness, as not to attend to the motive at the time of action : it is hardly possible for us to estimate the good or evil of our actions, by considering the immediate and sensible connexion between each act and the motives which produce it : for as many motions of the body, which depend on the acts of our will, are exerted with the greatest reason, and yet the reason of exerting them is but seldom if ever attended to ; so, in moral actions, a man of confirmed habitual goodness does many things right, without recurring by reflection to the special grounds of duty on which their morality is founded. Hence it seems a very distracting method to set people on an inquiry into the motives of all their particular actions ; and it is still more improper to exclude sincerity from all actions that are not immediately influenced by true motives of religion.

We must therefore search after a more equitable and practicable way of judging of our sincerity. Our Saviour tells us, we must *love our neighbor as ourselves* : this therefore will be a sufficient evidence or test of our charity.

Now it is certain that the principle of self-preservation does generally act so uniformly in men, that they do the things most necessary to their own well-being without much thought on the reasons for so doing ; nor do we ever suspect the sincerity of their motives.

What the principle of self-preservation is with respect to ourselves, the same is charity with respect to our neighbor : and the more real and vigorous this principle is, the more easily, and with the less deliberation, does it exert its acts of beneficence : hypocrites have a design, and therefore they deliberate : but it is a great presumption that a man acts on a general principle of charity and humanity, when he lives well towards others, without having a particular reason to assign for every instance of so doing.

This rule however is not so strict, as that men should be always condemned for the good they do to others with a view to themselves : for it is as reasonable to exchange good offices as other less valuable conveniences of life ; and the Apostle himself exhorts us *to provoke one another to love and to good works*.

The surest way to know whether we are influenced by a true principle of charity, is to consider, not this or that particular action, nor our behavior with respect to particular persons ; but to reflect on our carriage towards all in general, and in all instances ; for the true principle will discover itself in the uniformity of our actions.

If therefore we find that our sentiments of humanity are confined to certain persons or parties, we may be sure they are the product of some partial narrow views, and not the genuine offspring of true charity, which is in its nature extensive and universal : or if we find ourselves acting in some instances justly and mercifully, whilst in others we are regardless of mercy and justice, we have not the virtue of charity : this point enlarged on.

The rule here recommended is the same which the Apostle in

effect describes 1 Cor. xiii. ; where he speaks of spiritual gifts, and shows that without charity they are of no use.

Thus the Scripture rule of judging ourselves in this great point of charity, is to compare our conduct with the precept, and to consider whether our actions are uniformly suited to the principle by which we pretend to act. When we find a constant benevolence in our minds, and that we act conformably to it within the rules of reason, why should we doubt of our own sincerity, or scrupulously examine the special motives which attended every charitable act? Such an examination shown to be unreasonable.

Conclusion : We see the extensive nature of charity, as well as a plain and natural way of judging whether we possess it. If we allow ourselves in any instance to injure our neighbor, how can we be said to love him? Whatever therefore be the darling passion, which makes us transgress against our brother, that it is which destroys in us this most excellent grace of charity.

PART II.

Consideration of the sense in which the Apostle's assertion is to be understood, *that charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* To *cover sins* signifies to excuse and exempt them from punishment: in no other sense is it possible for sins to be covered in the sight of God. With respect to the judgment of men, this expression will bear a stronger exposition; for whether we consider the charitable person as judging of other men's sins, his charity may incline him to judge better of sinners than they deserve; or whether we consider others as judging of the charitable person's own offences, it is natural for men to be so charmed with the excellency of charity, as not to see the defects which are in such good company.

Which of these two expositions ought to prevail, depends on a farther inquiry; viz. whether the Apostle in the text had respect to the judgment of God or of men.

We must also consider of whose sins he speaks; and whether he means to affirm that charity shall cover those of the charitable person, or of other people.

Probable reasons may be given for each interpretation: these examined.

First: There are good reasons to be assigned for limiting the Apostle's assertion to the judgment of men. *Hatred*, says Solomon, *stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins*: where *covering of sins* being opposed to *stirring up strifes*, the meaning needs must be, that as hatred generates animosities, so love allays intemperate heats, and inclines men to overlook offences: this point enlarged on. Charity therefore, as it naturally inclines us to forgive the offences of our brethren, so it puts us into that peaceful state of mind which may best enable us to prepare for our great Judge. In this sense St. Peter's assertion agrees exactly with the accounts of charity in other places of Holy Scripture, and with those properties ascribed

to this virtue by St. Paul. Besides, the expression, *the multitude of sins*, leads to this interpretation: when the Apostle put the question to our Lord, *how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?—till seven times?* Jesus answered, *I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven:* from which St. Peter could not but learn that the property of charity was to *cover the multitude* of a brother's sins. Moreover, it is more reasonable to think that a truly charitable man should meet with a multitude of sins in other people for the exercise of his charity, than that he should have a multitude of his own to cover: we meet with no such description of charity in Scripture, as may lead us to suppose it is consistent with a multitude of sins.

If it be thought that the text, thus interpreted, holds forth no great comfort or encouragement to charity, since the benefit accrues to others, it must on the other side be considered, how blessed a state it is to enjoy a calm serenity of mind, whilst the world around us is agitated by the storms of passion; and how happy we shall be if we are so found when we are summoned by our great Master.

Secondly: There may be reasons for expounding the text of the judgment of God, and yet the Apostle's assertion may still relate to the sins of others, and not to those of the charitable person. But, it may be said, may one man's sins be covered in the sight of God by another man's charity? Yes, they may: and in this sense the very expression of the text is made use of by St. James, ch. v. 20.; where it is evident that the sins to be covered are those of the soul that is saved from death; and this is proposed as a strong incitement to every charitable person, to labor for the conversion of a sinner: this point enlarged on: were the several works of charity to be enumerated, its instruction of the ignorant, its encouragement of the weak, its rebuking of the presumptuous, &c. we should soon see how instrumental it is in covering the sins of others.

Third and last inquiry; viz. What encouragement we have from reason and Scripture to expect that by charity we may cover our own sins.

In the verse before the text, the Apostle gives us this warning, *the end of all things is at hand.* To this solemn notice he subjoins a proper exhortation; *be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer; and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:* and as a reason for this, he observes, *for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* Hence arises a presumption that the Apostle might mean to instruct each person how to cover his own sins: for when we look to future judgment, of whose sins do we think, or for whose offences do we tremble, but our own? Besides, the exhortation to mutual charity being subjoined to the mention of prayer, may show the Apostle's intention to instruct us how to hide our own offences: as it is in the Lord's Prayer. Farther, the nature and extent of charity considered, there is an additional argument to confirm the charitable man in the hopes of pardon for his own offences: for charity is *the fulfilling of the law:* it is *the royal law*, as St. James calls it, which *whosoever fulfils, shall do well:* and in this view St. Peter's advice

in the text is equivalent to that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, ch. iv. 27. For these reasons, it may be allowed that the Apostle meant to exhort us to charity, as a proper means to obtain forgiveness of our sins from God : but to prevent mistakes in so important a matter, a few observations are offered.

First ; We must not so expound this text as to make it contradict the general terms of pardon and reconciliation proposed in the gospel, which only gives hopes of this through sincere repentance and amendment of life. The words of the text, it is seen, are capable of various interpretations, and therefore cannot be so strong in any one sense as to control the meaning of more plain and express declarations of holy writ, &c.

Secondly ; We must not so expound this or any other passage of Scripture, as to raise up a doctrine reproachful to God, or inconsistent with his attributes. With the Almighty dwelleth truth and justice, and in his court there is no commutation for iniquity ; no excuse or pardon but by forsaking it. Under these limitations, it is considered how far we may apply this sovereign remedy of charity to our own sins.

We may consider our sins as past, present, and to come. With respect to our past sins, it is out of our power to recall them ; with respect to our present, it is in our power to forsake them ; with respect to those which are to come, it is in our power to avoid them. To begin with the last.

No sort or degree of charity can so far vacate the duties of religion as to make it unnecessary for us to avoid occasions of sin for the time to come ; the very remedy, if applied to this purpose, would turn to poison. Next, as to our present sins : as it is in our power, so it will ever be our duty, to forsake them ; nor can any thing dispense with this obligation. We must not therefore pretend to balance our good and evil, and fondly imagine that our virtues so far exceed our iniquities, that these may safely be enjoyed : for our Saviour tells us that *when we have done our utmost, we are unprofitable servants*. Lastly, As to our past sins : it is not in our power to recall them. Here therefore the goodness of God has provided a remedy. This is the only case in which we have any encouragement to seek for a cover for our sins. Repentance and amendment of life is required ; and as charity is the perfection of the law, to forsake sin, and to live by the rules of charity, is the best way to obtain pardon.

But even in this case we must guard against mistakes : for though a return to our duty and works of charity are the best amends we can make for the guilt of past offences, yet charity will not be accepted of God in lieu of justice : if we have injured one person, our debt to him will not be paid by charity to another. First pay the debts of justice, and then think of charity : till those are discharged, let no one imagine that his *charity will cover the multitude of sins*.

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

GALATIANS, CHAP. VI. VERSE 9.

And let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap,
if we faint not.

THIS and other like passages in Scripture are founded in the known truth, that God does not ordinarily dispense the rewards and punishments due to virtue and vice in this life, but refers the right settlement of all accounts to a future state. It may be thought that it would have been better if this retribution had taken place here below ; but a little attention will show us the wisdom of Providence. Were men to receive the rewards due to their good actions in this world, there would be no reason why they should grow *weary in well-doing*, which would so abundantly repay all their pains and trouble.

It is natural for men, when they see flagrant instances of wickedness, to make secret demands in their own hearts for justice against them ; and if these are not answered, they are apt to conclude that they themselves have *cleansed their hearts in vain*. Whenever hopes and expectations are raised beyond all probability of being answered by the event, they can produce nothing but anger against the ordinary course of things : yet who is to blame ? Not he who appointed this course, but he who so little understood it, as to expect what it never was intended to produce. Who would pity the husbandman who lamented that he could not reap in spring, when the harvest comes only in the summer ? and the case is the same in all other instances. It is of great consequence therefore to balance rightly our expectations, and adjust them to the natural course of things ordained by Providence. If we grow faint in our work, because our untimely wishes are disappointed, we shall forfeit the reward of patient endurance : and this seems the foundation of the Apostle's exhortation in the text.

It is no uncommon thing to press men to a virtuous behavior by a prospect of the rewards which such a behavior is intitled to in this world ; which is justified both by experience and Scripture ; inasmuch as peace and tranquillity of mind are the great ingredients of human happiness. But this argument is so little concerned with the external good and evil of the world, that it is applicable to men of all fortunes and conditions. But if men, when they hear of a happiness due to virtue in this life, will conceive hopes of obtaining honors and riches from God in recompense for their obedience, they expect what was never yet generally answered, and probably never will be ; and thus, while they pursue the shadow, they are in danger of losing the substance.

To clear up this point, it is necessary to inquire what reason or authority we have to assert the interposition of Providence in the

private affairs of men, with respect to the rewards of virtue and vice.

If we view and consider well the frame of the world and its laws, we can no more doubt the fact of its being sustained than of its being created by the Almighty. But the question now is, since God has made man a reasonable creature, and endowed him with a liberty of acting, how far it has been thought fit to leave him to his liberty and the consequences of his own acts. To come at any knowledge in this case, there are but three ways: to consider what reason requires, what experience teaches, what Scripture confirms.

First, with respect to what reason requires. It has pleased God to endow us with a power of judging and a liberty of acting. Why were these powers given? Was it that we might use them, and thus give proof of virtue or vice? or was it that God might overrule them, and render them in every particular case useless and insignificant? In this case he had better have made us mere machines, than free agents at first, and then machines by an arbitrary interposition of power. To secure the happiness of a good man, and the punishment of a bad one in this world, the actions of all men must be determined; they must be compelled to contribute to the happiness of the one and the misery of the other: and there would be an end of freedom.

This consideration leads to another of still greater weight: for if the freedom of human actions cannot be maintained on this supposition, neither can the distinction of virtue and vice: for there is no morality nor immorality where there is no choice or freedom, and consequently no responsibility.

But taking the case in another point of view, if virtue were to be constantly attended with success in worldly affairs, and vice certainly pursued with misery, there would be no trial of faith and obedience, which is necessary to prepare us for the blessings of another life: virtue would not be what it now is; but rather a kind of sensual thing, arising often from ambition, avarice, and a love of worldly enjoyments: this point enlarged on. But we may go still farther, and say that the condition of good men would be rendered worse than it really is, in losing one great support of their hopes and expectations in another world; in being presented with a vain scene of worldly pleasure, instead of that weight of glory which they on sure grounds expect.

These reasons may induce us to think that it is consonant to the wisdom and goodness of God to allow men to use the liberty which he has given them. But they ought not to be carried so far as to exclude his providence from the care and government of the moral part of the world. It is one thing to turn a state of trial and probation into a state of rewards and punishments, by dispensing good and evil to every man according to his work; and another to exercise acts of government suitable to the state, and subservient to the ends of creation: this point enlarged on.

In the second place, experience in this case is considered. That

worldly good and evil are not dispensed in proportion to the merits of men, appears indisputable: indeed the world has never been without complaints on this head. The righteous in all times have lamented their lot, and the wicked, seeing their own prosperity, have grown hardened and secure in their iniquity. To abate these presumptions on the one hand, and clamors on the other, has found work for the wise and good of all ages; but the truth of the case has never been disputed: and this may be safely left to every man's own judgment.

Lastly, it is inquired how far this experience is confirmed by what the Scripture teaches us to expect.

There are some passages of holy writ, which at first sight seem to promise more to the righteous in this life, than we have been able to find either reason or experience to justify. The Psalmist declares; *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.* But his son Solomon saw a different scene; *just men, unto whom it happened according to the work of the wicked; and wicked men, to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous:* so also it occurred in the days of our Saviour and his Apostles. But this passage in the Psalms relates not to our present purpose: it describes a general care of Providence over good men, in providing for them the necessaries of life, whilst they endeavor to serve God; but of a just reward for them in this world it says nothing: in that case we might expect to hear of crowns and sceptres given to them. As to this providential care of the righteous, our Saviour has given us great reason to expect it. *Seek ye first, says he, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;* and on his authority St. Paul tells us, *that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is,* &c. Nay, farther, there is great reason to think that God often blesses the honest endeavors of the virtuous in this world: but then there is no appearance that the rules of justice are at all concerned in such dispensations; for the righteous often suffer; nay, under the gospel they are called to suffer: but on the point of rewards and punishments the parable of the tares in Mat. xiii. is decisive; the meaning of which our Saviour himself has expounded.

Thus reason, experience, and Scripture, all combine in teaching us not to look for the reward of our labors in this world, but to wait with patience for God's appointed time, when he will do righteously, and recompense to every man the things that he hath done. Concluding exhortation.

DISCOURSE XL.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XIII. VERSE 29.

But he said, Nay ; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

PART I.

To understand this text we must look back to the 24th verse of the chapter. Take away the dress of the parable here delivered, and what our Saviour says amounts to this ; that there will always be in the world a mixture of good and bad men, which no care can prevent ; and though men may and will imagine that the wicked ought immediately to be cut off by the hand of God, yet he judges otherwise, and delays his vengeance for wise reasons, reserving all to the great day of future retribution.

The view of this parable has in some parts been misapprehended. It is intended to represent the necessary condition of mankind, some being good and some bad, and to justify God in the delay of punishment. Hence it is going out of the way to consider the particular causes to which the sins of mankind may be ascribed ; the question being, why are they not punished ? In the parable our Lord assigns a general reason of the world's wickedness, *an enemy hath done this*. But some think they see another assigned in it, viz. the carelessness of public rulers and magistrates, intimated in the words, *but while men slept, his enemy came, &c.*

There is indeed no doubt but that the negligence of governors and magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical, may often be one cause of ignorance and wickedness : but that it is assigned in the parable cannot be proved : this shown by the expression *while men slept*, which is a time of natural refreshment ; it is not said, *while they played, or were idle* : moreover the character of the husbandmen agrees with this exposition ; for they betray no consciousness of guilt or negligence : they come with no excuses to their master, but with a question, that shows how little they mistrusted themselves : nor does the master charge them with any fault, but rather lays it at another door : on which they desire not to spare their own pains, but are eager to go at once to work, and root up the tares which they had discovered. In this he corrects their judgment, though he condemns not their diligence. In truth, one main view of the parable is to correct the zeal of those who cannot see the iniquity of the world without violent indignation ; and not being able to stop it or correct it, are apt to call on God to vindicate his own cause in the punishment of evil doers.

The men who have this zeal and warmth against iniquity, are not commonly idle negligent rulers, nor would our Saviour have painted them in such different colors in the compass of a short parable. Besides, the object of the parable plainly is to justify the wisdom of

Providence in letting sin go unpunished for the present: the justification, however, does not arise from considering the causes of iniquity, but the effect which immediate punishment would have. In this view of the subject, the circumstance, *that while men slept, the tares were sown*, promotes the main end of the parable, and completes the justification of God's providence: for this shows *that offences must needs come*: they are not to be prevented without disturbing the very course of nature, and miraculously suspending the operation of second causes. The scope of the parable being thus explained, the text is considered more particularly; which contains the reason why God delays to punish sin in this world, and reserves it for future judgment.

There are two ways in which the words of the text may be considered: I. As they regard the particular case in view, and account for the justice of God in suspending his judgments: II. As they furnish us with a principle of reason and equity applicable to many other cases. To see the full force of the first, it is necessary to understand what sort of sinners are spoken of: for this reason is not applicable to all; many sinners being spared on other accounts. The sinners represented by the tares in the text are spared merely on account of the righteous: they are such as are incorrigible; and therefore there is no room to justify a delay of punishment from any circumstances arising out of their own case: our Saviour himself declares that they will be inevitably punished at last, and justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in sparing them from other motives.

The interests of good and bad men are so united in this world, that no signal calamity can befall the wicked but the righteous must have their share in it. It is therefore out of mercy to them that the wicked are spared: and this was Abraham's plea when he interceded for the men of Sodom. In public calamities it is very evident that all must be common sufferers. Thus far then the reason of the text certainly extends, and shows us the great mercy of God in forbearing to destroy sinners by such exemplary punishments as would involve whole communities in calamity.

But, it may be said, there are many ways of punishing sinners without including others; and if the wicked are spared only for the sake of the righteous, why are they exempted from these?

In answer to which several things may be said: and first, he that asks the question, may in return be asked, how he knows but that the wicked are often and commonly so punished? can he distinguish such as fall in the common course of nature, from those who are cut off by the judgments of God? It may therefore be true that God does exercise this retributive justice. But, secondly, allow the matter of the objection to be true, yet the reasoning will not be good; because our Saviour's resolution of the general case extends to these instances also; and the wicked are often exempted even from private judgment, that the righteous may not suffer in their ruin: for almost every wicked man has innocent relations and friends, whose happiness depends on his prosperity: this point enlarged on. Nor will the justice of God hereby suffer: for the day is coming which will

dissolve all the present relations between men, when every one will stand singly by himself to account for the good or evil he has done.

On the whole, then, this method of God's dealing with mankind is in all respects without reproach : and the complaints commonly made with respect to his forbearance in punishing iniquity, show the lenity of his administration, and the little reason we have to complain when we have to seek how we may account for his want of justice rather than of mercy : this subject enlarged on.

It has been observed that the argument in the text extends to one case only ; to the justifying God's wisdom and goodness, in delaying to punish incorrigible sinners : but if this case can be defended, all others may ; yet as these have their particular reasons, a summary view of the argument is given.

Such is the state and condition of human nature, that no care or diligence can prevent the growth of vice : every one sees this ; and it is confessed by those who require God's constant interposition to prevent it : but what is it which they demand, who require that God should by his irresistible power prevent all evil ? nothing less than that he should destroy all law and religion, and divest men of their distinguishing characters, reason and understanding : for if every thing is to be done by a superior force, this must be the case. Since then offences must needs come, the question is, properly asked, why are not men as certainly distinguished by rewards and punishments as they are by virtue or vice ? for this would be a great encouragement to virtue, and ought to be expected from God's justice. The first return to these questioners is to let them know that they inquire into a matter too high for them : the deserts of men must necessarily be estimated by a rule of which they are not masters, that is, by the sincerity of the heart ; and therefore they can never judge when rewards and punishments are duly administered : they may possibly be mistaken in those very cases which they suppose to call for the most signal examples. The next return to them is, that what they require is inconsistent with the present condition of men, and the goodness of God. Men are in a state of trial and probation, and it is fit they should have time to show themselves : and it would ill become the goodness of God to destroy men, as long as there are hopes of their amendment : to bear therefore with their sins, in prospect of their repentance, is both just and merciful : and with respect to incorrigible sinners, this world is not the proper place for their punishment, because it would involve the righteous in calamity. There is no reason therefore for a man to complain, whether he be himself a sinner or a righteous person.

PART II.

The text considered as furnishing us with a principle of reason and equity applicable to many cases.

This inquiry necessary, because the rule is liable to be misapplied, unless we attend to the reasons on which it is founded. The mercy

of God is the best pattern for us, and is recommended to us by our Saviour. Since therefore God spares the wicked for the sake of the righteous, is it reasonable for men to do the same? Should magistrates release the guilty on account of the innocent, who must share in the shame or loss of the punishment? At first sight we might imagine there was a parity of reason in these cases; but on farther consideration we shall find that the same reason which justifies God, would condemn the magistrate.

To see this clearly, we must attend to the difference between the reason of justice and the rules of justice. By the latter is to be understood the general principles and maxims of justice by which the laws of all countries are directed: by the former, the fountain from which all maxims and laws are derived, i. e. right reason: for laws are not just, as partaking of the lawgiver's authority, but as partaking of his reason. Hence the distinction between good and bad laws, though both are derived from the same authority.

Now between the reason of justice and the rules of justice, there is this great difference: the former takes in all the circumstances of every case, and therefore cannot be wrong; but the latter have no relation to the particular circumstances of any case, being formed on general abstract ideas; and consequently they may, and often do, fail when applied to single instances: hence the reason and the maxims of justice frequently stand directly opposed to each other; and hence the proverb *summum jus, summa injuria*. Hence it will plainly appear how liable we are to mistake, as long as we form our judgments by applying general rules of law or equity to particular cases. This point farther explained.

Now there is the same difference between the judgments of God and those of men, as there is between the reason of law and the rules of law: for men are tied down to judge by the rules which the law prescribes; but the judgment of God arises not from any maxim or rule of law, but in every instance follows the reason of the thing; otherwise his judgments would not in every case be reasonable. It is mere weakness that makes men go by rules: but it would be absurd to imagine God as acting by any such for the direction of his judgment.

Farther; these considerations will help us to form distinct notions of justice and mercy, and discover to us, if not what they always are, at least what they should be. Justice is thought to be a thing fixed and certain, and confined to limits which it cannot transgress without losing its name: but mercy is taken to be of a more variable nature, to go by no fixed rule, and to arise from the will of the governor: consequently we speak of mercy and justice as opposites to each other.

But mercy and justice would not be distinguished, were it not for the intervention of general and particular laws, which often fall very heavily on particular persons; whence it is that we complain of the rigor of the law: but were men perfect both in their reason and in their wills, so that they could neither judge nor act amiss, they would then do what is exactly right and reasonable in every case,

and there would be no room to correct the severity of justice by the interposition of mercy ; for there is no rigor in that which is perfectly right and reasonable : this point enlarged on ; by which it is shown that it is the proper business of mercy to correct the rules of justice by the reason of justice ; and consequently, if all judgments were founded on true reason, justice and mercy would be one and the same thing. Hence perhaps a difficulty may be accounted for, which is apt to disturb men greatly when they ponder the judgments of God. They consider him as essentially just, and essentially merciful ; whence they rightly conclude that he can never be otherwise than merciful, never otherwise than just ; and yet how to reconcile these attributes in every case they see not. In human judgments it is plain, where mercy prevails, justice sleeps ; where justice acts, mercy is silent : but this cannot be the case in divine judgments. But if we consider that the acts of mercy and justice, as distinguished from each other, are relative to stated rules and laws, and that they are both the same with respect to the reason of justice, we shall easily discern how God, who always acts by the purest reason, may be said in every case to do justly and mercifully : this point enlarged on.

The parable in the text is evidently intended as an answer to the common objections against Providence, drawn from the prosperity of sinners, or rather, in the present instance, the impunity of offenders. If the principles on which both the objection and the answer stands be examined, it will be seen that the objection is founded on one of the common and general maxims of justice which often misguide our judgment in particular cases ; and that our Saviour's answer is drawn from the reason of all law and equity, which can never fail. All the objector can say amounts to this, that it is an undoubted maxim of justice, that every sinner deserves punishment : he cannot enter into particular cases, unless he knew more of men than he does or ever will know. In answer to this, our Saviour owns the truth of the general maxim, and therefore teaches us that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world : but then he shows, from superior reasons of justice, that the application of the principle in the present case is wrong ; for though it would be just to punish all sinners, yet to punish them immediately would destroy the very reason which makes it just to punish them, viz. to make a difference between the good and the bad.

This then is a full justification of God in his dealings with men, and shows his justice, as well as his mercy, in delaying vengeance.

But if this be the height of justice in God, how is it not the height of injustice in men to act quite otherwise ? Temporal punishments, even capital ones, are executed immediately, notwithstanding the number of innocent persons that may be involved in their consequences. Nay, farther, this very method of justice is ordained by God. How comes it then that God pursues one method for himself and another for magistrates, who are, as it were, his vicegerents ? The plain answer is, because the reason of these two cases is very different. The punishments of this world are not the final punishments of iniquity,

but are means ordained to secure virtue and morality, and to protect the innocent from immediate violence: offences which disturb the peace of society and the security of its members, will not bear a delay of justice; and this world would scarcely be habitable if such crimes were to wait for their punishment in another.

Our Saviour's reasoning, when applied to this case, leads to another conclusion: that the righteous may not suffer, God delays the final punishment of the wicked: for the same reason, that is, that the righteous may not suffer, he has commanded the magistrate to cut off all the sons of violence, all disturbers of the public peace. And thus he has followed the same reason in both cases: this point enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE XLI.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVI. VERSE 41.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

FOR the better understanding of these words we must reflect a little on what occasion they were spoken, &c. The time of our Saviour's crucifixion was now at hand, and he had foretold to his disciples that they should all be offended because of him: on which St. Peter made a forward profession of constancy, as did they all: but it does not appear that they fully understood our Saviour, or were apprehensive that they should so soon lose him: if they had, they could not have been so negligent and unconcerned. But Jesus, as he had a different sense of what he was to undergo, so was he differently affected.

No one was ever more willing to fulfil the will of God than he was; he came into the world for this very purpose. But yet, in this last and sharp trial, he found how great the weakness of the flesh was: whence probably arose the reflection mentioned in the text, which is the ground of his exhortation to the disciples. Though they had made a very bold and forward resolution to die with him rather than deny him, yet he knew that such resolution was not a sufficient support against the weakness of human nature; but that they stood in need of all the advantages that might be reaped from watchfulness and prayer. If he himself found difficulties from the weakness of the flesh, he might well conclude how unsteady his disciples would be when their trial should come. So that the words of the text seem rather founded on what our Saviour experienced in his late agony, than on any thing criminal in his disciples: this point enlarged on.

The text, thus explained, contains an exhortation very suitable to the season when it was spoken, and to all men in general; and

affords us a powerful excitement to pray continually for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit to aid our good resolutions.

But this explication of the text, how worthy soever of its author, and agreeable to the circumstances under which it was delivered, will not easily be digested; because it undermines the favorite doctrine of sins of infirmity, which, on the slender encouragement of this text, has wonderfully thriven, ridding men of all the trouble and pains of repentance and amendment, by easing them of the terrors of guilt.

The text, when used to this purpose, is thus explained: the disciples are supposed to have committed some great fault, for which our Saviour rebukes them; but then checking himself, he makes this excuse for them, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*; absolving them for sake of the willingness that was in them, and throwing all the blame and guilt of sin on the weakness of the flesh. But to make the most of this, the fault of the disciples was only that of falling asleep after long watching, which, like the indulgence of many other natural wants, was a very pardonable infirmity.

As some men of melancholic temperament have fancied every sin committed to be sin against the Holy Ghost, and themselves thereby rejected irrecoverably, so others of a different temper have reckoned all their sins to be sins of infirmity, and themselves secure from danger. The one set pay dear for their mistake in this world by their constant terrors: the other will have no reason to be proud of their contrivance in another. There is just as much good policy in this conceit, as in his, who shut his eyes and thought nobody could see him.

But the better to judge of this matter, it may be proper to inquire what are sins of infirmity, and what value there is in the excuse. First then, It is considered what is the Scripture sense of infirmities: Secondly, What sort of sins they are, which will admit of an excuse, because of the infirmity from which they proceed.

I. The state of human nature is such, as to be liable to many pains, diseases, and at last to death: and though all are not equally affected by these miseries, yet all are equally liable to them: this is the first and proper notion of infirmity; and in this sense Christ is said to bear our infirmities, being, as St. Paul says, crucified through weakness; that is, by the condition of his humanity.

But men are not more weak and imperfect in their bodies than in their minds; nor more exposed to bodily pains than to the impressions of sin, which is our spiritual disease; and though all are not sinners alike, yet all are alike weak and subject to the temptation of sin: and this is the general sense of infirmity when applied to our spiritual condition. It is shown how St. Paul opposes the law of sin to the law of the spirit of life; and the condition of a person who was under the law of sin, in whom is the weakness of the flesh, to that of him who is under the law of life, in whom is the spirit of righteousness.

In his argument St. Paul more than once speaks thus: *If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*: which is thought by some to come very near to the case of sins

of infirmity; for the excuse from infirmity is made up of willingness and want of power. In all moral actions there is a proportion between the ability to perform, and the guilt of not performing; but if we consider ourselves as Christians, who do not depend solely on our own strength, but likewise on the assistance of God, the terms of the proportion will be altered, and the guilt of our disobedience will be measured by the ability we *might have had* to perform our duty: if we had not power to withstand temptations, this want of power may have been our own fault; and the not observing this is the true foundation of men's reliance on the excuse of infirmity: this point enlarged on.

Next to this general sense of infirmity come the particular infirmities included in it. As every disease of the body is called an infirmity, (for our Saviour, when he healed the sick of their particular distempers, is said to have cured their infirmities,) so, by the same analogy, every particular sin may be called an infirmity. Thus David, speaking of his distrust of God's goodness, calls it his infirmity. So in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said, *The law maketh men high priests which have infirmities*. But in the Scripture it is no where used in this sense as an alleviation of guilt.

The sense indeed of Scripture is the least thing regarded in setting up this plea of infirmity, which has been invented and used to shelter particular and darling sins; but seldom or never for the universal imperfection of all, even the best of our actions, in which sense only it can be reasonably used. But the bosom sin is to be defended: in which case two things are generally urged, a natural passion, and the violence of the passion: the passion is said to have the same author with nature; and its violence is excused by particular constitution and temperament: but what sin may not be thus permitted?

The Scripture uses weakness in another sense, opposed to knowlege; as *weak Christians* are those newly converted, and not yet confirmed in the knowlege and mysteries of Christianity: but this sense is nothing to our purpose: neither is that of weakness as applied to those who have tender consciences, easily offended, such as those who scrupled to eat meat which had been offered to idols.

These are the most usual, if not all, the Scripture senses of infirmity; but some of these have enough in them to be an excuse for sin. All sin is weakness: it was our weakness that made it necessary for the Son of God to rescue us from the law of sin and death: and to what purpose is the Holy Spirit promised or given, but to overcome our infirmities, that the strength of God *may be made perfect in weakness*?

But after all we cannot be perfect. St. James says, *in many things we offend all*. How shall these errors be excused, to which the best men are liable? This will be answered if we consider,

Secondly, What sort of sins they are which admit the excuse. And here we are not to expect a catalogue of sins: for no kind of sin can be otherwise excused than by repentance and amendment; and at best there is an impropriety of speech in *sins of infirmity*.

The necessary effects of our infirmities are not sinful : where they are not necessary, they may be sinful ; but why they are called sins of infirmity, in distinction to other sins, is hard to say. There is an imperfection in the obedience of the best men ; but without question God will favorably look on their failings, and accept their sincere though not perfect obedience. But the common notion of sins of infirmity gains nothing by this ; for let any one say, what is the sin of infirmity that all good men are guilty of. There is an imperfection which flows from the weakness of our present state, and shows itself in various instances. Thus many good Christians complain of a coldness sometimes in their devotion, and of wandering thoughts : others are troubled with evil thoughts, unworthy conceptions of God and Christ ; and they suffer great torment and anxiety of mind because of them : but such are objects of compassion to God and man ; and their infirmities are so far from forming an excuse, that they are an aggravation of the guilt of others, who have not the same obedience and virtues to plead for themselves.

Since then there is so little reason to depend on this excuse, though all stand in need of it, there remains only one way of intitling ourselves to the plea, which is, sincerely and universally to endeavor to obey God's will : we shall then be in the number of those whose infirmities, for the sake of Christ, shall be forgiven.

DISCOURSE XLII.

ISAIAH, CHAP. LIII. VERSE 3.

He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

OUR Saviour's words, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves*, may be very properly applied by us, to direct our devotion on the day of his crucifixion : it is a day of sorrow and mourning, not for his sake, who is crowned with honor and glory ; but for us, whose sins occasioned him to suffer. The consideration of his unbounded love towards us, and our own carelessness and indifference in availing ourselves of the salvation purchased by his sufferings, will show us where the true cause of our grief lies, and that instead of venting our indignation against the ancient crucifiers of our Saviour, we ought to turn it against ourselves, who are daily *crucifying him afresh*. The reflections suggested by the description in the text, will teach us to admire the unbounded goodness of our Redeemer, and to *weep only for ourselves*. The prophecy in the text remarkable as containing a general description of Christ's condition during his abode on earth. The great goodness of God in warning us by the spirit of prophecy of the mean appearance of our Redeemer is shown : his poverty thus became a proof of

his authority; and had he not in the lowness of his condition answered his description in the text, we could not have believed him to be the glorious Redeemer foretold by Isaiah, to be *despised and rejected of men*. A consideration of Christ's sufferings therefore is calculated not only to increase our love, but to strengthen our faith. Our attention is called to three points on this subject: I. God's wisdom and goodness in sending his Son into the world in a state of poverty and affliction: II. The evidence of prophecy, that he should so appear in the fulness of time: III. The historical evidence that he did so appear, and that in him the prophecies were fulfilled.

I. The sufferings of Christ are often insisted on by the sacred writers as an evidence of God's mercy towards mankind: see Rom. viii. 32. and v. 8; also 1st Ep. of John iii. 16, and our Saviour's own words in John xv. 13. Though we may not be able to see clearly the reasons that made it necessary for Christ to die that the world might live, yet it is plain his sufferings were on our account; and they show how much our salvation was the care of heaven: it would therefore argue great perverseness of mind, if, hardening our hearts against this goodness, we should busy ourselves with curious inquiries into the hidden mysteries of Providence, and shut our eyes and hearts against the impressions of his love and of our duty. That God's goodness is made plain to us in the death of Christ, is the only knowledge requisite for our salvation; and if we would be encouraged in the practice of virtue by the hope of God's aid, or be comforted in repentance by his promise to receive us, we may learn to reason of St. Paul, Rom. viii. 32. Our knowledge therefore is clear and distinct, as far as we are concerned to go. Many wise ends of Providence are to be discerned by a consideration of Christ's sufferings with respect to ourselves. First, with regard to his being a teacher, his sufferings set him above the reach of suspicions. Our Lord and his disciples met with nothing but misery and affliction. Had he come as a temporal prince, we might have suspected his cunning and policy; but the gospel now stands clear of this objection. Secondly, with regard to our Lord's being an example of holiness and obedience, set before us for our instruction and imitation, his sufferings render the pattern perfect: had he lived in worldly prosperity, the example of his virtues, however conspicuous, would have extended but a little way. The poor, though they might have upbraided the rich for not following his example, would have thought their poverty a sufficient excuse for not attempting it themselves: but now there is no pretence left for any mortal. Thirdly, with regard to his divine mission, his sufferings were an evident token that the hand of God was with him. He only can confound the mighty things of the world by things of no account; and we have here the instance of a weak poor man, oppressed by a whole nation, and yet enabled to withstand it: yet when his time was come, he fell an easy victim. Had the prophets foretold that a great man should do great things, at his appearance it might have been doubted whether he was the person foretold, or whether his deeds were not the common effect of that might and power with which he was armed: but when they declared that these

mighty deeds should be accomplished by our Saviour in his character described by the text, no doubt could arise. Our Lord would easily be distinguished by the greatness of his works and the meanness of his condition; and this leads, II. to the consideration of the evidence of prophecy concerning the mean appearance which our Lord was to make. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah so fully describes this part of our Saviour's character, that it looks more like a history than a prophecy; yet it was in being long before our Lord was born, and was in the keeping of his enemies, who were at once the preservers and the fillers of it: yet contrast this with the description before given of him in Isaiah ix. 6, and again in liii. 11, and how are we to reconcile these contradictions? It is answered, that we must search the gospel: there we shall find our Lord despised and rejected of men, persecuted and afflicted, yet rising to honor and glory; ascending to the glory of his Father, giving gifts unto men, and leading captivity captive. III. The historical evidence for the completion of these prophecies relating to the calamitous condition of our blessed Redeemer, is considered. The way was prepared before he was born: his conception led to it: and so it proved. The mighty Prince of Peace made his first appearance in a manger: his life was sought after as soon as he was born, and his parents were obliged to fly with him into banishment to save it. His youth was spent in the difficulties of poverty, and during his ministry he had not where to lay his head. The unbelieving Jews, when he healed the sick, cast out devils, or forgave sins, accused him of the greatest crimes. As the time of his being offered up drew near, all things conspired to make his death bitter and terrifying. He was betrayed by one of his chosen twelve, and the rest after his agony forsook him. He was afterwards carried to judgment, mocked, buffeted, spit on; and a murderer was chosen to be released in his stead: *thus was he despised and rejected of men*; but neither the pangs of the cross, his mental sufferings, nor the malice and scorn of his crucifiers, made him for one moment forget his love and tenderness towards them: with his latest breath he begged for their forgiveness. We must now close this scene, and ask with the Psalmist, *what reward shall I give unto the Lord? &c.* Let us also answer in his words: *I will receive the cup of salvation, and call on his name.* We have nothing to return but our love and obedience. Let us not again crucify Christ by our iniquities, but let us arise to a new life of righteousness in him; that *when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory.*

DISCOURSE XLIII.

COLOSSIANS, CHAP. III. VERSE I.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

How much the metaphorical language of Scripture has been mistaken and abused is well known. The words of the text are not capable of being taken in the literal sense; for it is not possible to imagine that St. Paul should intend to tell the Colossians, or that they should believe him, that they lived no longer in the world, but were literally men raised from the dead. The words plainly are an inference from what had been before said, and refer to the doctrine in Coloss. ii. 10—13. For an explication of them it is necessary to consider the Scripture representation of the natural state and condition of man, and of his gospel state on his becoming a Christian. In the state of nature the Scripture represents men as in Eph. iv. 17. 18. ii. 2. 3. Rom. iv. 19. 20. And because the end of these things is death, this state of sin is also called a state of death, as in Eph. ii. 1. 5. Whilst men were thus dead to God and themselves, they lived only to sin and unrighteousness. The passions and affections were but the instruments of sin, and therefore are said to constitute the body of sin; that body over which sin had dominion, as in Rom. vi. 6. Coloss. ii. 11. The members of which this body is made up, are described Col. iii. 5. This body is called by St. Paul the body of death, as the state of sin is called the state of death, Rom. vii. 24. As the body, with the soul its director, constitutes the man, so these depraved appetites and affections, which are the instruments or members of sin, and which compose the body of sin, together with the evil principle directing them, are said in Scripture to be the *old man*; the man which only lived before the regeneration by Christ Jesus: Rom. vi. 6. Eph. iv. 22.

This is the state of nature described in Scripture. It is plain that this old man, or man of sin, must be destroyed on the appearance of Christ Jesus, to make way for the Spirit of righteousness: thus to destroy the old man, and to restore the decayed image of God, what is it but to new-make the man, and by a second creation restore him to the privileges of the first, forfeited by sin? For this reason the Christian is said to be a new creature: 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. iv. 23. 24. vi. 15. We are said even to *put on* Christ, from the similitude of will and affections between Christ and his true members: Gal. iii. 27. From this account it is easy to understand the propriety of the words or phrases made use of to express these two conditions. We read that we were *dead* before the knowledge of Christ; that *we died* and *were buried with Christ*: again, that *we rose with Christ, and are alive in him*. The apparent inconsistency of these assertions may be reconciled by our taking the same view of man as the Scripture does. Man was created after the image of God; but on

disobedience he became subject to sin. This then was the death of the man created after God's image, who lay buried under the ruins of sin and iniquity; and this was the death of the world before the knowledge of Christ. The life of the world at the coming of Christ was the life of sin, which he came to destroy; Gal. v. 24.: and we are said to *die with Christ* and to be *buried with him*, because we renounce that life. Thus dying to sin, we begin again to live unto God, and are therefore said to be made *alive in Christ*, and to *rise together with him*. This change, which we had no power even to wish for, was effected by Christ alone, who dying on the cross for all, all are said to be crucified with him: Heb. ii. 9. 2 Cor. v. 14. The way to attain to the benefits of Christ's death, as St. Paul tells us, is *to be conformable unto his death*; and to do this, we must put off the old man, and put on the new man, who is created after righteousness. This St. Paul, Rom. vi., styles, *being planted in the likeness of his death, and in the likeness of his resurrection*. To this he refers, Rom. viii. 29. and Rom. xiii. Many other places also must be opened with this key. The very essence of Christianity consists in this conformity with Christ; and therefore baptism, which is our admission to the gospel, is only a solemn taking on ourselves this conformity, as we learn from St. Paul, Rom. vi. To walk in newness of life is our conformity to the resurrection of Christ, which was to new life and glory: Rom. vi. 9-12. As the resurrection of Christ was to perpetual life, so our first resurrection must be perpetual holiness. This account of the Scripture language, and of the reasons on which it is founded, will make clear to us many otherwise intricate passages. For instance, when we read of two deaths and two resurrections, we shall understand the death of the body and the death unto sin; the resurrection to life eternal hereafter, and the resurrection to righteousness in this world. *I am crucified to the world*, says St. Paul, *and the world to me*: and St. John says, *whosoever is born of God*, that is, whoever has attained the new life through Christ, *overcometh the world*. St. Paul tells us that the Spirit of God will *quicken our mortal bodies*, as well as our dead bodies. This is not to be understood without referring to the first resurrection, as explained above; and again, Phil. iii. 10. 11. can be explained only by what has been said of our being made conformable to the death and resurrection of Christ, by rising to holiness and righteousness. The power of Christ's resurrection in producing good effects on those that feel it, is described in v. 20.; and is what the Apostle to the Hebrews calls *tasting the powers of the world to come*. To understand St. Paul when he says, those that fall from their faith *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame*, we must have recourse to the Scripture representation as before explained. By receiving the faith, we put on Christ, crucifying the old man and his deeds; by deserting the faith, returning to our former deeds, and again putting on the old man, we again crucify Christ with his deeds, and put him to open shame. The various expressions to this effect in the gospel are only to be understood by analogy to this notion. Our death, burial, and resurrection with

Christ having been discussed, the Apostle in the text carries the metaphor still one degree higher ; arguing that, since we are dead to the world, and alive to Christ through the Spirit of holiness, we must act like members of Christ, and set our affections on things above, where Christ our life is ascended : hence it is that St. Paul so often exclaims against the absurdity of a Christian's living in sin ; for the Christian has crucified and buried the body of sin. How then, says he, *shall we who are dead to sin, continue any longer therein ?* Sin alone has power to separate the Christian from his Saviour. Holiness is as necessary to our spiritual life as food to our natural life. How just therefore is the Apostle's conclusion in the text : *If we be risen with Christ, that is, if we be with him, we must seek the things which are above !*

DISCOURSE XLIV.

JAMES, CHAP. III. VERSE 17.

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

THE gifts of the Holy Spirit are of two kinds ; either extraordinary, and peculiar to certain times and persons, and given, not for the sanctification of those on whom they are bestowed, but for the edification of the church ; or common to all times of the gospel, necessary to perfect the man of God in good works, and tendered to all Christians through Christ. Of the first were those gifts bestowed on the Apostles, to enable them to convince the world by signs and wonders of the truth of their mission. It is evident, from St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii., that the gifts of this sort conveyed no sanctifying grace to the receiver ; as he supposes that they may consist with a want of charity, i. e. without the moral qualifications of a Christian ; and we are therefore warranted in concluding that they do not convey the sanctifying grace of the gospel, and that they are given, not for the sake of the receivers, but for those who through them are to be converted to the knowledge of the truth : and it was for this reason that they were given in the primitive church. It is manifest then that the Scripture ascribes a twofold operation to the Spirit of God. The first has been already described ; and it remains to consider the second, in explaining the words of the text ; viz. the affording assistance and strength to all Christians in the performance of the duties enjoined by the gospel. The wisdom mentioned in the text is the *wisdom that is from above* ; and we are instructed how to obtain it by St. James, chap. i. ver. 5. ; and in verse 17 he shows on what grounds his advice stands. The instruction given, that we should ask this wisdom *in faith* ; and the reason assigned to support this

faith, that with God is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, sufficiently show that this wisdom is the grace promised under the gospel: for the declaration of God's purpose to give this wisdom, which is only to be found in the gospel, must be supposed, before the immutability of his purpose can be given as a ground of hope to obtain the good gift by the prayer of faith. The *wisdom* in the text, then, signifies the grace of God promised in the gospel; that principle of holiness by which the disciples are enabled to *mortify the deeds of the flesh*; and of which St. Paul has said, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. This grace is called *wisdom*, as the *fear of the Lord* is said to be the *beginning of wisdom*; the wisdom of man consisting in obedience to God, and not in any degree of knowlege. The fruits ascribed to this wisdom in the text are not learning and knowlege, but all moral qualifications. A knowlege of mysteries and things sacred is mentioned by St. Paul among the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; but he speaks of them as not necessarily inferring charity, and therefore as distinct from that grace or *wisdom, which is pure, and peaceable, and full of mercy*. The gifts of God are free, and we have no right to demand an equal distribution of them: if the gifts of the Spirit were granted only to some, we should not be obliged by the terms of our religion to render an account of God's proceeding herein. But the promise of the Spirit being given to all Christians, and represented as the purchase of Christ's obedience, it is evident that we cannot account for our being Christians, without showing a reason for the necessity of grace to render our hopes of salvation effectual. This is a great point of difference between the gospel and natural religion, particularly as regards the state of mankind before the gospel. If men were in that state of original purity in which we must suppose God to have created them, what grace was wanting? If they have fallen from that state, we cannot dispute the grace of God unless we can show that it was impossible or improper for him to redeem the world. The fall of man being supposed, is it not more natural to think that God, to save the world, should destroy the power of sin, than that he should grant immortal happiness to unreformed sinners? The best argument against the necessity of grace would be a proof that the effects of the Spirit generally are or may be attained by the mere strength of nature. If men are naturally inclined to virtue and holiness, they will not want grace to make them so: but this has never yet been the case. The works of the Spirit are described in the text, and in many parts of Scripture: St. Paul, in Gal. v. 22. enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, and adds, *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*. There is no one so little acquainted with human nature as to suppose that there exists a people who would answer to this description of St. Paul: but if we look into the account which the same Apostle gives, Gal. v. 19., of the works of the *flesh*, we shall find too great a correspondence between them and the historical accounts of all nations. After considering the difference between the works of nature and of grace, does it appear unworthy of God to send his Spirit to make the difference? If

we have not the Spirit already to produce these effects, natural reason will testify in favor of the gospel, by showing us how greatly its assistance is to be desired. It is shown that the grace of God could not be irresistible consistently with free-will; and that we can draw no argument against the promise of it, from a want of signs of it in some professors of Christianity: for we might as well conclude, from the unreasonable actions of the generality of men, that reason itself is a fiction. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, vii. 22., has taught us to solve this difficulty: he there acknowledges that the dictates of reason are right, but of use only in convincing us of our guilt; for there is another principle in our members warring against reason, which brings them under the slavery of sin: he therefore, seeing no help from reason, sought a refuge in Christ, who alone could redeem him from this captivity to sin. The Apostle founds the necessity of grace on the insufficiency of reason to overcome our natural inclinations to evil. The best evidence we can have that the grace of God is in us, is that we live up to the dictates of reason. By reason we may know our duty; by grace we are enabled to perform it. The only evidence Christians can give that this grace of God dwelleth in them, must arise from their works of love and obedience. Our Saviour himself says, *by their fruits shall ye know them*; and St. John declares, *This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments*. Our Saviour, in St. John chap. xv., speaks to the same effect. Every Christian is bound to answer for himself, or to quit his pretensions to the hopes and promises of the gospel, when unbelievers object to the want of evidence of the operation of the Spirit in the works of Christians. The confidence of some that they have the Spirit of God, though they have no good works to allege in proof of it, is a conceit not belonging to the gospel. If we would know whether the Spirit of God be in us, we must examine ourselves by the text. St. James speaks of two sorts of wisdom; the one *earthly, sensual, devilish*, the fruits of which are *every evil work*; the other heavenly, *which is pure and peaceable*: it is easy to distinguish to which class we belong. Our Saviour, in his discourse with Nicodemus, compares the influence of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind; and how the new birth and regeneration is performed, he only can tell who performs it: but its effects are visible to all. As the fruits of the Spirit are its only evidence, so its end is the production of these good fruits. The terms sanctification, regeneration, &c. signify to us that the Spirit is given to redeem us from sin. It is no small commendation, that those things in the gospel which seem most mysterious have the plainest use. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are offered to us on the terms of the gospel, which calls us to holiness and obedience. What design or contrivance have we to suspect? Even supposing that we are deceived into goodness, would not the advantage be our own, and would not the world be happier thereby? The conclusion is plain: righteousness and holiness are the only certain marks of regeneration. All other distinctions invented by men are marks only of spiritual pride.

DISCOURSE XLV.

MATTHEW, CHAP. V. VERSE 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

As practice is the end of all precepts and exhortations, to command or exhort to any thing impracticable must be absurd. Some have endeavored to obviate this objection to the text, by affirming that it contains only counsel or advice, and not a command or precept: the insufficiency of this reasoning is shown. The reason and equity of God can be no more justified in advising than in commanding impossibilities: others tell us, that it is not equality, but quality of perfections that the text enjoins; and that we are commanded to aim at the same perfections with God, though not in the same degree. This exposition, though it avoids the difficulty complained of, is not that which arises from the circumstances of the text. From the words of our Lord, in Matth. v. 43-46. preceding the text, it is evident that it was not the quality of mercy, which even the publicans possessed in some degree, that our Lord recommended; but the extensive exercise of it, which was discernible in the works of Providence. As these expositions afford no relief, it is to be considered what assistance we derive from the circumstances of the context, or the general reason in which the precept is founded: for if we consider it as part of the gospel doctrine, it will be sufficient to know how far it may be extended on the authority of the gospel; or if as a general maxim and rule of religion founded on reason, and antecedent to the gospel, we must discover how far the reason of the command goes, and how it may be applied to the duties of religion and morality. First: The text examined, as it stands limited by the circumstances of the context. It is shown that the precept is applied to the particular case of charity and mercy: in other instances of duty the example of God is not proposed; and there are some to which neither the example nor the exhortation can be applied, such as the duties arising from the relations which are peculiar to man; as in the case of afflictions and persecutions, which are to be borne patiently. In the instance of mercy and forgiveness, what greater motive can we have to obedience than the example of God, who bears with so much lenity the abuses and affronts of wicked men? Supposing then that this example is confined to the exercise of love and mercy, it is shown that our Saviour's precise meaning must be, that our love should be universal, unconfined by partialities, and with respect to its objects as large as God's is: not that our love either to enemies or friends can be supposed to bear any proportion to the divine love. Though in this case of extending our love, the example and the exhortation are proper, in others it would be very injurious to the Deity to suppose that any example

could be drawn from his perfections. An instance of this is given in the government of the thoughts. As therefore the exhortation to imitate the divine perfections cannot reach to all parts of our duty, it ought not to be considered a general precept. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, exhorts them to be followers of God as little children : but we see, from chap. iv. 33., and chap. v. 1. 2. that this exhortation stands inclosed on both sides with the precepts of love and charity, as if he intended to secure it from being applied to any thing else. That this was also our Saviour's meaning may be inferred from the sixth chapter of St. Luke, who, in the sermon on the mount, after introducing the example of God, concludes with an exhortation referring to the example, as St. Matt. does ; but, instead of the phrase, *Be ye perfect as your Father is perfect*, says only, *Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful*. If the two Evangelists are consistent, the exhortation of St. Matthew can relate only to that particular perfection of mercy and forgiveness recommended by our Saviour ; and is therefore of no greater extent than St. Luke's. The holy writers often require of us that we should be perfect and blameless ; or, as St. Paul says, Coloss. iv. 12. *stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*. *The will of God* manifested to us is the rule of perfection which we ought to aim at ; the perfections of the Deity are not to be attained by any creature. Though there is no room to exhort men to be perfect, as God is perfect, yet it is reasonable to press them to imitate their heavenly Father. The imitation of God has not for its end the attaining to the perfection of God, but to the greatest perfection of which we are capable. In this sense St. Peter exhorts us to be holy, because God is holy (1 Pet. v. 1-15.) ; and St. John expresses the same, chap. iii. 3. A conformity to the divine nature in the moral perfections of it is the utmost excellence and happiness of human souls ; and this was taught by some few wise heathens, who found, by the light of reason and nature, wherein the true dignity and happiness of man consisted : for the imitation of God has its foundation in the reason and nature of things. This is the second thing considered. That we should endeavor to be perfect, even as God is perfect, in the strict meaning of the words, is the direction neither of reason nor revelation. It is shown that the perfections which are essential to God, considered as a rational being, are those which we as rational beings ought to aspire to ; and as they are in him in the utmost perfection, to say that we are to imitate the excellences of the Deity, means only that we ought to endeavor after those perfections which are natural and proper to rational minds, which belong to us as made in the likeness of God. Though the example of God be a strong motive for holiness, yet it is but a secondary argument, and supposes an antecedent obligation to the duty, the due performance of which we learn from it. We must therefore search for a reason why some of the perfections of God are proper examples, and others not so ; that is, we must search for their primary rule of duty. It is shown that from the light of our own minds we discern the difference of moral good and evil, and the obligations consequent on that difference : the moral perfections of the

Deity are made visible to us by the same light ; so that the same reason which holds forth to us the rule of our duty, holds forth also the perfect example of it : it follows that to obey the dictates of reason, and to imitate the example of God, is the same thing. This appears by considering that we can only trace the perfections of the Deity from the natural notions of perfection in our own minds ; so that whether we follow the dictates of reason in endeavoring after these virtues, or copy from the perfection of the Deity, we follow the same virtues, though placed in a different view. The imitation of God therefore is a principle of religion arising from and depending on the right use of reason ; and this shows us on what foundation it stands in natural religion, and how we may apply this principle in particular cases. It is absurd to aim at the measure of God's perfection : we are perfect as he is perfect, when we do only what he will approve. To stand approved in the eye of an all-perfect being is the true perfection of every creature : this is the Christian excellency described by St. Paul, Coloss. iv. 12.

DISCOURSE XLVI.

JOHN, CHAP. III. VERSE 19.

This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

It is shown that man being a reasonable creature, and enabled to choose for himself in all cases, it is contrary to nature to suppose that there should be any thing absolutely or necessarily good to him ; since the advantage to be drawn from any thing depends on the right use of it. Wholesome food is good for the sound ; but taken in undue measure, it creates disease. Physic is proper for the sick ; but if not properly regulated, it might destroy instead of curing. As it is with the body, so it is with the mind. The best instructions are of no use unless attended to. If there were any system of religion pretending by uncontrollable power to make men righteous, it might be considered as a good piece of spiritual mechanism, but not as a rule of virtue, since there can be no morality without free will. Hence it follows that the religion designed for us as free agents, can only instruct us in such a manner that we may not err through ignorance, and so aid us that it may be in our power, whenever it is in our will, to obey. That religion must therefore be the best, which most fully enlightens our understanding, and is best calculated to remove those impediments to liberty and freedom which arise from the corruption of our nature. There are but two sorts of men that can hope to escape punishment : the righteous, who have no reason to fear judgment, and the sinners who offend through ignorance. The declaration in the text therefore is only a natural consequence drawn from the excellency of the gospel and the perverseness of men.

If the gospel were less perfect or less known, sinners would have more to plead in their own behalf; as it is, they have no excuse for disobedience: if it were only a matter of advice, they might be pardoned for neglecting it. But as it is a law given by God to his creatures, if we do not walk in the light of it, we shall be condemned for seeking darkness rather than light. This meaning of the text is confirmed by other parts of Scripture: it will be shown that men continue in darkness rather than light, only because their deeds are evil. The declaration of our Saviour, Mark xvi. 16. having reference to the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, it is evident that the believers and unbelievers there spoken of are such only as have had the gospel preached to them. St. Paul speaks to the same purpose, Acts xvii. 30.; where the command to repent being opposed to God's winking at the times of ignorance, shows that now it is at every man's peril if he refuses to hearken to the heavenly call. The same is to be learned from Rom. i. 16. 18.: so that revelation, as it affords help to those who embrace it, at the same time renders all ungodliness inexcusable. There are many texts in Scripture to this effect; and our Saviour, in Luke x., speaks so clearly of those who despise the gospel, that his words can only be thus explained. It is not left to our choice whether we will be subject to the gospel or no; and this is not peculiar to the gospel, but is the case with regard to the laws of the realm, and all laws founded on sufficient authority: and if this be the case in human laws, it is much more so in those of divine origin: for the greater the authority of the lawgiver, the more absolute must be our obedience. Hence appears the insufficiency of that argument for Deism which men make who affect to discard the gospel, in order to preserve the moral law of reason and nature: for they manifestly reject the authority of God, and refuse that obedience which reason teaches to be due to the Lawgiver of the world. Such pretences are of little weight, since the gospel being the true light to direct us, the only reason for forsaking it must be that assigned in the text.

The avowed design of our Saviour's coming was to destroy the works of the devil, and to restore religion, as it respects God and man, to its native purity. His first lesson to the world was the necessity of repentance: the laws of his gospel are declaratory of the original law of reason and nature: the mysteries therein revealed to us are intended only to give us the assurance of his pardon and mercy, and raise us to a lively hope of life and immortality through faith and obedience. The institutions of the gospel, as baptism, the Lord's supper, &c. are set before us as the proper means to enable us to make our calling and election sure, by continuing stedfast in holiness; and what is it that can tempt a man to reject a religion so well adapted to serve all the good ends of living here, and to support our hopes of happiness hereafter? We cannot pretend to forsake the gospel, in order to secure an obedience to the moral law by better hopes or stronger fears; since the gospel has taken in all the hopes and fears of nature, and confirmed them by the irreversible decree of God, *who hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by the man Christ Jesus.* Do we recur to the light of nature in order

to learn what is acceptable to God, and what are the relative duties between man and man? In the gospel we shall find all the moral duties deduced from the two great principles of nature, love of God and of our neighbor. There is no precept of virtue laid down in the gospel which nature can reject; and none in nature that has not been enforced in the gospel. Many have complained that the terrors of the Lord, set forth in the gospel, are too rigid and severe; and many have lamented the strictness of the gospel morality: but did any one ever forsake the gospel, that he might become more perfect than the laws of Christ required he should be? If not, we may judge what purposes he serves who endeavors to bring down the precepts of morality from the strictness of the gospel, to give mankind greater licence; and to weaken the restraint laid on us by the terrors of the Christian law, by discarding the fears of perpetual punishment. Is it likely that the world will become better when less holiness is required, or when the danger of sinning is lessened? and yet this is pretended by those who forsake the gospel in search, as they say, of a better, but in reality of an easier form of religion. The reason assigned in the text is the only true cause of their aversion to the light which is held forth to them. Some have made objections to the mysteries of the gospel; and to those institutions of it which cannot reasonably be considered a part of true religion. It is true the gospel has taught us many things which by nature we could not know; but they are all designed to strengthen our hope and assurance of God's mercy: and those institutions, which in their own nature are not constituent parts of religion, are necessary to supply us with spiritual strength; and they were given by our Saviour, who, seeing, from the weakness of our nature, that we could not alone resist evil, mercifully granted us the assistance of his Holy Spirit. The gospel being recommended to us as founded in the express revelation of God, carries with it such authority as cannot with safety be either despised or neglected. We must therefore consider the necessity of impartially examining its claims to divine authority: since if it be the word of God, it is death to forsake it. Religion, properly so called, admits of no choice; in all the essential parts of it we must either obey or perish. But the corruption of man making it necessary for God to interpose by a new declaration of his will, the only dispute is of the truth of this revelation. If it indeed comes from God, it cannot be safe to reject it. This matter therefore, of all others, requires our most serious consideration; for if we wantonly or perversely refuse the gift of God, the words of the text will be our condemnation.

DISCOURSE XLVII.

JOHN, CHAP. V. VERSE 44.

How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

THE chief exercise of reason consists in so regulating our actions as to make them subservient to the end we purpose to attain. All

men have something which is the object of their desires ; though few choose well, and fewer still wisely pursue the good they choose : if we choose ill, the greater the ability with which we strive to compass our designs, the more certain is our ruin : the best actions directed to ill purposes become criminal : nothing is more commendable than a spirit of beneficence ; but where the appearance of it is assumed merely to promote our own selfish designs, what is it but fraud and deceit ? This is peculiarly applicable to religion. The man, who under the disguise of religion seeks only his own interest, affronts God, abuses the world, and lays up for himself certain ruin. There are degrees in this vice ; and men are often influenced by it without being conscious to so much baseness, as to deserve the name of hypocrisy. Where morality and virtue are not concerned, it may perhaps be right to comply with the world ; but if we allow our love of fame to influence us in religious matters, our minds will be perverted, and we shall be disabled from judging between truth and falsehood : thus it was with those whom Christ addresses in the text. He had *done among them such works as never man did*, and to these he appeals as evidence of his mission, John v. 26. : in v. 39. he appeals to the ancient Scriptures : a fairer issue could not be proposed ; and we learn from St. John that it had its effect on many of the rulers among the Jews, who however kept their faith secret, loving *the praise of men more than the praise of God* ; which words express also the sense of the text. It is shown that, as religion arises from the relation we bear to God, and respects him only ; when it is made to regard other objects, it necessarily becomes either idolatry or hypocrisy. It has been said that the zeal and piety of Christians fell into decay when the empire became Christian : this observation not perfectly just, as the church has, in all ages, had many faithful members. The times of persecution were calculated to afford more striking examples of zeal ; but the great alteration was, that when the powers of the world came into the Church, they were followed by all such as *loved the praise of men more than the praise of God* : since which time profession has become a less certain sign of true faith : and men not being now called to the proof by others, and not readily calling themselves to a strict account, have less reason for confidence in themselves. Some rules may therefore profitably be sought by which men may judge whether they receive honor one of another, or do seek the honor which cometh from God only. In order to this it is First inquired, In what sense the text condemns the receiving honor from men : Secondly, What is meant by seeking the honor which cometh from God only : Thirdly, What are the marks by which men may try themselves on these articles.

I. St. Paul has given it for a rule, that we ought to *render honor to whom honor is due* : and as some degree of honor and respect is due to all men, St. Peter has given the precept in general terms, *honor all men*. All men therefore to whom honor is due, may both innocently receive and justly require it : as a father from his son, a king from his subjects, &c. But in the text, and in the parallel passage of St. John, there is evidently an opposition, between the praise

of men and the praise of God. Now it is certain that no honor can be due to man which is inconsistent with the honor which we owe to God; and we cannot be innocent while we sacrifice the good-will of God to the vanity of being well spoken of in the world. Instance of Paul and Felix commented on.

II. *Them that honor me, I will honor, saith the Lord; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* The only way therefore to seek honor from God, is by paying to God the honor that is due to him. A sincere regard to truth and justice is the truest honor, indeed the only honor, we can pay to God: all external signs, though expressed in the method prescribed by himself, become empty shows, unless they proceed from an honest heart: this point enlarged on. And as it is in practical duties, so it is in faith likewise: he who professes to believe in Christ merely in compliance with the world, may obtain perhaps its riches and honors; but he has his reward; for this temporal faith will procure for him no praise or honor from God.

How differently people will act in religious matters, when they seek the praise of men, and when they seek the praise of God, may be collected from the knowledge we have of God and the world, and the measures that are necessary to please them: this however is fully shown by instances from holy Scripture.

III. Respecting self-examination. All times do not afford the same trials of faith and sincerity, yet there is no time which has not some. If persecution fails, prosperity has its temptations; and it is perhaps as hard to deny ourselves the glories and honors of the world, as it is to submit to its afflictions. St. Paul tells us, that *there must be heresies among us, that they which are approved may be made manifest*: when heathen persecutions ceased, internal divisions arose in the Church, and the powers of the empire were sometimes on one side of the controversy and sometimes on the other: what influence this had on the faith of multitudes, a moderate experience of the world may teach us. But farther; times of ease and prosperity naturally abound in vice and a neglect of the things pertaining to salvation; and it is counted a wise thing to sit still and give way to the torrent, and not to create trouble for ourselves and others by opposing a general corruption; and perhaps it may be wise: but is it wisdom towards God or towards the world? Is it seeking that honor which comes from above, or the honor which comes from men? Could the man, who so seeks it, have had courage in the day of trial and persecution?

Let us then examine ourselves on this head: if we think it a happy choice to sacrifice the honor of God and religion to a corrupt generation, and to screen ourselves from the indignation of the world by a professed indifference, is it not directly preferring the good-will of man to that of God? and can we complain, if we are left to seek our sole recompense from the world, whose servants we are? Conclusion.

DISCOURSE XLVIII.

MARK, CHAP. VIII. VERSE 33.

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

THE text shown to relate immediately to the times of persecution, and to express the duty of a Christian whenever God's providence may call him to such a trial. This is not our case at present; yet an adulterous and sinful generation has more ways than one of making men ashamed of Christ and of his words: and if the temptation to this crime be now less than in times of affliction, the guilt is greater. In order that men may easily examine their own consciences on this head, and avoid the evil, two inquiries are made: I. Into the nature of the crime of *being ashamed of Christ and of his words*: II. Into the several temptations that lead to it.

I. The duty opposed to this crime is expressed in the language of Scripture, by *confessing Christ before men*; and therefore *to be ashamed of Christ and of his words*, is to deny or disown him and his doctrine before men. In this language both parts are expressed in the 10th chapter of St. Matthew. There have not been wanting some, in all times, to justify the prudence of concealing our religious sentiments, and living well with the world. They call on us to remember that religion is internal in the heart, and not on the tongues or in the lips of men; that our virtue and obedience will be estimated by our integrity, and not by outward show and profession; and that, as the world has nothing to do with our hearts, we owe it no account of our religion. To this plea another is added; that to suppose it necessary for men to own their religious sentiments at the peril of their lives, is making God a very hard master, requiring of us a service of no value to him, at the expense of all that is dear and valuable to us in the world. These excuses are founded in ignorance of the nature of religion, and of the great ends to be served by it. Were we to estimate our religion by the service or benefit done to God, we might part with it all at once; he gets no more by the sincerity of our hearts than by our outward professions: but if it be supposed that there is something in inward sincerity which is agreeable in his sight, and renders men acceptable to him, it must surely be thought that hypocrisy and dissimulation with the world are odious and detestable to him: this point enlarged on. But it may perhaps be asked, how comes it to be necessary for a man to say any thing about his religion? how comes the confession of it to be made a term of salvation in the gospel? and what right has the world to make any inquiry?

To answer this, we must consider the nature of religion, and the ends proposed to be served by it. When God made us reasonable

creatures, he made us capable of knowing and obeying him. The great character in which he appears to us as governor of the world, is one which demands our obedience: religion therefore cannot be merely a secret concern between God and every man's conscience, since it respects him in so public a character; and it is impossible to pay him proper respect and obedience, if we deny him in the face of the world. Moreover, if any religious obedience be due to God, as governor of the world, it must principally consist in promoting the great end of his government: but whoever teaches and encourages men to deny that God is governor of the world, which every one does who refuses to own him as such, does effectually disturb the end of his government. Again, if it be really, as it is, impossible for us to do God any private service, it is very absurd to imagine that religion can consist, or be preserved by any secret belief or opinion, how cordially soever embraced. What thanks can be due to us for silently believing God to be the governor of the world, whilst we openly deny it, and in our actions disclaim it? Even this principle, which is the foundation of all religion, has nothing of religion in it so long as it is inactive; much less when we openly deny it, and in words and actions disclaim it: this point enlarged on. Lastly, if it be any part of religion to promote religion and the knowledge of God's truth in the world, it cannot be consistent with our duty to deny our faith, especially when we see how infectious example is.

Hence then we may conclude that it is part of every man's religion to own the faith and hope that is in him; that it is absurd to rely on a secret faith, which is of no use to him who keeps it secret; and whenever such faith is openly contradicted or denied, it may aggravate, but can never atone for, the hypocrisy.

Hitherto the argument has been drawn from the nature of religion in general, and the question referred to the denying of God and his truth. The text indeed speaks particularly of being ashamed of Christ and of his word: but to every believer in Christ and in his words, the arguments already used are directly applicable.

One thing more may be observed, that there are in this, as in other crimes, different degrees: while some were contented to dissemble their acquaintance with Christ, St. Peter openly denied him, and confirmed it with an oath. Among us some openly blaspheme him; others make a sport of his religion; and a third sort profess a pleasure in such conversation, though their hearts ache for their iniquity; but they want courage to rebuke the sin of the scorner. All these are in the number of those who are ashamed of Christ; and to all these it shall be one day said, *I know ye not*.

II. Inquiry into the temptations which lead men to this crime.

The fountain from which they spring is plainly enough described in the text; *this adulterous and sinful generation*. And we know that there is not a fear, a passion, a weakness, or a vanity in the heart of man, but the world knows how to reach it. One distinction however must be made with respect to these temptations, that there are some which pursue us, and others which we pursue: to the

one sort we unwillingly resign our faith, driven thereunto by fears and terrors, pains and torments, which we are not able to endure : but the other kind of temptations come on our invitation ; and we make our faith a sacrifice to the world, when we part with it or disown it for honor, wealth, or pleasure : these are they, who, properly speaking, love the world more than God and his Christ ; but they will find it a dear purchase at the last.

But whenever infidelity grows into credit and repute, and irreligion is considered as a mark of good understanding, then there arises another temptation to make men ashamed of Christ and of his word. No man likes to be despised by those around him ; and he who perhaps wants neither riches nor honors, wants however to live in credit and good esteem with his acquaintance. How far this inclination must work, from motives of vanity, want of courage, and the contagion of example, may be easily conceived. But let us compare our pretended difficulties and hardships, in this respect, with those real ones which Christians of the early ages endured. If they were called to brave the sword, and look every image of death boldly in the face, shall we find pity, who are afraid only of being laughed at by those who are void of understanding ?

But to come still lower : if we care not to be reprovers or rebukers of this iniquity, surely there is no necessity for us to be admirers or encouragers of it : it is no great sacrifice we make to Christ, when we resign our share of the applause which belongs to those who persecute and blaspheme him. Religion is after all our most serious concern. If its pretensions be founded in truth, it is life to embrace them, it is death to despise them. We cannot in this case stand neuter, we cannot serve two masters. If we confess Christ before men, he will also confess us before God ; and if we deny him, he will deny us at the last day.

Had our Lord been merely a teacher of good things, without any special commission from the great Creator, it would have been absurd and presumptuous in him to have arrogated to himself the high prerogative of being owned and acknowledged before men. Several have from the light of reason taught the world ; but none have assumed that prerogative. The case is otherwise with our Redeemer ; we must own his authority and confess him, be the danger of doing so ever so great. Whence arises this obligation ? It cannot rest on his being merely a teacher of reason and good morality. We must consider then what manner of person this is who requires so much at our hands. If he be indeed the Son of God ; if all power in heaven and earth be given him by the Father ; if he be appointed to be the judge of all men ; there is a clear reason to justify his demand and our obedience : but if he were only a teacher of morality and religion, how is he justified in pretending to be the only Son of God ? &c. We must either own him under this character, or condemn him as an impostor for claiming it.

When therefore we read that our Lord requires of us to confess him before men, the true way to know what we are to confess, is to reflect on what he confessed himself ; for it cannot be supposed that

he would make one confession himself, and demand of his disciples and servants to make another. Let us then look into the gospel, and having read his words, weigh well these things, and judge what our duty is.

DISCOURSE XLIX.

2 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. V. VERSES 10, 11.

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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

It is the privilege of a rational being to look forward into futurity, to consider the tendency of his actions, and to view them in their most distant consequences.

By the exercise of this power of reason, the wisest among the heathens discovered that there was ground for men to have expectations beyond this life. The arguments for these expectations fully stated. Under such circumstances our blessed Lord appeared, to bring to light life and immortality through the gospel. This fundamental article of religion, as it now stands on revelation, considered.

As to the principal point, there is no difference between the hopes conveyed to us by the gospel and by natural reason: thus far then the doctrine of each must stand or fall one with the other. But the gospel has made an addition to this doctrine, and communicated to us the knowledge of some circumstances which were not discoverable but by revelation. They are principally these; A resurrection of the body; Christ the Judge of the world; Rewards and punishments, in proportion to our conduct here.

First; The resurrection of the body was revealed, to give to all men a plain and sensible notion of their being subject to a future judgment. Death is the destruction of the man; for man is made of soul and body: therefore to bring the man into judgment for his deeds, the soul and body must be again brought together. This doctrine does not remove all prejudices, when examined by the scanty notions we have of the powers of nature; but it removes all difficulties that affect this belief, considered with respect to religion and morality; for the single point in which religion is concerned, is to know whether man shall be accountable hereafter for their actions here. Reason tells us they ought to be so: but a difficulty arises from the dissolution of the man by death; and this is followed by endless speculations on the nature of the soul, &c.: but take in the declaration of the gospel, that soul and body shall hereafter be as certainly re-united as they were dissolved by death, and all difficulty concerning a future judgment vanishes.

But still prejudices remain : to some it is incredible that the dead should be raised. To these it may be said, on the ground of the gospel evidence, that the dead have been raised ; on the ground of reason, that it is quite as credible that God should be able to raise the dead to life, as he was to give them life at first. But we are farther asked, what body shall be raised, since no man has exactly the same two days together : this apparently plausible objection has nothing to do in the present case ; for religion is concerned only to preserve the identity of the person as the object of future judgment, otherwise the difficulty would be as great in the judgments of this life as in those of another.

But the prejudices which affect men most, arise from the weakest of all imaginations, that they can judge from the settled laws and course of nature, what is or is not possible to the power of God. It is true that our powers are bounded by those laws, but it does not follow that his are so bounded who appointed the laws. When the Sadducees denied the resurrection, our Saviour told them, *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.* But whatever difficulties of this kind may remain, this article has removed all which lie in the way of our considering ourselves as accountable creatures, subject to the future judgment of God : so that revelation has in this particular brought faith and reason to a perfect agreement.

Secondly ; The gospel has made known to us that Christ shall be judge of the world.

Our Saviour tells us that *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son* : John v. 22. ; and again, John v. 27. St. Peter also declares that the Apostles were commissioned to publish this doctrine to all the world : Acts x. 42. Accordingly St. Paul, in his discourse with the men of Athens, fully instructs them in this important point Acts xvii. 31.

It is material to observe that this authority is given to Christ, *because he is the Son of Man*, as he has himself assured us ; and that the person ordained to be judge is a man, *even the man whom God raised from the dead*, as St. Paul asserts. And how happy is it for us to have such an one, of whom we may say, as the Apostle to the Hebrews says of our High Priest ; *we have not a judge which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

It may be said perhaps, that this is drawing consequences on the ground of vulgar apprehensions ; and that in reality there is no difference, whether God be judge himself, or commit judgment to the Son of Man : the objectors in this case answered ; whilst it is shown that, on the ground of Scripture, we may certainly know what the justice, mercy, and goodness are, by which we must finally stand or fall.

Thus this great fundamental article of religion, involved as it was in the darkness of former ages, is made plain by the light of the gospel. That men were accountable was always known ; that there would be a future judgment was generally believed : but how men were to appear to be judged, how rewarded or punished, was not known.

That the right of judging men was in God was well known : but how he would exercise it, whether by himself or another, visibly or invisibly, was not known ; infinite were the speculations raised on this subject, instead of which the gospel has assured us, that at the final judgment we shall be, what we now are, real men : and that the man Christ Jesus, who appeared in the world to redeem us, shall judge us by that gospel, and those rules which he left to direct us.

Thirdly ; The consequences of this judgment, which all must undergo, considered.

If we consult either Scripture or reason, we shall find no evidence of any farther change to be made in our future state, after once judgment has passed on us. That we are accountable, and therefore shall be judged, reason says ; but we can see nothing after judgment, except the reward or punishment consequent on it, and therefore the only conclusion we can draw is, that the condition of man will be finally determined as to happiness or misery, in which he must continue to abide.

As reason can show us nothing beyond judgment, but that state and condition which are the effect of it, so the holy Scripture has given us reason to think that nothing else there shall be, by describing the rewards and punishments of another life, as having perpetual duration. Life eternal is prepared for the righteous, and everlasting punishment for the wicked. Even the mildest interpretation that is given to the threats and denunciations of Scripture, supposes the punishment to last as long as the sinner : so that in this, the lowest view, our all depends on the judgment which shall finally be passed on us at the second coming of our Lord. The Apostle therefore is both just and charitable, when he adds, *knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*. If the Christian religion has cleared our doubts, by *bringing life and immortality to light*, it has also given us reason to be watchful and careful over ourselves ; for it is a fearful thing to have to answer for ourselves before the searcher of all hearts ; to answer to him that loved us, for despising his love ; to him that died for us, for having crucified him afresh ; and for having accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. This will be the sad case of every wilful sinner ; and the view of this misery moved the Apostle, and should ever move those who succeed him in his office, to warn men *to flee from the wrath that is to come*.

DISCOURSE I.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. II. VERSES 6—11.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took on 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. 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 should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PART I.

THE words of the text have been strongly debated by Christians differing in opinion about the person and dignity of our Saviour; and as they are often handled, lead more certainly to the knowledge of the interpreter's opinion than the Apostle's. It is not intended to press them into the service of any particular opinion, but fairly to expound them; to infer nothing from them, but what may be shown to be in them, even by the necessity of the Apostle's argument. To avoid confusion, this argument shall be represented, I. Intire and by itself: II. The things implied in it shall be considered, which we may call the principles on which the Apostle reasons: III. by a comparison of one part with another, the true sense and meaning of each shall be laid open. And, I. St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to love one another, and mutually to aid and assist each other in all things ii. 1. 2.: then, like a wise physician, he searches out the bottom of the evil which he would cure; and knowing this to be pride and vain-glory, he proceeds to admonish them 3. 4. in the next two verses; *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other, &c.* To support this doctrine, and enforce their obedience to it, he represents in lively colors the great humility of Christ as an example verses 5-8. To encourage their obedience, he sets before them, from the same example, what glorious rewards they might promise themselves hereafter for their present humility 9-11. This is the whole of the Apostle's argument. II. We may observe, in considering the several things implied in it, First, That the Apostle here points out to us three different states and conditions of Christ; the first, his state of dignity, from which he willingly descended, as expressed in the words *Who being in the form of God*; the second, his state of humility, to which he descended, as *he made himself of no reputation*; the third his state of glory, and exaltation as thus intimated; *wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.* These are all essential to the Apostle's argument; nor can one be taken away without destroying its force. For example: remove the first state, and the second is no longer one of humiliation, nor Christ an example of humility: this point explained.

In the second place, it is implied in the argument, that he was in possession of whatever belonged to his state of dignity and excellence before he underwent any thing that belonged to his state of humiliation : this point fully made out, showing that he was *in the form of God*, before he was made *in the likeness of man*. III. It is necessarily implied in the argument, that he underwent whatever belonged to his state of humiliation before he enjoyed any thing that belonged to his state of exaltation : this point established : hence it follows that his natural state of dignity and his acquired state of exaltation are perfectly distinct and different ; since one was antecedent to, the other consequent on his humiliation : whence his dignity before his humiliation belongs not to him in virtue of what he did or suffered ; nor is it any part of the exaltation he received after, or on account of his sufferings. This particularly insisted on, as it is a common mistake to think that because Christ was *for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor*, these dignities belong to him only because he suffered. Hence to all arguments drawn from the attributes of power and knowledge, &c., to prove the eternity and divinity of the Logos, some think it a sufficient reason to say, that Christ received his glory at his resurrection, and was made perfect through sufferings ; and therefore that these are not his natural perfections, but his acquired honors, received from the Father at the redemption. Thus they answer not the arguments, but confound Christ's states of glory : the one the glory of the eternal Logos, the other of the Son of man. St. Paul expressly founds the former of these on his creating the worlds, Coloss. i. 15-17. : the latter on his resurrection, in the next verse. These then are different states, and founded in different characters. St. John also makes the same distinction : chap. v. 25. 27. These verses enlarged on ; whence it is clearly shown that two distinct states are meant, when he says that the dead shall be raised by the voice of *the Son of God* ; but they shall be judged by the voice of *the Son of man*. Thus also the Apostle to the Hebrews, i. 2. 3., describes the dignity and excellence of the person whom God sent to our redemption, showing the glory of Christ before all worlds. Then in the following verses, he speaks of his state of exaltation, in consequence of his sufferings, clearly distinguishing between the dignity of his nature and the honor of his office. The Apostle, in ii. 9., says that Jesus was *made a little lower* than the angels ; but here that he *was made better* than the angels : these terms fully explained. But this difficulty vanishes if we rightly distinguish his three states of dignity, of humiliation, and of exaltation, evidently mentioned in the text. According to this key we may expound the Apostle to the Hebrews by the Apostle to the Philippians : this exposition made out. We find Christ described by St. John as with God, and as God, and as the Creator of all things, i. 1-3. : in the eighth chapter our Saviour bears testimony of himself, *before Abraham was, I am*. Had he said before Abraham was, I was, it might have been inferred that he existed before Abraham, and yet was born into the world long after Abraham, and therefore had existed long before his coming

into the world. But in the passage as it is, something more is implied which peculiarly belongs to the expression *I am*: what that is, we may learn from the original words as used by God, in answer to Moses inquiring after God's name, Exod. iii. 14. Why should our Saviour apply this expression to himself, knowing to whom alone it had been applied, and knowing that it would have been in the highest degree, in the man so applying it, committing *the robbery of making himself equal with God*? Besides, the words are a mere solecism, and according to the analogy of language express nothing; for to carry present time back, and make it antecedent to the past, is shuffling ideas together which can have no place in the mind or understanding. If then the expression means any thing, the *I am* must belong to Christ, as signifying eternity and permanency of duration, which, with the ascribing to him the creation of all things, is the greatest power we have any notion of. Let us now look to the other part of the question. At our Saviour's last appearance to his disciples, to give them full commission to teach and baptise, with full assurance of his being with them to the end of the world, he introduces his charge thus: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*: where he clearly speaks of power conferred on him after his resurrection, in virtue of which he thus commissions them, *Go ye therefore*, and teach all nations. The import of the word *therefore* fully explained from the power he had received. It is now considered what weight there is in the great *Socinian* argument against the eternity of the Logos. All power, they say, was conferred on our Saviour after the resurrection: it is therefore absurd to ascribe any to him before, since he that receives all power is supposed to have had none before he received it. This objection, though plausible at first view, when duly considered will be found to miss the aim; as the power spoken of in St. Matthew, and that in St. John, belong to different and distinct states; and therefore his receiving all power as due at this determinate time, argues not his having none before that time: this shown from the grounds of a royal commission from a human prince. The creation and preservation of all things are ascribed, the former by St. John, and the latter by St. Paul, to the same eternal and inherent power. But in Hebrews and Colossians, with respect to his power of office, he is styled Head of the Church. This point fully developed. We know what is said of a new creation by virtue and holiness; but were powers, principalities and dominions, things visible and invisible, which the Apostle declares to be works of his hands, thus newly created? Was the material world redeemed and made holy? What absurdities may we not believe or teach, if such are the doctrines of clear and unbiassed reason! Conclusion: from the text and other parts of Scripture there are three distinct states of our Lord spoken of, and unless we have an eye to this material observation, we shall not understand the Scripture, or the controverted points concerning the eternity and divinity of the Son of God; but we shall absurdly confuse the glories which he received in reward of his obedience with the antecedent and inherent glories of his nature.

PART II.

The three distinct states belonging to Christ Jesus, and mentioned in the words of the text, being supposed, we now proceed, thirdly, to compare the several parts of St. Paul's argument together, and to examine what the Apostle teaches us concerning each of these states. As to those of humiliation and exaltation, the difficulties are not great. It will be readily allowed that in the first he was very man, subject to the infirmities of human nature, and that he underwent the bitter death of the cross; that in the last, he is Lord and Head over the church under God: that he now governs it, and shall at the last day appear in the majesty of his Father, to judge the world. Thus far most Christians are agreed, though they may differ concerning his first state, and his proper glories before his coming into the world. The text first describes this glorious state, *Who being in the form of God*, in order to set forth his great humility in becoming man: the following words, as they stand in our translation, describe the excellency of this glory, which was so real and transcendent, *that he thought it no robbery to be*, i. e. he thought himself intitled to be, *equal with God*: but this translation is not insisted on; for it is more agreeable to the Apostle's argument and language to suppose that he intends to express the first degree or instance of his humility, and that the words should thus be rendered, *Who, being in the form of God, was not fond or tenacious of appearing as God, but made himself of no reputation*. The reasons of thus rendering these words not given; but in either way the $\tau\acute{o} \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota \dot{\iota}\sigma\alpha \Theta\epsilon\acute{\omega}$ belong to Jesus Christ: this point enlarged on. Some render these words so as purposely to exclude Christ from the dignity here mentioned, and make the Apostle speak thus: *Who, being in the form of God, did not arrogate, assume, or lay claim to any equality or likeness with God*. This bears no analogy to the words in the original, nor can it agree with the aim and design of the Apostle. The original expression is metaphorical, taken from catching prey. The application of this metaphor explained, and the point enlarged on: whence it appears that St. Paul evidently supposes the $\tau\acute{o} \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota \dot{\iota}\sigma\alpha \Theta\epsilon\acute{\omega}$ to belong to Christ before his humiliation, when he was in the form of God. Secondly, by comparing the several parts of St. Paul's argument together, it will appear that the expressions $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, and $\tau\acute{o} \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota \dot{\iota}\sigma\alpha \Theta\epsilon\acute{\omega}$, relate to the same thing, so that he who possesses the first, has a right to the last. The foundation of the Apostle's argument is, that Christ enjoying a most exalted state of glory, was not fond or tenacious of that glory, but made himself of no reputation; for this argument being wholly spent in setting forth Christ's humility, there is no need to mention any other glory than that which he, out of his humility, laid aside; whence the glory which he had is the same as the glory which he laid aside. From the two verses together, according to the signification of the original, it appears that the humility of Christ consisted in changing willingly a glorious for an inglorious condition: this point enlarged on. From the words there-

fore, *who being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant*, the Apostle plainly intimates that he obscured or laid aside the glory belonging to the form of God when he took the form of a servant: the *form of God*, therefore, expresses all those glories which Christ suffered to be hid in his state of humiliation. The same thing is expressed by the *equality with God* here mentioned: this point explained; and it is shown that we must necessarily say that the *form of God*, and the *equality with God* are one and the same thing. This perhaps does not discover the precise notion belonging to each of these expressions, but it clearly shows that both did equally belong to our Saviour before his coming into the world; which all allow to be the proper character of Christ here, however they limit it in their various expositions. Moreover, the form of the argument proves that St. Paul esteemed these to be Christ's natural and inherent, not his borrowed glories; for he exhorts the Philippians thus: *Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others.* This passage explained. He farther exhorts them thus: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

He then sets forth how little Christ regarded τὰ ἑαυτοῦ; for being in the form of God, he was not eager of appearing equal with God. This form of God therefore, and this equality with God, were those things of his own which he did not look for. If he meant not this, the precept and the example cannot meet in the same point. Supposing then this to be the meaning of the terms *the form of God*, and *to be equal with God*, we must yet consider who and what manner of person he is to whom these things belong, so as to be his own: the glories of God, even if communicated to a creature, could in no sense be said to be the creature's own glories: our own glories are those only which are peculiar and proper to our nature. From the seventh and eighth verses of the text, the Apostle clearly means to oppose the *form of a servant* to the *form of God*: when he laid aside the latter, he took the former: if we can determine the meaning of one, it will lead to the knowledge of the other; the true key to which is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, i. 1-4. The substance of this is contained in the words, *who being in the form of God*: but the Apostle to the Hebrews shows wherein the true difference between Christ and all other beings lies, ver. 5. 6. declaring who Christ is; and of the angels he speaks in ver. 7. and 14. From the image which the writer to the Hebrews seems to have had before him, viz. that of a great household, where he considers God as the great *Pater-familias*, Christ the *Filius-familias*, and other beings as servants of different orders, we can understand the Apostle to the Philippians when he says, Christ took on him the form of a servant: this point enlarged on. The Apostle to the Philippians adds, *being made in the likeness of men*: the reason of this addition we see in Heb. ii. 16. Angels are servants as well as men: therefore when Christ took on himself *the form of a servant*, he might be supposed to have taken the nature of the angels. To put aside doubt, the Apostle says, he took the form of a servant, *in the likeness of men*; i. e. in the nature of men; hence the

μορφῇ δούλου is the common mark and character of all God's creatures; the ὁμοίωμα is the peculiar character of each species: hence these together make a real and perfect man. We must attend to the Apostle's argument in order to distinguish rightly between *the form*, *the likeness*, and *the fashion*, as applied all to Christ Jesus. The equality with God, which Christ did not retain, but emptied himself of, clearly means the divine glories in which he appeared, and which during his state of humiliation he laid aside: his nature he could not lay aside: he was still the Son of God; and therefore, says the Apostle, being man, he was found in fashion as a man: which expression answers to *the being equal with God*. The form of God, in the first part, answers both to the form of a servant, and to the likeness of men, in the second part; the form of a servant being common to all God's creatures, it did not of itself sufficiently denote Christ's nature: hence the addition, *in the likeness of men*, was necessary: *the form of God* required not this: the argument for our Saviour's divinity from this text briefly recapitulated. This exposition of the text is farther confirmed by St. Paul to the Ephesians, iv. 22-24., again in 1 Cor. xv. 47. 48., and many other places of like import. In our text, the Apostle does not expressly compare the first with the second *Adam*; but the contrast which he draws between the conduct and spirit of the second Adam, and the corrupt affections of the first, leaves no doubt of his meaning. Moses relates that *Adam* was created after *God's image*, and was made lord over this lower world. St. Paul tells us that Christ was in *the form of God*, which gave him dominion over the works of nature. Moses declares how Adam, through disobedience and a vain ambition, fell from the dignity in which he was created, and intailed misery on his descendants: St. Paul says, that Christ through obedience hath set us an example, by which, if the same mind be in us, we may recover what is lost: this contrast carried on and completed. If then we admit of this reference to the case of the first Adam, it will determine the sense of those words in our translation, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; for in that case the opposition between the two characters would require that it should be said of Adam, that he thought it a robbery to be equal with God: which is absolutely inconsistent with the account of *Moses*, and with the view and reasoning of St. Paul.

PART III.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: this point enlarged on, and the humility of Christ shown in taking on himself the form of a servant, and becoming obedient to the death of the vilest of slaves. This humility is plainly represented to us under two views: in one Christ, who was *in the form of God*, descends so low as to become man; in the other, he descends yet lower, taking on himself the meanest condition, and undergoing the most ignominious death. The first instance of Christ's humility has been explained by

considering from what, and to what, he descended; the second instance is now subjected to a similar examination. In the first we learned the Apostle's opinion concerning our Saviour before his incarnation; in this we shall find what notion he had of him during his abode on earth. The question then is, what manner of person did St. Paul conceive Christ to be, when he said of him, *being found in fashion as a man*? This will appear by considering what is meant by *the fashion of a man*, and why St. Paul thus expressed himself; and likewise by examining the instances of humility given in the text, and considering of whom it can properly be said, that he was humble in submitting to death. *The fashion of a man* denotes those proper and distinguishing characters, which belong to a man as such, and not to any other kind of being: this shown from a consideration of St. Paul's use of the original word, and of the verb derived from it: thus, when he tells us of Satan's *transforming* himself into an angel of light, and of his ministers *transforming* themselves into Apostles of Christ, in both places he uses the verb derived from the original word in this place; and in both places he means, not that these persons actually became such, but that they appeared in such fashions, and could not be distinguished from their originals. Hence the *fashion of a man* only means the true and real appearance of a man. To ascertain what led St. Paul to this expression, and why he might not as well have said, and *being man* he humbled himself, we must look back to the first rise of the Apostle's argument. The person here spoken of, Jesus Christ, was in the form of God, yet emptied himself not of his being or nature, but of the glory and majesty belonging to him: this point enlarged on, showing that though he continued to be the same, yet, as to his outward dignity and appearance, he was mere man: otherwise, in what tolerable sense could the Apostle say of him, *being found in fashion as a man*? for in what other fashion should *a man* be found? The reason of this limitation fully explained in his being something more than man. The Apostle perhaps had another view in the expression, *and being found in fashion as a man*, with respect to what follows, *he became obedient unto death*. It might well seem strange that any should attempt the life of him, who was himself the Lord of life: who would be bold or vain enough to think of compassing his death? To which the Apostle gives this previous answer; *he was found in fashion as a man*, and as such underwent the consequences: this the proper import of the word *found*: by whom? by those who sought his life, and called him to the obedience which he readily paid. Allowing the Apostle to have had this view, we must suppose that he thought him more than mortal man, as he is at some pains to assign a reason which could tempt any one to suppose him liable to death. This topic enlarged on. II. From the instances of humility given in the text, it is considered to what sort of person they can be applied as such; *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. All must die, and if to die be humility, all are in this respect equally humble. Why then this distinction of Christ's humility? why is it humility in him, which in the case of others is necessity?

This point enlarged on, showing that he was mortal, else he could not have died; that he was more than mortal, else he could not have avoided death; in which case, to die had been no humility. St. Paul therefore supposes him to be more than mere man, who willingly laid down his life, which no man could take from him. We may also observe the Apostle's accuracy, who says, that when Christ quitted the glories proper to the form of God, he *emptied himself*; for the form of a servant and the likeness of men were inconsistent with divine glories: had he retained them, he could not have come in such form or likeness: he therefore emptied himself of them. In the second instance, he considers Christ as found in the fashion of a man and humbly submitting to death: now to die, even on the cross, has nothing in it incompatible with the fashion of a man; therefore, says the Apostle, *he humbled himself*. This humility therefore bears no relation to the *fashion of a man* here spoken of, which continued one and the same on the cross as before: it relates to his person and real dignity, and distinguished from the appearance in which he was found: this point enlarged on. But farther, *Christ took on him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men*: it indeed was great humility for him who was in the form of God, to become mere man: but having become so, since death is the natural end of all men, what farther humility is there in that he *became obedient unto death*? The reason is, that though he was man, yet as Lord of all things, he could, as he himself has told us, take up his life and lay it down; hence St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 8. says, *they killed the Lord of life*, or the Prince of life, as expressed in St. Peter's sermon. For him therefore to die was great humility; to die on the cross was still greater; submitting himself to the malice of those who lived only by the power of him they were destroying. It was humility therefore to become man; and when so, it was humility to die. Consider St. Paul in this view, and his discourse is just, the example full; but otherwise we shall hardly find either his argument, or the humility of Christ Jesus.

PART IV.

From verses 9-11. of the text enlarged on, we are instructed in the true reason, and the true foundation of the honor, worship, and glory, which the Christian church has ever paid, and still continues to pay to our blessed Lord. It is difficult to conceive how any accession of glory or honor should be made to him, who was, before his coming into the world, *in the form of God*, and therefore possessing all things. Yet the Apostle's argument supposes such an accession on his exaltation as a reward for his humility and obedience. Wherefore God has *more* highly exalted him, &c.: now, according to the Apostle's reasoning, this glory ought to be more excellent than the first glory; for if God gave him nothing but what he had a right to, according to the very excellency of his nature, how did he reward his humility? This point enlarged on. But it

may be said, how can these things be? how can he, who is *the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person*, be exalted in glory? especially considering that Christ, in praying for glory for himself, prays for no other than that which he had before the world was: John xvii. 5. To set this matter in its true light, we must consider that the glories of nature and the glories of office are different and distinct. The Apostle says nothing of nature or essence: he speaks of the person of Christ, and considers him as the same person, and of the same nature, in all his different states of glory, humility, and exaltation: this point enlarged on. The Apostle then infers, not that the natural powers and dignities of Christ were increased, or capable of being so, but only that in consequence of redemption, God made him head over all, and so intitled him to that worship and those honors which were not paid to him before. He was subservient to his Father in the creation of the world: John i. 3. Yet the worship and honor due from the creature to his Creator, always were, and still are paid to the Father; for as the evidence arising from the natural world leads to the acknowledgement of only one great Being, there could be no pretence in setting up another either in opposition to, or conjunction with him, to be an object of worship. But when Christ undertook and redeemed the world, then it was thought proper to make known his primary glory, that we might know whence to expect salvation, and that the honor and obedience due both to our Maker and to our Redeemer might be consistent. Thus Christ, having redeemed the world, was by the Father made Lord of all things: and thus the Lord of every man is Christ, whose we all are. There is no room to speculate about nature or essence, or to suppose that Christ, before his exaltation, was less honorable, any more than to suppose that God was less honorable before the creation; because at the creation the sons of God sang together for joy, and paid him new honors and adoration. This difficulty being thus removed, the doctrine of the text is considered in the following method: I. That the power and authority exercised by Christ Jesus, in and over the Church of God, are derived from this exaltation; and therefore, II. That the honor and worship paid to Christ, in and by the Church of God, are founded in this exaltation: III. That the power and authority exercised by Christ, and the honor and worship paid to him, are, and ought to be, ultimately referred to the glory of God the Father. These propositions are so evident from the words of the text, as to be subject to no doubt in the explication: but it may be of service to show that they are also agreeable to, and confirmed by, the whole tenor of Scripture. With regard to the first proposition; the first authority produced is that of our Lord himself, who, just before his ascension, and the commission given to his disciples, to teach and baptise in his name, did, as it were, open his own, which was the foundation of theirs: Matth. xxviii. 18-20. These verses commented on, showing that this power is part of the exaltation spoken of in the text; and that in consequence of their commission, all acts done by them in his name are founded in the power which he received after his resurrec-

tion. St. Paul, in Rom. i. 4. says, that Christ was declared to be the Son of God *with power*, &c. God, at Christ's baptism, and at the transfiguration, declared him to be his *well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased*; but at the resurrection, to be his Son *with power*. The Apostle's sense is fully expressed, Rom. xiv. 9.: this passage commented on and explained. In the Epistle to the Colossians towards the middle of chap. i. St. Paul speaks largely of Jesus Christ, not only distinguishing between the power by which he created all things, and the power by which he governs all things, as head of the Church; but marking also the different sources and originals whence these powers proceed. One place more is mentioned, Ephes. i. 17-23., where St. Paul describes the power and authority of Christ, and founds all on his resurrection and consequent exaltation. The Scripture abounds with such evidence; nor is any thing plainer in the gospel than that Christ is our Lord, our King, our Mediator, and Intercessor. The second proposition is a natural consequence of what has been already said. The title which Christ Jesus has to receive honor and worship in the Church, is the reason and foundation on which they are paid him: what his title is has been already shown; and consequently the foundation of the Church's worship. But that faith may not rest on man's wisdom, hear the evidence of Scripture on this point also. In the Revelation of St. John several hymns of the Church, in honor of God and his Christ, are recorded, than which we cannot find a better copy for our devotions: see chap. iv. 11. Here the adoration paid to God the Father is founded on his being the Creator of all things. In the next chapter, the worship of Christ is founded on this, that he was slain, and that by his blood he redeemed us: the same praises are also sung to him in the 12th verse: from all which it is evident that the worship of Christ is founded on the redemption, and relates to the power and authority which he received from God at his resurrection. The confession drawn from the text, *that God has given Christ a name that is above every name*, &c. implies much more than a bare acknowledgement that he is Lord; it comprehends those honors, and that worship, which those who heartily confess him as Lord, will naturally and readily pay to him. How this confession must be made, and whence it must proceed, St. Paul tells us in Rom. x. 8-9: these verses commented on, showing that the confession of our faith in Christ Jesus is that faith by which we shall be saved: this point fully enlarged on. But if Christ be not risen from the dead and exalted to glory, *then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*: but if he be risen, and be exalted to glory, how absurd is it to deny him the honors due to him! The fear which some have, that by paying their duty to their Redeemer, they rob God of his peculiar honor, and set up an object of worship in opposition to his plain commands, that himself alone is to be worshipped, will vanish, if we consider, lastly, that all powers exercised by Christ, and all honors paid to him, are ultimately referred to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The honor and worship paid to the Son must either be part of the service we owe to God, or inconsistent with it:

if we have found out new objects of adoration, we offend against the law, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: but to honor Christ, in virtue of God's command, to honor the Son even as we honor the Father, is part of the service which we owe to God, and arises out of the command itself. Our Saviour has told us, *that all power is given unto him*; thereby asserting both his own and his Father's authority: this point enlarged on. He has told us by his Apostle that, at the end of all things, the Son shall resign his power, *that God may be all in all*; plainly intimating that the power now exercised by him is his Father's, which, as it is at last to be given up to him, so was it at first received from him: hence the honor paid to Christ is referred ultimately to God the Father: this point enlarged on with reference to the different offices of Christ. These things clearly show that the gospel has not strained the precepts of natural religion, in teaching us to honor the Son, whom the Father hath made head of all things, even to their consummation.

DISCOURSE LI.

TITUS, CHAP. II. VERSE 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THE expression here used, *Who gave himself for us*, is so familiar to the ears of Christians, and its reference to the death of our Saviour is so well known, that there is no need to illustrate it by parallel passages. The expressions in 1 Tim. ii. 61. and Gal. i. 4. are somewhat fuller, but their import is the same. This doctrine of the gospel, viz. man's salvation purchased by Christ's death, is that great mystery hid from ages, but now manifested by the preaching of the Apostles and Prophets. Yet, though it be *made known* and *manifest* to us, that we may not suppose ourselves intitled to call for the reasons on which it is founded, it is necessary to observe that the gospel is a revelation of the will and purpose of God: the reasons of his so acting are not revealed to us, nor have we authority to say they ever will be. Under the law, God's purpose to save mankind is intimated; under the gospel it is proclaimed to all the world; but neither of them instructs us in the reasons of this proceeding: but having life and immortality set before us in God's own way, we are left to embrace them through faith. The gospel then being offered as a matter of faith, confirmed by signs and wonders as security for its promises, he acts without commission, who proposes it as a matter of science and knowledge, and as the result of mere reason, or who pretends to account for the inscrutable methods of God's wisdom. To a person inquiring why God required such a sacrifice for sins,

when he might have forgiven them, we may answer, God has not admitted us to his secret counsels, or openly declared them. We preach Christ's death, a sacrifice for sin, himself the resurrection and the life, and the judge of the world: if you ask for our evidence, we answer with St. Peter, *To him give all the prophets witness, &c.* (Acts x. 43.), with our Saviour (John x. 25.), with St. Paul (Acts xvii. 31.) On this evidence the faith of the gospel stands; the Christian's hope rests not on curious speculations, but on this, *that all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and amen*, that is, sure, certain, and irrevocable. The death of Christ, according to the Scripture, was ordained before the foundation of the world; and since, through faith in his death, God intended to offer salvation to the world, it is reasonable to suppose that the sacrifices before and under the law were introduced in order to prepare and dispose men to receive the tender of God's mercies, in virtue of the one sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the whole world. Sacrifices in the heathen world, though corrupt, and applied to corrupt purposes, yet appear in the religious worship of the best men in the earliest times, and were established in the church of God's own founding among the Israelites. Had they originally been matter of superstition or human invention, though we may suppose God's gracious acceptance of the free-will offering of a weak mind, yet we cannot suppose that he would adopt the superstition, and make it a necessary part of a religion of his own establishment. To avoid this absurdity, it must be said that the use of sacrifices was divinely introduced for the atonement of sins; if so, they had such virtue as God thought fit to annex to the performance, in consequence of the promise which attended them; if they came in any other way, we cannot imagine any virtue in them. Now since we are taught that the sacrifice of Christ is the only true expiatory one for the sins of the world, it is manifest that all other sacrifices, accepted by God, owed their efficacy to the relation which they bore to this one sacrifice, and as signs and figures of better things to come. By this reasoning it may be shown that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is not confined to any particular age or time, &c. This sacrifice conveys to us the charter of God's pardon, together with the certain hope of immortal glory: we are no longer our own, that we should obey the lusts of the flesh; but his, who hath purchased us with his blood, to be heirs with him, &c. These are great hopes, but they rest on a foundation which is agreeable to reason. All religion ultimately resolves itself into a trust and faith in God: men are not apt to refer those conclusions which are deducible from natural reason to the head of faith, though sometimes they have no other support. As in the common affairs of life, we trust men from our knowledge of their characters and qualities, so natural religion, reasoning from the character and attributes of God, doubts not but that he will deal reasonably with the children of men: and what is this but faith and trust in God? Beyond this natural religion cannot go, so as to particularise and say what God will do in any case: to determine this, we must be wise as God, so as to say what is the best thing for infinite wisdom to do; for though we may depend on him for future happi-

ness, if we do well, yet nature presents us with great difficulties : this point enlarged on. This faith of natural religion is the basis of gospel faith ; for as reason teaches us to depend on God's wisdom, justice, and goodness, it teaches us also to depend on his veracity ; and therefore it is as rational an act of faith, to believe that God will save the world according to the method which he has declared, as to rely on his goodness to do the thing, without being able to assign the method in which it shall be done : this point enlarged on. The difference lies not in the nature of faith in one case and in the other, but in the extent of our knowledge in each case. In natural religion, the belief that God will save us, implies that some means will be used for our salvation ; under the gospel these means are ascertained, and therefore the faith of a Christian embraces the means as well as the end of this hope. In things which are within our power to do, or to conceive, we can judge of the fitness or unfitness of the means made use of to do them ; but in things beyond our power and conceptions, we have not this judgment. This point beautifully illustrated by examples drawn from the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The application of these examples to our resurrection ; in which natural religion throws itself on the unlimited power of God, thereby owning itself no judge of the means for effecting this great work : these the gospel has opened to us : we complain that we see not the natural tendency of them to the end proposed, forgetting that the work itself is mysterious, and therefore that the means must be so too. That the death of Christ should be the life of the world, is a surprising proposition ; but to say that this is not a proper method, without a clear knowledge of the whole dispensation of Providence regarding man, is absurd. The New Testament discovers to us that we are the immediate workmanship of the Son of God, *by whom all things were made, which were made ; being created by him and for him.* How far this relation between Christ and man rendered it proper that his death should be an expiation for the sins of the world, we are not informed ; nor is it expedient for us to be wise above what is written : but something of this sort seems intimated in Scripture : the fall of men was the loss of so many subjects to Christ, their natural Lord under God, in virtue of his having created them : the redeeming of them was the recovering them again, the re-establishing his power over his own works : thus St. Paul describes the work of our redemption, Col. i. 13. ; and in the next verse recites the means used for our deliverance. In confirmation of this doctrine, he subjoins the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Maker, verses 15-17. and the new relation acquired in virtue of his redemption, verse 18. As we owed to him our first life, so also we owe to him our second. The reason of this dispensation of Providence in the redemption of the gospel is related verses 19-20. The scheme of thought which runs through this passage of Scripture, seems to be this : that as Christ was head of the creation, and made all things, so at the redemption from sin he was made head of this new work also, the giver of life to every believer : for this purpose he made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things to God, that he

might have the pre-eminence. This the Apostle teaches us, and also that the pre-eminence of Christ as head of the church is connected with and related to his pre-eminence as head of the creation. We have therefore reason to believe that the whole transaction of our redemption through Christ, his incarnation, his life on earth, his death on the cross, the sacrifice he offered for sin, and his glorious resurrection, are founded in the most absolute propriety, and the result of infinite wisdom, choosing the fittest means for the end desired. This then is our hope and confidence; that Christ *gave himself for us*. Let this hope live with us here, that we may live by it for ever.

DISCOURSE LII.

1 TIMOTHY, CHAP. I. VERSE 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

THESE words contain the great charter of the Christian church, and are the title by which we claim all the promises of the gospel: if it be asked on what pretence the peace of God is proclaimed to men, and on what confidence pardon is offered to sinners, it is answered in the latter clause of the text; and that in his name is preached salvation, peace, and pardon to offenders. This doctrine, with the principles on which it is founded, and its natural consequences, distinguishes the Christian religion from all others. On this text are built the believer's hopes, and the advantages and favors which we claim beyond the terms of justice and natural religion. Whoever therefore rejects this article, does indeed reject the Christian religion, though not all the religion contained in the gospel, the moral duties of which are those of natural religion carried to perfection: and the man who receives not Christ for his Redeemer, may yet receive these, as being agreeable to his own reason and understanding. The difference between a true Deist and the Christian arises from the doctrine in the text. They both admit the being and providence of God, as well as the obligations of morality, and therefore the necessity of a virtuous life. Thus far the Deist cannot doubt, as his sole hope rests in his obedience to his equitable judge. Should the Christian build so far on other hopes, neglecting the weighty matters of the law, he deceives himself, and abuses the gospel of his Saviour. But the Deist reckons all men, from the very nature of their creation, capable of fulfilling the end designed for them by God; and as he owns the duty of obeying God, he therefore claims his protection. The Christian knows that man has fallen from his primary state of innocence, and having no claim on God by his obedience, stands in

need of pardon, as well as grace and assistance to perform the conditions on which pardon is offered: he believes that pardon and reconciliation has been granted to man through the sufferings of the Son of God; and that grace will be granted. All these points are briefly comprehended in the text. To illustrate and confirm this proposition, it is shown, I. What reason we have to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon and salvation: II. By what means Christ perfected their redemption and salvation.—I. It is a saying of St. Austin's, *if man had not fallen, Christ had not come*: our Lord speaks to the same sense, when he tells us, *the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*; and again, when he answered those who reproached him for conversing with publicans and sinners, *they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*. Had man continued innocent, natural religion would have answered all the ends of his creation; he would have wanted no Redeemer; for after the works of the creation were finished, *God saw every thing that he had made; and behold it was very good*: in this state therefore no reconciler between God and man was wanted. That actions shall be rewarded or punished, natural sense and reason have always taught the considering part of mankind. The voice of reason and of the law is, *this do and thou shalt live*: for though man is altered, yet the nature of things is the same; so that the abstract consideration of virtue and vice properly infers the reward of the one and the punishment of the other; it is no wonder then that they who argue on such general views only should imagine that moral virtue may still exalt a man to the highest degree of happiness. In the question concerning the merit of good works, there has been much confusion, for want of distinguishing between good works, considered simply and in their own nature, and as performed by the sons of men: the first is, whether virtue in its own nature is intitled to reward. Now as sure as God is just, and that good differs from evil, God will and must reward the one and punish the other. But the question, whether the good works of *men* deserve reward, alters the state of the case; since the nature of good works and of man also must be considered; for in his case you ask whether the man condemned for his evil works may be rewarded for his good works: this point exemplified in the case of a murderer, who has long after his crime led an irreproachable life. Though this instance is not absolutely parallel to our case, yet it shows that virtue and morality, naturally considered, may deserve reward, while the virtue and morality of man may not: and this is the parting point between the patrons of natural and of revealed religion; the not considering which has made some think, that whilst we defend the authority of revelation, we give up the principles of reason and nature. But, say they, does not vice essentially differ from virtue? True, it does. Is not justice the attribute of God, who must therefore reward virtue and punish vice? True, still. Is not this then a sufficient foundation for religion, without recurring to grace and faith, or miracles, or mysteries? True, it is; where native innocence is preserved, where religion is *res integra*: but with respect to those who have already offended,

reason and nature declare vice must be punished: and if so, what must sinners expect? Whether such conditions should endear natural religion to sinners, let common sense judge. Were Christianity to be preached to a new race of men without stain of guilt, these doctrines would not apply to them: this point enlarged on. Should this race however fall from innocence, and be liable to the punishments of vice, then the application holds good: this point also enlarged on. Some contend that God from his mercy and goodness will forgive sinners: but if the justice of God must reward virtue and punish vice, and yet his mercy must forgive sinners, then natural religion contradicts itself, in affirming that sin necessarily must and must not be punished: if it be said, it is probable God, pitying our weakness, will be lenient with us, so say we too; but probability infers not necessity; therefore it must depend on his will whether he will do it or no: all hopes therefore must be resolved into the evidence of free grace, which is no other than revelation. Would you then disprove revelation, and discard the religion of Christ? You must prove mankind to be in a state of innocence and purity; and then it will be senseless to talk of redemption: for what should innocence be redeemed from? This point enlarged on. But whilst you endeavor to prove this, try at least to be an instance of it yourself: this point also enlarged on. Innocence may challenge justice; but sin can only sue for pardon: justice you may have from nature, but pardon you must receive from grace and favor. The apophthegm of one of the wise men, *learn to know yourself*, is the first requisite in the choice of religion: this point exemplified in the case of a condemned malefactor, who must not sue to his prince in the same terms as a faithful and deserving subject may. Consider then with yourself; can you stand a trial with God? if so, justice will do you right; but if conscience cries out to you, *let us not enter into judgment with God, for in his sight shall no man living be justified*, then seek, if happily you may find, his mercy. The Christian religion is throughout adapted to the present nature and circumstances of mankind; nor can one see the reasonableness and beauty of the gospel, without considering the quality and condition of those for whose use it is designed: hence one great reason why the gospel has been so much undervalued in comparison with natural religion, that its end has been misunderstood. II. It is considered by what means Christ has wrought our redemption. *That God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, that is, without being offended at it, is a truth as discernible by the principles of reason as by the authority of revelation. The world then being in a state of corruption, men were manifestly become *the children of wrath*. To redeem it therefore, it was necessary that God should be reconciled to sinners, and should pardon the offences which could not be recalled, or through infirmity could not be avoided; to consider redemption otherwise, would be an attempt to rescue sinners from God's anger, whether he would or no. Look now into the gospel, and you will find that the only-begotten Son of God took our nature on him, and by a perfect obedience to his Father, and a voluntary death on the cross, com-

pleted this reconciliation, and obtained our pardon, in which properly consists the work of redemption. But to redeem men from God's displeasure, only that they might draw it on themselves afresh every day, would have been useless and unworthy of the Redeemer. To secure therefore the benefits of redemption to men, it was necessary for him to render them such as God might be pleased with; which he did by the powerful methods prescribed in the gospel for rectifying their depraved wills; and to render this effectual, he promised and bestowed on them the aid of his Holy Spirit, by which they might lay hold of eternal life. This is a short account of what Christ has done to save sinners; and in this what has any man to complain of? You have no reason to complain, you say: you are willing to be pardoned, but you cannot see how the death of Christ can reconcile God to sinners. But do you consider that you are the sinner, the person to be pardoned? Is it your's, or your offended Master's business, to judge of the proper means of reconciliation? Surely it is his: why then debate a point in which you have no farther interest than to accept the blessing granted on any motives? If we cannot fully comprehend the reason of these means, there is but one just consequence, viz. that the counsels of God are unfathomable by human reason: nor can this be any surprise to a considering man, who daily sees the same truth confirmed: this point enlarged on. Leaving then these curious inquiries, let us be content that God should be wiser than man; considering that, although he has concealed from us the secrets of his wisdom, he has manifested his love towards us, and that his mercy shines forth unclouded in every page of the gospel. These advantages so correspond to the sentiments of nature within us, that it is strange to find the pretensions of nature opposed to the Christian revelation: this point enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LIII.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAP. I. VERSES 9. 10.

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

IN the verse before the text, the Apostle tells the Thessalonians that not only the word of the Lord had sounded out from them in Macedonia and Achaia, but their faith towards God was spread abroad in every place; so that there is no need, says he, to speak of the doctrines delivered by me, and received by you: the thing is well known, *for they themselves show of us, &c.* Hence it is evident

what notion was entertained by the world of the Christian religion and its principal doctrines. The Apostle's business was well known to be, to turn men from idols to serve the living God, to give evidence of Christ's resurrection, and to raise certain expectations of his coming again with power and glory to judge the world : this common report was so just an account of the Apostle's doctrine, that there was no room left to enlarge or correct it : *in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad ; so that we need not to speak any thing.* Considering then this early account of the Christian religion, we find it to consist of two principal parts ; the first relating to the service owing to the living God ; the second, to our faith in Christ, and to our hope and expectation grounded on that faith. Religion, under the first head, must be natural religion, or true uncorrupted Deism : this was the original religion of mankind, of which, through abuse and corruption, hardly any sign was left at our Saviour's coming. However rightly some few might think, yet they were obliged to follow the world : few attempted, none succeeded in a reformation of the public religion ; nor is there an instance of any people who served God on the principles of natural religion : this reformation was effected only by the preaching of the gospel, which revived the true ancient religion of nature, and prepared men for its reception ; and has, by the additional supports of revelation, maintained it for ages, and will probably maintain it to the end of all things. These additional supports make the second great branch of Christian doctrine : they are revived on the authority of revelation, and stand on the evidence of external proofs : that we ought to turn from idols, and serve God, &c. are truths which any reasonable being may feel ; but that we have been delivered from wrath by the Son of God, who is appointed to be judge of the dead and of the living, &c. ; these are articles which no man's reason can suggest, and which, when suggested, reason cannot receive on any internal evidence, but on authority founded on external testimony. This distinction, constantly attended to, will go far to show us the true temper, genius, and ends of Christianity. The gospel, considered in its precepts and morality, and with respect to its new doctrines or articles of belief, supports and encourages true religion. This might be shown in the several particulars of the gospel dispensation : confined here to those specified in the text. The sense of the expression, *to wait for the Son of God from heaven*, is completely expressed in Phil. iii. 17. 20. 21. The expectation of Christ coming to judge the world is peculiar to Christians, and is supported by the belief of the resurrection, that main point of faith which the Apostles were to teach and establish in the church of God ; whence arose the qualification necessary for an Apostle, viz. the capability of bearing witness to the resurrection : (Acts i. 21. 22.) And St. Peter, in the next chapter, vindicating to the Jews the miraculous gift of tongues bestowed on the day of Pentecost, renders a similar account of the work and ministry of the Apostleship. Several other passages of a like tendency quoted : from which, taken together, it plainly appears how much the Christian religion, considered as a distinct system from

natural religion, depends on the belief of the resurrection of Christ. The Apostles were ordained to be witnesses of this article; and on this they founded their doctrine, whether they preached to the Jews or to the Gentiles. When St. Paul preached this same doctrine at Athens, he was thought to be an introducer of some new deities, (Acts xvii. 18.) This doctrine of a resurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with its consequents, (30. 31.) This new article was introduced to be a new evidence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and to support the sinner's hopes of pardon through the promises of Christ. We see then its use: let us consider now whether we are beholden to the gospel, and how much, for this new evidence of a life to come; what is in it, or the doctrines grounded on it, that any sober Deist or professor of natural religion can justly blame. Natural religion pretends to support itself on the expectation of future rewards and punishments: it considers God as Governor and Judge of the world. Christianity stands on the same foundation, and admits for genuine all these hopes and fears of nature. Thus far then they differ not: the question is, which brings the best proof, and most fitted to persuade the world of these great truths? This point enlarged on; showing that the one appeals to conscience, and that the other embraces all this evidence, together with the suggestions of reason, and the express testimony and assurance of God given to mankind. But what need of this new evidence? If the arguments from natural religion were sufficient to support the belief and expectation of a future judgment, why call men from a dependence on their reason, to rely on the evidence of men for the truth of a fact in its nature hard to be believed? one in which we might have doubted even our own senses, much more those of others? Whoever, in answer to this difficulty, endeavors to weaken the natural arguments for a future state, is very ill employed: they are in themselves convincing; but they require more thought than the generality of men can bestow on them: whether this be so or no, the evidence of history must determine: under the light we now enjoy, we are ill judges how far men could go, aided only by the mere strength of reason. A right notion of God is the foundation of all true religion; for which notion each thanks his own reason: and if so, the world has mightily improved in reason during these last ages; since it was not so until the publication of the gospel made reason see and approve the truths which were before in a great measure hid from her eyes. The case is the same with respect to the natural arguments for a future state: this point enlarged on. To remedy this evil, God has proposed a new evidence, the resurrection of his Son, shown before chosen witnesses, who were sent into the world to publish it as an evidence of a future general resurrection of men, and to seal the truth of the doctrine with their blood. Such evidence requires no abstract reasoning, no refinements, to show its force: this point enlarged on. Those who pretend to be real Deists, cannot be offended by this evidence, as the main thing we prove by it they acknowledge to be true, viz. that God will judge the world. If then the Christian religion has no private design to serve by this evidence,

but produces it to confirm that natural sense which all true religion admits, why should it be suspected of deceit? Besides, the belief of a future state, supported by the evidence of Christ's resurrection, is applied only to those purposes which a wise and good man would desire. The gospel labors to assure us of the certainty of our resurrection to eternal life, and in addition to the common evidence of reason, has given us a new proof from the very hand and immediate power of God; for the establishing of which proof it shows such concern, that we may be sure it was provided to forward the design of the gospel; so that if there be any deceit in the gospel, it must lean on this article for its support: this point enlarged on; showing that the gospel requires nothing but what reason and natural religion require also. One thing in the Scripture account of a future state is new, the designation of the man Christ Jesus as Judge of the quick and dead: this is however liable to no objections on the part of natural religion, which requires not that God should do every thing immediately by himself; nor is it any impeachment of his authority: the Son acts by the Father's commission, who hath given all judgment to him: it makes no change in the nature of the judgment: we shall answer for nothing to Christ but what reason tells us we are accountable for. There is this difference between the Deist and the Christian believer: the latter has not only the same hopes of futurity, and in the same degree, which reason and reflection can furnish; but he has also the express promise and testimony of God, confirmed by his Son's resurrection. Suppose him mistaken, he stands on the same ground the other does: suppose his faith well established, he can give a better account of his hope. Thus the gospel has supplied the defect of natural religion on this momentous point: to the wisdom of this provision experience can bear witness: this point enlarged on. The resurrection indeed was a stupendous work; but the hand that performed it was greater. He who believes that God created men, cannot doubt his power to raise them from the grave. But allowing God to be omnipotent, still you say the resurrection, as a fact, requires proof; and proved it is by the concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses, who have given not only their words, but their lives in its confirmation: surely they were in earnest, when they embraced and taught the doctrine on such hard terms; nor can any serious person disbelieve them. Did this article alter our notions of God or religion, and lay any new burden on us, then men might be careful how they admitted it: but as this is not the case, as it pretends only to establish and confirm the hopes of nature, why such scruples? Admit it; our hopes are much improved; our duty nothing increased: reject it, our duty is the same, and our hopes much less. How kind a provision then has the gospel made for our weakness! and how powerfully has it supported the interest of true religion, by furnishing us with so plain and yet so strong a proof of a future state, and of a judgment to be executed in righteousness!

DISCOURSE LIV.

PROVERBS, CHAP. IX. VERSE 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and the knowlege of the Holy is understanding.

THE advantages which we may expect to reap from religion are many and great, but not all equally certain : some are exposed to the chances of human life, and depend on circumstances over which we have no control : hence it is that the best men sometimes have the severest trials and sharpest afflictions. But there are two things which sincere religion is sure to obtain, one of which is the foundation of all happiness here ; the other is the happiness and immortality hereafter : this blessing we can only enjoy now through faith and hope ; the other is a necessary attendant on a mind truly good and religious, viz. the peace and tranquillity of mind which flow not so much from an exact discharge of our duties, but from a due sense of God and religion, and an upright desire of serving him. Properly speaking, this is not a reward given to the virtuous ; but it arises from the very nature of things, from the frame and contexture of our souls ; it is virtue's own natural offspring, which can never forsake her. Since nature then has given us notice of the being of the Almighty, and shown us, from our relation to him, the service which we owe him, this sense, properly pursued in an honest discharge of our duty, must breed in our minds true peace and comfort ; and therefore true religion must be the source even of our temporal happiness. Yet the face of things in the world has a different appearance : religion is fearful, suspicious, dissatisfied with itself, always seeking, but seldom finding where to rest : hence the misconceptions of men concerning religion itself, who think it better to give it up intirely, than perpetually to fluctuate in doubt : and thus superstition, by making many miserable in the pursuit of religion, makes others, to avoid that gulf, throw themselves into the deeper one of atheism and irreligion : thus true religion is lost, and its companion, peace of mind : for view God from either extreme, and you see him in terrors ; you behold not the kinder rays of his mercy : the cases of these two extremes enlarged on. It is therefore worth while to search into the causes of this unhappiness, whence arises the corruption of this living spring. The text, rightly understood, not only affords occasion for this inquiry, but directs us in it ; for by showing us the principles of true religion, it helps us to discover the errors which produce irreligion and superstition. Two things proposed : I. To show that the text and other like passages of holy Scripture will be found on examination to set forth that a just conception of God, his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion : II. That this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in all particular matters of religion, and alone can secure us from either atheism or superstition. —I. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of*

wisdom. Some might think it sufficient to observe that fear, whatever limited or enlarged notion of it we may have, is not a voluntary passion, but necessarily relates to and arises from the notion or conception we have of the thing feared; and that there is the same distinction between the different kinds of fear: these points enlarged on, and the sources of a base and slavish fear, and of a filial fear and veneration shown: hence we cannot understand the sense of the proposition, without a notion of the thing feared: thus the fear of a tyrant and that of a father are different; but without knowing the difference between a tyrant and a father, we shall not be able to distinguish these passions. The same rule is applicable to the expression in the text. Allowing this *fear of the Lord* to mean a right and due fear, the wise king presupposes a proper conception of the Lord, whence only that fear can flow, which is the mother of wisdom and understanding; for misconceptions concerning God and his attributes will not produce wisdom, as is manifested in the follies of the heathen world. The proposition therefore amounts to this; *a just notion and conception of God is the beginning of wisdom.* This exposition being deduced from the order and nature of things, let us try the other method, which is more familiar, and see if any exposition will not lead to the same thing. Now we are to consider what is meant by the *fear of the Lord*: the reason of which inquiry arises from our experiencing in ourselves different kinds and degrees of fear, which have different effects and operations. Of what sort then is the fear of the Lord? That it is not an abject slavish fear all expositors agree in, because God is no tyrant; which every man of sense will admit as a good reason: and this is but adjusting the sense of fear from the true notion and conception of God. Scripture mentions various properties of religious fear: *the fear of the Lord is clear,* says the Psalmist: other passages cited, all which being tried in the same way, are deducible only from the notion and conception of God, and are unintelligible without it. The fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the nature of fear, considered as a distinct passion of the mind, but by considering the natural effect that a just notion of God has on a rational mind; for it means that frame and affection of soul which arises from such a notion: it is so called, because as majesty and power are the principal ingredients in the idea of God, so are fear and reverence in the affection that arises from it; not but that love, honor, and admiration, are included in the notion. And doubtless in this latitude the wise king said, *in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.* The only appearance of a difficulty in this way of arguing is this: if the fear of God be such as has been stated, none should be void of it but those who want right notions of God; and yet we know it is not so with some sinners against knowlege. By two ways men may discover whether they have a sense of the fear of God; one by acting agreeably to it, the other by conscience. Self-condemnation, for acting contrary to the fear of God, is an evident token of it. But if neither of these signs be discoverable, there is a farther account to be given; for it is not merely the speculative notions of God which produce this sense, but

a persuasion that there is a real Being, to whom these ideas actually belong; else the notion is idle and fruitless: this point enlarged on. And though there be not many atheists in the world, yet in many hearts there is a secret lurking infidelity, or rather the want of a due assurance in the reality of things invisible, which makes religion lifeless and inactive. In this case a just conception of God is wanting, and therefore a due sense of his fear. Having thus considered the true meaning of the fear of God, we are now to consider, II. what is affirmed of it, as the right rule to form our judgments by in matters of religion. *It is the beginning of wisdom*; taking wisdom here to mean true religion, as it often does in Scripture. By this expression we are not to understand merely that the notion of God is, in point of time, or order of nature, prior to religion; which, though true, is not the whole of what is taught concerning the fear of God. All religion relates to God; therefore without the notion of a Deity there can be no religion: but there is religion which is folly and superstition; if therefore the fear of God only shows the necessity of religion, and then leaves us to chance in the variety of its forms, we may learn folly as well as wisdom through it. But the fear of God also teaches us wherein true religion, which is indeed wisdom, consists; and enables us to judge if our offering be fit for God. In natural religion this is clearly the case; because in that state there is no pretence to any other rule that can come into competition with this: it is from the notion of a God that men come to have any sense of religion, and it is by the same principle only that they determine this to be a proper part of religion, that to be otherwise. When we consider God as governor of the world, we soon see that subjection to him becomes our interest and duty: but what is this obedience, and in what acts does it consist? For this we must recur to our natural notion of God: this point enlarged on. The attributes of God considered, and the consequent duties which they oblige us to perform: though some may be moral duties, as mutual love and benevolence, arising from the relation of man to man on mere principles of reason, yet this becomes part of religion from the above-mentioned consideration of God's nature. Take from the notion of God any of his moral perfections, and religion will degenerate in proportion. Hence to the superstitious man religion becomes a torment, and he thinks that the worse he uses himself, the more he shall please God. There are other kinds of superstition, which, though they have less of torment and anguish, have not more of reason or religion; such are they which have turned religion into a trade, and found something to offer unto God in exchange for virtue and holiness: here the spring is corrupt, and the notion of God lost or not attended to: this point enlarged on. It is plain then, both from reason and fact, that a just conception and sense of God is the beginning of wisdom, the fountain of true religion. *God is a Spirit*, says our Lord, *and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*. Here we are referred to the same principle, and by the best authority. This, it may perhaps be said, may be true on the foot of natural religion, where natural notions alone direct us: but what is it to us, who are instructed by the surer word of prophecy?

To this it may be answered, revelation is founded on natural religion, and therefore cannot supersede it without destroying itself. The knowledge of God is in the nature of things antecedent to revelation; for why should we attend to the voice of God, till we know who he is? Hence nothing contrary to this notion of God can be admitted for revelation any more than for natural religion. There is indeed a difference, from inattention to which some have fancied natural religion opposed to revelation, though it is not so: the difference is this: in natural religion nothing can be admitted which is not deducible from our natural notions; for every thing must be admitted for some reason; and in natural religion no reason can take place, except this agreeableness of the thing to our natural sense: but revelation introduces a new reason, the will of God, which must have the authority of a law with us: this point enlarged on. Hence it is not necessary that all parts of a revelation should be such as may be proved by natural reason, provided they do not contradict it; as the will of God is sufficient reason for our submission. But the essentials of religion, even under revelation, must be judged by the same principle. No revelation can dispense with virtue and holiness; for it may as reasonably dispense with our belief in the being of a God, as that he can or would vacate the obligations to virtue and holiness; hence all such doctrines, rites, and ceremonies, as tend to subvert true goodness and holiness, are clearly not of God's teaching or introducing. The surest way to keep ourselves steadfast in the purity of the gospel, is to fix our eye constantly on this rule: enthusiasm or destructive zeal could not have grown out of the gospel, had men done so; nor could religion have degenerated into folly and superstition: these points enlarged on. Some persons, finding so much folly, superstition, and uncertainty in religion, have rejected it altogether; which could not have happened, had they attended to the true notion of God, and not to the extravagances of men, which affect not our duty. Are we absolved from our religion because others have corrupted theirs? If the people are deceived, and the priests ignorant or superstitious, that does not destroy the relation between us and God, or make it reasonable for us to throw off our obedience. The fear of God teaches us a very different sort of wisdom.

DISCOURSE LV.

LUKE, CHAP. X. VERSE 29.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

PART I.

THE precepts of the law and of the gospel being conceived in general terms, and familiarly expressed, men of speculative minds

have so restricted the application of this general rule, that the duty has often been lost in the explication, and the precept so pared and cut, that it is no longer serviceable to common life. The law of God, *to love our neighbor as ourselves*, can be better interpreted by our hearts than our heads; as we cannot help feeling the sense of our duty as long as we attend to the inward motions of nature: our own wants and infirmities will show us the matter and extent of our obedience: but when men come to limit the exact bounds of love, it generally happens that very little love remains to be disposed of among their neighbors, and very few to share what they have. This exemplified in the case of a covetous man making excuses why he should not bestow his charity on some poor wretch; and so every instance of our duty has its subterfuges: as long as men find comfort in excuses, invention will furnish them. It may seem strange that the laws of God should be liable to this usage; since being the transcript of perfect knowledge, and the work of him who knows and foresees the secrets of all hearts, we might have expected to find them so fenced about, and so express in all cases, that the meaning of the precept could not be questioned, or iniquity covered by excuses drawn from the interpretation of Scripture: but there are good reasons for this. Were the Scripture to consider all cases, and limit our duties in all possible circumstances, the world itself could hardly contain the things that should be written: such a law would be useless, and men might grow old in sin before they could learn their duty. Besides, God gave every man a law to direct him, when he made him a reasonable creature; and therefore he expects obedience to it. The gospel was given not to exclude, but to assist the exercise of reason; and therefore a law so circumstantial would preclude men from those nobler instances of duty which flow from a right use of their minds, and are the proper sacrifice of a rational soul to God. The uprightness of a man, and the integrity of his mind, are as discernible in his application of the rules of the gospel, as by any outward acts whatever. He who from his own reason nobly interprets the word neighbor in the gospel to be all the sons of men, is so much a better Christian than the man who confines the law to townsmen or countrymen, as his neighborhood is more universal. Besides a law so particular would not correct the evil complained of: the perverseness of the will, not the weakness of the understanding, teaches the evasions of the law: were it more explicit, men would take more pains to evade it; for the plainness of the law will but little correct the malignity of the will, which alone needs improvement: this point enlarged on. Since therefore it is impracticable to give rules for all cases, and to adjust the general laws of virtue and obedience to the various circumstances of human life, without destroying the end of all laws which are intended for rules; but which, by taking in all particular cases, would grow too voluminous for use;—since reason and judgment would be of no use in virtue and obedience, if men in all cases were limited by particular clauses and provisions;—since likewise the end to be gained by such numerous and particular laws would not be attained, but men would still

find room to cavil at their duty, and pretences to evade it;—it appears that the gospel is not to be charged with the doubts and disputes that often arise on its laws and precepts, itself being perfect as a law for the government and instruction of rational creatures; but we must seek elsewhere the cause of men differing so widely on the plainest points of duty. A careful attention to the text will show this; and the parable which our Saviour put forth, instead of an answer to the lawyer's question, will point out the remedy. Interpreters differ about the meaning of the words, *but he, willing to justify himself, said*; as it does not appear why he needed any justification for himself: no one had charged him with any neglect or contempt of the law. Nay, our Lord had commended his wise answer, *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; This do, and thou shalt live.* Then follows our text. Nor does it appear how any justification of himself could arise out of this question, or the answer that might be given to it: what fault did he mean to excuse by asking, *who is my neighbor?* How did his virtue or innocence depend on the answer that might be given him? These difficulties have led interpreters into different sentiments; these being omitted, the most easy and natural exposition of the passage is proposed. This lawyer came to our Lord, and tempting him said, *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Our Lord answered, *what readest thou?* He said, that in the law he found he was to *love the Lord his God with all his might, and his neighbor as himself*: our Saviour says unto him, *thou hast answered right*, and adds, *this do*, that is, practise the law as well as thou seemest to understand it, *and thou shalt live.* But in the practice, the lawyer knew how this precept had been loaded with exceptions and limitations by the Jewish doctors; and that he esteemed him only as his neighbor, who was of the same blood and religion with himself; he therefore hated many who were actually his neighbors, as the Samaritans for instance. Since then he heard that life eternal depended on his obedience to the law, and the propriety of his obedience rested on the Jewish interpretation of it; in order to his own justification he very properly asks our Lord, *and who is my neighbor?* for by the answer to this question he would be found to have fulfilled or transgressed the commandment. Had our Lord determined in favor of the Jewish interpretation, the lawyer had been justified in his practice; and his obedience, as well as his previous prudent answer, would have deserved praise: but being forced to own that the *Samaritan* was his neighbor, he stood condemned by his own sentence, and by his approbation of the Samaritan's example; and he was sent away with this short but full report and admonition; *go, and do thou likewise.* The words, thus expounded, show us on what motives men act, and what it is which prejudices their minds in interpreting God's law: they are *willing to justify themselves*, and therefore use all their force and skill to make the command countenance their practice, and to speak only consistently with their inclinations. When we do what is commanded, and forbear from what is forbidden, then is our obedience perfect: this plain description of obedience cannot be disputed. He that loves

not his duty, is restless, and labors to bend the law, that it may justify him in his proceedings. It is no wonder, when men are so engaged in errors either of practice or doctrine, that they should labor to reconcile themselves with the commands of God's law; for great as is the pleasure of sin, they cannot of themselves bear up against a guilty conscience. While the pleasure is new and in its full vigor, or the gain increasing, the mind wants perhaps no other comfort: but the pleasures of vice have their intermission, and are succeeded by cold damps, which seize on the spirits: this point enlarged on, and illustrated by the case of ill-gotten wealth. It is in the intervals of reflection that a man frames devices how to escape the dreaded punishment, and convinces himself that he has not offended against the law of God, but of the interpreters, who love to lay heavy burdens on others, which they care not to touch with one finger: thus the easy casuist comes to enjoy and justify his iniquity. When the young man inquired on what terms he might inherit eternal life, our Lord set the commands before him, (Mark x. 19.): thus far all was well: these terms he willingly accepted. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly disposition, would have led him on to greater perfection, (ver. 21.): but this the young man could by no means digest, (ver. 22.) for he was exceeding rich: how gladly would he have had the precept softened! how would he have adored a teacher who could have made him a consistent title both to heaven and to his estate! In this instance we see the disposition which makes men strive to render the law of God of a piece with their own affections: in others we shall see the practice. The Jews had a law, commanding that they should honor their father and their mother; which implied an obligation on children to support their indigent parents; a precept so just and reasonable, that it is one of the prime laws of nature; but the Jews, hardhearted to their own flesh and blood, were uneasy under this burden; and yet the law was plain: and they could not rest till they made the law comply; and they set up tradition against it, to dissolve its uneasy obligations: for they taught as our Saviour justly reproves them, (Mark vii. 11-13.) Thus the law was to be supplanted, to justify its open violation. But to come nearer home: the Scripture expressly commands us to worship the Lord, and him only; and he has declared himself a jealous God in this respect. Two of the commandments, and all parts of the gospel, confirm this article; yet it has been controverted even by Christians more than any other. Were not the case notorious, it might be said, perhaps, how is this possible? whence such misunderstanding of the Scriptures? Whence these interpretations? It was not a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scripture that led to this: corrupt practices first got possession; and men, *willing to justify themselves*, coined new interpretations: the violence of this inclination may be seen from its beating down such express and repeated commands of God. There is no man living, who has heard or read the gospel, but he believes that all image or creature worship is forbidden, those only excepted who are practising it. Could the Jews give themselves leave to charge such doctrines on the gospel as

some Christians pretend to find in it, they neither would desire, nor could have better arguments for rejecting it. Prayer, praise, and adoration of Gød, are things difficult to none but scholars: they are in themselves plain; but refined notions, to justify modern corruptions, have made them intricate. The command is clear, God only is to be worshipped: to make room for any other object, worship is to be split into many kinds, and one religiously preserved to God, in controversy at least, that others may be imparted to the creature. To this eagerness of justifying a corrupt practice, we owe the many curious distinctions invented to darken and confound the clearest truths of the gospel.

PART II.

It is a common practice, though much complained of, to pervert the Scriptures to support the opinions which distinguish different sects; and this, in proportion as each has departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Christianity. The same disposition exists in private life: there are not so many self-condemned sinners in the world as is generally thought; for he who continues in sin generally finds out soon some excuse or justification for *his* vice. A man, judging only by reason and Scripture, would wonder how Scripture was ever made a party to such a defence: but the friends of any vice are guided in their judgments by self-love and interest, such candid interpreters, that no vice need fear being tried by the Scriptures, they being judges. The cause of this has been already observed: it is now considered how we may best secure ourselves against this great abuse. The words of the text do not lead directly to this inquiry, or afford much light in it: but by observing how our Lord brought this disputer to do justice to the law of God, and to own even the Samaritan as the Jew's neighbor, we shall learn how men are to be dealt with; and how forced to give up the excuses under which they have sheltered their iniquity. As what is farther to be said in this argument must arise from our Lord's answer to the question put to him in the text, his answer must be placed in its true light. In answer then to the lawyer's question, our Lord puts a case to him for his own judgment: the story briefly related. Some have labored much so to adjust this case, that it might be a proper answer to the lawyer's question, *who is my neighbor?* that is, whom must I love as myself? So that our Lord ought to have determined the extent and right of neighborhood, and thence deduced the obligations of love and assistance; whereas the case reverses this order: the Priest and the Levite were not neighbors, because they did not assist the wounded man; the Samaritan was, because he showed kindness to him: if then no man is our neighbor till we have either showed or received kindness from him, we cannot from the right of neighborhood infer the obligations of love, but must determine, from the mutual exercise of love, the notion and extent of neighborhood: and no man, if this be the case, can offend against the law of loving his neighbor: for none

being our neighbors except those we love, every man loves his neighbors. But if we view the case fairly and in its true light, this supposed difficulty vanishes. The lawyer asked the question in order to justify himself: he had learned to call no man neighbor who was not of the same stock and religion with himself: he expressly hated Samaritans, and justified his hatred, because they were deserters of the temple at Jerusalem. This great error was not to be wrested from him by battling his prejudices, and arguing on the true sense of the law; for not being unaccustomed to such exercise, he would have stood resolute against any such convictions; our Saviour therefore puts him a case which shuts out all his prejudices. By placing a *Jew* in distress, no exception could be taken against the person: a Samaritan in the same state would have found no pity from a *Jew*, who would have thought it right to be an enemy to the enemy of God. A priest and a Levite pass by and neglect him: these persons stood in all those relations to the distressed, which the lawyer owned to be just bonds of neighborhood, and therefore he could not but condemn their want of bowels to their brother; but a Samaritan passing by, shows compassion to the poor *Jew*: here even the lawyer's prejudices carried him to a right judgment; for knowing the hatred between the *Jew* and the Samaritan, he could not but the more admire his kindness: hence our Saviour urges him to declare which was neighbor to the man in distress; that is, which acted most agreeably to God's law, that we should *love our neighbor as ourself*: the lawyer answers, *he that showed mercy*; condemning thereby the Jewish exposition and his own prejudices; for if a *Jew* was forbidden to assist a Samaritan, the same reason held good why a Samaritan should not assist a *Jew*. Our Saviour approving his judgment bids him apply it to himself; *go thou, and do likewise*; that is, since you commend the Samaritan for acting like a neighbor to the *Jew*, do you learn to act so to a *Samaritan*, which is the force of the word *likewise*. Thus the case fully determined the question, and showed that no restrictions were to be laid on the law of God. From our Lord's conduct here, we may learn how to apply to the passions and prejudices of men; and how most successfully to make truth occupy the seat of error. If it were a defect of reason that made us thus disagree, and act differently in cases where we have one and the same rule to go by, the distemper would be incurable, as we are not able to enlarge the faculties which are bounded by God and nature. But it is not so; passion and prejudice hinder us from judging rightly in cases of morality and natural justice; and we find that men's reason and judgment fail in the very same proportion that vice and passion prevail. Did men judge perversely in all cases alike, nothing less than want of judgment and reason could account for it; but when we see them to have reason in most cases, and to be dark only in a few, we must search out some other cause. Now if we find that a man's reason and virtue forsake him in the same instances, and that where he judges perversely he acts perversely, and remarkably so in them only, we may learn what misguides or rather enslaves the mind, and how the freedom of reason may be restored: this beau-

tifully illustrated in the cases of the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious man : *self* lies at the bottom ; it is not so much the vice, as *self* that is to be defended ; and if you can separate these, the vice will soon fall under the common sentence of reason, and be left to be condemned with its fellows. By this honest, this holy art, did our Lord convince the lawyer, who put the question of the text to him, intending to admit no one as his neighbor that was not nearly allied to him, or at least of the same nation. Our Saviour stated a case to him by which his prejudices were silenced : thus he who excluded almost all mankind, owned even the *Samaritan* to be the Jew's neighbor, and thus confessed the *Samaritan's* right, in that relation, to expect and receive good offices from the *Jew*. Thus also did the prophet Nathan force David, in the very height of sin and extravagance, to give sentence on himself and his iniquity. The story of Uriah briefly told. Had the prophet openly taxed David with the murder, he would perhaps have justified himself, and said to the prophet as he had to the captain, *the sword devoureth one as well as another* ; or perhaps the prophet would have been rebuked for his intrusion, and forced to fly from the king's anger. But he complains to the king of a great oppression, which a very rich man had been guilty of towards a very poor one. The story of the ewe-lamb fully told. Then said the king, *as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die*. The king having thus passed sentence, the prophet opened the secret, and said, *thou art the man* : the parallel fully drawn. The king therefore had no retreat for his justification : he had nothing left him but this plain confession, *I have sinned against the Lord*. Thus again our Saviour, under the parable of an householder and his vineyard, made the Jews bear witness to God's justice in rejecting their nation from being his people : this parable briefly related. It is not hard to force truth out of men, when you have once got beyond their prejudices, and separated the truth from all personal views and interests ; for reason is clear enough, when unclouded by passion and affection : this made the heathen moralists clothe their instructions in the dress of fable : the reasons of this enlarged on, and illustrated in the case of a passionate man, who never reads the fable of the horse and the man, but he laughs at the horse's folly and his impotent desire of revenge. The consequences of these things are plain. I. The true art of convincing a man of his error is plainly to throw him as much as possible out of the case ; for the less he is himself concerned, the better he judges. You must not fret his prejudices, but decline them ; not reproach him with the error you condemn, but place it so that he may see it in its true light. II. In private life, innocence is the only preservative of reason and judgment : guilt causes you to seek subtrefuges, and misleads you in your opinion of yourself and your duty. III. If you find yourself involved in the case you are to judge of, instead of seeking new reasons and arguments to form your opinion by, look back and reflect what sense you had of the matter before it was your own ; as your judgment will thus be more impartial : or consider, if possible, what is the sense of the sober and

virtuous, whom you may more safely trust than yourself, where your passions are concerned. At least suppose your enemy in the same circumstances with yourself; change places with him; then consider what judgment you would make of him, and so judge of yourself. By these means perhaps we may preserve ourselves from the fatal influences which vice and passion have over the reason and understanding of mankind.

DISCOURSE LVI.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIV. VERSE 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

ST. PETER describes the condition of Christian warfare, adding the example of Christ, who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again*. Here one would think no man would overact his part; reproach and contempt are not riches, against the temptations or too eager pursuit of which we need be warned. We are apt to shrink at calumny, and excuse ourselves from duties, which performed would expose us to envy or ill-will: what then is the meaning of the text? Does Christ call us to suffer revilings, and his Apostle call us to avoid them? But suppose that it is not inconsistent with our Christian duty to avoid the reproach of the world; yet can we stop malice when we do our duty, or prevent others from speaking ill of our good? Is it not enough therefore to do good, without securing it from the attempts of malice and envy? to suffer patiently the malice of wickedness, but must we partake the guilt of it too? and shall it be imputed a crime to us, that we let our good be evil spoken of? Such reasonings the text may suggest at first; but maturely considered, it will teach us how to pursue things in themselves truly praiseworthy; not only how to be good ourselves, but useful in the world, by exercising a truly Christian prudence and address in promoting the interest of virtue and religion. The gospel calls us not to court persecution for the sake of our profession: it is not for the interest of religion, or the glory of our Master, voluntarily to expose ourselves or doctrine to the contempt of the world: in both cases our Saviour has directed us otherwise, Matt. vii. 6.: when he sent his disciples forth to preach, his express command was, *beware of men*; thereby requiring them to consult their own personal safety. This may satisfy us of the lawfulness of avoiding danger, and clear our way to the fully understanding of the text. The rule is general, and extends itself to all parts of our Christian conversation. The Apostle applies it particularly to the controversy in the church of Rome at the time this letter was written to them; but as it arises not out of the particular circumstances of that case, we may deduce

it from the general principles of Christian prudence on which it is founded. To proceed clearly, it is inquired, I. What the Apostle means by *our good*: II. Endeavor is made to show that our good is often exposed to be *evil spoken of* through our own indiscretion, and therefore that we may often prevent it: whence, III. Will appear the reasonableness of the duty enjoined us in the text.—I. Some by *our good* understand our religion, which is every Christian's chief good: in which point of view the text is thought to recommend simplicity of manner and inoffensiveness of behavior. But the Apostle seems to aim at something farther: his business here is not to deter us from the practice of evil, but to direct us in the use and practice of good, that our virtue may be secured from reproach; and *our good* is not the topic whence the Apostle draws an argument or exhortation, but the subject-matter of his directions. Thus then the text may be paraphrased: be not content with merely doing what is in itself good and commendable, but look forward to its probable consequences, and thus try to prevent any mischief that may grow out of it to yourself or others, that your good may be inoffensive and irreproachable: in this sense it is proposed to consider the text.—II. We cannot then be truly virtuous till we are above the temptations of the world, and free from the servitude of courting its opinion; but here men err in thinking this to be the same as to despise the world and all that belong to it: and hence it is that virtue itself attracts a moroseness which destroys its power of usefulness. Nor is this all: the cause of virtue often suffers by the zeal and indiscretion of such mistaken votaries, who disdainfully censure all the prudent methods by which goodness may be advanced, as the effects of worldly wisdom and cunning; and if what they do be justifiable in itself, they care not for the consequences: nay, they eagerly embrace inconveniences, esteeming it virtue to suffer for good; whence arises disdain and aversion; and hence they value themselves more for reproaching men with their vices than for correcting them. The success of such a method may be known by considering the temper and disposition of mankind. To vex and exasperate men makes them stubborn in vices and opinions, exposes your good to reproach, and gives the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme. Zeal is the noblest grace, when duly tempered with charity and prudence, and in this state produces the best fruit; but growing extravagant, it becomes a grief to wise men, and the sport of fools. The mistake of such men lies in not distinguishing between a servile compliance with the world, and a prudent behavior towards it; the difference between which is as great as between virtue and vice: one is the way which men, who sacrifice honor and conscience to their interest, make use of; by the other, wise and good men recommend the practice of virtue and religion. Those whose virtue is too stiff to court the world into a compliance with what is good, may do well to consider how the Apostle is to be justified in the character which he has given of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 19. Into what a variety of shapes did he turn himself, to gain on the affections of men, that he might win them over to the gospel! This point enlarged on, and illustrated

by the case of a skilful pilot. But to court the affections of men some think below the dignity of religion. How so? ought not men to be made to love virtue and religion? Yes; and how is that to be done but by engaging their affections in its cause? Is then the attempt to do so an unworthy one? How can these things be made to agree? But if it must be allowed that it is necessary to apply to men's affections in the cause of virtue, it will show the reasonableness of the text, and the necessity of having recourse to Christian prudence and wisdom to direct us in the practice even of good: for all things have not the same appearance to all men, and we must therefore beware of the ill impressions which may be made on others by the good we do. This care not to offend is the foundation of civility and good-breeding in common life, and will produce mutual love and condescension in religion: this point enlarged on. View but the difference in one Christian grace, when attended by this care, and when not. This exemplified in the case of zeal, which is in itself an excellent gift. Some there are who care so little for securing their good from being evil spoken of, that their zeal for good arises even from envy and strife: this spirit is still in being, and often makes men spitefully good, delighting to exasperate others who differ from them: this point enlarged on. They justify themselves by saying that men ought not to be ashamed when they are in the right, or afraid of owning the truth; two very good reasons sadly applied: for men ought to be ashamed so to use truth, as merely to insult, not to correct, the prejudices of mankind. But there is still a farther mischief: when men truly labor to promote truth, and recommend it to others, they always place it in the best light, and take care to obviate the misapprehensions of those with whom they deal: but when they dispute for opposition sake, or for their own amusement at the expense of another, they care not whether he understands the truth, or how grossly he mistakes; for the more violence he shows, the greater is their entertainment: this point and its consequences enlarged on, showing the probability of his error continuing for ever, thus exposing our good to be *evil spoken of*. The same effect is often seen to proceed from a mixture of zeal and ignorance. In this case men think they must do or say the things which they approve, when they are before those who they know do not approve them: this case enlarged on. Sometimes men expose their good to be evil spoken of from pure pride and haughtiness of temper: this is the case when men so despise the world as not to care about guarding against the misapprehensions of those around them. The very reason why you despise the world, and disdain to give an account of your actions, viz. because it is weak and captious, is the reason why you ought to try to satisfy it; and in this the rule of the Apostle is founded, as appears from chap. xv. 1. No man, how great soever he may be, is above rendering an account of himself to the world. It is not greatness of soul, but a narrow-spirited insolence and pride that makes men averse to it, teaching them to glory not so much in the worthiness of their actions, as in despising every one else: a generous virtue enlarged on, showing that if candor were

more practised in the world, it might prevent much hatred and animosity; since few intend half the mischief of which they are suspected.—III. As it is often in our power to prevent our good from being *evil spoken of*, so in many cases it is our duty. This duty may be deduced from these principles; the honor of God and of truth, the charity that is due to our brethren, and the justice that is due to ourselves. The honor of God is chiefly consulted by reconciling men's minds to the love of virtue and religion, by removing their prejudices, and gently drawing their affections to the cause of goodness: the most substantial honor that we can pay our Maker, is to *exalt his name among the people, and teach every tongue to confess his truth*: this point enlarged on. It will appear also to be a part of that charity which is owing to our neighbor: we know how much his happiness depends on approving that which is good; for *without holiness no man shall see God*: this duty then is to be performed not by rendering our *good* odious and offensive to him, but by setting it forth without scandal or offence, that he may be ashamed of nothing, but rather love and embrace it. But farther, it is a piece of justice which we owe to ourselves and our own character, to render our good irreproachable: for when it suffers, we suffer with it, and share in the reproaches that fall on it. It is doubtful whether it be justifiable in the good we do to have regard to our own reputation: to make it the end of what we do is certainly bad; for the applause of the world is not the end of religion: but a good man can do so much good by having a good reputation, that it is his duty to consult his credit and character in what he does: hence he refrains from those freedoms which the world judges unbecoming his character, though harmless in themselves; and surely this restraint is an innocent way of aspiring to a good reputation. Nor is this prudent behavior inconsistent with a steady and constant adherence to the truth, which is not to be deserted that it may not be evil spoken of, but is to be practised without offence. In matters essential to religion there is no room for compliance; and in matters of Christian liberty there is hardly any room for denying it: where we are free, the greatest deference is to be paid to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others: this point enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LVII.

NUMBERS, CHAP. XXIII. VERSE 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

THESE affecting words are apt to engage us on their side at the first hearing; for whatever be our present prospects, when thus called from them, we stand as it were beholding ourselves under the arrest of death; we want no arguments to direct our choice to what is best

for ourselves: these circumstances carry conviction with them; and though unwilling to live the life of the righteous, we are willing enough that *our last end should be like his*. There is a comparison implied in the text between the cases of the wicked and the righteous, which the mind readily supplies: it is stated under circumstances which throw out all prejudices and partialities, and bring only the merits of the cause on each side into judgment. You see the wicked and the righteous both on the point of death, and you are to say which condition you would choose: the pleasures of the world on one side, the supposed hardships on the other, are equally set aside: you are to judge between virtue and vice, placed naked at the bar, without color or disguise. It may seem perhaps that we have but little confidence in the cause of virtue under all other circumstances of life, when we defer this judgment to the last moments of it: it may be thought unfair to state the case without the pleasures and enjoyments on one side, and the difficulties and discouragements on the other, which things weigh most with the generality of men; whilst we leave nothing but the doubtful prospect of a future state, and every thing is taken out of the other scale, which, as we find by general experience, serves to balance against such hopes and fears: it is perhaps saying little for virtue, that its hopes should be preferred to the fears of iniquity, when nothing but mere hope and fear is left; for who would not prefer the most uncertain chance of being happy to the least degree of fear of being miserable, or even to the thoughts of endless sleep? Were these exceptions well founded, the comparison in the text would lose much weight; but there are no times or circumstances of life in which virtue may not be compared with vice, the passions, prejudices, and corruptions of men being put out of the question. The words of the text, in their first and natural sense, lead us to this comparison not only in the latest hours, but in all the course and circumstances of life: they arise from the contemplation of the present and future prosperity of the Israelites in the land of promise, compared with the misery of the idolatrous nations, given up to sin and superstition, and therefore to ruin. Numb. xxiii. 9. 10. and xxiv. 20. compared together: these passages help to expound each other; for as the prophecy relating to Amalek was completed in the temporal destruction of that people, so by parity of reason the prophecy concerning Israel imported their temporal happiness. Bishop Patrick's interpretation of the words, *let my last end be like his*, by *let my posterity be like his*, gives us farther reason to suppose that temporal prosperity was contained in the prophet's wish as a peculiar inheritance of the righteous. The other sense of the text, which looks to a future life, is of ancient date: nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two; both fairly arising from the text; both agreeable to the apprehensions of mankind, and founded in reason and nature. That *righteousness exalteth a nation*, that *sin* is not only a *reproach*, but also a weakening to any people, are truths which want no proof. In all ages, all law-givers, philosophers, and moralists, have been of this opinion, which experience has justified: this point exemplified by the rise and fall

of nations. But besides this, if we believe the being of a God, and have just notions of his attributes, and think him at all concerned in the government of this his world, we must conclude that virtuous nations are under his peculiar care: this point enlarged on. Yet though all allow that virtue is the true foundation of the happiness and prosperity of public societies, men differ much in opinion and practice respecting the choice and pursuit of happiness for themselves; yet the same thing which is necessary to the happiness of a kingdom, is also necessary to that of private families and private men: this point enlarged on. Since then all allow that virtue is the true way to public happiness, they must confess that private happiness is to be obtained only by the same method: whence then the inconsistency of men in preferring the momentary pleasures of vice to the solid happiness arising from virtue? Whence is it that they think, that what makes others miserable will make them happy? This difference arises not from the nature of the things considered, which is always the same, but from the passions of men, which are excluded in the one case, and admitted in the other with all their force to bias the judgment. We can deliberate calmly on what is right for other men, as their passions have no effect on our understanding; but in our own case all our passions are roused, and often prove too strong for it. There is much truth in the common observation, that it is easier to give good instructions than to follow them: but this ought to be no prejudice to the cause of virtue; for when a man speaks reason, and at the same time acts against it, he ought to be taken as a strong witness for the truth. It may be asked perhaps, why we prefer the judgment of a man when he chooses happiness for others, to his judgment when he chooses it for himself. Do we not know that men are most sincere when their own prosperity is concerned? this point enlarged on, from the consideration of men who should form laws for suppressing vices which they themselves practised. But by this method of arguing, there is but one law for man and beast: reason makes no difference in the case, since the happiness of both consists in the mere gratifications of sense; a conclusion too absurd for any reasonable man to embrace: this point enlarged on. But we have no reason to decline the comparison between the pleasures of vice and the calm enjoyments of virtue; let us view these conditions nearer, and see whether there be no reason to wish that we may live the life of the righteous as well as die his death. The wicked can make out no peculiar title to the good things of this life, which may be held and enjoyed by the righteous as well as by the wicked, though they differ much in the use which they make of them: therefore the only question is, whether a man is happier with a large fortune, used within the bounds of virtue, or made subservient to all the ends and pleasures of vice; or, fortune being removed out of the case, whether the difficulties of life attendant on mean circumstances are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious man. If we allow the vicious man to have a greater share of sensual gratifications, he can claim no more advantages; and let him set his own value on them, which however enables him not to judge of the hap-

pinness or unhappiness of those who deny themselves the same liberties. The virtuous man not only abstains from the pleasures of vice, but subdues the passions of it, and thus renders himself capable of much nobler enjoyments, which perpetually delight the mind; so that even in this case there is reason to believe that virtue has the advantage over vice. But the consequences of their different ways of living, such only as are soon made manifest to the eyes of the world, render the case very clear: observe the health and vigor attendant on virtue, the pains and diseases which closely follow vice; the mind of the virtuous man surrounded with a constant calm serenity, that of the other by disturbed imaginations, restless desires, and unpleasant thoughts: this topic enlarged on, showing that reason will have the last influence in making us happy or miserable. The wounds of the body may be cured, but for the wounds of the spirit the world affords no salve: the truest touchstone to prove the things that are conducive to our happiness, is to consider their future operations on the mind for the rest of our life: this point illustrated by the case of a man, who, having got possession of an estate through wicked measures, is haunted by his own thoughts; and whether this man is happy who lives under a continual displeasure with himself, let any one judge. This displeasure is inconsistent with any real enjoyment; so that sin lays the foundation of misery immovably and close to us. Besides, the sense of virtue, which does and will exist among reasonable beings, must render a vicious man contemptible both to himself and others, and therefore unhappy; for no man can easily bear contempt, knowing that he deserves it. Thus in this case also does the wicked man appear given up to misery. But hitherto his case has been considered with respect only to this world, and the natural effect of his vice; which he will himself confess to be but an imperfect description of his condition; for he has other foreboding fears of future misery sufficient to poison all the pleasures of life. He sees that in this life all things come to an end, and that the wicked and the righteous equally go down to the grave; but what future distinctions there may be, answerable to the natural hopes and fears of the mind, he hates to remember, yet cannot forget. The satisfied passion haunts him in the language of Israel's king: *know that for all these things God will call thee unto judgment.* Say however, and it is all the wicked have to say, that such imaginations may be delusive; and such fears vain; yet weak as these fears may be, we must be still weaker before we can get rid of them; we must lose our reason and understanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the world righteously. This result of innate reason, true or false, must affect our present happiness; and if true, will add eternity to the misery of the wicked. Some sinners indeed are found, so hardened as to be for many years proof against all such considerations; yet they are not secure: vice will soon impair their strength, and bring down the pride of their hearts: and when infirmities lay hold of them, and death draws near to execute his commission, they awake as one out of a dream; and their long-silenced fears begin to speak with double terror. Then what is the sinner's condition?

Ask him then whether the fears of futurity are all idle dreams? And as you like his answer, follow his example. Concluding reflections.

DISCOURSE LVIII.

PSALM CXIX. VERSE 165.

Great peace have they which love thy law.

IN the exposition and self-application of this and such like texts, men are apt to commit two great mistakes; which, though very different in kind, are in their consequences equally fatal and pernicious. On the one hand they think that they cannot place too great a reliance on the promise of the text; easily persuaded that the general name of peace comprehends whatever the world calls good: and because that on which they fix their most sanguine affections, is what the world places in competence and health, they fondly conclude that the promise of peace infers the promise of these good things, which they esteem the genuine and necessary effects of peace. On the other hand, to secure their title to these things, they consider the condition to which they are annexed in quite a different view; employing all their force to limit and expound away the rigor of this article, and to show how easily, and on how small a portion of righteousness and obedience, a man may be included among those denoted by the text. There they make all reasonable allowances to themselves through the great perfection of the law, which renders it hard to practise; through their own weakness so liable to offend, and through the mercy of God, which will incline him to accept the will for the deed. These deductions being made in the proportion which best suits their own will and condition, they easily find themselves within the articles of the text, and therefore expect the annexed promises, to which they think they have so good a claim. But as error naturally produces error and falsehood, so these mistakes are exceedingly fruitful, and directly lead men to misapprehensions of God, of themselves, and of religion: for as long as men conceive prosperity and the enjoyment of it necessarily to attend virtue and holiness, they will judge of their attainments in religion, and of God's favor towards them, by what they enjoy: hence the spiritual pride and presumption of rich and prosperous men, who esteem their fortune as the reward of their virtue; hence the desponding imagination of poor and miserable men, who look on their misery to be their punishment, and the forerunner of their condemnation. It is needless to speak of the pernicious consequences of the kind allowances which men make to their own vices and imperfections, whilst they labor to crowd into the number of those who love the law: for if they are once persuaded that a little religion will serve their turn, it is not

likely they will take pains to obtain more than they judge necessary. To avoid these inconveniences, it is necessary to consider, I. The nature of the peace spoken of in the text: II. Who they are who may be said to *love the law of God*: III. To illustrate and confirm the truth of the proposition in the text. And, I. The Psalmist plainly makes this observation on his own personal experience and many trials; but yet even thus he does not set forth the splendid glories which he enjoyed during his reign; though he ought to have done this, had he intended to infer that worldly peace, security, and health, were the sure rewards of holiness and obedience. His life offered as ample matter for such an observation as any man's. He was specially raised by Providence from obscurity to the throne of Israel, and his life was specially guarded by heaven: his glory likewise was darkened, and his afflictions were sore; but on his repentance the clouds dispersed, and he grew happy as he grew obedient: yet so far is the Psalmist from considering these circumstances of his outward glory, and thence making a general rule, that in the text he regards only the inward peace he enjoyed during his afflictions, which peace in the severest trials he found to be the undivided companion of faith and obedience: this topic enlarged on. Nothing therefore was more distant from the Psalmist's thoughts, than to promise outward peace or temporal prosperity to the practice of virtue; since he speaks only of the peace of the righteous in their afflictions: he therefore adds, *and nothing shall offend them*; which would have been improper, had he spoken of temporal peace before, in which there is nothing to offend any man. But to enjoy a peace which sets us above the power of evil or fortune, which opens our eyes to look through the gloomiest scenes of sorrow to the blessed hope of future glory, this is what the world cannot give; and this is the peace which the Psalmist speaks of as the peculiar inheritance of him who loveth the law of God. But it requires pains, labor, and watchfulness over the affections and appetites of the flesh, before we can love what intirely thwarts them: it is not enough to love the law in admiration, and to obey it faintly; our love must be active and fruitful, and satisfied only in the enjoyment of its righteousness: all which will more fully appear under the second head. In this psalm we find holy David often declaring how much he loved the law of God. May we therefore from his character safely draw the picture of a man who loves the law of God? No: for David was a different man at different times: this point enlarged on. He blessed God for his afflictions, and soon afterwards he acknowledged the mercy and goodness of God in thus afflicting him: what David therefore in himself condemned when he loved the law of God, is inconsistent with the character of one who loves it: the excuses of sinners drawn from the worst part of the character of David and of other holy men, are a vain and imaginary comfort; but there is a comfort to be drawn from hence: these examples are a great encouragement to repentance, since we see how readily God embraced the returning prodigal; but whilst men use them to soothe their consciences in the quiet enjoyment of sin, they abuse God's mercy in setting forth these instances of his

patience. Yet though the example of David be not intircly a safe direction to us, his inspired writings are; and in this psalm we may find the righteous man's character, (1-3.) The first good thing he says of himself is his repentance, (59, 60.) His next step was to forsake his wicked companions, and associate with such as feared the Lord, (63.) Next he resolves to persevere in holiness, (111, 112.) He then describes his sense of religion, that source of peace and joy in his bitterest afflictions, which, in the text, he comprehends under the general term of loving the law, (161-164.) From all this we may see that to hate and abhor sin, to love and delight in the law of God, are expressions implying no small degree of perfection: this point enlarged on. There are some who on different views, such as are suggested merely by fear, interest, or present conveniency, keep out of sin, and make a tolerable show in the performance of their religious duties; but, alas! their work is labor and sorrow: such persons are fond of every pretence which may help to ease them of any part of their duty, and excuse or protect them when under it; whereas they who delight in the law of God want not to be excused from the work in which they take pleasure; nor do they wish the approaches to sin to be made easy, since they have no appetite to embrace the monster, which is their aversion. Hence St. John, in one of his epistles, has given us this mark to know whether we love God or no; *his commandments are not grievous*. This text explained, showing that the connexion between the love of the law and of God was evidently in the Psalmist's view; since he affirms of one, what, properly speaking, belongs to the other: this case fully laid out. Nor is it to be imagined that when the Psalmist penned the text, his thoughts were exalted no higher than to a stoical rapture in praise of virtue; or that he fetched his comfort from such uncertain and disputed principles: no; his mind was fixed on God, *from whom cometh our salvation*, and in whom alone the faithful have peace for ever. That this is the foundation which he builds on will appear, when we consider, III. How little peace of mind worldly enjoyments afford; this every man in his own condition knows, though inexperienced in the pleasures of the station above him. So that, allowing men to judge according to their knowlege, all must agree that there is no lasting peace to be had from the pleasures of this life, no security in them against affliction, no comfort under present evils, no assurance against future ones: and even if there be some enjoyment, it is imperfect, and liable to interruptions, unless supported by the hopes of religion: this point enlarged on, from a consideration of the unchanging nature of man, and his mind always looking forward beyond the limits of this world. So that, however valuable the world may be, something else is wanting to calm our fears, and raise the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which alone intitles us to God's protection. Having the assurance of this, we stand on an immoveable rock, against which the winds and waves vainly spend their fury: this is what we call a good conscience: this topic enlarged on, showing that when we are thus armed, and can without reserve profess the sentiment, *I have loved thy law, O God, and my delight hath been*

therein, we shall be superior to all the evils of life. That which fills the breast of the worldly man with horror, gives us ease and comfort: when he thinks how soon he must give an account to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its post: but to the good man this thought so fills his mind, that, lost in pleasure and delight, he forgets all the pains and calamities of life: this point illustrated by the example of the holy martyrs. Concluding remarks.

DISCOURSE LIX.

PSALM CXIX. VERSE 63.

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

NOTHING is more essential in the pursuit of holiness, and indeed in the whole conduct of our lives, than to observe how those who are set forth by the holy Scripture as patterns, attained to that perfection which made them shining lights of the world and declared favorites of God. If from such examples we draw rules for our own use, we shall be sure of two great advantages, viz. that these rules will be proper and practicable; practicable, because drawn from the practice of men like ourselves; proper, because we aim at the same end which good men before us have attained to by the use of those means which experience has already found to be proper. The division of the Psalm containing the text sets before us the several steps by which David recovered himself from the sin in which he had been involved. First, he declares his choice, and his resolution to pursue that choice, (57.) This he knew by experience he could do only by the assistance of God, which he therefore applies for, (58.): then he diligently examines his heart, and forms resolutions which he immediately puts into practice, (59, 60.); to secure all this, there was need of patience and courage, and faith towards God. The way of life is beset with dangers; we must therefore be prepared to endure hardships, like good soldiers of Christ; he therefore mentions for our learning, stedfastness under trials, (61.): he then resolves on a continued devotion towards God, (62.): next follows the text. At first sight this seems but a little thing to mention, after so many attainments spoken of before: what should lead him so low as to add that he was careful to keep good company? Nothing but his own experience had taught him that this was the great preservative of all his other attainments, without which they would soon waste away, and leave him once more an easy prey to the allurements of vice: this point enlarged on, showing how he, being led away by evil company, had almost perished but for the intervention of God. So sensible was he of this danger, that he not only resolved to avoid it himself, but made it his early care to forewarn his son of it; which

made such an impression on him, that he, speaking on the same topic, being full of the image of his father when he delivered the instruction, introduces him as giving advice to him, his son, (Prov. iv. 1-4.); and again, (14. 15.) But why, you will say, look far for an advice so obvious, and an instruction which all parents give to their children as well as David? It is true they do; for which reason it is looked on as advice fit only for children; and young people hardly think themselves men till all restraints are broken from, and they can with impunity choose the worst of company for themselves. But to remove this prejudice against the advice implied in the text, we must consider that though David gave this instruction betimes to his son, yet even in after-life, though improved in holiness, he laid it down as a rule for his own conduct, a security to his virtue, and defence of his innocence, (115.) He hardly thought it practicable to associate with evil doers, and yet keep the commandments of God; as is plain from the reason which he gives after, *Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God:* which would be no reason, were it not morally impossible to keep the commandments of God without departing from evil doers. Men in a state of trial cannot safely expose themselves unnecessarily to the constant insinuations of wicked men. The reasonableness of the Psalmist's practice described in the text, and of the rule therein implied, must proceed from a consideration of the great danger of keeping ill company, and the great advantage of contracting friendships with the good. But before this argument is entered into, it is to be observed that none are concerned in it but such as have a sense of religion and a due regard to virtue: such as have no regard for these are not concerned in it; nor will it be hard to convince the former of their great danger in contracting friendships with men who have prostituted their minds and bodies to the service of sin. For, First, let it be considered that none of our resolutions to keep clear from the pollutions of the company we keep, can give us any security for preserving our innocence: they are often carried into bad company, but seldom or never come off unimpaired; for their foundation being undermined, they themselves must fall to ruin. Resolutions made against sin, because of its heinousness and evil consequences, wear off by conversing with those who have learned to make a mock of sin. When once we come to relish this subject, it is but an easy step to practise what we thus far approve of: nor is it a hard matter to imagine that our fears are but the prejudices of education; and from the example of our friends our treacherous heart will say to us, Behold they sin, and no evil happeneth unto them: this whole point enlarged on, showing that thus seduced we fall asleep in the arms of pleasure, never perhaps to wake, till the last trumpet calls us with all our sins into the presence of God. Secondly: supposing that all these circumstances should not meet to complete our ruin, yet the opportunities for sin which an evil acquaintance affords, are of themselves great temptations: the virtue of men is not always equally strong; and it is the happiness of those who are unacquainted with the ways of wickedness, even when most

tempted, to be ignorant how to sin. This guard we lose in the society of wicked men: this point enlarged on, showing how ready they are to second our temptations in order that they may triumph in our fall, and illustrated by the case of a person subject to violent passion, going into the company of one who would place arms in his hand, and rejoice to see the extravagance of his fury. Thirdly: all acknowledge that there are difficulties in religion, even with all the assistance and advantages that may be had; the nature of the case requires this; for being here in a state of trial, and in order that we may give proof of our virtue, faith, and ready submission to God's will, if there were no difficulty, there would be no trial. Now knowing our all to depend on this trial, it must be extreme folly in any man to refuse any help that may make his work easy, or to expose himself to difficulties that may render its issue more uncertain; yet this every one does who lays himself open to the art and cunning, and deadly insinuations of evil men, industrious in the bad cause they serve: (Prov. iv. 16, 17.) These verses enlarged on, showing that when the fulness of meat and drink has driven out thought and care, there springs up a brutal courage, which neither fears God nor regards man. Even this sensual indulgence, independent of its consequences, exposes us to the wrath of God: *Riotous persons and drunkards shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This crime is heightened by a kind of self-murder, destroying the man formed after God's image, and leaving him in a worse condition than a helpless beast of the field. Should you propose to share these enjoyments with the libertines, and guard against all other kinds and degrees of wickedness, yet even this is destructive of the hopes of religion. If you bring but a taste and relish with you for such pleasures, use and custom and example will soon make you a proficient; and you will be surprised too late at finding yourself lost in excesses which you never thought of. Your cheerful nights and succeeding heavy mornings will indispose you for thought and reflection, and thus your sense of religion will gradually decay. This whole case beautifully laid out, showing how the former comforts of an innocent mind will yield to misgiving fears, and drive a man to desperate intemperance; and then nothing but the extraordinary grace of God can save him; and whether he deserves this, let any one judge. But the mercies of God, like the sun, *rise on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust.* Perhaps then he will awaken you once more to a sense of danger. This is the best thing that can befall you: but could you be sure of this, there is no encouragement in it to enter into the societies of wicked men; for even thus you little think what misery you are preparing for yourself. When immersed in sensuality, the gentle calls of the Spirit will not awaken you; rougher methods are then necessary: this point enlarged on, showing that the methods to be used for rousing a lethargic or apoplectic man, are to be employed in spiritual distempers: by such methods was David called back to himself: this case enlarged on. Yet the external evils and afflictions which we call down on ourselves, will be but a light part of our misery; for

when at length we come to see nothing to keep us from everlasting ruin but our slender thread of life, what despair will possess our minds ! This awful state enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LX.

2 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IV. VERSE 18.

For the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

PART I.

THE motives to obedience in all religions are thus far the same, that they depend on the belief of another invisible world, and the different state of men in it : for though it has been urged, with some show of reason, that virtue is its own reward, and that man's chief happiness would consist in the practice of it, independent of any other rewards, yet this, even if true, is far too narrow a foundation to build religion on ; as it would only influence men of abstracted thought and reason. The generality of mankind live by sense, and take their measures of happiness, not from the remote conclusions of reason, but from their present feeling, and from the impressions which they receive from their daily intercourse with men and things ; and the rewards and punishments of religion are calculated to this sense and feeling, excepting only that they are distant, and incapable of being made the present objects of sense ; and therefore they operate so weakly on the minds and affections of men. Herein lies the advantage of the things of this world, that the man of thought and reflection cannot but see them, while the man of no thought sees nothing else : hence the distinction made by the Apostle in the text. In this lies all the force and strength of worldly temptations and pleasures ; for were the enjoyments of this world and those of the next equally remote, there could be no competition between them. This most men would find to be true, would they but observe a little what passes in themselves and others : this point enlarged on. If it be true now, that it is wise to prefer the pleasures of life to the hopes of futurity, it will be true fifty years hence, that a man acted wisely by so doing ; for truth is always the same ; and yet if he lives till then, it is great odds but that he judges otherwise ; as we find men do every day : this point enlarged on. Hence arises the difference, that in one case reason is excluded by sense and the prevailing power of present objects ; in the other it is free, and judges from the truth and nature of things. Throw out sense and appetite, and the question will be reduced to these two points : I. Whether we can have sufficient evidence for the existence of the things not seen, as may make

them capable of being brought into competition with the things that are seen, the existence of which is in this question out of doubt?

II. Whether the value of *the things which are not seen* be so great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things which are present with us*? There are several ways by which we satisfy ourselves of the existence of things without us: the chief of these is sense. This evidence extends to this world and the things of it; and though some have taken great pains to doubt the existence of these, yet it is a question whether any man did ever reach that perfection of scepticism. This evidence may be styled the strongest in one respect, as it most universally affects mankind, who more readily receive the reports of sense than the conclusions of reason. Not but that the evidence of reason is as strong for the existence of things not seen, as sense is for the things which are seen; as is manifest in the proof of a first cause: so likewise from the testimony of others we believe in the existence of things which they have seen, but we have not; this is the evidence of faith, and on it men act in their dearest concerns in this world: this point enlarged on. Hence it is no manner of proof that things do not exist because they are not seen, as they may admit of another proof: yet the wisdom of the voluptuous man is founded in this prejudice: he thinks it wisdom not to part with a certainty for an uncertainty: this point enlarged on, with respect to the things of this world, which he sees and feels, and to future things, which lie out of the way of his senses. Sense is the measure of his certainty, else why should he judge as he does? His senses only prove his present existence in this world; not that he shall not live hereafter in another; and yet from the former he concludes in prejudice to the other world; which is very absurd, since this evidence affects not, one way or other, the belief of future rewards and glories: this point enlarged on. Hence therefore sense can judge only on one side; it can be no rule in this dispute; for a rule must be a common measure of the things to be estimated, and applicable to both. Let sense prove, as strongly as you will, the existence of this world, and the things of it, how can it affect the belief of another? That you live now proves not that we shall *not* live hereafter; therefore the evidence of sense for this world ought not to prejudice our belief of another. The advantage of this evidence of sense is great, because it is the first that men come to the use and application of; and thus they learn to trust to it in all cases. Men come later to the use of reason, for the evidence of which they have less occasion; and they use still less than they have occasion: being then not equally acquainted with the certainty of this evidence as with the demonstrations of sense, the deductions of reason satisfy them less than the reports of sense. Such is the true state of this question. Now if the evidence for unseen things be not of equal weight with the evidence of sense, the things which are not seen can never be made so clear as to compete with the things that are seen; though the means by which we arrive at the knowledge of the former may afford an evidence equal to the evidence of sense. Many things are known only from reason, and yet are as well

received as any report of sense: this point enlarged on, with respect to the productions and works of nature. Another evidence for things not seen is faith, an evidence to which the world in temporal affairs pays great respect, however shy they may be of admitting it as a principle of religion: this point enlarged on, showing that a man believes more about this world and its affairs, on the report made from other people's senses than he does from his own. This then the world must admit as good evidence for things not seen; since on it men believe the certainty of most things in the world. Now this evidence, where it is perfect, falls little short of that of sense; and men in many cases make no difference between them; which shows that this kind of evidence may be so strong as to leave no room for doubts or suspicions. Where then lies the reason of the objection against the things of another world, because they are not seen, and therefore not to be preferred to the things of this world, which are seen? Neither want their proper evidence; and being possessed of it, they are not the worse for not having that evidence which does not belong to them. If then the case is so, it is extreme folly and want of thought to pursue the objects of sense in opposition to things unseen, without a thorough examination of their evidence and certainty. When you are told that for the blessings of another life we have the certainty of reason and faith, you must own the arguments are proper: the nature of the proof you cannot suspect; and if it be sufficiently strong, you must acknowledge it to be demonstrative in this as in all other like cases. The things of another world may be objects of sense to those of the other world, and are therefore capable of having the evidence of eye-witnesses: so that, should one come down from Heaven, and report the state of things there, his evidence must be admitted, the proof of his coming from Heaven being supposed. Besides, this question concerning future rewards and punishments is not the principal one in religion: it presupposes the belief and knowledge of God, else there is no room for it: a question then will arise, whether God can qualify men to be witnesses to the world of these unseen things? Doubtless he can reveal these things to men if he pleases; and were the world satisfied that he had revealed such things to such and such men, they must admit them as good witnesses in that case: it comes therefore to this point; can men satisfy the world that God has indeed spoken to them? This enlarged on. Since these things, then, are capable of such good evidence, it will be worth while to inquire whether they have it or no; nor will it be the effect of wisdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the impressions of sense at the hazard of final ruin. It would be strange if a man who has eyes and ears doubted the evidence of things continually thrust in at them. But to arrive at the evidence of reason and faith requires the exercise of thought; because these proofs lie more out of the common road, and are not to be had without being sought for. This is a just account of the reason why most men act by the evidence of sense, and follow the things of this world, while so few pursue with any heart or zeal the invisible things of another. Not that the former are in themselves more real; but

because men are sure of them, not being able to exclude the impressions of them, but are dubious respecting the things of futurity, not being able to attend to their proofs. How well this becomes men of education, let any one judge: how they will account for their neglect in not even proving and trying the things which make for their salvation, is hard to say. If it had been intended that we should be directed merely by our eyes, God need not have given us the power of reflection; and he will not excuse us for resigning ourselves to sense, which was given, not to rule, but to serve man. Concluding observations.

PART II.

Second subject of inquiry—whether the value of *things not seen* be so great that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things that are present with us*. There can be no ground to persuade men to renounce the pleasures of life, and expose themselves to troubles, which are often the companions of virtue, in hopes of future glory, unless this glory be great enough to recompense them for the losses and sufferings sustained in its pursuit. If the rewards of Heaven be infinitely preferable to the things of this world, then it is the part of wisdom to choose the greatest, though not the present good, and to prefer the severe duties of religion to the soft allurements of pleasure; since our present afflictions are but momentary, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. On this principle the Apostle argues in the text, and justifies his own practice and behavior: he suffered persecution gladly for the sake of Christ and his truth: he suffered on the prospect of future glory; and though not dead to the sense of nature, or void of feeling, yet knowing the value of the rewards for which he labored, he made this choice. The Apostle's argument is founded on the different duration of the things of this world and of the other. It must be allowed that we have the same evidence for the uncertain, and, at best, for the short duration of the things of this life, as for their existence; that is, the evidence of sense: this point enlarged on. Let us then examine what are the conclusions of reason from this head, that *the things which are seen are temporal*. To estimate the happiness of man, we must take into account the nature of his desires and inclinations, and that of the objects which he pursues: if there be such a due proportion between them, that the object is capable of satisfying the desire, then the object obtained is capable of making a man happy: uneasiness, and the want of something which we have not, cannot do so; which must always be the case when our desires are fixed on objects which do not answer to them, and afford not such a pleasure as may fill and content the mind. There are different passions and desires incident to man; not the same in all, but varying according to temper, habits, age, and the like: these, being so uncertain, enter not into this inquiry, which is after man's natural happiness: this must be estimated by his natural and con-

stant desires; among which the greatest is the desire of life: this point enlarged on, showing that as life is but short, and must end in death, the life of this world cannot be an adequate object of desire, or make a man happy; because it does not answer to his natural desire, but leaves him restless and uneasy. Another natural and constant desire, grafted on the former, and springing from it, is that of happiness uninterrupted by afflictions of any kind: hence the fear of losing what we possess often equals the pleasure of the possession; which shows that no temporary possession can justify the mind of man; thus proving that the natural desire is that of perpetual uninterrupted happiness: nothing less than this can make a man happy; and this the world does not afford. To place our happiness therefore on this life, and the things of it, is, at best, to place it where it cannot be had. We can never free ourselves from the natural desires of life and happiness: this point enlarged on in the case of an atheist, who, retaining the desire of eternal happiness, but denying the possibility of it, reduces himself to a state which cannot afford him happiness: so that to have desires which cannot end in enjoyment for want of suitable objects, is to have desires only to make us miserable. If then this world has nothing that can make us happy, it cannot be the effect of wisdom to seek it there: so that the first conclusion of reason is, that the things of this world being temporal, and our desires adapted to the fruition of things eternal, this world can never make us happy: we must therefore seek where we may meet with objects suited to our desires, and thus arrive at perfect happiness: so that the voice of nature speaks the same language as our Saviour, (Matt. vi. 19. 20): these verses explained. That the things which are seen are temporal, is no sufficient proof that there are things which are not seen which are eternal; though it is a great presumption that God, not having fitted this world to our desires, has fitted our desires to another world, and has not given us these cravings of nature merely to vex us without the possibility of their being satisfied. The things of this world however being temporal, is a proof that they cannot make us happy. Hence religion becomes a very serious concern, since it alone can furnish objects adapted to our natural desires. Is it not then very unnatural to see a man rejoice and triumph in the thoughts that there is no eternal life or happiness? It is indeed better not to be, than to be miserable; the thoughts therefore of dropping into eternal silence may be the refuge of guilty fear, but never can be a natural joy to the soul of man, which longs for everlasting life. The only reason why any man can wish there may be no other world is, that he may more freely enjoy this; a wise reason, if we consider the value of this world, and how fleeting the things of it are. So little do men gain by gaining this world, or lose by losing it, that its concerns would weigh but light in this question, were not men guided more by the violence of passion than either by reason or the regular desires of nature. For, secondly, suppose that religion were very uncertain, and a man liable to be deceived in his hopes of future rewards; let us again examine by this rule, that *the things which are seen are temporal*, the consequence of this mistake,

and how much a man would suffer by it. In ordinary life the pleasures that are consistent with innocence will be found to afford more real satisfaction than the vicious man can ever receive from the gratification of his sensual desires. But we will waive this topic, as the text supposes us to give up this world, and submit to many hardships in order to obtain the other; and it is always difficult to submit to the restraints of religion, till men have mastered their appetites, and learned to use this world as not abusing it. Say then, that a man loses the pleasures of this world in pursuing those of another; his loss must be valued according to the worth of the thing lost. Now the things of this world being very uncertain possessions, their loss cannot be set very high: ill-success and disappointments often render all our labor in pursuing them abortive; and few attain to the end of their desires. This being the case, he that pursues the glories of another world to the neglect of this, may perhaps lose just nothing at all: this point enlarged on. We may learn then, from the nature of worldly possessions and our own experience, what chance a man has of being satisfied with the enjoyments of life, even if he takes the utmost pains for them: possibly he may never get them; for there are many pretenders who are ever jostling one another out: possibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them, or he may even not relish them; for many things are proved by possession to be but empty and vain allurements. Now this chance for worldly happiness is all that a man quits for religion: this point enlarged on. On the other side, if religion reaches no farther than this life, still it makes men easy under its disappointments; so that whatever the loss of the world may be to a worldly man, yet to a truly religious one it is inconsiderable, as he is comforted and confirmed against such losses by the hopes of more solid enjoyments. Add this therefore to the account, and religion will appear to be the surest step, if not to happiness, yet to ease and contentment: this topic enlarged on, showing that, as things go, it is well if the pain and uneasiness of losing the world be not all we get by pursuing it; whilst religion teaches us that not to enjoy its pleasures is no great mischief: so that, if there be no other world but this, we are sure by religion to get the second best thing that can be had, that is, contentment. Admit that the principal thing is to have and enjoy the things we want; the next best is to be easy without them: the first the world rarely grants; the next religion never denies. And thus far we may argue from the nature of worldly things, without making any comparison between them and those of another life; for this comparison will even make it reasonable to choose the sorrows of life for the sake of future glory; *since the things which are not seen are eternal*. Of the nature of future happiness we know but little: the descriptions of it in Scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true knowledge of its glories: possibly this world affords no notions proper to express the happiness of Heaven, which therefore can be described only by figures taken from our present sense of pleasure; from hence we only argue that the happiness is very great: but we have a clear notion of duration; here therefore the Scripture speaks

plain, and tells us that this happiness is for evermore. *Whosoever*, says our Saviour, *believeth in me shall live, though he die; and whosoever believeth on me shall not die eternally.* This is the natural happiness of man, since this alone can answer his natural desire of eternal life; and nothing can be more evident to sense than this is to reason, that something has been from all eternity, and shall continue to all eternity; so that our desires of eternity are not loose ill-grounded desires, but have objects in nature fitted to them. This being the case, is it not agreeable to the very instinct of our nature to seek those things which can alone make for our happiness, if by any means we may attain to them? To lead us to them is the work of religion: to be employed in it therefore, is to be employed in the work of nature, which is to seek its own happiness and perfection. If religion be attended with difficulties, yet the glories we attain thereby are worth the purchase: this point enlarged on. It is wise to retire from the pleasures of the world, if it were only to guard against this certain evil consequence, that if we follow things present to the neglect of future happiness, the time will come when our present enjoyments will be past, when things future will be growing into things present: then this evil thought alone will haunt us, that for the time past we have been comforted, but must be for the time to come tormented. Shortlived as men are, they often outlast the world, that is, its enjoyments: this point enlarged on. Concluding reflections.

DISCOURSE LXI.

GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE, VERSE 3.

It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

IT is at all times the duty of pastors in the Christian church to be zealous in maintaining and propagating the faith of the gospel; but there are some seasons which more especially require of them vigilance to prevent, and of the people care to avoid, the danger of growing errors and superstitions. Such was the occasion of this Epistle, as we learn in verse 4.: hence the Apostle's exhortation in the text. If this was needful in the Apostle's time, when the mischief began first to show itself, what must it be in ours, when the evil seems full-grown, and to surround us in different shapes? when superstition on the one hand, and irreligion on the other, have left true Christians but a narrow path to walk in, and the transition from one of these extremes to the other is so much easier than from either to the truth that lies between them?

Another difficulty also distinguishes our times: St. Jude com-

plains that teachers of perverse doctrines had crept in by stealth, though the churches themselves taught the true faith of the gospel. But in these latter days all churches are tainted with the infection by corrupt members; the errors which we have to contend with are taught by authority as the necessary conditions of Christian communion: this point enlarged on. It is now then more needful than ever to exhort men to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. This however is to little purpose, unless you give them some sure mark of the right faith. If you ask of particular churches or societies of Christians which is the true faith, each answers that its own is right, and that of others wrong: hence no church must be believed on its own word alone, without giving a reason of its faith: yet this pretence of authority is all that can or does justify the dominion of the church of Rome. With how much better grace might St. Jude have told them of his own time, on his own authority, what the true faith was; but so far from doing it, he told them to inquire what it was as formerly delivered to Christians. Church authority is one of those unhappy subjects which is seldom seen but from one of its extremes. With some persons it can do every thing; with others, nothing: these considerations are too copious for the compass of a sermon; some observations are made on the text, which may be of use if duly considered. Firstly: since an Apostle of Christ, in the early days of the church, sent Christians to inquire after the faith delivered from the beginning, the Apostles themselves could be but teachers and witnesses of it, and had no authority or commission to make new articles; otherwise St. Jude's conduct would have been absurd. This truth may be proved from our Saviour's own words, (Mark xvi. 15.) That the gospel was to be taught, not altered, is more expressly declared by St. Matthew, (xxviii. 20.): the promise annexed, (ver. 20.) *and lo! I am with you to the end of the world*, relates to their commission; and on it they could depend only whilst they taught what Christ had commanded. Previously to our Saviour's leaving the world, he told his Apostles that he would send them *a Comforter*, (John xiv. 16.); and he describes his office, (ver. 26.) These verses enlarged on, showing that the office of the Spirit, and the Spirit itself, was given only to make them teachers of Christ's doctrine.

The conduct of the Apostles is next considered, and how they executed the commission intrusted to them. They first elected an Apostle in the place of Judas, and without doubt considered well the qualifications necessary to the office: these are declared by St. Peter (Acts i. 21. 22.) to belong to witnesses of the doctrines and works of Christ; their business therefore evidently was to report the doctrines of Christ, not to deliver doctrines of their own. St. Luke particularly tells us that he wrote his gospel, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*, (i. 3.): thus following the rule prescribed by St. Jude, and reporting the *faith once delivered to the saints*. St. John also refers to the beginning and first revelation of the gospel, to show the authority of the doctrines which he delivered, (1 Epist. i. 1-3.): these verses explained,

showing also that a right of fellowship with the Apostles, or a right to church communion, depends on embracing the *faith once delivered to the saints*, and on no other doctrines of later date whatever. St. Paul's case was a singular one; he had not the qualification required in the Acts, or in the Epistle of St. Peter; but the way by which this defect was supplied, will justify the observation we are on in the strongest manner imaginable. As St. Paul conversed not with Christ in the flesh, so had he not the gospel from any of the Apostles who did; but he had it by immediate revelation from Christ himself; and therefore, says our Lord, *I have appeared unto thee*, &c. (Acts xxvi. 16.): hence he speaks to the Galatians, of his own authority, as an Apostle, (Gal. i. 1. 11. 12.) And this revelation extended not merely to points of doctrines, but to the knowledge of historical facts also; as is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 23. All these things prove that the Apostles were witnesses and teachers of the faith, and had no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of Christ, or to declare new articles. If then the Apostles who were so highly gifted, had not this power, can their successors without great impiety pretend to it? this point enlarged on in the case of the Romish church. Can then any sober Christian trust himself to such guides, and not tremble when he reads, *though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed?* When the corruptions of the church of Rome were generally felt and complained of, and no applications caused any alteration, the fear of owning an error being more powerful to continue old errors than the force of truth or even conviction was to reform them; what was left for serious Christians to do, but to separate between the old doctrines of the gospel and the new inventions of men, and to build up a church *on the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone?*

Hitherto we have spoken only of the doctrines of the gospel, and points of Christian faith. If we extend this farther, and say that the Apostles and the church after them had no more authority in any thing else, we shall run into an extreme that can produce nothing but disorder and confusion, and must in the end be subversive of all Christian societies. Let us now then consider the grounds of this distinction, as found in holy Scripture. We have this direction from our Saviour: *if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault*, &c. (Matth. xviii. 15-17.) In cases which fall under this direction, the church has a judicial authority, though it may be and often has been flagrantly abused: to say it has none, is to deny not only the authority of the church, but of Christ also, who gave the direction. This authority is noticed by St. Paul, who rebukes the church of Corinth for not using it to separate from them the incestuous person, who had given offence, not to one, but to all Christians. Another power which the Apostles had and exercised, was the authority of settling churches, and prescribing rules of order and decency to them. St. Paul's conduct in the disputes which happened in the church of Corinth, will show how carefully he distinguishes between his duty to preach the pure gospel of Christ, and his authority in matters of order and decency. The Corinthians had

been guilty of great impropriety in eating the Lord's supper, as if they had forgotten the end and use of it; and they are set right by St. Paul, as related 1 Cor. xi. 23. 33. 34.: he also committed the like authority to his pastoral successors. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus are full of canons for the government of their respective churches. All these particulars laid together show that particular churches had power to settle matters of discipline, order, and decency, for themselves; and that there were no rules of this kind of universal obligation to all churches. As the Apostles, considered singly in the light of commissioned and inspired teachers, had no authority over the faith, neither had they when met together in council. We have but one instance of an Apostolic council, which was held at Jerusalem, of which the proceedings are recorded in Acts xvi. This matter was plainly one of discipline, not of the substance of faith; and it was determined by prudential considerations, arising from the circumstances of the Christian church at that time. This case fully stated and commented on.

There is a question arising out of this case, viz.—why were the particular orders to *abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, &c.* singled out, when the Jews were strongly attached to other points of the law? If we consider the case, the reason of this distinction will appear: the great concern being to prevent offence to the Jews, and thus to preserve peace in the church of Christ, it was necessary to guard against practices which lay open to every body's view in daily life: thus a Jew could not have dined at the table of a Christian without having some security that he should not meet with things offered to idols and the like; and thus all intercourse between them would have been cut off, &c.: but the great difficulty in this case lies in the word *fornication*; which seems to be an offence of a moral kind, in which the Jews had no particular concern. In the common sense of the word it could have no meaning here. In respect to things offered to idols, and the like, the Jews were not only forbidden the use of them, but all communication with those who had, even though they were strangers, (Lev. xvii. 12.) The word *πορνεία*, which we translate fornication, includes all carnal impurity. The abominable lewdness which made part of the heathen worship will account for the worship of idols and whoredom being joined together in the decree of the council. So also they are joined together 1 Cor. vi. 9. and Rev. ii. 14. 20. *Idolatry* is also styled *whoredom* by the writers of the Old Testament; and the great powers which spread idolatry in the world were characterised under the image of a great whore; so that nobody is at a loss to understand the meaning of those writers, when they charge the people with going a whoring after other gods. What has been said in few words, the importance of the subject being considered, may show us the foundation and proper bounds of church authority in holy Scripture, and also the true foundation on which our reformation from the church of Rome stands. If that church asks why we have departed from some which it accounts articles of faith, we answer, because they are no part of *the faith once delivered to the*

saints : if we are pressed with the authority of the church which has received them, our answer is, that *Christ Jesus was the author and finisher of the faith*; to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken : if it be asked why we have discarded much ceremony and discipline, we may, without entering into particular cases, answer that the church of England has as much authority to appoint rules for its members as the church of Rome has ; that these have been settled on prudential considerations of the circumstances of England, whose church is a far better judge in this respect than that of Rome. But, secondly ; if we are to *contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints*, where are we to find this faith, and how can we distinguish it from the addition of later ages ? When our Saviour came into the world, the case of the Jewish church was in this respect the same as ours : the evil had been long growing, and the ancient prophets had taken notice of it, as in Isaiah xxix. 13. : but yet in our Saviour's time traditions were in such esteem, that the Scribes and Pharisees challenged him to answer this question : *why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders ?* (Mat. xv. 2.)—the very question this which is put to us by the church of Rome, and the darling point insisted on by their emissaries. But hear our Saviour's answer to it : *why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition ?*—a question hard to be answered, and which the rulers of the church of Rome should consider well, for they are much concerned in it. If that church pretends to have, by oral tradition, doctrines derived originally from the Apostles, the Jewish doctors referred theirs to Moses, from whom, as they supposed, they received them. The Jews had the writings of Moses and the Prophets ; the church of Rome has those of the Apostles and Evangelists ; yet neither allow their own to be a complete rule, but recur to tradition in order to supply the deficiency. Consider how our Saviour treated this pretence of the Jewish church, and it will direct us how to behave in the like case. He speaks of them as holding doctrines of their own, not of God, (Mark vii. 8. 9.) : he shows how their traditions contradicted the law of Moses, and then tells them, *you make the word of God of none effect, &c.* : plainly considering the written law of Moses as the commandment of God, but the traditions of the elders as the law of men. To Moses and the Prophets, who make up the Scripture of the Jews, our Lord constantly appeals : he bids the Jews *search the Scriptures* ; tells them *they err, not knowing the Scriptures* ; and when he tells them that on the two commandments, of loving God and our neighbor, *hang all the law and the prophets*, he plainly declared that they contained the whole of their religion ; for if he had considered the traditions as a rule of religion, he must have reduced them also to his general precepts. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour has fully determined this point in the person of Abraham. The application of this case is easily made to our own : we have seen what our Saviour thought of the traditions, what of the law and prophets of the Jewish church. The Christian church has its Apostles and Evangelists, and also too many traditionary doctrines, not founded

in holy writ. What are we to do then? We cannot want better authority than our Saviour's to reject the traditions of men, and to hold fast the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets of the gospel; that is, *contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.*

DISCOURSE LXII.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIII. VERSE 1.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

WE have, in this and the following verses, the duty which subjects owe to their temporal governors, taught and maintained by several arguments; to understand the sense and propriety of which, we must consider the circumstances of the time, place, and persons here concerned. There is no appearance in the gospel that our Saviour intended to alter the civil governments of the world. His errand was of a different nature; and he speaks of government only as occasion required. In Matt. xxii. 17. we find a captious question put to him by the Pharisees, whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Roman emperor or not? The question arose from hence: that a certain Jewish sect held this payment to be unlawful. The author of this opinion was Judas of Galilee, who, when the nation was ordered to be taxed, raised a great rebellion. His fate is related fully by Josephus, and mentioned by Gamaliel in Acts v. 37. By degrees they gathered strength; and in the reign of Claudius ravaged many places in Samaria: their pretence for freedom was, as we learn from St. Chrysostom, that being the freemen of God, they ought not to be the subjects or slaves of men. They were called Galileans, their founder being of that country, as also many of his followers. By this name Christians went in the first ages; they are so called by several heathen writers: Julian thus also designates them. Hence the Christians going by the name of Galileans were thought by the heathens to entertain the opinions of those who refused obedience to earthly princes, and were for setting up an independent government. Thus Tertullus the orator accused St. Paul, (Acts xxiv. 5.); thus also did the Jews accuse the Christians to the magistrates of Thessalonica, (Acts xvii. 16.) Hence that question of the Pharisees, *Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cesar?* for they hoped to have found something whereof to have impeached our Saviour before the Roman governor. The collectors of tax seem to have had the same jealousy concerning our Saviour, when in Matth. xvii. 24. they inquired of St. Peter whether his Master would pay tribute or no; to which he answers *yes*: and our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted, says to St. Peter, when he had cast his hook

into the sea, and taken the piece of money from the mouth of the fish, 'Give it them as tribute for me and yourself, *lest we should offend them.*' This scandal, which he and his Apostles lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themselves, and to teach their followers such obedience to the higher powers as might leave no pretence for such an accusation. That the Apostles had reference to the same in pressing obedience of all kinds on their disciples, is evident from the argument with which they close their instructions; *that the word of God be not blasphemed, or evil spoken of:* this text commented on, showing that Christians were more liable to reproach in this case than in any other: hence the reason why our Lord bids St. Peter pay the tribute: hence St. Paul's orders to Titus, ch. ii. 5. and 10.: also Tim. vi. 1. See also 1 Peter, ii. 15, 16. Besides these reasons, drawn from the Apostle's own writings, St. Jerome, in his comment on Tit. iii. 1., and St. Chrysostom, on Rom. xiii., teach the same thing. Hence we may see why the Apostles so earnestly press their new converts with a more than ordinary obedience to their governors: the honor of Christ and the gospel was nearly concerned in their behavior, which ought to be dearer to them than their lives: this point enlarged on. St. Paul more especially labors this point, when he writes to the Christians at Rome, where the least disorder would be soonest taken notice of, and most improved to the prejudice of the gospel. If we examine what St. Paul has taught on this point, we shall find it built on reasons purposely adapted to confute the error of the Galileans and some judaizing Christians, and to require such a scrupulous obedience as might clear the gospel and its professors from the scandal thrown on them by the heathen. The doctrine of the former part of the text opposes that of the Galileans; and is supported in the latter part by arguments peculiarly adapted to combat their error. He allows what they say to be true respecting God; but this is so far from exempting them from subjection to temporal power, that it proves the contrary: for the power of the magistrate being delegated from God, is therefore more especially to be regarded by those who pretend in a peculiar manner to be his servants. It was obvious to object to this reasoning, that the powers then in being could not be ordained by God, because they had thwarted all his purposes. To prevent which he purposely adds, *οἱ δὲ οὐσαὶ ἐξουσίαι*, the powers which *now be*, are ordained of God; whence he draws this consequence, *whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* In what sense the rulers of the world may be said to be the ordinance of God, and to derive their power from him, is to be found from the state of the world, which requires them to protect the innocent and defend the weak: therefore to pretend an exemption from their power is to act in opposition to his will. As some pretended to withdraw their obedience from the prince, because they had been made partakers of the freedom of the gospel, so others in a state of servitude thought they had a right to throw off their bondage for the same reason: the Apostle therefore uses the same way of arguing with them, exhorting them to submit to their

masters as unto God. Thus he lays down this general rule: *Let every man abide in the same calling, &c.* (1 Cor. vii. 20.); which he particularises in Ephes. vi. 5. 7. The same is somewhat differently expressed in Col. iii. : and is treated with some warmth in 1 Tim. vi. 3-5. In all these passages he plainly refers to the opinion of such as taught that the gospel had introduced a perfect state of freedom, and therefore teaches his converts that Christianity should make them better, not worse servants; since they ought to obey from the heart, as serving God and not men. St. Peter also teaches the same: *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.* Hence it is plain that the Apostle's argument is chiefly directed against those who were for making religion the cloak of disloyalty, on the specious pretence of setting up the Lord Jesus. The Apostle uses a second argument to enforce his doctrine, laid down at first in the words of the text: *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers:* and here the first doubt is, where the argument begins; for the words immediately following those last treated of may either be taken as the first of the second argument, or as a farther conclusion drawn from the first: *and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* If they who resist the power, do resist the ordinance of God, then this consequence is so evident, that it can lose nothing of its force should it be taken as introducing a new argument; which on the whole it seems to do: reasons for this given. To go on with the argument: it is drawn from the common topic of hope and fear; and by setting before us both the power and right of our governors to punish us, when we refuse to acknowledge their authority, it tacitly warns us to expect no protection from God against their just anger: it is absurd to expect assistance from God in opposition to his own authority delegated to earthly powers. The gospel in every page encourages its disciples to bear up against the afflictions or persecutions of the world, and to be exceeding glad, because their reward shall be great in heaven; but lest those who suffered as seditious subjects should entertain these hopes, he also warns them that the prince acts by the will of God in punishing such offenders. St. Peter, on the same subject, has the same view before him, (iv. 14, 15.) as he had before observed; *what glory is it, if when ye shall be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?* St. Paul's second argument therefore is not a mere prudential motive to obedience; but it teaches us that we shall not only suffer, but deserve to suffer, which every Christian ought to fear more than the evil itself. The steps of the argument are, *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*, that is, punishment or judgment; and the reason follows: *for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil:* hence we infer that by *good works* obedience is especially meant; and by *evil works*, resistance: else his reason will not contain the proof of his doctrine: yet the Apostle is now disputing with those who considered themselves justified by the gospel in not thinking the resistance here spoken of an evil work. Does he then beg this most material point? No: but from his first argument, that whoever resists the power resisteth the ordinance of God, he proves resistance to be an evil work: he then

shows the prince's power over such workers of iniquity; *wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.* This was a strange assertion, if understood of good works in general: St. Paul knew that to obey the gospel, to reject idolatry, was to do good; yet that those who did so, far from having the praise of their rulers, were daily tormented by them: he knew that to preach the gospel was a good work, yet that he himself for so doing had been in perils and in danger of his life. How then could he assure his converts that if they did good, they should have praise of their rulers? But the difficulty vanishes, if we take *good* in the limited sense of the Apostle. By this reasoning the *good* must mean the same thing with *good works*; and we have shown *good works* to signify the work of *obedience*: hence, *do that which is good* means, *pay due obedience*: and then this proposition is universally true; for obedience is a good work; and, be princes what they may, they will always praise it; and we are sure to get this good by it, a quiet life at least. This exposition also suits St. Paul's main design, which was to inculcate obedience to the higher powers: temperance, chastity, and other virtues were out of this question: if the Apostle then keeps to his point, the good thing he recommends is that of obedience; and the word in the original, rendered *good* in our translation, is appropriated by St. Paul and St. Peter to denote the good of obedience in opposition to that evil spirit which sets a government at nought. The promise made to obedience is, *thou shalt have praise of the same.* What is meant by *praise* may be understood from St. Peter, who speaks of governors sent *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well*: where praise must denote protection and encouragement, the only proper rewards good subjects can expect. And this will explain the words, *for he is the minister of God to thee for good.* The Apostle had promised *reward* to the obedient: he then supports it by these words. To be a minister for good then, must denote his being appointed by God as a dispenser of rewards; else the argument is lame: for if any other good be meant, the consequence is false; but if he be appointed by God to dispense rewards to those who do well, and if obedience be the good work, we have reason to expect reward for our obedience. And this sense will appear the true one by comparing the former and latter part of the verse together: for the Apostle goes on, *but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain.* He then adds, *for he is a minister of God*: for what? He had before called him a dispenser of rewards, a minister of God for good; here then he should have called him one *for evil*: but the expression being too harsh, he uses a periphrasis, and says he is *a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.* This expounds a minister for good to be an encourager of him that doeth well. Compare all the parts, and there can be no doubt: this comparison fully drawn out. What good we are to expect from kings and governors, St. Paul has told us, 1 Tim. ii. 2. The peace of society is the very end of temporal government; and when promoted by those in authority, then they are justly to be esteemed as

ministers of God for good to the people, who in return are bound to obey; and this intitles them to the praise and protection of those in authority. By these two arguments St. Paul supports his doctrine of obedience: that they are rightly divided he himself bears witness in the next verse; *wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*: here he refers only to two arguments, one drawn from wrath, and one from conscience: the former respects the present life and the magistrate's power; for the wrath of God is included in the latter, which is no argument without it; for what is conscience where there is no fear of God? You must then submit for wrath, because the magistrate has the power of God to execute wrath on him that doeth evil; for conscience, since he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. The sixth verse only mentions a particular instance of obedience, the paying tribute, as being the very ground of this dispute. St. Paul, under the duties of subjection, comprehends not only those owing to kings, but to every superior; nay, even to our equals: Rom. xiii. 1.; and thus concludes, *owe no man any thing, but to love one another*; referring even the duties of love to this head of subjection: but more on this point hereafter. The Apostle's concern was with such as were for denying the right of government, and being every man his own king; he did not therefore intend to consider the measures and limits of the power of earthly princes; nor can the argument reach this point, nor has Scripture meddled with it: it has commanded obedience to all governors, and left us the laws and constitutions of our country to know who they are, and what they are. The Apostle, in teaching this doctrine, was chiefly concerned for the honor of the gospel, and exhorted to obedience, that the name of God and Christ might not be blasphemed. Had he taught the Christians at Rome that the emperor was ordained by God for their good, and that they were bound to obey him only so long as he was good to them; would this have cleared them of the scandal they lay under? No: it would have justified it, and confirmed this maxim to the powers of the world, that if Christianity prevailed, their authority must sink. Notice taken of St. Peter's doctrine on this subject. His Epistle is directed to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries: for in the ninth year of Claudius the Jews, under which name the Christians also were plainly comprehended, (Acts xviii.) were banished Rome for tumults occasioned by their disputes. This banishment is mentioned by Suetonius, and by St. Luke in the Acts. St. Peter therefore was necessarily to press obedience in his exhortation to his scattered flock, (ii. 11, 12.): then follows the general precept: *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, &c.* Here St. Peter is supposed to teach us that kings are the ordinance of man: if so, he has contradicted St. Paul, who expressly tells us that *the powers which be are ordained of God*; which clear doctrine should make us cautious how we expound St. Peter to a different meaning. His original words are *πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*. Now *κτίσις* signifies sometimes in Scripture *a creature*, and the adjective joined with it, *human*: thus the doctrine is plain; submit

yourselves to every human creature, or to every man, for the Lord's sake, How it signifies any thing made by man is unintelligible : *ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία* is not wisdom made by man, but that wisdom which man has given to him by God ; so that *κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη* is a *human creature* will appear from the whole tenor of his discourse. It is usual with the best writers to set down the doctrine in general words, and then to deduce the particulars : this is St. Peter's method in the place before us. These particular cases detailed, which are plainly included in the general rule, show the absurdity of our version of this phrase : nay, St. Peter goes lower, and commands us to love the brotherhood : so that we may as well say we made our brother, because we must love him, as our king, because we must obey him. It was observed before, how St. Paul derived the duties of subjection so low as to the love of one another : St. Peter does the same. St. Paul's general rule is, *render to all their dues* : St. Peter's is, *submit to every human creature*. St. Paul concludes, *owe no man any thing, but to love one another* : St. Peter, *yea, all of you be subject one to another*. Thus both take all degrees of duty into the doctrine of submission ; so nearly do they agree : if St. Paul has said that the higher powers are ordained of God, St. Peter has said as much, by telling us that so is the will of God, that with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. If St. Paul has said, we must obey for conscience sake, St. Peter has affirmed that obedience is the will of God. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE LXIII.

GENESIS, CHAP. XVIII. VERSE 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring on Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

THESE words of the Lord concerning Abraham contain the reason why God made choice of him, to make of him a nation to whom should be *committed the oracles of God* : the verse before the text contains the sentiment. It has been matter of difficulty with curious inquirers to assign the reasons of God's regard to Abraham and his posterity, while the rest of the world was permitted to remain in ignorance and superstition : it is not intended to examine all the reasons that may be assigned for this selection ; but since God has been pleased to give one, it concerns us to consider it, as instructing us how to render ourselves acceptable to God, and draw down a blessing on ourselves and our posterity : Gen. xviii. 18, 19. We may plainly see the connexion of the text with the preceding verse,

and the reason given for the distinguishing mercy bestowed on Abraham, which is founded on these two propositions, and supposes the truth of them: First, That it is the duty of every father and master of a family so to command his children and household, that they shall keep the way of the Lord: and, secondly, That the same duty is incumbent on the governors and magistrates of all nations. If we suppose the virtue here commended proper only to fathers and masters of families, the reason assigned in the text for making Abraham *a great and mighty nation* is very absurd: nay, it would rather have been a good one to keep all public authority out of his hands: this point enlarged on generally with respect to magistrates, and in its application to the present subject. It has been disputed whether government is derived from the paternal authority, and is only the extension of it, or from the consent or choice of the people: a point of greater curiosity than use; since the rights of nations will be determined by their respective laws and usages, not by the speculations of philosophers. But as to religion, every magistrate's duty, with respect to his people, is the same as every father's with respect to his household. This was the case with Abraham; otherwise this care over his family could have been no reason for extending his authority over a great and mighty nation. The magistrate's care with respect to the religion of his people, and the father's with respect to that of his family, are so much the same, that they must stand or fall together; both having the same reasons to support them, and being liable to the same objections. If the father has his authority from God, is the case of the magistrate different? If the happiness of a family and its members consists in a due conformity to the principles of virtue and reason, and if it be the father's duty naturally to guard them against vice, is the happiness of a kingdom less concerned in the virtue of the people? or ought a prince less to regard the welfare of his subjects? Turn it as you will, the arguments are the same, and applicable to both cases. If you object to the magistrate's authority in religion, and the impropriety of temporal rewards and punishments, are they not as improper in the hands of a father as of a prince? This point enlarged on. From the text thus explained, it is inquired wherein the care of religion, public and private, consists, and the means necessary to its support are justified. If we consider the nature and disposition of mankind, we shall perceive two things necessary to guard the practice of virtue and religion, viz. instruction and correction: one, a proper remedy for the weakness of the understanding; the other, for the perverseness of the will. Where these two are joined together, the instruction is properly authoritative; and this is the case both of parents and magistrates; therefore Abraham's care is expressed by the word *command*. The same precept, called *teaching* in Deut. xi. 19. is in xxxii. 46. called *commanding*. This duty princes cannot perform personally to all their people; therefore there has been an order of men set apart as teachers and ministers of religion in every civilised nation; which, on the footing of natural religion, the supreme power has doubtless a right to appoint: such was the case with the people of Rome; and,

had their religion been right, no fault could have been found with the constitution of their priesthood. This right under the law of Moses was limited to one family, while the priesthood under the gospel is confined to such methods of conveyance as Christ and his Apostles have appointed or approved; and being owned and established by the public, they have the commission and authority of the magistrate for the edification of the people. The power of correction is proper to be preserved in the hand of the magistrate, to be applied for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and for the maintenance of true religion and virtue. As these methods are necessary for the promoting and preserving the virtue of nations, so are they for the good government and improvement of private families: as to instruction separate from correction, no one but a friend to libertinism can object to it. Some have thought that, since God has given all men reason to direct them, they should be left to its guidance in discovering the truths of religion, without having any principles instilled into them by others, which they esteem only as so many prejudices. Not to insist how contrary this is to all the rules of Scripture which relate to the duty of parents, and to the practice of nations, it is enough to observe that had God intended this, he must have supplied all men with leisure for speculation as well as with reason. If men have so much reason as to be able to discover their duty without assistance, they can distinguish between truth and falsehood, when proposed to them by others, and are not in more danger of being betrayed, than if left to themselves. Those who have not reason enough for this, must be governed by other methods. It is certain that general errors have been perpetuated by traditionary instruction, as well as general truths; but if an end must for this reason be put to all instruction, what single thing of use can be preserved in life? Must the world be starved, because some have suffered by intemperance? or left in ignorance, because some, through false teachers, have been miserably deceived? But the strongest objections lie against the use of correction in matters of religion. All allow the magistrate to punish crimes which injure the state, or private persons; a concession not to be despised in behalf of religion, since our duty to God and to our neighbor so concurs that he who punishes offences offered to men, will so far punish vice and immorality. Hence the plea for excluding the magistrate from matters of religion can only affect such cases where the honor of God alone is concerned, as profaneness, impiety, and the like. The reason assigned for this is, that human punishments cannot make men religious: they can make men comply outwardly with the law, but cannot reach to the purifying their hearts, in the integrity of which the virtue of religion consists. But, first, it ought to be considered that such impiety is prejudicial to the public, by the contagion of ill example. The reverence men have for God is the best foundation of obedience to temporal governors: this point enlarged on, with the ill consequences of taking away this reverence for God. But, secondly, it is want of the knowledge of human nature, which leads men to make this objection: for though it is true that the sinner who abstains from

vice through fear of temporal punishment, cannot be said to act on a religious principle in so doing; yet we must consider the consequence which punishments produce. If you keep a sinner from vice at first through fear, he will by degrees habitually do well; his relish for vice will abate, and by length of practice he will take pleasure in virtue. We see that this is the case with children. And will it be said, that when a man is grown to be habitually virtuous, he has no true religion in him, because he was reclaimed at first by temporal fears? If not, it must be allowed that these fears are not destructive of religion. Enough has been said to show, and also to justify the means necessary to be used in discharging the duty recommended in the text; it remains to exhort every one to do his part, and to make all, as far as he is able, *keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment*. And first, the magistrate is to be watchful over the manners of the people, and jealous for the honor of God. In this consists the stability of nations; for *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of the people*. This case descends from the supreme head of justice to every officer of the kingdom, in proportion to his power. But leaving this part of the exhortation, it is to be added that private men, though vested with no public authority, can do much by showing themselves pleased that others should do their duty. Next to the magistrate, the chief care of virtue and religion lies on fathers and masters of families. The kingdom is one great family, which is made up of the small ones; in which if care be taken for the instruction of youth, the public will soon see and feel the happy effects of it: this point enlarged on, first, with respect to the duty which we owe to God, who, if they perish, will require their souls at our hands: secondly, with respect to our country, which is deeply concerned that its youth should be trained up to virtue and industry; else how can we hope to see the nation supplied with honest and worthy men? thirdly, with respect to our children, whom we have brought into the world, and whom we are obliged, by the strongest ties of natural affection, to guard against the certain miseries of this life and of the next: this point enlarged on. What strong obligations then are parents under to be diligent in the discharge of this duty! and what happy days might we promise ourselves, did the performance answer to the obligations! In many cases ignorance and poverty preclude the performance; hence the institution of public schools, maintained by contributions for the instruction and education of the poor; calculated to promote nobler views than those of private interest to any one set of men, and tending directly to the public good. The passions of men considered, it is not to be expected that those who are permitted to go wild in their youth, should prove harmless, much less useful to society in after years. Necessity is a great temptation to wickedness; and when they have nothing but their corrupt affections to direct them, how can they withstand these temptations? Idle and undisciplined boys often prove vicious young men, and fall a sacrifice to the severity of the law before they become old ones. Thieves and robbers must be punished, or the innocent will be ruined: is it not then a reproach to

a Christian country, that great care should be taken to punish crime, and little or none to prevent it? yet this is the case where the instruction of the poor is neglected. This mischief is in some measure provided for by the charity-schools; and thus the rich are saved from the violence of wicked necessitous men; the poor from wickedness and its punishments; and so many useful hands are gained to the public. But farther, the peace of the church is thus also provided for; an end which every sincere Christian must take pleasure in promoting: the consequent happiness obtained by such an education, must give us an idea of its usefulness, and encourage us in its support. If every gift thus bestowed shall have its reward, how abundantly shall the charity be recompensed which serves all these purposes at once! This point enlarged on: concluding exhortations.

SUMMARIES OF OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

Preached before Queen Anne at St. James's, Jan. 30, 1704, being
the anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXIV. VERSE 21.

My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that
are given to change.

THE fear of God and of the king are joined together in Scripture, to show the dependence which one has on the other. The advantage of religion to all public societies and civil governments is evident: and if we look into the history of former times, we shall find the first symptoms of ruin in the dissolute lives of the people and their contempt of sacred things.

The duty of fearing God is not considered farther than as the obedience due to our superiors on earth is included in it; the discourse therefore is confined to the following particulars: I. What obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God: II. How inconsistent with this obedience is the practice of those men, who are given to change.

I. Obedience is seen chiefly in three things: first, in submission to the laws and commands of our princes: secondly, in honor and reverence to their persons and government: thirdly, in defending them, when any danger threatens them or the public. First: to determine

the original of civil power, or the prince's right to the subject's obedience, is neither easy nor necessary. When our Saviour appeared in the world, various were the forms of government in it, and different the degrees of power exercised by its rulers; none of which were lessened or increased by the divine law, but all pronounced to be the ordinance of God; and obedience was exacted, under penalty of disobeying him, the original of all power: *for he that resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God, &c.*

But since the nature of obedience is no where determined by the law of God, while the practice of it only is commanded, some other rule there must be to judge of the extent of our duty. This shown to be the *measure of power and authority*; whatever the prince can lawfully command in that, the subject is bound to obey. *The things which are God's must be rendered unto God*; and therefore no divine law can be superseded by the command of any earthly power: we must obey God rather than man, and be content with the lot of them who suffer for well-doing. But to reason abstractedly on the power of princes is a sign of weakness and of a troublesome temper: custom and the law of the land are, in each country, the highest reason: otherwise the gospel, which was intended for the law of all nations and people, could not have commanded obedience to the present powers, so different in form and authority.

Obedience is primarily due to God, the fountain of all power. Where God did not so visibly interest himself, as in the Jewish dispensation, but committed the reins of government to earthly princes, the making of laws for the external order of the world was remitted to their authority; and therefore the gospel, though infinitely more perfect than the law, gave us no system of laws, either for civil or ecclesiastical government. Of obedience there are two parts, the external and the internal: the former is that in the due performance of which the beauty and order of the world consists, and is therefore the proper care of its governors. The same holds in religion, which is the service of God: there are duties in which none are concerned but God and our own souls; such as faith, repentance, &c. But God requires also an external and visible worship from us, in which order and decency are *required*, but not *determined*; and therefore they must be left to the jurisdiction of those to whom we are answerable for our outward behavior in all things.

The second instance of obedience is to honor and reverence our governors; a duty which we owe to all our superiors in proportion to their dignity and office. Next to him, whose very name cannot be taken in vain without guilt, are the supreme powers on earth, great though the distance be: to them we owe respect, according to the Apostle's rule, *to render honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear is due*. Two things have a right to honor and respect; personal virtue, and public character; which, when happily joined together, are to be accounted worthy of *double honor*; but when separate, are not to be defrauded of their due portion. Example of St. Paul, who corrected himself when he had spoken rudely to the high priest.

The third instance of obedience is in defending the persons and

government of our princes. Mutual defence is the end of all government. Protection in life and fortune is the right of every subject; this he may lawfully expect from his prince, and so is bound to him, in the like duty of defending his person and government, whenever occasion requires it. When men entered into civil society, they resigned all their private rights and interests to the public good; and therefore the public happiness is to be preferred before our own: the prince bears the person of the commonwealth; by him the public lives and acts; therefore his life is sacred, and to be defended with zealous devotion. To maintain the established form of government is the first and highest duty of men acting in society: to remove the ancient landmarks of power and obedience tends to the ruin of all government, and is an injury to the prince and his vested rights, as well as disobedience to his power.

Second head considered: viz., how inconsistent with the obedience required is the practice of those *who are given to change*.

No government was ever so perfectly formed at first, as to answer all occasions, the wisdom of man not reaching far enough to view all possible varieties of circumstances: therefore it is necessary for the public good that there should be a power lodged somewhere, to adapt old laws to present circumstances, or to those which may arise hereafter. To change thus is an act of lawful power, and therefore falls not within the charge of the text. But then the most necessary changes must be promoted and perfected by lawful authority, or else they lose their good quality; for no change can be so beneficial, as the usurpation of lawful authority is injurious: to seek public good by such means is like the curing of a distemper by destroying the patient.

To view with pleasure the factions and disturbances of a kingdom, having in prospect our own advantage, is the part neither of a good man nor of a good Christian; and to encourage seditious principles in others, though it may be done without danger, cannot be without guilt: such practices have nothing in them appertaining to honor or obedience to the prince.

The authority of the prince is as much concerned in maintaining the honor and order of God's service, as of his own; and the noblest character that belongs to princes, is that of *nursing fathers and mothers* to the church of Christ, the peace and order of which is at once the splendor and security of a government: therefore the advice of the text must be extended to the government of the church as well as of the state. And the occasion of this solemnity gives good reason for this application; the alterations intended and practised on the church having had no little influence in the barbarous treason which was perpetrated towards the state.

There must be in the church, as in the state, a power to change whatsoever by experience is found unfit for the end designed; and to effect this is their duty in whose hands the power is lodged: nor can changes so effected ever be to the blemish or dishonor of the church. But when men dislike without reason, and obstinately condemn whatever has been settled by authority; when they disclaim all the

power and the acts of the church; either their ignorance must be invincible, or their guilt unpardonable.

The reason of all changes ought to be very plain and apparent; since to change is the effect and sign of weakness; and to change *often* always breeds *contempt*. To press for alterations when most things in an establishment are owned to be good, and all tolerable, is not the effect of much judgment. If want of perfection be a reason to change, this reason will last for ever, since all the laws of the church are not of divine institution.

In matters of religious government, strange to say! every man thinks himself a competent judge of what is fit to be obeyed, though he pretends not to the same discretionary power in state affairs; as if the case were not the same in both instances; and as if obedience in all things lawful and honest were not of like necessity in both.

The common people are led to esteem men who act thus, because they appear to suffer for their opinions, forfeiting advantages and worldly interests by not complying with the establishment, while rewards are open to the obedience of others; and as long as men are weak enough to be misled, and the errors of some are profitable to others, there will be no end of dissensions; and should the restlessness of men once break in on the constitution, the event only could show where it would end.

To what extremes the humor of men once set on change will run, the mournful occasion of this day's solemnity is a sufficient proof. The actors in those troubles thought of nothing less, when they began, than the event that succeeded. The good of the public and of the king was the pretence; and they never left off seeking it till they had ruined the public, and brought the royal head to the scaffold. With the same success the purity of the church was promoted; which ended in its utter subversion, and the blood of a great prelate.—Character of Archbishop Laud.—His case might deserve more to be lamented, did not that which followed bury all private injuries and resentments.—Character and death of King Charles I.—Reflections thereon. It is a hard case if princes have no right to the allowances that are made to all besides; harder, because by their high station they are more exposed to the view of the world, and are obliged to live by the opinion of those who are not always wise enough to judge, or to let it alone. The privilege too, which extends to the lowest cottager, of choosing his own friends, is not without murmuring allowed to kings; nor may they stoop to the innocent and harmless enjoyments of life. Every step men take, by which they rise in the world, is an abridgment of their innocent liberty, and binds them to a stricter self-denial; for there is a natural envy in men, which loves to see the honor and dignity of high station qualified with trouble and anxiety.

Those however who are distinguished by the advantages of birth and education, should be above the common prejudices and sordid passions of the vulgar; thinking themselves obliged, both in honor and duty, to pay a steady obedience to the established government: this point enlarged on.

It is through the goodness of God to us, that after so many convulsions we still enjoy our ancient government; that there is still life and vigor in the religion and liberty of England; a goodness that on our part demands the utmost return of gratitude; which can in no way be so acceptably shown, as in the worthy use of the blessings we enjoy. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE II.

Preached before the Sons of the Clergy at St. Paul's Cathedral,
December 5, 1710.

MATTHEW, CHAP. X. VERSES 41, 42.

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

TOWARDS the beginning of this chapter, we read that our Saviour sent forth his disciples to preach the kingdom of God. That they might preach with authority, he endowed them with the gifts of the Spirit; and that they might attend on their ministry without distraction, he eased them of the care of providing for themselves, by giving them power to demand and to receive of those whom they instructed whatever their wants required. It was not our Saviour's intention to make poverty a necessary qualification for their profession. This shown from Luke xxii. 35. compared with Matt. x. 9, 10. As the office of preaching the gospel was to be perpetual in the Christian church, so the right of maintenance was always to attend it: see 1 Cor. ix. 14. And since in this kind of charity the honor of Christ's name, and the promotion of his religion are immediately consulted, he has distinguished it by a more honorable and glorious reward: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, &c.*

To receive a prophet sometimes signifies to receive his doctrine and become his follower; but in this place it cannot have this signification: reasons for this given. *To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet*, is to receive him because he is a prophet; that is, on account of his character and office, and the near relation which he bears to Christ: this topic enlarged on. In treating on the words of the text, two principal subjects are offered for consideration: I. The several degrees of charity mentioned in it, and wherein the excellency of one above the other consists: II. How truly Christian

and excellent in its kind that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

I. If we begin our account at the verse immediately preceding the text, we shall find four degrees of charity enumerated, and distinguished by distinct promises. The first is that of receiving an Apostle; the second is that of receiving a prophet; the third, that of receiving a righteous man; and the fourth, that of relieving the meanest of Christ's disciples. Charity is distinguished into these different kinds and degrees, by the dignity of the persons who are its objects; for since the receiving a prophet shall intitle us to a prophet's reward, and the receiving a righteous man to a righteous man's reward, it is plain that the former act as far exceeds the latter, as the dignity of the one object is above that of the other.

To receive a prophet because he is our friend or relation, is but a common degree of kindness: the honor must be paid him, *because he is a prophet*: the motive and principle of our action must be taken into account; and in this lies the difference between the Christian and the moral virtue: the same object appears not in the same light in both cases: this point enlarged on, showing that the love of Christ is the foundation of Christian charity; and that Christ in his members is the object of it.

Hence one kind of Christian charity will differ from another in perfection, as it more nearly approaches the person of Christ, who is the object, and as it more strongly partakes of the principle, which is the love of Christ: and by this rule of proportion our Saviour has placed the several degrees of charity mentioned in the text: the objects of that charity are of four sorts; Apostles, prophets, the righteous, and the little ones: they are ranked according to the dignity of their characters, which arises from the relation they bear to Christ, who is the head over all: here then is a perfect scheme of Christian charity, and a rule to direct us in the choice of proper objects.

The Apostles, at the death of our Saviour, succeeded to the government and direction of the church: under them were placed teachers and pastors of different orders, comprehended under the general name of prophets. These offices have been perpetuated in the church by a constant succession of men duly called to them, and who stand in the same relation to Christ that the Apostles and prophets did, who went before them in the same work of the ministry; and we must *so account of them*, &c. 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The two next characters belong to the flock of Christ, who are not distinguished from one another by any difference in character or office, but only by their different attainments in faith: the righteous are the *strong* in faith; the little ones are the *weak*, who are indicated by St. Paul, Ephes. iv. 13, 14.

The learned Grotius shown to be wrong, who makes only three degrees, leaving out Apostles, and saying that there are *tres discipulorum Christi gradus*. His interpretation of the word *δικαιοι*, as signifying a middle kind of Christian, and that of *prophet*, as signifying only a perfect one, disproved. Besides, our Saviour's design

here was evidently to lay a foundation for the support of the Christian ministry; he forbids them to provide for themselves, because they were workmen worthy of their hire; and to encourage men cheerfully to discharge their duty towards them, he adds, *he that receiveth you receiveth me*: this being his design, could he forget all degrees of teachers except Apostles, and yet be so particular in reckoning up all degrees of Christians? This point enlarged on.

From this declaration made by our Saviour, we learn what ought to give the preference in Christian charity. The relation which men bear to Christ is the foundation of the love and honor due to them; and the nearer this relation is, the greater love and honor are due to it. It were easy to show the title which these several degrees of charity have to their respective rewards: it is sufficient to instance the one which is most applicable to the present discourse, that of *receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet*.

This charity is intitled to a prophet's reward; and well it may; for it is a charity which does a prophet's duty: by enabling him to do the work of his calling, we share it with him, and preach the gospel by the mouth which we feed.

The work of the ministry is great, and requires our whole attendance; and if to this be added the constant care of supporting ourselves and families against encroaching poverty, who would be sufficient for these things? Must not the ignorant want instruction, and the afflicted comfort, whilst the prophet is employed in the meaner cares of the world? And must not such as set the Lord's prophets free from the world, and enable them to dedicate themselves to his service, be properly said to labor with them in the work of the gospel? And as they thus partake in the work, ought they not also to partake in the reward?

The properest way of exercising this charity is by allotting such a maintenance to the ministers of Christ, as may enable them to provide for themselves and those who depend on them. Next to its present wants and necessities, poverty has nothing more terrible in it than the fear of futurity; nor is there a more distressing case than that which arises from the prospect of entailing want and misery on those for whom we are bound by the dearest ties of nature to provide.

After a present maintenance therefore, the next degree of charity is to lighten this heavy burden; that the ministers of Christ may with cheerfulness, and without interruption, attend to the service of the altar, seeing a way open for the support of their indigent families, when they, their present support, shall be called away. And this leads to the second consideration proposed; viz.

How truly Christian and excellent in its kind that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

Its objects are the widows and orphans of those who have spent their lives in the service of the altar, and were found faithful. Considered in themselves, they are not the meanest of Christ's disciples; but to their own they add the prophet's claim to charity, who has left them nothing else to maintain them.

Were their poverty the effect of luxury or idleness, we might be ashamed to plead its cause in public: but its reasons are too well known; and it is so far from being a reproach, that in some measure it is a glory: this point enlarged on.

Some who subsist on the charity of this corporation are living witnesses of the faith and constancy of the English clergy to God and to their king: allusion made to the widows of the sequestered clergy.

Never does Christ more truly suffer in his members, than when his members suffer for him; nor can our acts of mercy ever more nearly approach him, than when we relieve those who endure affliction for his sake and that of the gospel.

The worldly advantages pointed out, which would have accrued to these children, if their parents had been turned to the more profitable employments of the world: hence arguments are deduced for the support of the charity.

DISCOURSE III.

Preached before the Lord Mayor at St. Paul's Cathedral,
Nov. 5, 1712.

LUKE, CHAP. IX. VERSES 54, 55.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

THE provocation which the disciples had to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, may be learned from Luke ix. 51—55. The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, founded in religious controversy, was so great as to prevent all interchange of the common offices of humanity between them: see John iv. 9 and 20. This account is confirmed by Josephus, who also says that the animosity was occasioned by a contest concerning the holiness of their respective temples. St. Luke (ix. 51.) tells us that this journey of our Lord to Jerusalem was taken about the time of the Passover; which may account for the conduct of the Samaritans, who, perceiving that the disciples were going to celebrate the feast at Jerusalem, as the true place of worship, sent them away unassisted. The disciples, calling to mind the story of Elias, address our Lord in the expectation of witnessing his vengeance, and are answered in the words of the text: these circumstances enlarged on, as being applicable to the case in question. It was hatred arising from a religious controversy that bred the treason of this day: and to all concerned in it the words of our Lord in the text are applicable. The controversies

between us and the Romish church are too numerous to be considered; but even supposing that church to have all the advantage which the parallel in the text can afford it, and ourselves to be obstinately mistaken in our religion, their cruel thirst after blood would still intitle them to the reproof of our Lord. Neither their zeal and love for Christ, nor their faith, had they enough to work miracles, could justify their practice of cruelty towards their fellow-creatures. The same faith had the disciples in the text; and yet we learn that their spirit was not right within them. A consideration of Christ's judgment in this case will better enable us to judge of that kind of spirit to which the treason of this day may be ascribed. It is to be considered how far this reason of our Lord's excludes all use of temporal punishment in matters of religion; and, I. It will be shown that it holds in all cases with respect to church power: II. That the argument does not affect the civil magistrate's power, nor prevent his interposing in matters proper for his jurisdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion: III. What is said will be applied to the present occasion.—I. The wrath of the disciples arose from two accounts. The objects of it were Samaritans and apostates, who had inhumanly treated them and their master. As Scripture forbids us to plead personal injuries to justify persecution, the weight of the argument lies on the honor of God and the difference of religion: this is answered by our Saviour, Luke ix. 56. It is shown that, as the honor of God is best consulted by a compliance with his designs, and as our Lord has said that his design in coming into the world was not to destroy, but to save men's lives, we cannot offer a greater indignity to God than by making religion an instrument of destruction. This argument, which is that of Christ himself, reaches to all methods of propagating religion which are hurtful or injurious to men. As some punishments are calculated for the good of the offender, and consequently all will not come within this argument, it may still be pretended that there is room for the exercise of temporal punishments in the case of religion; since they might be made to forward the salvation of men. This reason can signify nothing in the present case, unless the church be vested with the power of dispensing temporal punishments: it cannot create a power; it can only direct the exercise of it where it is: those therefore who urge the conveniency of temporal punishments in matters of religion are answered by our Lord in the text. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, nor is it to be erected or supported by any worldly power: see Matt. xxvi. 52. and John xviii. 36. The meaning and extent of Christ's argument, and how contrary it is to the spirit of Christianity to found its faith in temporal punishments, thus shown. Since Christ's kingdom is not of this world, the powers belonging to his kingdom cannot be of this world. If we take all spiritual power from the church, and derive its authority from the magistrate or the people, we exempt the consciences of men from a spiritual jurisdiction, to submit them to a temporal one; and thereby we become advocates of popery. The power of the magistrate in matters of religion has been by some too

much exalted, and by others too much depressed.—II. It is shown that the reason of the text does not prevent the civil magistrate from interposing with the sword in matters proper for its jurisdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion. The principle on which the magistrate's power has been both unreasonably exalted and depressed is liberty of conscience; or rather on the one side a liberty *from* conscience, for which reason all spiritual matters are disregarded, and the magistrate's will set up as the supreme law of conscience; on the other side, the magistrate's power in all cases where conscience is concerned is taken away, and men are set at liberty to act as their consciences (however erroneously) direct them. The arguments drawn from the nature of Christ's kingdom against the use of temporal punishments are conclusive only as to the ministers of that kingdom, and cannot extend to the civil magistrate, whose business it is to consider men's actions with regard to public peace and order, and to punish such as disturb it, without respecting from what internal principle they flow. When men's religion or conscience come to show themselves in practice, they then fall under the cognisance of the civil power; and if their principles are destructive of the civil government, they may be rooted out by the civil sword. On this principle many penal laws have been enacted in this kingdom against popery; not on the weak supposition that no man's conscience ever led him to be a papist, but on the known truth, that a papist must always be an enemy to the constitution of this government; which has therefore a right to secure itself against his practices by the terror of temporal punishment, notwithstanding the pleas of conscience and religion: and this argument may be applied to all sects professing principles destructive of the legal constitution. It is only when difference of opinion produces such acts as concerns the public peace, that it comes under the jurisdiction of the magistrate. Penal laws are not laws of the church, but of the state, and are enacted to prevent the growth either of principles or practices conceived to be dangerous. The subject's conscience cannot bind the magistrate's power from acting in its proper sphere: a thief might pretend that his conscience persuaded him that the goods of Christians were in common; but this would not be a sufficient plea in a court of justice; and if so, it can be no general rule that conscience ought to be exempt from penal laws. The church has no right to impose penal laws on any account; nor has the state in matters purely of a religious nature: but if the controversy should breed convulsions that affect the civil government, it becomes the magistrate to drive conscience out of the state into its proper seat, the heart of man, whither his power neither can nor ought to pursue it. As on the one side the magistrate has no right to punish men for the errors of their consciences, so neither is it his duty, when he calls a man to account for his actions, to inquire whether those actions were suggested by his conscience; nor indeed could he arrive at the truth of these matters: but if the action tend to breed mischief in the state, the magistrate has a right to punish it without considering whether it be a religious

action or no. Disputes on this head would cease, if men would attend to the just consequences of their own principles; but they assert that, as the magistrate has nothing to do with conscience, he cannot punish men for acting according to their conscience; that is, his authority is suspended by the plea of conscience, in which case he must of necessity in the administration of justice enter into the examination of conscience. If the just consequences of the principle be attended to, the truth will be clear. As the magistrate has nothing to do with conscience, and has no right to punish the errors of it unless they affect the public good, so neither can the pleas of conscience supersede his authority in any case proper for his cognisance: this topic enlarged on and examples given. The limits of spiritual and civil power may be thus defined: the ministers of Christ not being of this world have no right to exercise power in it: the civil magistrate, as he is of this world, is not to be excluded from the affairs of it by any pretence of religion: pure religion cannot be injured by this, as it never interferes with the magistrate's right: those whose doctrines or practices are destructive of civil government, must answer to God for perverting religion, and to the magistrate for disturbing the public.—III. What has been said applied to the present occasion. The only two things which the church of Rome can insist on are determined against them by the text. For, firstly, whatever religious differences there are between us, their means of conversion are unjustifiable: and, secondly, notwithstanding their pleas of religion, the civil power has a right to punish their practices, and did justly exercise that right in the case of this day. The great cruelty of the Catholics in their attempt of this day enlarged on: the mercy of God in turning their malice from us on their own heads: the memory of the event deservedly distinguished in the British calendar, &c.

Nothing is to be more feared by an Englishman than the prevailing power of popery: to design its advancement is to design the ruin of the state, and the destruction of the church. It is shown that no interest is to be served by fomenting jealousies between the people and their rulers; but that those who wish well to the succession will endeavor that there may be a mutual confidence and good opinion between the people and the princes of the blood, &c. A recommendation to men to enjoy the tranquillity of the reign, and to show their zeal for religion in dutiful behavior to their governors, and in mutual love and charity, rather than in disputes; to let the purity of their religion be expressed in the innocence of their lives, that at the restoration of peace they may exemplify the words of the Psalmist, when *mercy and truth shall meet together*, &c.: above all, they are exhorted earnestly to pray for the good queen; and that when she shall be called to everlasting glory and a better crown, God in his mercy would tenderly regard these kingdoms, and hide them under the shelter of his wings till the danger be overpast.

DISCOURSE IV.

Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, March 8, 1714, being the anniversary of Queen Anne's accession to the throne.

2 SAMUEL, CHAP. XXIII. VERSES 3. 4.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

THE words of the text are said to be the last of David, uttered by *the Spirit of the Lord*, whose word was in his tongue. In whatever light they may be considered, they show the true art of governing, by which a prince may render himself and his people happy. The words shown to be applicable to the state of the nation; whence arise two considerations: I. The character of a good prince expressed in them: II. The great blessing which a just prince is to his people.—I. The nature of justice described, in the limited notion of the word, and in its more extended sense as measured by *the fear of God*; which makes princes to become true fathers of their people: this topic enlarged on. This view carried through the particulars of government; whence the happy influence of such a religious principle is discovered. Character of the queen delineated; and the principle just laid down applied to her executive government.—II. The great blessing which arises to his people from a just prince. It is shown, first, that good laws, duly executed, are as much the happiness of the people as they are the support of the crown: secondly, how the very example of such a ruler has a natural tendency to promote the peace and welfare of the kingdom; and how the virtue which shines from the throne, warms the hearts of all below it: lastly, that the blessing and protection of Heaven attend the government of a just prince; and that as kings are the immediate ministers of God, so are they his immediate care. The virtues of the queen shown to deserve well this divine protection; and that if the state may rejoice in the care taken of it by its monarch, the church has an equal right to boast of her regard. Her excellent conduct considered, when the prospect of the church was dark and gloomy; when some who wore its honors, forsook its cause; when others silently lamented its condition, and the fears of popery surrounded it. Transition to the glories and triumphs of the queen's reign; her piety and compassion towards her conquered foes; and the noble end of her great victories in peace restored to harassed nations. Exhortation to her subjects to complete her happiness by uniting in love and mutual confidence, and by burying in oblivion those animosities which threaten the peace of our Israel. Allusion

to the queen's sickness, and to the general grief which pervaded the nation on that account. Praise to God for dispelling those fears. Her desire of life arising from a love of her country: her concern for the good of posterity shown by providing for the future peace and happiness of these kingdoms, in the settlement of the crown on the ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE OF HANOVER: a blessing for which the nation can never be sufficiently thankful. Concluding remarks.

DISCOURSE V.

Preached at the Temple Church, Nov. 20, 1715.

ACTS, CHAP. VII. VERSE 25.

For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

THE text is part of the dying speech of St. Stephen, delivered to the high priest and the people just before he was offered up a glorious sacrifice for the truth of the gospel. The design of it was to set before the people of Israel the history of their redemption from slavery and idolatry, and excite them to attend to the present offers of peace through Jesus Christ, by showing them the fatal mistakes they had often made in despising or abusing former mercies: their conduct to Moses in this point enlarged on.

To draw parallels between the histories in Scripture and those of our own times, is a slippery subject, in which there is a danger of missing Scriptural doctrines, and publishing our own partial sentiments, under cover of that divine book which was given to amend them. The subject of this discourse therefore is confined to such observations and such applications of them, as naturally arise from the text and our own circumstances.

First, then, we may observe from the text that Moses, though raised by God in a wonderful manner to be the deliverer of his people, yet fell under great discouragements from his countrymen, for whose sake he was raised up: this topic enlarged on. Notwithstanding however this blindness of the people, the murderer, as they called him, was ordained by God to be their prince and deliverer; and they were at last happily convinced of their mistake, by receiving at his hand the blessings promised to their forefathers.

Secondly, we may learn what confidence and trust we ought to place in God for the deliverance of his church and true religion, notwithstanding the hopeless prospects which arise from human affairs: this point enlarged on. If ever hopes are justifiable, they are when the honor of God and the truth of religion is concerned: the people of Israel had as little to boast of on their own behalf as

other nations; but they were chosen by God to bear his name, to be witnesses of his truth in the dark ages of the world, to prepare the way for the coming of their great master; and though they were often afflicted, yet they were as often restored, until they were at last utterly rejected, for denying that great prophet for whose sake they had been so long and so often preserved.

Application of these observations to the people of this nation. Since the beginning of the Reformation in this kingdom, there never was so fair a prospect of a firm establishment of the protestant religion as at the present time; yet the people seem never to have had less sense of it: their deliverance is near, but they understand it not: this topic enlarged on. Allusion made to the various arts played off by the church of Rome, to prevent the foundation of this establishment. A succinct account given of the progress of the Reformation in this country, from its first step in the reign of Henry the Eighth, to the accession of George the First; in which the dangers it has run, with the various arts and designs of the papists, are clearly pointed out: whence we may learn wherein our true interest consists. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*: if we cannot judge for ourselves, let us learn of our enemies to know wherein to place our security. The two greatest efforts made by popery to bring ruin on this church and nation with force and violence, were one at this time, the other in King James's reign; and their great provocation was, to see a succession of protestant princes likely to be established among us. And as this is their fear, so is it our security. If we consider the circumstances of times past, and the doubtful condition in which we have often been, when our happiness has depended on one single life, we shall have reason to think that Providence has at this time both wisely and mercifully provided for our safety.

It is an easier matter to kindle the fires of popery and persecution, than it would be to extinguish them. Should the wishes of some take place, and a popish prince prevail over us, where will they next go for protection? What prince or family in Europe is left to which they may apply for succor? If therefore we have any sense of loyalty, any concern for our religion, our country, and ourselves, let us show it by a cheerful and steady obedience to the prince whom God has set over us.

With regard to the second observation, that notwithstanding the hopeless prospect of human affairs, the text affords grounds for dependence on God, this may well be spared; the application being made to our hands. God's care over us has already appeared, and we are likely to be saved, whether we desire it or no. Concluding exhortation.

DISCOURSE VI.

Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 17, 1715.

MATTHEW, CHAP. IV. VERSE 17.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

THE occasion of this meeting naturally suggests to our thoughts a consideration of the encouragements and the difficulties which attend the undertaking, as well as of the methods proper to be observed for attaining to so desirable an end. This however is declined; and instead of it, a view is taken of the gospel; on what foot it first set out in the world; and what it had to recommend it to the reason of mankind, abstracted from those signs and wonders which were wrought by God for its confirmation.

The first doctrine which our Lord taught was that of repentance, as necessary to qualify men for the kingdom of Heaven. *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* What is to be understood by this expression may be learned from Mark i. 14, 15. Whatever we understand by the *kingdom of Heaven*, it is plain that the reason why it was said to be at hand, was because the time was fulfilled for the publishing the gospel to all the world, and that the exhortation of the text agrees with that in St. Mark, *Repent ye, and believe the gospel*: whence it is evident that repentance was inculcated, as necessary to prepare us for receiving the gospel of Christ. The same appears also from the preaching of John the Baptist. So also did the Apostles teach repentance as the first necessary step: this fully shown by examples. Before the consequences which arise from this state of the case are stated, a few observations are made to clear the way for what is to follow. We may observe then, that repentance was the very first thing insisted on, wherever the gospel was published; before any new law was promulged, or even mentioned. Secondly, The gospel was ushered in by the doctrine of repentance, not only when it was delivered to the Jews, but also when it was proclaimed to the Gentile world: therefore the repentance taught did not regard any particular institution, but that general law of nature to which every man owed obedience in virtue of the reason and understanding with which God had endowed him. Thirdly, True repentance requires change of mind, and leads to a reformation of manners, with due obedience, for the future, to that law of righteousness against which the offence was committed; for where the obligation to any law ceases, there can be no call to repentance for disobedience: this doctrine shown to be that of Scripture.

The consequences now shown, which seem to be the natural result of this method, made use of in the publication of the gospel: the first of which is, that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion

of reason and nature. It is so in part; it is all that and more. Repentance was necessary; but it was not all: it was the first step towards Christian perfection: see Heb. vi. 1.

This will appear by considering the nature of that repentance which our Lord, and those who came after him, preached to the world: repentance supposes a transgression, and transgression supposes a law; for, as the Apostle argues, *where there is no law, there is no transgression*: and since repentance consists in a change of mind, in rectifying what was before amiss, and in fulfilling that obedience which was before wanting, it is evident that to repent of the violation of any law is to return to the obedience of it. The question then is, against what law those offences were committed, the repentance for which was so necessary, that without it there was no admission into the gospel. At the time of its publication there were many forms and institutions of religion in the world; but as these differed much from each other, they could not be the ground of that repentance, which, being generally taught, must respect some general law, which relates alike to all: and this can be no other than that which the Apostle has described in Rom. ii. 14, 15. However the light of reason and nature was darkened and obscured by ignorance and superstition, yet some remains of it were in all places to be found; and the general principles of religion were so riveted in human nature, that she could not but start at any thing which directly contradicted them: thus atheism was as detested a crime in the heathen as in the Christian world; and some were even thought worthy of death for so unnatural an opinion: this point enlarged on; whence it appears that the gospel was a republication of the law of nature, and its precepts declaratory of that original religion which was as old as the creation.

That this must certainly be the case, will appear by considering the nature of the thing in itself. The notions of good and evil are eternally and unalterably the same; which notions are the rules and measures of all moral actions, and are consequently necessary and constituent parts of religion; and therefore if the religion of nature was in its primitive state pure and uncorrupt, (which no one can well deny,) though there was sufficient reason for a republication of it, because of the great ignorance and superstition prevalent in the world, yet there could be none for any alteration of it. The duties of religion, considered as a rule of action, flow from the relation we bear to God and to each other; and religion must ever be the same as long as these relations continue unaltered.

That the case is so might be shown from the particular laws of the gospel, and their dependence on the maxims and principles of natural religion: this however would be too long a task. We may be content with one general proof, which reaches to every part of the Christian doctrine, and yet will not lead us beyond the bounds prescribed. Our Saviour in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew tells us, *that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them*. What his meaning was, he sufficiently explained in the following part of his sermon on the mount; in which, laying down first

the old law, he showed in every instance what the true perfection of that virtue consisted of, which the law required : this point enlarged on. Since then it appears that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature, the second thing to be observed is, that it has, as such, a claim to be received independent of those miracles which were wrought for its confirmation.

This consequence will be admitted by all who allow the force and obligation of natural religion, and can be denied by none who know or understand themselves. The principles of religion are interwoven in the very frame of our minds ; and we may as well run from ourselves, as from the sense of the obligations we are under : this point enlarged on.

But some one may perhaps ask, why he may not teach the religion of the gospel to the heathen, as well in his own name as in the name of Christ ; since, being the very religion of reason, it wants no name to support it ? To this we may reply, that if the heathen are such masters of reason as to want no teaching, the question is impertinent ; and if they do want instruction, there is no comparison between the masters.

The truth is, that all the essentials of true religion are contained in that part of the gospel of which so much has been said ; but how this religion came to need renewal by a special commission from heaven, how nature came to want that new light and additional assistance of the Holy Spirit which the gospel has given and promised, is a matter of another consideration ; opening to us a new view, to see the reasonableness and necessity of the doctrines peculiar to Christianity ; which, though not different, are yet distinct from the principles of reason and nature.

Had man continued in the purity of his first religion, he had wanted no second ; the doctrine of nature had led him to the enjoyment of the glorious hopes of life and immortality to which he was born. But when he fell under the power of sin, he grew both blind and impotent, had but little knowledge left to find his duty, and still less his ability to perform it : this point enlarged on.

The Son of God came into the world not merely to restore the religion of nature, but to adapt it to the state and condition of man ; to supply the defects, not of religion, which continued in its first purity and perfection, but of human nature, which was fallen from the original dignity of the creation. If death came in as the penalty of disobedience to the law of nature, it was an evil for which natural religion could afford no remedy ; since no law provides a remedy against its own penalties ; and though the world retained some notion of a future state, yet its hopes seemed to be rather the remains of that first state in which nature had the full prospect of life before her, and which subsisted when the blessing itself was forfeited, than any just assurance of a future life, to be purchased by virtue and obedience. To repair this breach, and to settle religion once more on the sure foundation of the hopes and fears of eternity, our blessed Lord *brought life and immortality to light again* by the gospel, &c.

But to what purpose was it to restore religion from the corruptions

of ignorance and superstition? to what end was this *better hope* brought in? Since our first parents, who wanted not this hope or this knowledge, yet fell wretchedly from both by transgression, what security can we, their sons, still worse than they, promise ourselves from these advantages? It is we who are weak and degenerate, and who stand in need of restoration. Hence it is that our admission into the gospel is attended with a new birth unto righteousness; hence it is that we are put under the conduct and direction of the Holy Spirit, who is always ready to comfort and support the faithful: this point enlarged on.

It is true, the gospel has taught us things which by nature we could not know; but they are all designed to confirm and strengthen our hope in God: it is true also, that some of its institutions are only necessary to supply us with spiritual strength to do our duty: these are the additions which it has made to natural religion; and we may well forgive the injury. Our blessed Saviour saw that the hopes of nature were lost, and therefore he brought to light again life and immortality.

These considerations may suggest to us what probable ground there is for success in our endeavors to spread the gospel of Christ in the dark corners of the world; and what is the true method of proposing it to the uninstructed part of mankind.

DISCOURSE VII.

Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, June 7, 1716; being the day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for suppressing the unnatural Rebellion.

PSALM CXXII. VERSE 6.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

NOTHING places religion in a more disadvantageous point of view, than an opinion that the present peace and prosperity of the world is foreign to its ends and purposes. It is shown that a concern for the welfare of our country is not only a political but a religious virtue; a care that becomes us not only as citizens, but as Christians; more particularly because religion is so connected with our civil rights, that there is no hope of saving it out of the ruins of our country. The psalm from which the text is taken turns wholly on two topics; the temporal prosperity of Jerusalem considered as the head of the civil government, in which the happiness of the whole nation was concerned; and as the seat of true religion, as God's own city, on whose peace depended the security of that religion: these points enlarged on.

From this great authority in the text two considerations are brought home to ourselves: I. What reason we have on both these accounts to bless God for our deliverance from the late rebellion. II. What obligations we are under, from the same motives, to use our own best endeavors in perpetuating the blessing of this deliverance.

I. Some arguments there are which require rather a capacity of feeling than any great acuteness of judgment to apprehend them; such as those drawn from a sense of pleasure or pain, from an experience of the conveniences or inconveniences of life: this position applied to the case in question. Had men a proper sense of the miseries of times past, it would teach them what consequences they might expect from any successful attempt against the present establishment, or what usage a protestant church would find, under the corruption and superstition of that of Rome. Reasons given for the exclusion of papists from the affairs of government. Historical account of the treatment which *heretical* princes have met with from the church of Rome.

Conduct of those who had courage and plain dealing enough to refuse their assent to the Hanoverian succession, and thereby to forego civil advantages, contrasted with the guilt of those who, after having bound themselves by solemn oaths and obligations, openly or secretly favored the rebellion.

II. Our obligation to perpetuate our deliverance considered. This obligation is but the necessary consequence of the duty which we are now met to perform. Thanksgiving is little more than a solemn mockery, if we feel no value for the deliverance; and in vain do we pray for God's assistance in any case, while we neglect the means of helping ourselves which he has put into our power.

How much the preservation of the establishment depends on the success of public councils, every body knows: what private men can do, they best know: many are well qualified by station and abilities to promote the interest of their king and country; and surely it is every man's duty to do whatever he thinks he lawfully may do, to serve these desirable ends. Unhappiness of the nation, from its being divided into factions, dilated on. Evils of this state described.

Under such unfortunate circumstances there is more reason to wish for, than ground to expect, peace and unanimity at home. It is easy for a few designing men to fill the people with unjust apprehensions of their rulers; though his Majesty, in his wisdom and goodness, took at the very beginning the properest step to prevent this mischief, by declaring that he would always make the constitution in church and state the rule of his administration. Concluding exhortations and rules for quieting the angry spirit that is abroad, for suppressing false hopes, and allaying false fears.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, April 23, 1717.

ACTS, CHAP. XX. VERSE 35.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak ; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

THESE words conclude the moving discourse of St. Paul to the elders of the church of Ephesus ; his last advice, and the best legacy that he could leave them. Two things he especially recommends ; the care of the church of God ; and provision to be made for the necessities of the poor and helpless : the former duty in verse 28. ; the latter in the words of the text. In speaking of the duty of charity, in that restrained sense of the word in which it regards only the temporal wants of our brethren, there are three things proper to be considered : I. How far, and to whom, its obligations extend. II. The objects who are duly qualified to receive charity. III. What is the blessing and reward which attend on the faithful discharge of this duty.

With regard to the first point, it is shown, by the Apostle's words and his example, that he calls on all indifferently, the elders and pastors of the church, as well as others, to labor, working with their hands ; and that he charges on their labor, not only the duty of providing for themselves and families, but also the care of supporting those among them who were indigent and necessitous : the measures, however, and proportions of charity not being determinate, but relative to the condition of times and persons, varying and changing with them, it must be absurd to apply the rules of charity, found in the holy Scriptures, to ourselves and our own times, without making due allowance for the difference in our circumstances and theirs to whom the rules were first directed. Hence it becomes necessary to consider the state of the times and persons to which those rules have reference.

The church of Christ at the first consisted almost wholly of the poor and indigent ; whence St. Paul chose rather to work for his bread with his own hands, than to make his ministry burdensome to the churches, though he always asserts his right to be supported by them in his function : nor were the learning and education of the first converts much better than their fortunes ; even the rulers of the church being often taken from trades and mean employments, the Spirit of God wonderfully supplying all their defects : this point enlarged on.

These circumstances of the first Christians considered, it is easy to justify the propriety of the Apostle's exhortation in the text : though it would scarcely be at this time a proper one. We must rather be exhorted to part with something out of our abundance to relieve the

necessities of the poor. Those however who are able to work, who are blessed with health and strength and vigor of limbs, are rich with respect to others who are incapable, through want of limbs, or by the weight of years, to assist themselves: when therefore bodily labor was the whole wealth of the church, there was a necessity that the strong should work to support the weak; or the weak must have perished in their want and poverty. This shows the reason of such precepts, in which men are exhorted to part with something, even out of the little they can earn by the sweat of their brows.

This also will help us to understand some other passages of Scripture relating to the exercise of charity: examples given: hence also we may learn to answer the first inquiry, viz. how far the duty of charity extends. The Apostle brings all under it who are able to labor; but this must be mitigated by the difference of circumstances between us and those whom he addressed. He pressed all to labor for the purpose of being charitable, because he had none to speak to but such as lived by their labor: but if he were now to address us, his exhortation would doubtlessly be directed to the rich and prosperous: this point enlarged on: exhortation, founded on St. Paul's advice to the Corinthians, that they should lay by in store, the first day of every week, as God had prospered them.

Second subject of inquiry, viz. who are duly qualified to receive charity.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak. By the *weak* here we must understand such as are not able to labor and work for their own living; for since all who can labor are placed on one side and made debtors to charity, *the weak*, who are placed on the other side, and have a right to be supported by charity, must be such as are not able to work or to provide for themselves in any honest calling. This case is fully determined by the Apostle in 2 Thess. iii. 10-12. The general rule therefore arising from these apostolical precepts, seems to be this: that such only are due objects of charity, who are, through sickness or other infirmity, rendered incapable of labor. Yet this rule, rigorously construed, would be found inconsistent with reason and equity; for the man who is most able and willing to labor, may be the most pitiable and unexceptionable object of charity: this point enlarged on.

But though the rule of charity must not be so restricted as to exclude all who can labor, it may seem reasonable perhaps so to limit it, as that all who can work, should work before they are intitled to assistance from others; yet even to require this in all cases would be cruel and inhuman: for instance, if you saw a man fallen under great calamities, who had relieved thousands in the days of his own prosperity, would you, when the hand of God was thus on him, turn aside from his affliction and say, Go, work for your living?

Since then there can hardly be any general rule fixed which will be equally applicable to all cases, it may be worth while to examine the reason and equity from which this duty flows, which may serve to direct us in it.

Charity is a relative duty, and supposes the distinction of rich and

poor; since without it there could be no reason assigned why any man should part with what he has to another who is already in as easy a condition as himself: the distinction of rich and poor supposes property, for if all things were in common, one man could hardly be richer than another: but then how unequally soever the good things of the world are divided, the wants and necessities of nature are shared in common; and it cannot be supposed that God sent men into the world with such wants and cravings, merely to starve and perish under them: yet how shall their wants be supplied, who have nothing to supply them with? Steal they must not: it remains therefore, that they must obtain the things they want from the proprietors of the world, in exchange for such services as they can perform. But, it may be said, is this a sufficient source for their maintenance? Will the rich so accept the services of the poor? This would be a hard question, were there not an equal necessity on both sides; had not Providence so ordered it that the rich can no more live without the poor, than the poor without the rich: this topic enlarged on.

It is agreeable then to reason and equity that the poor who have strength and ability to labor, should work for their living. It is next considered, how the duty of the rich stands with respect to this sort of poor.

The right which all men have to maintenance and subsistence is a superior right to that of property; for the great law of self-preservation is antecedent to all private laws and possessions whatever; the consequence of which is, that in the last result the property of the rich is subject to the maintenance of the poor: this point enlarged on. As reasonable as this may seem, yet it is hard to tell every particular rich man what the measure of his duty is in this case, or how many poor he ought to employ: but the wisdom of Providence has in great measure superseded this difficulty; for a rich man cannot enjoy his estate, or live answerably to his condition, without creating a great deal of work for the support of the poor.

Hence we may judge what real iniquity there is in the temper and practice of the penurious miser: that he denies to himself the comforts and enjoyments of life, is the least part of his crime; for whilst he pinches himself, he starves the poor, and withdraws from the needy and industrious that maintenance which God has provided for them.

Whenever this ordinary method of supporting the poor fails, the providing for them is a debt lying over the possessions of the rich; for this is a necessary condition of that law which secures them in their property, by making it penal for the poor to dispossess them by violence. The reasonableness of our poor laws shown from hence.

We see then how the duties arising from the distinction of rich and poor, stand on the ground of natural reason and equity.

The gospel, though it has left men in possession of their ancient rights, yet has enlarged the duties of love and compassion; has taught the rich to look on the poor not only as servants, but as brethren: this point enlarged on.

To speak of the duty strictly, charity must begin where the maintenance of the poor fails; for whenever it becomes impossible for them to provide for themselves, it becomes the duty of others to provide for them. Now work being the maintenance of the poor, it is evident that, whenever this fails, they become objects of charity; and this happens many ways: these enlarged on: *the report read*. Last thing proposed for consideration, viz. what is the blessing and reward attending on the faithful discharge of this duty: *it is more blessed to give than to receive*.

First; If we consider the different conditions into which men are divided, and their several duties; if we consider the obligation of the rich to assist the needy, and that of the poor to toil for a mean livelihood, we shall have reason to bless God, who has placed us on the happier side, and thankfully to comply with the duty of our condition; whence this comfort may be added to it, that it shall not be taken from us.

Secondly; In regard to present pleasure and satisfaction attending on works of charity, the giver has in all respects a better share than the receiver: this point enlarged on.

Thirdly; If we look beyond this present scene, the difference is still wider. There is no virtue in being relieved: a poor man is not a better man for the charity he receives; it rather brings with it an increase of duty: it may happen that it may be a burden on his future account, and will be so if he misapplies it. But the giver has a better prospect before him: this enlarged on.

DISCOURSE IX.

The case of the Insolvent Debtors, and the charity due to them, considered.—Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, on Monday in Easter week, April 22, 1728.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII. VERSES 29, 30.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

WHEN we consider the various distresses under which many persons and families labor, and their utter inability to support themselves under these evils, it is some alleviation to observe the diligence of Christian charity in finding proper methods for the comfort and support of such objects.

This thought arises naturally from the business of the day. Series of observations made on the present assembly; on the manner in

which men oppress the poor and miserable; particularly in the case to which the text refers; that is, the hard-hearted cruelty exercised towards insolvent debtors. Consideration of what reason, conscience, and Christian charity require of us in this case. Observations on the words of our Saviour's parable in the text.

First; Here is a debt supposed to be justly due. The poor man owed his fellow-servant an hundred pence.

Secondly; When the debt is demanded, he does not deny it or refuse to pay it, but desires forbearance only, till by his labor he could discharge it.

Thirdly; He asks even this as a favor, and with great submission. On the contrary,

Fourthly; The creditor with insolence and violence demands the debt; for which behavior he is called, *ver. 32. Thou wicked servant.*

Some of these circumstances seem to be added, in order to aggravate the cruelty of this wicked servant; as the violence used on the one side, and the submission made on the other. And the case commonly falls out to be so.

But the circumstances on which the reason of the case depends are principally two: First, That the debtor was not able to discharge the debt at the time of the demand: Secondly, That he was willing to do justice to his creditor, and to endeavor, by the best means in his power, to raise a sum which might answer the demand. Therefore where either of these circumstances are wanting, the reason of the case ceases, and together with it all pleas for compassion and forbearance: this point enlarged on.

Another circumstance, on which the judgment of our Saviour in this case depends, is, that there be a readiness and willingness in the debtor to do justice whenever he is able, and to use his best endeavors for that purpose: consequently all such debtors are out of this case who deny their just debts, or any part of them; or who conceal their effects to defraud their creditors; also such as live idly and profusely on the estate which ought to be applied to do justice to whom it is due. The reason of these exceptions given in each case.

In these therefore, and others of the like nature, a good man may, and a wise man will, make use of the power which the law gives him for the security of his property.

But when the circumstances mentioned in the text meet together; when the debtor is chargeable with no fraud or fault, but is disabled by mere poverty from discharging his debts, to use the extremity of the law against such a man is not only cruel and inhuman, but contrary to the true meaning and design of the law: this point enlarged on.

Is it then a general rule that the law can never with good conscience be executed against insolvent debtors? There may possibly be many exceptions; but they must all be attended with this circumstance, that there be a prospect of recovering the debt, though the debtor be insolvent: this point explained.

Some think that no severity is too great to be used against those who have spent their estates riotously, to the injury of their creditor; and indeed little is to be said in behalf of such persons. Yet still it is worth consideration, whether a man would choose to be judge and executioner in his own cause.

But the case which is now principally in view, stands clear of these exceptions. Those unfortunate persons with whom the jails are crowded, are for the most part such as have neither money nor friends to assist them; such as have fallen into poverty by misfortunes, by a decay of business, or perhaps by the numbers of a family which their utmost diligence could not support. Were they at liberty, they might be of use to themselves, to their poor families, and also to their creditors: this case enlarged on: *the report read*. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE X.

Preached before the House of Lords at Westminster Abbey,
Jan. 30, 1733.

MARK, CHAP. III. VERSE 24.

If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

THOUGH the words of the text are read in the gospel, yet they have not their authority merely from thence; since an appeal lies to common sense and experience for the truth contained in them.

As observations of this kind depend on a great number of facts, so are there in the present case a great number to support it. We have examples of our own growth.

The late unhappy times of Charles the First were attended with this peculiar felicity, that no foreign nation was at leisure to take advantage of our divisions. But though there was no such enemy to ruin us, yet ruined we were. Such is the malignity of intestine division!

When national quarrels grow extreme, and appear in arms, it is easy to foresee their sad consequences; and whoever looks back with partial or impartial eye on the years of distress under which this country labored in the late times, will see enough to convince him how fatal a thing it is for a kingdom to be divided against itself: it will be therefore of little use to enlarge on this part of the argument.

But there are other evils less discernible, which spring from the same bitter root, and naturally prepare a way for the greater mischiefs which follow.

National divisions are sometimes founded in material differences, sometimes owe their rise to accidents; but all divisions, how different soever in their commencement, grow in their progress to be much alike; and there are evil effects which may generally be ascribed to them all, as the fruit they naturally produce.

I. The zeal and warmth which attend public quarrels, are apt to get possession of men's minds and affections so far as to render them in great measure unable to form a right judgment of things and persons; and without this it is impossible for men to be of any service to their country; since a foundation for public good can never be laid in a wrong judgment of things and persons: this topic fully treated.

II. One great guard to virtue, and placed in the minds of men by the hand that formed them, is the sense of shame when we do ill; of the same kind, and a twin of the same birth, is the pleasure arising from the praise of having done well: but to make these natural passions of any service to us, they must be kept true to their proper objects, good and evil; and whenever the judgment is so corrupted as to lose sight of this difference, the love of praise and the fear of shame will become not merely useless, but mischievous and destructive; which must be the case when a false standard is set up. This applied to a nation or kingdom divided against itself.

III. When praise and reproaches are distributed with so little justice, it has another very ill effect in hardening men against reproach, even when they deserve it most: this point enlarged on.

IV. It is a farther aggravation of this evil, to consider that such infamous conduct seldom fails of being successful; for when the malignity of intestine division is far spread, it becomes a shelter for all iniquity: party zeal usurps the place of Christian charity, and covers a multitude of sins: men then trust their hopes and fortunes to the merit of their zeal, and this seldom fails them; for,

V. As credit and reputation, the natural rewards of virtue, are perverted and misapplied by the blind spirit of division, so are the rewards which the public has provided and destined to the encouragement of true merit, diverted into a wrong channel: this point enlarged on.

These are the steps by which division corrupts the manners and morality of a nation. And what hopes are there of seeing a people great and considerable, who have lost the sense of virtue and of shame; who call evil good, and good evil; and who are prepared to sacrifice their true interest and that of their country to their own and their leaders' resentment?

These general observations might be justified by numberless instances, drawn from the late times; but to do justice to the subject and the solemn occasion of the day, it is necessary to take one step into their history, and to view the works of division in its utmost rage.

It is difficult to speak of any thing relating to the unhappy period which this day calls to mind, and truth can hardly be borne on either side; yet testimony must be given against the unnatural and

barbarous treason, and the acts of violence which prepared the way for it; a treason long since condemned by the public voice.

The subject illustrated by some examples, which the history of the late times affords, and which reach to the full extent of the text, that *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*.

To put a stop to innovations, correct abuses, and redress grievances by the known rules of Parliament, is the true and ancient method of preserving the constitution, and transmitting it safe to posterity; but when this wholesome physic came to be administered by the spirit of faction and division, it was so intemperately given, that the remedy inflamed the distemper, and the unhappy contest which began about the rights of the king and the liberties of the people ended in the destruction of both.

The contest about civil rights was rendered exceedingly hot and fierce, by having all the disputes and quarrels in religious matters, under which the nation had long suffered, incorporated with it: thus conscience was called in to animate and inflame the popular resentments: the effect was soon felt, for the church of England fell the first sacrifice.

The bishops of those days were generally inclined to save and support the crown; the consequence thence drawn was, that episcopacy itself was an usurpation; and the bishops were excluded, not only from the House of Parliament, but from their churches also.

But why mention this, when so much more fatal a blow was given to the liberties and constitution of England, by the House of Lords itself being declared useless, and the peerage excluded from a share in the legislature?

The nobility were not free from the infection of those times; and yet to their honor be it remembered, that the execrable fact of this day could not be carried into execution so long as the peerage of England had any influence in the government: when once they were removed, the crown and the head of him that wore it fell together.

It is said that very few persons comparatively were wicked and bold enough to dip their hands in royal blood. But then, how fatal to kingdoms is the spirit of faction and division, which could in the course of a few years throw all the powers of the kingdom into the hands of a few desperate men, and enable them to trample on the heads of princes, the honors of the nobility, and the liberties of the people!

Could these acts of violence, and the causes which produced them, be suffered to lie quiet in history, as so many beacons, we might be wiser and better for the calamities of our fathers; but if we permit their passions and resentments to descend on us; if we keep alive old quarrels by mutual invectives, what else are we doing but nursing up the embers of that fire which once consumed these kingdoms?

The application of what has been said is so natural and obvious, that were it pardonable to omit it on this occasion, it would not be mentioned.

There is no pleasure in viewing the follies and distractions of

former times; nor is there any advantage, unless it be that we may grow better and wiser by the examples which history sets before us. In the present case we have the experience, which cost the nation dear, to warn both rulers and subjects how carefully they should avoid all occasions of division. The true way to act is, for each side to maintain its own rights without encroaching on those of the other; for the constitution must suffer whenever the rights of the crown, or the liberties of the people, are invaded: this point enlarged on. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE XI.

The nature and extent of charity.—Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, before the Trustees of the Infirmary in James Street, April 26, 1735.

LUKE, CHAP. X. VERSES 36, 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

THE case of the good Samaritan was not principally intended to show the necessity of works of mercy, &c.: these have their foundation in, and are recommended by, the law of nature; but to remove various pretences or prejudices was the direct object of our Lord in stating this case: and he was led to this by the inquirer, who admitted the love of our neighbor to be a fundamental duty, though he sought after limitations and restrictions on the practice of it: this point enlarged on. The parable itself is so well known, that it is sufficient to mention the mere circumstances of it.

Taking the direction of our Saviour, as it stands explained by these circumstances, it will lead us to the following considerations: I. The nature and extent of charity: II. the value of the excuses which men often make for the neglect of it: III. The excellency of that particular charity which has given occasion to this day's meeting. First; as was before observed, our Saviour's intention was not principally to show the necessity of charitable works, or to recommend one of them above the rest. In stating a case, however, it was necessary to instance some sort of charitable work; but the conclusion, *Go and do thou likewise*, is not confined to that kind of work only, but is intended to show us who are our neighbors in regard to works of mercy in every kind. The works of mercy are as various as its objects, and all who are miserable are objects of pity; nor can any reason be assigned for excluding such from our compassion, if we consider ourselves merely in the light of reasonable creatures: this topic enlarged on.

And as the case stands on the ground of reason and the natural sentiments of men, so likewise have the precepts of the gospel bound these duties on us in the same extent.

Honor and reverence are due to those who deserve them ; but love is a debt due to all men, which can never be fully paid and exhausted. Therefore St. Paul commands that we *render* to every man *his due*, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor *is due* : but when he speaks of love, he varies his style, and considers us in this respect as debtors to every man : *owe* no man any thing *but to love one another*.

If we consider these laws as derived from the author of nature and of the gospel, we shall find that they proceeded from a love as universal as that which they enjoin ; the general good of mankind being provided for in them : this point enlarged on.

The extent of this great duty of love and mercy having been considered, it will be easy, in the second place, to estimate by this measure the value of excuses often made for the neglect of it.

To speak without confusion, it is necessary to distinguish between love as merely a sentiment or habit of the mind, and as coupled with a power and ability to exert itself in external acts of mercy : this subject considered.

Where men are able to practise acts of love and generosity towards others in distress, there is often an unwillingness, and always an excuse to attend it. From what has been said of the duty in general, it is evident that to confine our charity to relations, acquaintance, &c., is inconsistent with the great reasons on which the duty itself is founded, and is therefore a breach of duty which cannot be justified : indeed it is that very pretence which our Saviour intended to exclude and condemn in the parable. But what shall we say to the personal merit of those who are objects of charity ? In the parable the person relieved was a stranger to his benefactor, known to him only by his misery and distress ; here therefore personal character had no influence in the charity. And to follow such an example we are exhorted in other places of the gospel. But as no man's ability to do good in any way is unlimited, it is commendable surely to seek for the properest objects of charity ; and in this consideration the virtue and innocence of the sufferer must be of great moment.

There would perhaps be little reason to be very nice and curious in the choice of objects, were it not for the many frauds daily practised on well-disposed persons, since begging has become a trade, &c.

Another great discouragement to charitably disposed persons, is the ill use which the poor often make of their benefactions : this point enlarged on.

How to advise charitable persons to steer clear of these inconveniences in their private benevolence, is difficult : perhaps it may be a good rule not to be too curious, or hard to be satisfied. But with respect to the great work of charity connected with the day, this stands free of all such difficulties. This shown ; first, from the nature of the charity itself ; secondly, from the method in which it is conducted. Concluding exhortation.

DISCOURSE XII.

Preached before the Society, corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland, at St. Mary-le-Bow, March 7, 1738.

DEUTERONOMY, CHAP. XXXII. VERSES 45, 46.

And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: and he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

THIS is the last piece of advice which Moses gave to the people of Israel; and as the last advice of dying friends makes a strong impression on the minds of the survivors, so is it natural for those who are leaving this world, to make the thing which they deem of the highest importance, the subject of their last advice.

If the character and circumstances of Moses be considered, the advice of the text is no less interesting than it is to be expected: it aims at laying a solid foundation of happiness for that and all succeeding generations, by instructing the people how to perpetuate to their posterity the knowledge of God and of his law, and to make him their constant friend and protector; viz. by instilling into the minds of their children a sense of what God had done for them and their forefathers, and by forming them early to obedience.

The Jews had a still greater reason for discharging this duty: they well knew that they were distinguished from the rest of the world by Providence for the sake of it.

That the command of Moses lays an obligation on parents to use their authority with their children to bring them into subjection to the law of God, is put out of all doubt by the language of the text. But this precept had a larger and more extensive view, being given not merely as the advice of a preacher, but as the injunction of a great lawgiver. The education therefore of the children of a country may, and ought, in all wise governments, to be considered as a national concern.

To judge of the methods which have been, or may be, applied to propagate or preserve religion in the world, we must consider the nature, capacities, and circumstances of men in general; the influences under which they act, and which of them may be properly made use of in the case in question. Religion being the service of a free agent, all external force is excluded as absolutely improper: instruction is the proper application to a reasonable mind; and were men under no influence but that of reason, instruction would be the only proper application: but men are born with passions also that become turbulent; and therefore authority is wanted as well as instruction, to form the mind to virtue and religion.

Some persons object to this method of propagating religion, and

think that all men should be left free to judge for themselves, without the prejudices of education being thrown into the scale on either side. It is no uncommon thing for men to pursue their speculations till they lose sight of nature; whence they fall into notions contradictory to the experience of mankind, and impossible to be reduced to practice. If we look into the history of ages past, we shall find no instance of children brought up free from the impressions of custom and education; the nature and condition of men considered, it is impossible there ever should be: so that where parents do omit the instruction of their children, it is but leaving them to receive impressions from far worse hands.

But as this objection, if there be any weight in it, directly impeaches the means ordained by Providence for perpetuating the great truths of religion both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, it may be proper to consider farther, how it stands on the grounds of reason and human nature.

Did men come into this world perfect, and equally perfect, as to all the faculties of the understanding, there might be some reason perhaps for saying, 'leave them to judge for themselves.' But as the case is otherwise, and we arrive by slow degrees to the use of reason and the knowledge of things about us, nature directs that parents should teach their children, as they grow capable of learning, the things that are necessary to their well-being.

The great force of custom and education, whether rightly applied or otherwise, could not be long unobserved in the world: as soon as it was observed, it became a strong call on the natural affection of parents to guard the tender minds of their children against wrong impressions, and to prevent evil habits. Without the exercise of this care in some degree, authority cannot be maintained on the part of parents, nor duty required on the part of children. If parents have nothing to teach, what have children to obey?

When the ways of men grew corrupt, custom and education went over to the side of vice and superstition, and soon spread the follies of idolatry far and wide: these took such deep root, that human reason could not shake them, but was content for ages to wear the chains of blind superstition. Custom and education cannot be shut out of the case: influence they must and will have; and if they are not secured on the side of reason, they will soon grow to be tyrants over it; and men will think and act as if they had none.

So general and so strong is the force of custom and education, that the influence may be said to be natural to the mind of man; and if so, it was doubtless intended by Providence to serve good purposes. That he intended it for this use, is manifest also from his making this use of it, and from his interposing to correct the abuses to which this natural influence was but too liable through the passions and corruptions of men.

Consideration of what provision was made at the beginning of things for propagating religion in the world.

Consideration of what care was taken of religion at the restoration of the world after the deluge: to check the course of succeeding

impiety, and keep up a sense of true religion, a nation of God's own peculiar people was raised up: Abraham made choice of: a law given to his descendants, with signs and wonders: memory of it perpetuated by various rites and ceremonies: these, introduced at first by positive law, soon obtained the force of national customs, and were a strong barrier against idolatry.

These institutions however were not intended to operate merely by the force of custom, but were adopted to preserve and renew the memory of the true reasons in which the Jewish religion was founded: they were intended to make custom subservient to reason and true religion.

On this ground did that religion stand, till God thought fit by a new revelation to call all the world to repentance and obedience to the gospel. The nations of the earth were idolatrous before the coming of Christ; their worship was impure and depraved; and their forms of superstition, supported by custom, had got strong possession of the human heart.

To root out this inveterate evil required supernatural assistance; and yet such as was consistent with the freedom and reason of human minds, and agreeable to the nature of religion, which loses its very being when it is separated from freedom and reason. The power of miracles was such an assistance; for miracles are an appeal to reason, as much as the works of nature are; and therefore, when offered in support of true religion, are to be considered as new arms put into the hands of reason, to subdue the powers of corrupt custom and education.

The subject does not lead to a consideration of all the purposes which Providence had to serve by the power of miracles; but this manifestly was one, to awaken the attention of the world, to consider what they and their idolatrous fathers had been doing, &c.

When reason and true religion were by this powerful assistance set free from the shackles of idolatry and superstition, miracles ceased; and for perpetuating the knowledge of God and of his truth in the world, the natural and ordinary methods of teaching and instructing received an additional strength, by an order of men set apart for that purpose. This was an additional strength to the ordinary means of instruction, but was never meant to supersede them; for parents are obliged by the law of the gospel and of nature to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and where this care has been neglected, it is rarely that the other can take place.

What then is there in the present circumstances of things that we can do to promote virtue and religion? We have only natural and ordinary means within our power. May we use them? or must the care of virtue and religion be given up? If not, the properest, if not the only way to preserve them, is to lay a foundation for the youth of the country. But these general reflections arise so naturally, that we may go on to consider the particular case now before us.

The state of religion in Ireland well deserves the attention of

every man in this kingdom, who has a concern either for the purity of the gospel, or the security of our government.

The Reformation was very imperfectly carried on in that country ; so that the bulk of the people have ever been, and still are, papists : state of Ireland from this circumstance, as well as from the peculiar language of the people, which renders it difficult to enlighten them, considered. Uncomfortable state of the Protestant clergy there described : feeling exhortation addressed to all who may have it in their power to alleviate this state of things. Encouragement to do this, arising from a consideration of the prosperity and welfare of our own constitution. The present government and the protestant religion must stand or fall together : papists are by principle enemies to both ; and by the lowest computation they are in Ireland as five to two. Civil and military power indeed are in the hands of protestants ; and in times of peace perhaps they are able to preserve public tranquillity ; but in public commotions the strength of popery has always been grievously experienced : this point enlarged on.

What then shall we say to this state of the case ? Shall these numbers continue still to be our enemies ? or shall we try to gain their affections, and make them friends to the government ? Shall we allow them even to remain untaught, uncultivated, and therefore useless to themselves and to the world ? or shall we show them the arts of life and honest industry, teach them to be happy, and serviceable to themselves and to the public ? There can be no doubt which part is to be chosen. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE XIII.

Preached at St. Sepulchre's, May 21, 1719, at the anniversary meeting of the children educated in the charity school.

II CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IX. VERSE 12.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.

To take in the full sense of the Apostle on this subject, the 14th verse ought to be read together with the text.

The occasion of these words explained : hence an inference is drawn, that it is not only lawful, but landable, to make the natural passions and inclinations of men subservient to the cause of virtue and religion. These motives however must be kept in their proper place ; we may recommend them, but they cannot make a duty : the ground of obedience lies deeper : this shown to be regard for the honor of God, for the good of our brethren, and for our own happi-

ness; which principles, though considered distinct, are as it were united: nor must we imagine that they are peculiar to works of charity, since they extend to all parts of our duty; and from them all religion is derived.

In treating therefore this subject, three considerations are proposed: I. How these principles influence religion in general: II. How plainly and evidently they lead us to works of charity and mercy: III. How effectually they conspire to recommend that good work which is the object of this meeting in the presence of God.

First, then: Man is a religious creature, in consequence of his being a rational one: our obligations to do right arise from the natural powers with which we are endowed, to distinguish between right and wrong: this point enlarged on. When once a man has attained to the knowledge of God, and of the relation he bears to him, and feels the natural obligations from thence arising to love, honor, and obey his Maker; though other considerations may come in to incline him to his duty, yet none can add to his obligations; since he already acts on the highest principle which a rational mind is capable of entertaining.

The second principle of duty, which is the love of our neighbor, may be considered in two views; either as it results from the common relation which all men bear to God, or from the relation which men bear to each other. In the first view, to love our neighbor is properly a religious act, and part of the duty which we owe to God, whose attributes must render it acceptable to him. But besides this, could we suppose men to forget God without forgetting themselves, and losing the reason which they are endowed with, the very light of reason, assisted by their natural faculty of distinguishing what is right and wrong, would oblige them to use each other with justice and with tenderness: this point enlarged on.

Join these two considerations together, and you see into the very source of all the obligations a man can be under to do good to his fellow-creatures. We can consider men only as they stand related to us, or as they and we stand equally related to God, our common father; and under these views we may discover whatever we owe to man for his own sake, or for the sake of God who made him, and discern the whole compass of our duty with respect to the second great branch of it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*.

The third thing then is now considered, viz. the love of ourselves and our own happiness; and how far this will and ought to influence our religious obedience.

It is evident from the common and universal sense of mankind, that the desires of life and happiness are impressions which come from the Author of nature; and consequently that to follow these impressions, and act according to them, is agreeable to nature and to the will of God, the Author of them. It is reasonable for a man to be concerned for his own happiness, and consonant to the divine will; and considering the strict union which God has made between our happiness and our duty, this principle will always be a powerful one in matters of religion: this point enlarged on.

To judge rightly therefore of the motives on which men act in their religious concerns, we must judge of the nature of the happiness which they propose to themselves; and as long as men seek after that which is natural and proper, and intended for them by God, so long they act on motives agreeable to his will.

The happiness in which men are capable of having any share, or for which they have any desires, is either that which belongs to this world, or that which belongs to the world to come. That future rewards are proper incitements to virtue and religion, is plain from Scripture; but these do not alter the nature of religion, or give to God a better title to our obedience than he had before: this point enlarged on.

As to the happiness of this present life, we can as little question whether God intended men to be happy here, as whether he intends them to be so hereafter: the natural desires of men after this happiness, the necessary connexion between it and virtue, and the goodness of God towards his creatures, will not permit us to doubt it. Under the old law we find the promises of this life expressly made to religious obedience by God himself: even under the gospel we are assured that *godliness has the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*. To encourage ourselves therefore in our duty with the hopes that God will reward us here with life, health, and prosperity, is no blemish to our religion, but rather an act of faith in God as Governor of the world. Our Saviour reckons but two heads of religion, the *love of God*, and the *love of our neighbor*; but the second of these plainly infers another, the love of ourselves, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves: this point enlarged on.

Second consideration; How plainly and evidently these principles lead us to works of charity and mercy.

He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker; but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor. The poor are the creatures of God, not only as they are men, but also as they are poor men: the different orders and degrees of mankind are from the hand of God; and to despise or oppress a man for being what God has thought fit to make him, is to reproach God. Besides, works of mercy redound to the honor of God, through the praises and thanksgivings of those who feel comfort and relief by them. Unexpected relief given to the indigent naturally creates in them a great sense of Providence; it raises them to a thankful acknowledgement of his regard towards them, and disposes them to a religious dependence on him in the midst of all their distress. That the good and welfare of men are directly consulted by the charitable hand, is too plain to admit of a doubt; hence it is to be lamented that so many impostures make good people distrustful, and thus bring difficulties on the deserving poor. We therefore can no otherwise answer this end of charity, the doing good to others, than by taking some care to place our charity right, and to distinguish between the truly needful and the idle beggar.

But, thirdly, By works of mercy and charity we make the best provision for our own present and future happiness. This may be

concluded from what has been already said ; for since such works have so plain a tendency to promote the honor of God, we cannot doubt but that he will reward such as take pleasure therein : add to this, the express promises of the gospel made to these works especially, and we have all the security that can be desired or expected.

The final retribution for this and every other work must be expected from the justice of God in the day of judgment, but this hinders not but that we may justly hope for part of our reward in this life : this point enlarged on.

Last thing proposed, viz. To show how these considerations conspire to recommend to us that good work which is the object of the present meeting.

If to supply the temporal wants of the brethren be a work redounding to the honor of God, behold these numerous objects, all wearing the livery of charity, not as a badge of servitude to any earthly master, but as a token that they and their benefactors are equally servants of God : nor are their present wants and necessities the only concern of this pious institution ; for a foundation is laid for the constant support of themselves and their families.

But the supplying of the temporal wants of the poor is not the only nor the chief end of these institutions : they have another view, which more directly regards the honor and glory of God ; the instructing of youth in the principles of virtue and religion, teaching them to know God betimes, and the obedience due to him. To instruct undisciplined youth in the principles of faith and obedience, what is it but to extend the dominion of God over his creatures, and to lay up in store for ourselves more than a conqueror's crown ?

The argument has the same advantage with respect to the good of those who are the immediate objects of this charity : it has this in common with other charities, that it supplies the wants of the poor : it has this above many others, that it is a provision against future wants : but its chief glory is, that it is a provision not only for the present comforts of this life, but also for the happiness of that which is eternal. Lastly, As to the encouragers and supporters of this good work, God is their reward ; and they need not doubt but that the promises of the gospel shall be justified to them both in this life and in that which is to come. Conclusion.

DISCOURSE XIV.

Preached October 6, 1745, on occasion of the Rebellion in Scotland.

JUDGES, CHAP. II. VERSE 7.

And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel.

THUS far all was well ; but the case quickly altered : no sooner were the men who had seen the works of the Lord *gathered unto their fathers*, but *there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord*, &c. The effects of their departing from God their deliverer, are described at the 14th verse.

This is the case of the Israelites. Would that it was a singular one, and that the rest of the people of God stood clear from the like imputation ! It is but a melancholy reflection to think that the misbehavior here charged on the people of Israel, is almost a natural effect of the present degenerate and corrupt state of nature : this pointed out in the common affairs of life : but public blessings make still less impression on the minds of men : this point enlarged on.

The mischief which such a temper of ingratitude produces in private and in public concerns, is very manifest ; but its effect in the affairs of this life, and among ourselves, is a light matter compared with its influence with regard to religious duties.

The common blessings of Providence are received and enjoyed by multitudes who seldom or never think of the hand that supplies their wants : the constant and regular supply of our necessities makes us imagine that we have a right to it by prescription, and have a property in it as children of the earth ; or that if any thing be owing to wisdom, it is to our own, in managing the ground and seasons to the best advantage : thus forgetting the Author of every good gift, and transferring to ourselves the honor which is due to him, we do, in the language of the prophet, *sacrifice unto our net, and burn incense to our drag*, &c. Hab. i. 16.

But however these common blessings, which come to all without distinction, are neglected and overlooked, one would imagine that signal deliverances would be had in perpetual remembrance, and transmitted with gratitude and reverence to posterity : yet the case is far otherwise. The history of the Jews, a people under the peculiar and visible government of Providence, is a series of rebellions and revolts against God, who had so often and so miraculously delivered them from the hands of their enemies. In their story the counsels of God with respect to them and to their neighbors are laid open : from their example we may learn to reckon with ourselves, and to know what to fear and what to hope from the justice and mercy of God : for the ways of Providence are unalterable, and the same

wisdom and justice that governed the Jews, governs all the people of the world : this topic enlarged on. Examples drawn from different nations.

Final punishments, whereby nations are rooted out, are of use to us as warnings to flee from the wrath to come ; otherwise they can do us no service : for should we ever fall into so wretched a condition, who can deliver us from the hand of the living God ? But other judgments, how sharp soever they may be, are the effects of mercy, and intended for our correction : moreover the perverseness and corruption of men's hearts justify the goodness and equity of God in the infliction of such punishments ; and they must blame themselves for not attending to the gentler calls of Providence.

Perhaps there may be no great occasion here to justify the ways of God towards the children of Israel ; all are of one opinion, to condemn their perverseness and ingratitude. But are we ourselves innocent from this great offence ?

Let us consider our own case ; and we have great reason to consider it, now the enemies of our religion and liberty appear with triumph in the land. The unhappy divisions in civil matters are passed over ; for our conduct towards God and his holy religion is the first and most interesting consideration.

The special providence of God over the people of Israel was not the effect of partiality, or a weak fondness for a particular set of men ; but the house of Abraham was called for the sake of true religion ; to preserve a knowledge of God in the world, &c. ; and as they were chosen for these great purposes, so whenever they acted contrary to them, they ceased to be the chosen people, and were treated as enemies and rebels.

We are apt enough to boast of the purity of our reformed religion, and to flatter ourselves that we also are a peculiar people of God. And if we judge from our many deliverances, we have reason to acknowledge the care and protection of Heaven over us. But let us remember still that we too are chosen to profess and maintain the truth of God's holy gospel, and to bear our testimony against the corruptions which have prevailed over great part of the Christian world. If, instead of acting up to this, we grow careless and indifferent to our holy profession, we forfeit our title to God's protection, and must expect to be treated as enemies.

Our present condition is attended with fears and apprehensions ; and if we look back and consider from whence we are fallen, we may see but too much reason to suspect that they are well founded. How has this nation been blessed with the light of the gospel ! How wonderfully and how often has it been rescued from danger, when to human appearance there was no help at hand ! History of its successes, dangers, and deliverances, from the Reformation to the Restoration. At that time the hearts of the people were turned as the heart of one man : nor was it in vain they sought the Lord ; for by a wonderful series of providential mercies he delivered them ; and we have seen for many years the crown on the head of protestant

princes, the natural guardians of the religion and liberties of this country.

If we have made a right use of this last deliverance, let us fear no change; for God will not forsake us till we forsake him. But the prospect before us, the dangers that draw near to us, call on us to act uprightly with ourselves, and not deceive our hearts by supposing that God will remember us, if we have forgotten him and his mercies.

Our histories will always remind us of our great deliverances, and we cannot forget them; nor did the Jews forget the wonders wrought in Egypt, and the redemption of their ancestors from captivity: but the charge against them is the same as that brought by St. Paul against the Gentiles; *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, &c.* Do we stand clear of this charge? Let every man recollect what he has heard, read, and seen, within the compass of a few years. State of the nation commented on: its infidelity and profaneness; its neglect and violation of the Sabbath; its proneness to theft and robbery; its hatred of popery shown to be not so much a concern for the purity of the gospel, as fear of the powers of a popish church. In the mean time popery itself has been gaining ground in many places by the artful and unregarded insinuations of the adversary, and by applications of another kind, which do but little honor to the converts or converters; since the price at which a man may sell his faith is become almost a known sum.

We have but too exactly copied the Jews in their days of prosperity: let us learn of them likewise in their adversity, and cry unto God for help against our enemies.

And as in all the dispensations of Providence it is expected that we should make use of the means which God puts into our power for our own defence and safety, let us on this occasion, with cheerfulness, and with the hearts of men who trust in God, be ready to employ our persons and fortunes in defence of our king and country, and of the happy constitution in church and state under which we live. Conclusion.

SUMMARIES OF DISCOURSES

ON THE USE AND INTENT OF PROPHECY.

DISCOURSE I.

2 PETER, CHAP. 1. VERSE 19.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; wherunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

EVIDENT comparison in the text between *the word of prophecy*, and something before mentioned or intended. At the 16th verse the Apostle says, *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And after thus disclaiming all art and deceit in setting forth the promises of the gospel, he declares on what evidence and authority he had raised such expectations in them: *but (we) were eye-witnesses of his majesty, &c. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.* Immediately follow the words of the text, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy.*

We see then on what foundation the inference of a sceptical writer stands, who asserts that "prophecy is a stronger argument than a miracle, which depends on external evidence and testimony." Interpreters differ much in expounding the passage, but all agree in rejecting this sense, which gives to prophecy a superiority over other evidence by which the truth of the gospel is confirmed. It is shown that the text, so interpreted, not only contradicts the general sense of mankind on this subject, but is inconsistent with itself and many other places of Scripture. Consider, if any prophet can give greater proof of his divine mission than the power of working miracles. When Gideon is called by the angel of the Lord to the deliverance of Israel, and a prophecy is delivered to encourage him, he demands a miraculous sign: such a one is given him, and he undertakes the work, to which he is again encouraged by two miracles wrought at his request. In this case was the word of prophecy more sure before the miracles than after? If so, why was a sign desired? and, when desired, why was it granted? Does God work miracles to humor men in their folly, or to confirm their faith? A still higher instance adduced in the case of Moses.

But farther; the comparison in the text is between the *word of prophecy* and the *immediate word* of God; accordingly St. Peter, by this interpreter, is made in his own person to say, that the dark prophecies of the Old Testament were a surer evidence than the immediate voice of God. But let the account which St. Peter himself gives of this *word of prophecy* be considered. He compares it to a *light shining in a dark place*; and distinguishes it from *daylight*, and from that brightness which is ushered in by the *day-star*: it is but as the glimmering of a candle in a dark night seen at a distance, which, though it gives some direction, is nothing when compared to clear daylight. This is a choice account to give of the best evidence for that gospel which was to *lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the people of Israel*. Ask St. Paul what state Christians are in, and he will tell you *that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, has shone unto them*. Ask the Evangelists; and they will answer that *the day-spring from on high has visited us, &c.*: this point enlarged on.

But let us go one step farther, and we shall find that St. Peter in the text is so far from speaking of the *word of prophecy* as of the *best* light or evidence to be had for the point in question, that he manifestly speaks of it as *not the best*, but as a light to be attended to only till a better comes; *until the day dawn, and the day-star arise*: this point enlarged on.

Such reasons as these probably prevailed with interpreters to quit the apparent sense of this text; but they are far from being agreed in the establishment of any other. The Greek expositors suppose that prophecy is *now to Christians* a more sure evidence than ever it was, having been verified and established by events; which interpretation preserves the force of the comparison, but places it where St. Peter has not placed it: this shown.

Others suppose that the comparative is here used in the sense of the positive, to denote the great certainty of the evidence; but this introduces a new use of language into the text without sufficient authority.

Others, preserving the natural signification of the words, and admitting the comparison, will not allow it to be *absolute*, but only *relative*, that is, to the opinions and prejudices of the Jews, to whom this epistle was directed: this shown not to be the Apostle's meaning.

These are the most considerable expositions of the text: it appears that every interpreter has been sensible of the absurdity of setting up prophecy as superior to all other gospel evidence, and to avoid this difficulty, has been driven to seek out another meaning. Yet the words do certainly import that the evidence of prophecy is a *surer* evidence than that before mentioned; which was the Apostle's own testimony of the glory of Christ, which he had seen with his eyes; and of the voice of God declaring Christ to be his beloved Son, of which St. Peter was an ear-witness on the mount. Yet we are not hence to conclude that prophecy is better than all other evidence of the mission of Christ and of the truth of the gospel; since it is neither

of these to which the text refers. To clear this matter, let us consider what the Apostle intended to prove.

The second epistle of St. Peter was written to support the hopes and expectations which he had raised in his first. The Christians to whom this was written were in a state of severe trial and persecution: (see ch. i. 6. ii. 12. iii. 16. iv. 4. 14. &c.) wherefore the Apostle administers suitable advice to them, and bids them account it a happiness that they were reproached for the name of Christ: (see ch. iv. 1, 13, 14.) He reminds them this was no strange event, but what they had reason to expect; as it had been foretold, &c. (see ch. iv. 12, 17. v. 9. Together with these admonitions he gives them assurance of a certain deliverance near at hand. He tells them that *they were kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed*: i. 5. He bids them have perfect hope and confidence in this deliverance (13.); and for the certainty of it he appeals to the ancient prophets, and *the spirit of Christ in them*, &c. (i. 11, 12.) The first scene, the sufferings of Christ, being over, (iv. 1.) his glory was ready to be revealed, which would bring to them *exceeding joy*, and to *the ungodly*, their persecutors, destruction, (iv. 13, 18.) All these hopes were founded in this; that Christ had already received glory and power, and would return in that glory and power to save true believers. Now it is very probable that the persecuted Christians of those times looked daily for this deliverance; but when one year after another passed, and no deliverance came; when the scoffers began to mock them and ask, *where is the promise of his coming?* (2 Ep. iii. 3, 4.) their hearts grew sick, and hope deferred became an additional grief; filling them with fear lest they had believed in vain: whence many gave way, listened to corrupt teachers, *fell from their steadfastness*, and, to avoid suffering, *denied the Lord that bought them*: (2 Ep. iii. 17. 1.)

In this state of things, after an interval of five or six years, the Apostle sends his second epistle; and it answers in every point to this account. He endeavors, in the first chapter, to re-establish their hopes: in the second he notices the false teachers, and threatens them with *swift destruction*: in the third he considers the scoffers and their irreligious insult, entering into their argument, and showing, from what had already happened in the world, how perversely they reasoned about future things. He concludes with proper cautions to Christians respecting the times and seasons of God's judgments, and guards not only his own, but St. Paul's doctrine, on this article, viz. *the coming of Christ*, against the arguments of the unlearned and unstable.

This then is the main point of the second epistle; and St. Peter himself tells us that his intention in both his epistles was, to make them to whom they were sent, *mindful of the words which were spoken before of the holy prophets*; adding also, *and of the commandments of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour*: 2 Ep. iii. 1, 2. This key will open this so much perplexed passage of Scripture; from which it is evident that the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only point here in question; and that not a

word relates to any other fact or doctrine of the gospel. To prove this point, the Apostle declares that he had himself been an eye-witness of his majesty and glory. But this evidence is not sufficient. What is there to prove his future coming again in this power and glory? There is a great presumption that he will so come, in that the Apostle saw him glorified, and God openly declared him to be his *well-beloved Son*: but to assure us that he will indeed so come and use his power, it is said, *We have a more sure word of prophecy*. This interpretation is shown to be necessary to the Apostle's argument, plainly enforced by the context, and to stand clear of all difficulties. The *more sure word of prophecy* here mentioned is shown to refer not only to the prophecies of the Old, but also to those of the New Testament. The above interpretation of the passage furnishes an answer to one objection, stated by the learned Grotius, against the authority of the epistle.

DISCOURSE II.

CONSIDERATION of the character which St. Peter gives to prophecy, and the degree of evidence we may reasonably expect from it; which amounts to this, that the knowledge which God gives us of things future by means of prophecy, is but imperfect and obscure; not to be compared with the clear knowledge that will attend on the manifestation of the things themselves. This proposition is confirmed by the authority of Scripture, and some useful observations on the nature and evidence of prophecy are suggested.

If we look into the first epistle of St. Peter, we shall find that the ancient prophecies, of which he speaks in the text, and which he styles *the more sure word of prophecy*, were not apprehended or clearly understood by those inspired persons who delivered them: see ch. i. 11. To the same purpose our Saviour speaks, Matt. xiii. 17. St. Paul also gives the like account of the gift of prophecy under the gospel dispensation, 1 Cor. xiii. 9-12. Now if the prophets and righteous men of the Old and New Testament knew only in part, and prophesied only in part, seeing but darkly as through a glass, it is most evident that others less qualified must have had but a confused and indistinct notion of things foretold. The prophet Daniel, after an extraordinary vision, adds, *I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end*. Our Saviour gave a similar answer to the Apostles, Acts i. 6, 7. These passages relate to such prophecies especially as seem to design the times and seasons of God's working; the delay of which often brought the prophets and their predictions into contempt: see Ezek. xii. 22, 27. The case is

very much the same in regard to other prophecies: this point enlarged on and explained.

Hence it appears that prophecy was never intended to be a very distinct evidence; and St. Peter's meaning is shown, when he compares it to a light shining in a dark place, and makes this evidence so inferior to that which we are to receive when the fulness of time comes.

But allowing this to be the case of prophecy at the time of delivery, may we not expect to find the prophecy clear and distinct, and exactly corresponding with the event, whenever it comes into existence? Consequently is it not absurd, after an event is come to pass, to apply any ancient prophecies to it, that do not clearly, to the eye of common sense, appear to belong to it?

These questions being admitted, another will be asked; how comes it that many prophecies applied to our Saviour and his actions are still obscure, requiring learning and sagacity to show the connexion between them and events?

In answer to this it must be observed that the obscurity of prophecy does not arise from its being a relation or description of something future; since it is as easy to speak plainly of things future as of things past or present. It is not of the nature of prophecy therefore to be obscure; for if he who gives it thinks fit, it may be made as plain as history. On the other hand, a figurative and dark description of any future event, will be figurative and dark still when the event happens: this exemplified from Isaiah xi. 6. So that the argument from prophecy for the truth of the gospel does not rest on this, that the event has necessarily limited and ascertained the particular meaning of every prophecy; but on this, that every prophecy has in a proper sense been completed by the coming of Christ. We must not expect conviction from every single prophecy applied to him: the evidence must arise from a view and comparison of all together.

Prophecies are not all of one kind, or of equal clearness: the most literal of them relating to Christ were not always at the time of delivery the plainest; for many of them, involving the most wonderful events, wanted not the veil or cover of figurative language; for being plainly foretold, they could hardly, from the seeming incredibility of the things themselves, be admitted in their literal meaning. This instanced in the prophecy, *a virgin shall conceive a son*. Also in the prophecies from which the resurrection of Christ is inferred.

We may observe therefore, that the most literal prophecies have received the greatest confirmation and most light from the event; but no event can make a figurative expression to be a plain or a literal one, nor restrain to one determinate sense what was originally capable of many.

Thus much is said to show what sort of clearness and evidence we ought to expect from prophecies after their accomplishment; and that we should not expect from such evidence more than it will yield, but be content with that light and direction which God has thought fit to bestow on us.

It is doubtless a mistake, to suppose that prophecy was intended solely or chiefly for their sakes in whose time the events predicted are to happen : this point enlarged on and explained. If we consider the use of prophecy, this will help us to conceive the degree of clearness which ought to attend it. Some people talk as if they thought the truth of some facts recorded in the gospel depended on the clearness of the prophecies relating to them ; and they seem to think that they are confuting the belief of our Saviour's resurrection, when they are trying to confound the prophecies which refer to it : but we must be in possession of the fact before we can form any argument from prophecy ; and therefore the truth of the resurrection, considered as a fact, is quite independent of the evidence or authority of prophecy. The part of unbelievers should be, to show from the prophets that Jesus was necessarily to rise from the dead ; and then to prove that in fact he never did rise : here would be a plain consequence ; but if they do not like this method, they ought to let the prophecies alone.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament relating to the Babylonish captivity, with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Temple, &c. Can it be supposed that these prophecies were intended to convince the people of the reality of the events when they should happen ? Was there any danger that they should imagine themselves safe in their own country, when they were captives at Babylon, unless they had the evidence of prophecy for their captivity ? This point enlarged on.

But if it be the case that we must admit all the facts of the gospel to be true, before we can come at the evidence of prophecy, what occasion, it may be said, have we to inquire after prophecy at all ? Are not the many miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles sufficient evidence to us of the truth of the gospel, without troubling ourselves to know whether and how these facts were foretold ? In answer to this it may be said that such facts, once admitted to be true, are a complete evidence of the divine authority of a revelation. Had we known no more of Christ than that he claimed to be attended to as a person sent by God, he needed no other credentials than those which he showed ; and it would have been impertinent to demand what prophet foretold his coming ? For in a like case, who foretold the coming of Moses ? His authority as a divine lawgiver stands on his miraculous works, and on the wonderful attestations given to him by God ; but not on prophecy, since there were no prophecies relating to him : and this shows that prophecy is not essential to the proof of a divine revelation.

But the case of the gospel differs from that of the law ; for though the law was not prophesied of, the gospel was : he who delivered the law was one of the first who prophesied of the gospel, and told the people so long beforehand, *that God would raise a prophet like unto him, whom they must hear in all things*. Of him also the succeeding prophets speak more fully. Now one of the characters which our Saviour constantly assumes and claims in the gospel is this, that he is the person spoken of by Moses and the prophets. This then is the

point to be tried on the evidence of prophecy; viz. whether there be enough plain and clear in the prophecies to show us that Christ is the person foretold under the Old Testament. If there is, we are at the end of our inquiry, and want no farther help from prophecy, especially since *we have seen the day dawn, and enjoyed the marvellous light of the gospel of God.*

We do not here take into consideration the great advantages that may be made of prophetic evidence for convincing unbelievers of the truth of the gospel: we are only considering how far the truth of the gospel necessarily depends on this kind of evidence. These are two very different inquiries: this point enlarged on.

DISCOURSE III.

To enable ourselves to judge of prophecy, we must inquire to what end it was given. It cannot be maintained that we have any right to the knowledge of things future; we can make no demand on the wisdom, or goodness, or justice of God for any degree of it; whenever therefore we have any, we must ascribe it to some special reasons of Providence, which reasons alone can limit it: for if we have from prophecy so much light as fully answers the end of giving it, what reason can we have to complain for want of more? We come therefore to the only proper consideration: what end did the wisdom of God propose by the ancient prophecies, and how has it been served by them? What the writer understands by prophecy explained.

It cannot be supposed that God has delivered prophecies only to satisfy curiosity, or afford amusement to the world: there must be some end intended worthy of the Author; and what end can be conceived worthy of God, but the promotion of virtue and religion, and the general peace and happiness of mankind?

It is true, it may be said, that these things belong indeed to God; but what has prophecy to do with them? God can govern the world without letting us into his secrets; and as for virtue, religion, and our happiness, he has given us a plain law to walk by, in the result of that reason and knowledge with which he has endowed us. Prophecy can never contradict or overrule this light; nor can we suppose that we came so imperfect from our Maker's hands as to be in constant want of an admonisher.

We may allow the original state of human nature to be as perfect and complete as the objector can require.

But what if the case be altered? how will matters then stand? Since man was created a moral agent, with freedom of will, it was possible for him to fall, and consequently, possibly he may have

fallen. Suppose this to be the case, and then say, from natural religion, what must such sinners do? Repent, perhaps; for it is agreeable to the goodness of God to accept repentance, and to restore offenders to his favor. The inefficacy of mere repentance fully shown. When you prove to sinners the excellency of natural religion, you only show them how justly they may expect to be punished for their iniquity; a sad truth, which wants no such confirmation: whether God will ever pardon and restore them never can be learned from that source.

Should God think fit to be reconciled to sinners, natural religion would again become the rule of their future trial and obedience; but their hopes must flow from another spring; from the promise of God alone, that is, from the word of prophecy; for which reason prophecy must ever be an essential part of such a sinner's religion. And this reasoning agrees with the most ancient and authentic account of the beginning of prophecy in the world.

During the time of man's innocence there were frequent communications between God and him, but not the least hint of any word of prophecy delivered to him: the hopes of natural religion were then alive and vigorous; it wanted no other assistance, and therefore it had no other.

But when the case was altered by the fall of our first parents, when natural religion had no longer any sure hopes or comfort, but left them to the fearful expectation of God's judgment, then came in the word of prophecy; not in opposition to natural religion, but in support of it, and to convey new hopes to man.

The prophecy then given, being the foundation of all that have been since, deserves particular consideration.

Previous observations on the historical narration of the fall, showing that the commonly received interpretation is the true one. If we interpret the words of Moses with the same equity as we use towards any other ancient writer, this plain fact undeniably arises from the history, that man was tempted and disobeyed God, and forfeited all title to happiness and to life itself; that God judged him, and the deceiver likewise under the form of a serpent. No more than this is required for considering the prophecy before us, which is part of the sentence passed on the deceiver: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*: Gen. iii. 15.

Christian writers apply this to our blessed Saviour, emphatically styled here *the seed of the woman*, who came in the fulness of time to *bruise the serpent's head* by destroying the works of the Devil, and restoring those who were held under the bondage of sin. Objections are made to this interpretation by those who look no farther than to the third chapter of Genesis. To understand it rightly, we must go back to that state and condition of things which was at the time of the delivery of this prophecy, and consider (if haply we may discover it) what God intended to discover, and what our first parents may be supposed to have understood by it.

It is shown from that state of things, that the primary intention of

this prophecy must have been to comfort and support them under their awful and severe judgment; and that this was necessary to the state of the world, and of religion, which could not have been upheld without the communication of some such hopes. They must necessarily have understood the prophecy either according to the literal meaning of the words, or according to such as the whole transaction, of which they are a part, requires. The absurdity of understanding it in the literal sense pointed out. The meaning which all the circumstances of the transaction indicated is next shown.

The application which we are to make of this instance considered.

This prophecy was to our first parents very obscure; it was but *a light shining in a dark place*; and all they could conclude from it was, that their case was not desperate; that some remedy and deliverance would in time appear; but when, or where, or by what means, they could not understand: yet if it was a foundation for religion and confidence in God, after their fall, it fully answered the necessity of their case, and manifested to them all that God intended to make manifest. It is indeed obscure, but it is obscure in those points which God did not intend to explain at that time, and which were not necessary to be known.

But if this prophecy was obscure to our first parents, how is it that we pretend to discover so much more, and to see in it Christ, the mystery of his birth, his sufferings, and his final triumph over the powers of darkness?

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning; and whatever light he thought fit to give to our first parents, or to their children in after times, he must have always known the methods by which he would restore mankind; and therefore all notices given by him of his intended salvation must correspond to the great event, whenever the fulness of time shall make it manifest. But no reason can be given why God should at any time clearly open the secrets of his providence to men; though there is a necessary reason to be given, why all such notices as he thinks fit to give should exactly answer, in due time, to the completion of the great design. The argument from prophecy therefore is not to be formed thus. All the ancient prophecies have expressly pointed out and characterised Jesus Christ: but it must be formed in this manner:—All the notices which God gave to the fathers of his intended salvation are perfectly answered by the coming of Christ. These methods tried on the prophecy before us.

As this prophecy is the first, so it is the only considerable one in which we have any concern, from the creation to the days of Noah. What has been said therefore on this occasion may be understood as an account of the first period of prophecy, under which its light was proportioned to the wants and necessities of the world, and sufficient to maintain religion after the fall of man, by affording ground for trust in God: this topic enlarged on.

The bringing in of prophecy was not the only change in the state of religion occasioned by the fall. Sacrifice came in at the same time, as appears by the course of the history; and it is hardly possible

it should come in, especially at the time it did, any otherwise than on the authority of divine institution. It is the first act of religion mentioned in the sacred story to have been accepted by God: in later times, when the account of things grows clearer, it appears to be appointed by him as an expiation for sin. There is indeed no express declaration of the use of sacrifice in religion at its first appearance; yet there does appear something in the account of Cain's and Abel's offering, which throws light on the matter: this subject considered; the interpretation of which leads us to perceive that the true religion instituted by God has been one and the same from the fall of Adam, subsisting ever on the same principles of faith; at first on only general and obscure hopes, which were gradually unfolded in every age, till the better days came, when God thought good to call us into the *marvellous light of his gospel*.

DISCOURSE IV.

WE have seen the beginning of prophecy, with the measure of light and hope which it brought. The next inquiry is, By what degrees this promise was unfolded in succeeding ages.

If we consider the first prophecy as the foundation of those hopes in which all the sons of Adam have an interest, we shall not wonder to find that the administrations of Providence have had in all ages relation to it, and will have until its full accomplishment.

One thing in this inquiry cannot easily be denied; that if the ancient prophecies regarding mankind be divine oracles, there must be a consistency in the whole; and however obscure some part of them may have been at first, or in succeeding ages, they must conspire and centre in that great end which was always in the view of Providence. *Known unto God are all his works, &c.* Acts xv. 18. Taking this prophecy then to contain God's purpose with regard to mankind, his administrations and succeeding declarations must be the best commentary on it.

The account we have of the antediluvian world is very short, and conveys to us but little knowledge of religion, or of the hopes and expectations then entertained; yet something there is to show that the curse of the fall was remembered and felt; and that those who preserved a sense of religion, had an expectation of being delivered from the curse; which could only be grounded, as far as appears, on this prophecy.

Noah was born in the eleventh century after the fall, when his father Lamech, by the spirit of prophecy, declared, *The same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed: Gen. v. 19.*

This curious passage will throw some light on the condition of the world during this period. It is shown how we may fairly conclude from it: I. That the curse on the ground subsisted in all its rigor to the days of Lamech: II. That there was an expectation in his time,

at least among those who had not forgotten God, of a deliverance from the curse of the fall: III. That the ancient expectation founded on the prophecy given at the fall, was not of an immediate and sudden deliverance: IV. That the ancient expectation was not, that the world should be delivered all at once from the whole curse, but that the deliverance should be gradual; to which notion St. Paul alludes, who tells us, *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

In consequence of this exposition of Lamech's prediction, it must be maintained that the prophecy has been verified in the event; that the earth has been restored from the curse of the fall, and now enjoys the effect of the blessing bestowed on Noah. Against this notion there will arise many prejudices.

In the first place, the prophecy given at the fall has been usually appropriated to Jesus Christ, and to the deliverance we expect from him, by restoration to life and immortality.

In answer to this the following observations are offered: I. That the curse of the fall manifestly consists of several parts. II. The prophecy given to support man under this curse mentions no kind of deliverance particularly, but conveys a general hope, which is limited to no one circumstance of it more than another. III. Should there appear reason for thinking that one part of the prophecy is fulfilled, and one part of the curse removed, this, far from weakening, will strengthen our hopes of seeing the whole removed in God's own time. IV. It ought to be no objection that this prophecy is supposed to point out more events or more persons than one, since this is analogous to other ancient prophecies.

Another prejudice will arise from the common notion of the present and past state of the earth. Instead of seeing any alteration for the better, according to Lamech's prophecy, men think they see a change for the worse in every age: their observations however show how much they themselves alter, but show nothing else. This prejudice has a great support from the ancient traditions of the golden age. But it is shown that this golden age may be, and ought to be, referred to times succeeding the flood, which times afforded ground enough for those ancient traditions, without supposing any such alterations in the state of the earth as are commonly imagined. These prejudices therefore being set aside, the truth of the case is examined by the best light now remaining.

Three different interpretations of Lamech's prediction are referred: I. That Noah found out proper tools and instruments of husbandry: II. That he discovered the art of making wine: III. That Lamech had no view but to the circumstances of his own family, and only rejoiced to see a son born, who might in time assist him in cultivating the ground.

The Jewish interpreters are generally agreed in expounding it as a deliverance from the labor and toil of tillage, occasioned by the curse on the ground; but the Scripture will be our best guide.

Lamech foretels that his son Noah should *comfort them concerning the works and toil of their hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed.* When God informs Noah of his design to destroy

the world, he adds, *But with thee I will establish my covenant.* Lamech expected, in virtue of God's promise, a deliverance from the curse of the earth, and foresees that deliverance would come through his son: this point enlarged on.

The flood being over, God declares, *I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.* From which it appears, I. That the flood was the effect of that curse denounced against the earth for man's sake: II. That the old curse was fully executed and accomplished in the flood; in consequence of which discharge a new blessing is immediately pronounced on the earth: see Gen. viii. 22. This is called a covenant between God and the earth, ix. 13. and a covenant with Noah and his seed, and *with every living creature, &c.* ix. 8-10. And it is with respect to this covenant that the Psalmist breaks forth into admiration of God's goodness: Psalm xxxvi. 5, 6.

When Adam was first formed and placed on the earth, he had several blessings and privileges conferred on him by God: these were forfeited by the fall. But what if we see these very blessings restored after the flood to Noah and his posterity! This fully shown from Gen. i. 28. compared with ix. 1., Gen. i. 28. with ix. 2., i. 19. with ix. 3., i. 11. with viii. 22., i. 14. with viii. 22.

It may perhaps be thought that we see but little effect of this new blessing; that the life of man is still labor and toil, and that he still eats the bread of carefulness, &c. Such complaints however are but the effect of prejudice: men speak in this case as if they thought there were no thorns and thistles till after the fall. Yet for what employment do they suppose that man was made: *For a little sleep, a little slumber, and a little folding of the hands to sleep?* Surely this was not the case: even in Paradise it was Adam's business to dress and keep the garden; and this required some labor without doubt. After the fall labor increased, and continued very burdensome to the time of the flood; and God's promise of regular seasons after the flood seems to intimate that they were very irregular and confused before; which circumstance will account for all the change we suppose.

There are serious writers who think that the earth was much damaged and rendered less fertile by the flood. But this judgment ought to be grounded on the knowledge, not only of the present state of the earth, but also of its state before the flood: of this we know only that it was a very bad one, which is not enough to support us in judging that the present state is much worse.

We meet with frequent allusions to this covenant with Noah in later times, and in later books of Scripture. The son of Sirach tells us that *an everlasting covenant* (or the covenant of the age, *διαθηκαι αιωνος*) *was made with him*, xliv. 18.: for Noah was the father of the age, and had the covenant of the age after the flood, as Christ was the father, and brought in the new covenant of the succeeding age.

Jeremiah introduces God appealing to his fidelity in the execution of this first covenant, as a reason why he should be trusted for the performance of the second: xxxiii. 20. 21. 25. So also Isaiah liv. 9.

The lxxvth Psalm too seems to be a comment on God's covenant with Noah: this illustrated.

During the age of this covenant, the character by which God was known and applied to, was relative to this covenant and the blessings of it: see Job v. 8-10.; Ps. cxlvii. 7-9.; Jer. v. 24. Also Acts xiv. 17. Our blessed Saviour likewise commends and extols the mercy of God in the works of this first covenant: *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*: which words are a direct comment on the terms of Noah's covenant for fruitful seasons, which were to continue without being interrupted again for the sake of man's iniquity; or as the text itself expresses it, *though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*: Gen. viii. 21. This point enlarged on.

These allusions, and many more such, suppose a restoration of the earth after the flood, and a new blessing given to it in virtue of God's covenant; and without this supposition it is difficult to account for some passages in Scripture, which speak of the goodness of the earth, and the great plenty it affords. How comes it that this very earth, cursed with barrenness, and to be a nursery for thorns and thistles, is afterwards represented as flowing with milk and honey, &c.? Only by the curse of the fall being expiated at the flood.

The state of prophecy after the flood is next considered; and on what ground the religion of the new world subsisted.

No new prophecy is given to Noah after the flood, nor to any of his children, till the call of Abraham; the reason of which seems to be this: the power and sovereignty of God were so manifestly displayed in the deluge, and made such strong impressions on the few persons then alive, and came so well attested to succeeding generations, that religion wanted no other support. When idolatry and wickedness prevailed, the word of prophecy was renewed.

It may seem surprising that God should say nothing to the remnant of mankind about the punishments and rewards of another life, but should make a new covenant with them relating merely to fruitful seasons, &c. All that can be said to this difficulty is, that a gradual working of Providence towards the restoration of mankind is apparent; that the temporal blessings were first restored, as an earnest and pledge of better things to follow: this point enlarged on; and the law of Moses, which was founded on no other express promises and threats but temporal ones, referred to it.

It is shown that, if men had hopes of future blessings before the flood, grounded on the prophecy consequent to the fall, the coming in of the flood could not destroy them, and the covenant of temporal blessings with Noah must greatly have confirmed them.

That Noah had expectations of future deliverance from all the effects of the curse, and transmitted them to his posterity, seems evident from the peculiar blessing which he gave to Shem. *Blessed*, says he, *be the God of Shem*, &c. Gen. ix. 26, 27. Why the God of Shem, and not the God of Japhet, who was the elder, and equally pious towards his father, &c.? This blessing farther commented on to the end.

DISCOURSE V.

WE are now advancing to times of greater light; to clearer and more distinct prophecies, and more nearly relating to God's great dispensation of mercy, manifested by the revelation of his Son. This period begins at the call of Abraham, and runs through the Law and the Prophets, ending where the gospel of Christ commences. It embraces a greater variety and number of prophecies than can be comprised in these short discourses; but it may be useful to point out the great and general design of Providence in them, &c.

How soon the world after the deluge lost the knowledge of the true God, we cannot certainly know; but this we know, that in Abraham's time idolatry had spread far and wide, and taken deep root even in the family of Shem. Hence it is highly probable that true religion would have entirely failed in the world, had not God visibly interposed to preserve such a sense of it as was necessary for the accomplishment of his great design to restore mankind.

It may be said *necessary* to this end, for it is evident that it was not the intention of Providence in the call of Abraham, or in giving the law to Moses, to propagate or restore true religion among all nations of the old world: this point fully explained. These interpositions were merely subservient to some other view.

If we consider the whole world as lost to religion, estranged from God, and void of hope, and then suppose *one* family chosen to be delivered, merely for their own sakes, this gives so mean and partial a view of God, that no religion can subsist with it.

But if the law of Moses was intended to be neither a general law for mankind, nor yet as a partial favor to the Jews only, what remains but that we must consider it as a method of Providence working towards the great end always in view? as the opening of that scene which was to restore mankind, and bring a blessing on all nations? Accordingly we find this to be the case: when Abraham was called, he received assurance not only of peculiar temporal blessings to himself and his posterity, but also of a general blessing to be conveyed through him to all mankind: *I will make of thee*, says God, *a great nation, and I will bless thee*, &c.; and then it immediately follows, *And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*: Gen. xii. 2. It is of great importance, in the present question, to distinguish rightly between these promises. Accordingly they are fully commented on and distinguished. The promise of temporal prosperity to Abraham and his posterity is sufficiently explained in the course of his story; but this promise was derived from the temporal covenant established with Noah and his sons after the flood, in which other nations had a share as well as himself, and some of them, in some respects, a much greater. But if we look forward, we shall see the distinction between the several promises grow plain, when God renews the covenant, and limits the peculiar blessing of Abraham to

the son which should be born of Sarah his wife. In the seventeenth chapter of Genesis it is said, *I will make a covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly: and thou shalt be a father of many nations.* And at the 7th and 8th verses God promises to establish an everlasting covenant with him and his seed after him; to give him and them all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and to be their God. Here are either two covenants, or else the same covenant repeated, with this difference, that in the last place it is styled an everlasting one, and the land of Canaan is assigned for an everlasting possession, with this remarkable addition, that God promises to be the God of Abraham and of his seed after him. And this is the first time that this peculiar character assumed by God occurs in Scripture, and it is evidently connected with the everlasting covenant; and this indicates two distinct covenants as mentioned in this place. This subject carried on. The everlasting covenant was established with Isaac the son of Sarah, and not with Ishmael the son of Hagar, though he fully partook of the temporal promises, and was admitted to the benefit of the temporal covenant as well as Isaac. This distinction between the two covenants is the foundation of St. Paul's argument to the Galatians: *It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman, &c.*

Since then the promises of temporal prosperity to Abraham and his seed are distinct from the subject-matter of the everlasting covenant made with him, and limited to Isaac and Jacob, and afterwards to the tribe of Judah and family of David, it remains to see what the subject of the covenant so limited is.

If we look back to the call of Abraham, and the promises that attend it, we shall find one blessing added, in which all the world has an interest, and which was to be conveyed to them through Abraham and his seed. *In thee, says God, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* Whatever Abraham understood by this, he surely could not understand it as his children at this day understand it; who expect, in virtue of the promises, to have dominion over all people; which indeed would be a strange kind of blessing to them, thus to lose their liberty, and become subject to the dominion of one nation! But before we inquire into the special meaning of this blessing on all nations, we must see whether it were truly the matter of God's special, everlasting covenant with Abraham.

Ishmael, as we have seen, was excluded from this special covenant, and Isaac admitted to it. Both are admitted to the temporal covenant; but the covenant with Isaac renews this very promise: *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: Gen. xxvi. 4.*—a plain proof that the special matter of God's covenant, limited from Abraham to Isaac, and exclusive of Ishmael, consisted in the promise of this universal blessing. We have the like evidence from a like case between the children of Isaac, Esau, and Jacob. The blessing of Abraham was limited to Jacob, and denied to Esau; yet Esau received a temporal blessing from his father as well as Jacob: this case enlarged on. The profaneness which the Apostle to the

Hebrews attributes to Esau in selling his birthright, accounted for by his selling the blessing of Abraham. The limitation of Jacob's blessing on Esau, *thou shalt serve thy brother*, commented on and explained. It appears therefore that the blessing given to Jacob, and expressed in words implying, *rule over his brethren*, was truly a conveyance of the birthright to him in the family of Abraham; that the birthright in Abraham's family respected the special blessing and covenant given to Abraham by God; that Isaac himself calls this right of primogeniture in his house *the blessing of Abraham*; that God himself, in confirmation of Jacob's right of primogeniture, assures him that *in his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed*.

Now this promise being the only special promise made to Isaac and Jacob in preference to their brethren, and in consequence of God's everlasting covenant limited to them, this promise must necessarily be understood to be the subject-matter of the everlasting covenant. False interpretation of this promise by some commentators exposed. What distinct notion Abraham had of the blessing promised to all nations through him and his seed, as well as of the manner and method by which it should be effected, we cannot pretend to say; but that he understood it to mean a deliverance of mankind from the curse of the fall, there can be little doubt: this fully shown.

To preserve the hopes of this restoration in the world, and the expectation of future life and immortality, was Abraham called from his own country, then tainted with idolatry, to be a witness to God and his truth. Without this, the knowledge of God had been lost, and the remembrance of his creating man at first, and the hopes of a second and better creation after the fall. Abraham was not called for his own sake; much less were his stiff-necked posterity preserved for their own sakes, but that both parties might be instruments in the hands of God in the redemption and restoration of the world. The great article of the covenant, limited to Abraham and his chosen seed, evidently regarded the whole human race, and was to grow, in fulness of time, into a blessing on all nations. He and his posterity were depositories of these hopes; for the Jews' chief advantage above others was, *that unto them were committed the oracles of God*.

This account will help us to a distinct view of the prophecies relating to the period of time of which we are speaking: this point enlarged on.

Many of the ancient prophecies relate to both covenants; hence it comes to pass that at the first appearance many ancient predictions seem to be hardly consistent with themselves, but to be made up of ideas which can never unite in one person or in one event. Thus the promises to David of a son to succeed in his throne, have some circumstances which are applicable only to Solomon and temporal dominion over Israel; some which are peculiar to that Son of David, who was heir of an everlasting kingdom: hence it is that we often find the promise of temporal felicity and deliverance raised so high that none can answer the description; the thoughts and expressions

of the prophets naturally moving from the blessings of one covenant to those of the other, &c. Nor is it to be wondered at that they often speak of both kingdoms together, or make use of the temporal deliverances as an argument to encourage hopes of the spiritual; since the temporal deliverances being the actual performance of one covenant, were a great security for the performance of the other: and it would have been unnatural to see the hand of God performing one promise, without reflecting on the certainty of his performing the other.

The blessings belonging to the special covenant with Abraham and his seed were reserved to be revealed in God's appointed time. The prophets under the law could not be commissioned to declare them openly, without anticipating the time of their revelation: hence it is that the predictions concerning Christ and his kingdom are clothed in figures proper to raise the hopes and attention of the people, without carrying them beyond the bounds of knowledge prescribed to the age of the Jewish covenant.

If each kind of prophecy be considered distinctly by itself, it will be more clearly seen how this case stands.

Abraham was called from his father's house, on a promise that he should become a great nation, and that his seed should possess the land of Canaan. This promise could not be fulfilled in all its parts, till Abraham's family was multiplied into a nation. This required many years; and what must become of these children of promise in the mean time, who had no country of their own wherein to settle and multiply? Without launching out into speculations on the methods of Providence, let any one read the prophecies from the call of Abraham to Moses, and he will see evidently that they refer to this state of things: this point made out. The times of Moses and of Joshua, those days of miracles as well as prophecies, want no explication: the intention of Providence appears plain in every step.

The commonwealth of Israel was raised, and flourished, under the temporal covenant, given at first to Noah; and in a particular manner, with additional promises, confirmed to Abraham and his seed: for this reason all the promises and threatenings of the law are temporal, suitable to the age and season of the world. But these temporal blessings and punishments were so visibly administered by the hand of God, that every execution of the threats and promises of the law became a new proof of its divine authority. If it be asked why God did so visibly interpose in their temporal affairs, the answer may be thus given: No other nation ever had a divine law given on the establishment of temporal blessings and punishments; and therefore God had not so bound himself to any other nation, to account to them for their temporal prosperity and adversity: but to the Jews, with whom he had established a law and a covenant on temporal promises, he stood obliged to make good his word, and to justify himself to them in the administration of temporal affairs. For this reason a succession of prophets was raised up among them, at whose mouths they might receive the direction of God; and this is what Moses means in Deut. iv. 7.

That they might not be tempted by the prosperity of other nations and their own adversity to fall away to other gods, they were forewarned of the things that were to befall them; their calamities were prophetically described to them, that they might know, whenever they suffered, that it was the very hand of their own God that was on them: hence it is that we find so many prophecies, under the law, relating to the civil state of the Jews: for this cause the great captivity of Babylon is so largely and fully foretold by the prophets, that the people might not be tempted to think that the gods of the nations had prevailed against them, and thereby be seduced to forsake God in their distress; but might know that his hand was in all their sufferings; might become humble and obedient; and farther, might know that all their adversity and prosperity came on them according to the express terms of their covenant with God: this point enlarged on.

Hence we may account for all the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the temporal state of the Jewish nation; with which we have no farther concern than only to give a reasonable account of them.

The people of the Jews were so prone to idolatry, following the customs of the nations around them, that to the times of the captivity there was a perpetual struggle between the prophets of God and the false prophets of other nations, which should prevail: with this view are many ancient prophecies given, to preserve the people from being seduced by the surrounding nations: see 2 Kings i. 3, 4. and Isaiah xlvi. 3-5. We see therefore on what ground all the prophecies in the Old Testament stand, which relate to the temporal concerns of the Jewish nation; and also why this kind of prophecy has ceased in the Christian church. The gospel is not founded in temporal promises; so far from it, we are called on to take up our cross, &c. Those prophecies relating to the things of this life concern us but little; they have long had their completion in events which effect us not: but others there are, relating to the great *depositum* intrusted to the Jews, even the hopes of redemption, to be a blessing to all the earth; and these deserve our particular consideration.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the temporal covenant with Abraham and his descendants having been considered with regard to the purport and design of Providence, it remains that those which relate to that great and universal blessing promised to him and his seed, and through them to all nations of the world, be considered in the same method: inquiry being made, not into the express meaning and accomplishment of every single prophecy, but into the general use and design of them.

The prophecies of the several periods already considered have been found to correspond with the state of religion in the world at the time of giving the prophecy; a great presumption that the case was the same under the Jewish dispensation. We must therefore consider the state of religion under the Mosaic law, and examine how far and to what purposes prophecy was requisite.

With respect to this state, every man may know it by reference to the books of the law. But there are two questions to be considered previously. First: the promise to Abraham consisting, as we have seen, of two distinct parts or covenants, temporal and spiritual, to which of these two is the law of Moses annexed? If the law was given in execution of the promise made to all nations, then have the nations nothing farther to expect; God has fulfilled his word, and we are wrong in rejecting the Jewish law. But if this law be built on the temporal covenant only, and given properly to the Jews alone, then both Jews and Gentiles have farther hopes, and just expectations of seeing God's promise to all nations accomplished. It is fully shown and explained that the law of Moses was given to the Jews only, and not to all nations.

This being the case, it is evident that the promise of a blessing to all nations subsisted in its full force and vigor during the continuance of the law of Moses; for as the promise was not completed by the giving of the law, in which all nations were not concerned, so neither could so general a promise be annulled by a private law, given to one people only: and this is the meaning of St. Paul, Gal. iii. 17.

Secondly, another question to be considered is this: How far the religion of the Jews was preparatory to that new dispensation, which was in due time to be revealed in accomplishment of the promise made to all nations? If Abraham and his posterity were not chosen merely for their own sakes, and if the temporal covenant was given for the sake of the everlasting one, and to be subservient to its introduction, it is probable that all parts of the Jewish dispensation were adapted to serve the same end. If this appears to be a reasonable supposition, then have we a foundation to inquire into the meaning of the law, not merely as it is a literal command to the Jews, but as it contains the figure and image of good things to come.

To proceed then. The Jewish dispensation not conveying to all nations the blessing promised, but being only the administration of the hopes and expectations created by the promise of God, in this respect it stood entirely on the word of prophecy; and inasmuch as it did virtually contain the hopes of the gospel, the religion itself was in fact a prophecy, and the prophetic office in some measure necessary and essential to this church.

In what manner the blessing of all men was established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we have already seen. The next limitation of it is to the tribe of Judah, in that famous prophecy, Gen. xlix. 10. Of this there are many interpretations and difficulties; but take the whole prophecy relating to the tribe of Judah together, and there will be enough to answer our purpose: this fully shown. The next and last limitation of this special promise is to the

family of David; a point so uncontested that it cannot be called in question without rejecting the authority of all the prophets: this point enlarged on.

It is much to be observed that the prophecies relating to the covenant of better hopes were given to the people of God when religion itself seemed to be in distress, and to want all helps to support it. This shown in the case of Abraham, in the case of Isaac and Jacob, and of the people of Israel in Egypt: as soon as God appeared manifestly, making good his temporal promises, &c. and the people wanted no other evidence to keep them in obedience, we meet with few instances of this sort of prophecy. While God was their king, directing all their affairs by the voice of his prophets, their adversity and prosperity, which were always proportionate to their obedience and disobedience, were a sufficient instruction to them: this the case from Moses to David. But when succeeding kings fell into idolatry, and the people followed their example, and God determined to scatter them, then for the sake of the few righteous were the better hopes revived. Isaiah, who speaks so plainly of Christ's kingdom, entered on his office not long before the ten tribes were carried into captivity, in punishment for their idolatry. The prophet Jeremy saw the other tribes carried away to Babylon; and Daniel was himself one of the captives. This was the time when faith wanted the comfort of future hopes, and therefore God thought fit to give plainer intimations of his purpose than ever had been given before. Now it was that *the seed in whom all nations were to be blessed* was manifestly described, and all things relating to him foretold. This great scene being thus clearly opened, the work of prophecy was finished, and the gift itself soon ceased: a plain evidence that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

The ten tribes, which were carried away by the king of Assyria, never returned to their own country: the tribe of Judah, after seventy years' captivity, came back to Canaan, erected a new temple, and continued a tribe and a people till the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Can this have been by chance? And if the hand of God be visible in it, why this partial regard to the tribe of Judah? There was nothing in them to justify it: they were as bad as their neighbors; but they had one advantage; they had a promise which none of the ten tribes had, *that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh came*. Observations on the forfeited privileges and destitute condition of this people in the land of their forefathers, to account more clearly for the ceasing of prophecy some ages before the coming of Christ.

That the prophecies relating to the second and better covenant produced a suitable effect on the righteous among the Israelites, may be collected from some few allusions in the books of the prophets; see Amos v. 18. Isa. v. 18, 19. lxvi. 5. and Eccus. x. 4.

That the prophecy given at the time of the fall was understood in the ancient Jewish church to relate to the times of the Messias, may with great probability be inferred from many passages, but especially from one in Isaiah, lxxv. 25.; where after a full description of Christ's kingdom, and the happiness of the *seed of the blessed of the*

Lord, the state of the wicked in the time of that kingdom is thus described in few words, *and dust shall be the serpent's meat*. This allusion commented on.

These prophecies relating to the kingdom of the Messiah have still a larger and more extensive use. They were given to the Jews of old for the support of their faith, and are a standing reproof to those of this age for their unbelief: they are a support and evidence to the gospel, and furnish every true believer with an answer, *to him who asketh the reason of the hope that is in him*.

They who are educated in the belief of Christianity, and taught to receive the books of both Testaments with equal reverence, are not apt to distinguish between the evidence for their faith, arising from the one and from the other. This distinction pointed out, and exemplified by the different method of St. Paul's preaching to the Jews at Antioch, Acts xiii. and to the Athenians, Acts xvii. In the former case he argues professedly with Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who by them were well instructed in the great marks and characters of the expected Messiah. It had been highly absurd then to reason with them on other arguments, till he had first convinced them by their prophets: and having so convinced them, it would have been impertinent. To them therefore he urges and applies the authority of prophecy only. But to the Athenians, who knew not, or, if they knew, revered not the prophets, it had been ridiculous to offer proofs from prophecies: the appeal therefore before them is made to the sound and clear principles of natural religion, and to the miracles of the gospel, the truth of which, as they were matters of fact, was capable of undeniable evidence and demonstration.

It is observable that St. Paul calls the Athenians only to repentance, and to faith in Christ as appointed by God to judge the world, having natural religion with him for all his doctrine, except this latter point; and for that he appeals to the evidence of the resurrection. But to the Jews he speaks of a Saviour, of remission of sins, of justification beyond the law of Moses. Whence this difference, unless that the Jews were from their Scriptures acquainted with the lost condition of man, and knew that a redemption was to be expected? But the Gentiles had lost this knowledge, and were first to be taught the condition of the world, &c., before they could have any just notion of its redemption. From the state of the case farther displayed, it is shown that to the Jew prophecy was the first proof, to the Gentile it was the last. The Jew believed in Christ because foretold by the prophets; the Gentile because they had so exactly foretold Jesus Christ. Both became firm believers; having, each in his way, a full view of all the dispensations of Providence towards mankind.

This account will enable us to clear the argument from prophecy of many misrepresentations; but we must proceed to observe another use of prophecy with regard to the Jews, for which the Gentiles seem not to have had the like occasion.

The Jews lived under a divine law, established in signs and wonders, founded in great promises and terrible threats, as far as the

blessings and terrors of this world go. They are warned over and over not to forsake their law, or to suffer any strange customs to grow up among them. These cautions, intended to preserve them from the corruptions of surrounding nations, might easily, as eventually they have done, grow into prejudices against any future revelation, though made on the authority of God himself. Hence it was but reasonable to give them early and frequent notice of the change intended, &c. There are many prophecies of this sort in the Old Testament; many declarations on God's part that he had no pleasure in sacrifices, &c.; strange declarations, considering that they were of his own appointment! but not so, considering the many prophecies of a new and better covenant. Instance given from Isaiah i. 11. 14. But the most remarkable one is the prophecy of Moses himself, Deut. xviii. 15. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.* And the same is repeated at ver. 18. with this addition; *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.* Here now is a plain declaration on God's part, at the very time the law was established, of another prophet, like unto Moses, to be raised in time, as a new lawgiver, to whom all were to yield obedience. The interpretation of those who refer this to a succession of prophets, refuted, from the letter of the text, and from the great difference that existed between the other prophets and Moses, who is distinguished from them by the Jews themselves in four particulars: I. Moses had no dreams nor visions: II. He had light from God immediately without the interposition of angels: III. His mind was never disturbed or dismayed by the prophetic influence; *for God spake to him as a man speaks to his friend*: IV. He could prophesy at all times whenever he would; whereas others prophesied only at such times when the word came to them. But another chief dignity belonging to Moses, and not unto them, is, that he was a lawgiver; and the prophet foretold was evidently to resemble Moses in this particular: this point enlarged on.

Now if we inquire, from historical evidence, after the completion of this prophecy, we shall find that it did most punctually agree with the character of our blessed Saviour, and not with any other prophet either before or after him: this fully shown. But, moreover, the execution of the threat annexed to this prophecy has been literally fulfilled on the whole Jewish nation: who can deny that this part of the prophecy at least has been punctually verified?

This prophecy and many others seem intended for the Jews, principally to prepare them betimes for the reception of a new lawgiver, and to intimate that the Mosaic covenant was not to be perpetual.

The above exposition of the several periods of prophecy under the Old Testament may show the main design and use of it, opening a way to a fair and impartial consideration of the particular prophecies relating to each period.

TEXTS

OF

SHERLOCK'S DISCOURSES.

	PAGE
I. JOHN VI. 67—69.—Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.	1
II. HEB. VII. 25.—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.	6
III. MATT. XI. 6.—Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.	8
IV. 1 COR. I. 21.—For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.	13
V. JOHN III. 16.—God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.	16
VI. 2 TIM. I. 10.—And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.	18
VII. ROMANS IV. 25.—Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.	20
VIII. ROMANS VIII. 16.—The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.	22
IX. JOHN XX. 30, 31.—And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.	25
X. ACTS II. 22.—Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.	28
XI. PSALM VIII. 4.—What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?	32
XII. ACTS X. 34, 35.—Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.	33
XIII. MATT. XXII. 40.—On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.	35
XIV. HEB. III. 12.—Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. . . .	37
XV. ACTS XV. 1, 2.—And certain men, which came down from	

- Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question. . . . 42
- XVI. EPHES. II. 18.—For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. . . . 44
- XVII. EPHES. II. 8.—For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. . . . 46
- XVIII. PHILIP. II. 12, 13.—Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. . . . 47
- XIX. LUKE XIII. 23, 24.—Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. . . . 49
- XX. LUKE XII. 48.—Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more. . . . 50
- XXI. LUKE IV. 1, 2.—And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. . . . 53
- XXII. 2 COR. VII. 10.—Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death. . . . 56
- XXIII. 1 PETER II. 11.—Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. . . . 57
- XXIV. MATT. XXVII. 38.—Then were two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. . . . 62
- XXV. PSALM LXXVII. 9, 10.—Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. . . . 65
- XXVI. PSALM XCIV. 19.—In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. . . . 71
- XXVII. PSALM LXXXVIII. 15.—While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted. . . . 74
- XXVIII. PSALM XIX. 14.—Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. . . . 80
- XXIX. LUKE XII. 21.—So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. . . . 82
- XXX. LUKE XXII. 61, 62.—And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. . . . 85
- XXXI. MATT. XIV. 1, 2.—At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. . . . 87

	PAGE
XXXII. ROMANS VI. 21.—What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.	89
XXXIII. PROV. XIX. 27.—Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.	92
XXXIV. LUKE XVI. 31.—And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.	95
XXXV. PSALM XIX. 12.—Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.	97
XXXVI. MATT. XII. 36.—But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.	100
XXXVII. EPHES. IV. 28.—Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.	105
XXXVIII.—1 PETER IV. 8.—And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.	110
XXXIX.—GAL. VI. 9.—And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.	115
XL. MATT. XIII. 29.—But he said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.	118
XLI. MATT. XXVI. 41.—Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.	123
XLII. ISAIAH LIII. 3.—He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.	126
XLIII. COLOSS. III. 1.—If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.	129
XLIV. JAMES III. 17.—The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.	131
XLV. MATT. V. 48.—Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.	134
XLVI. JOHN III. 19.—This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.	136
XLVII. JOHN V. 44.—How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?	138
XLVIII. MARK VIII. 38.—Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.	141
XLIX. 2 COR. V. 10, 11.—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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.	144
L. PHILIPP. II. 6—11.—Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took on 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. 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 should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. . . . 147
- LI. TITUS II. 14.—Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. . . . 157
- LII. 1 TIM. I. 15.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. . . . 160
- LIII. 1 THESS. I. 9, 10.—For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. . . . 163
- LIV. PROV. IX. 10.—The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowlege of the Holy is understanding. . . . 167
- LV. LUKE X. 29.—But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? 170
- LVI. ROMANS XIV. 16.—Let not then your good be evil spoken of. . . . 177
- LVII. NUMBERS XXIII. 10.—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. . . . 180
- LVIII. PSALM CXIX. 165.—Great peace have they which love thy law. . . . 184
- LIX. PSALM CXIX. 63.—I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. . . . 187
- LX. 2 COR. IV. 18.—For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. . . . 190
- LXI. JUDE 3.—It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. . . . 196
- LXII. ROMANS XIII. 1.—Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. . . . 201
- LXIII. GENESIS XVIII. 19.—For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring on Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. . . . 206

OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

- I.—Preached before Queen Anne at St. James's, Jan. 30, 1704, being the anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First.
 PROV. XXIV. 21.—My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change. . . . 210
- II.—Preached before the Sons of the Clergy at St. Paul's Cathedral, December 5, 1710.
 MATT. X. 41, 42.—He that receiveth a prophet in the name of

- a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. 214
- III.—Preached before the Lord Mayor at St. Paul's Cathedral, Nov. 5, 1712.
 LUKE IX. 54, 55.—And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 217
- IV.—Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, March 8, 1714, being the anniversary of Queen Anne's accession to the throne.
 2 SAMUEL XXIII. 3, 4.—The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 221
- V.—Preached at the Temple Church, Nov. 20, 1715.
 ACTS VII. 25.—For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not. 222
- VI.—Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 17, 1715.
 MATT. IV. 17.—From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 224
- VII.—Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, June 7, 1716; being the day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for suppressing the unnatural Rebellion.
 PSALM CXXII. 6.—Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 227
- VIII.—Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, April 23, 1717.
 ACTS XX. 35.—I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. 229
- IX.—The Case of the Insolvent Debtors, and the Charity due to them, considered.—Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, on Monday in Easter week, April 22, 1728.
 MATT. XVIII. 29, 30.—And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 232
- X.—Preached before the House of Lords at Westminster Abbey, Jan. 30, 1733.
 MARK III. 24.—If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 234
- XI.—The Nature and Extent of Charity.—Preached at St. Margaret's,

Westminster, before the Trustees of the Infirmary in James Street, April 26, 1735.

LUKE X. 36, 37.—Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. 237

XII.—Preached before the Society, corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland, at St. Mary-le-Bow, March 7, 1738.

DEUT. XXXII. 45, 46.—And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: and he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. 239

XIII.—Preached at St. Sepulchre's, May 21, 1719, at the anniversary meeting of the children educated in the charity school.

2 COR. IX. 12.—For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God. 242

XIV.—Preached October 6, 1745, on occasion of the Rebellion in Scotland.

JUDGES II. 7.—And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel. 246

DISCOURSES ON PROPHECY.

I.	2 PETER I. 19.—We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.	249
II.	. . . . .	252
III.	. . . . .	255
IV.	. . . . .	258
V.	. . . . .	262
VI.	. . . . .	266



SUMMARIES

OF

JEREMY TAYLOR'S SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ADVENT SUNDAY.—DOOMSDAY BOOK ; OR, CHRIST'S
ADVENT TO JUDGMENT.

2 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. V. VERSE 10.

For 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.

PART I.

VIRTUE and vice are essentially distinguished from each other : this distinction necessary for the well-being of men in private, and in societies, &c. But it is not enough that the world hath armed itself against vice, and taken the part of virtue : reasons for this given : therefore God hath so ordained it, that there shall be a day, when every word and every action shall receive its just recompense : farther consideration of the things for which we shall be called to account. On that day all the evils of the world shall be amended, and the dispensations of Providence all vindicated. This is what the Apostle in the next verse calls *the terror of the Lord* : reasons for this in a consideration, I. Of the persons that are to be judged, with the attendant circumstances, &c. ; II. Of the judge and his judgment-seat ; 3. Of the sentence then to be pronounced, &c.

I. The persons that are to be judged : even all the world ; kings and priests, nobles and learned, the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the tyrant and the oppressed, shall all appear together to receive their symbol ; which will be so far from abating any part of their terror, that it will greatly increase it : this fully shown, and illustrated by examples of the deluge, and a great pestilence. More-

over, this general consideration may be heightened by four or five circumstances.

1. We may consider what an infinite multitude of angels, and men, and women, shall then appear : all the kingdoms of all ages : all the armies of heaven, and the nine orders of blessed spirits.

2. In this great multitude we shall meet all those, who by their example and holy precepts have enlightened us, and taught us to walk in the paths of virtue. And then it shall be remembered how we mocked at their counsel, or forgot their precepts, &c.

3. There also shall be seen all those converts, who, on easier terms, with less experience and grace, with less preaching, and more untoward circumstances, suffered the word of God to prosper on their spirits, and were obedient to the heavenly call. There the men of Nineveh *shall stand upright in judgment*. There shall appear against us the men of Capernaum, the Queen of the South, and the men of Berœa, &c.

4. But there is a worse sight than this, which in that great assembly shall distract and amaze us. There men shall meet the partners of their sins ; those whom they tempted to crime by evil example, or pernicious counsel ; those souls whom they helped to destroy, and for whom the Lord Jesus died : the miseries of this sight strikingly delineated.

5. We may consider that this infinite multitude must needs have strong influence on every spirit that shall there appear : for every thing will be then revealed, in all its naked deformity, to every person : all our follies and impurities will be declared, as it were, from the house-top, by the trumpet of an archangel : this topic enlarged on. The foregoing heads briefly recapitulated.

II. Second general consideration : That we must be judged : *we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ* ; and that is a new state of terror and amazement ; for Christ shall rise from the right hand of his Father ; he shall descend towards us on the clouds ; and he shall make himself illustrious by a glorious majesty, by an innumerable retinue, and by circumstances of terror and a mighty power. This is that which Origen affirms to be the *sign of the Son of Man*. Others interpret this expression of *the cross of Christ* : that of Origen shown to be most reasonable. The majesty of the Judge, and terms of the judgment-day, dilated on.

Fifteen terrible signs, or days of prodigies, related by St. Jerome out of the Jews' books, as immediately preceding Christ's coming. Though the Jewish doctors reckon these by an order and method, for which they have no revealed authority, yet the most terrible of them are disclosed by Christ's own words in holy Scripture : these enumerated.

The trumpet of God also shall sound ; and the voice of the archangel, that is, of him who is prince of the great army of attending spirits ; and this also is part of the *sign of the Son of Man* : for the fulfilling of all these predictions, and the preaching of the gospel to all nations, and the conversion of the Jews, and these prodigies, and the address of majesty, make up that sign. The notice of which

things, by some way or other, came to the notice of the very heathen.

And when these things actually come to pass, it will be no wonder if men's hearts shall fail them for fear, &c. : and it is an extreme wonder that the consideration and certain expectation of them do not awake us from the death of sin : concluding exhortations and reflections.

PART II.

1. If we consider the person of the Judge, we first perceive that he is interested in the injury done by the crimes which he is to sentence. *They shall look on him whom they pierced.* It was for our sins, and to take away sin, that the Judge suffered such unspeakable torments : this enlarged on. Now it is certain that they who will not be saved by his death, are guilty of his death : then what is to be expected from that Judge before whom they stand, as his murderers and betrayers : but this is not all ; since

2. Christ may be *crucified again*, and on a new account *put to an open shame*. For after having done all this by the direct actions of his priestly office, in sacrificing himself for us, he hath done very many things for us, which also are the fruits of his first love, and prosecution of our redemption : these enlarged on : also the terror and amazement of those who meet that Lord, whose love and honor they have so disparaged.

3. And as it will be inquired, in the day of judgment, concerning the dishonor done to Christ, so also concerning that done to his institution, and its poorer members. Every man who lives wickedly disgraces the religion of Jesus, &c. ; but although it is certain the Lord will resent this, yet there is one thing which he takes most tenderly, and that is, the uncharitableness of men towards his poor : it shall then be upbraided to them by the Judge, that himself was hungry, and they refused meat to him who gave his own body for them, &c. : this topic enlarged on.

4. To this if we join the omnipotence of our Lord, his infinite wisdom, and his knowledge of all causes, persons, and circumstances, his infinite justice and inflexible impartiality ; there can be nothing added to the greatness or the requisites of a terrible and almighty Judge.

But of all qualities, that which now demands our most serious attention, that which has most terror in it, is the severity of our Lord. For then is the day of vengeance, and there will be no mercy but to them who are the sons of mercy.

1. If we remember the instances of God's severity in this life, when in the days of repentance and mercy there are still mingled some storms and violence, some fearful instances of divine justice, we may readily expect that it will be infinitely worse at that day, when judgment shall triumph, and mercy shall be the accuser of the wicked. This topic illustrated by examples ; &c.

2. If God, on single instances, and before our sins have come to the full, be so fierce in his anger, what must we imagine it to be in the day when the wicked are to drink the dregs of that horrid potion! This topic enlarged on.

3. We may guess at the severity of the Judge by the lesser strokes of that judgment which he is pleased to send on sinners in this world, to make them afraid of the horrible pains of doomsday; that is, the torments of a guilty conscience: this head enlarged on.

4. That all may think themselves concerned in this consideration, let us remember that even the righteous and most innocent shall pass through a severe trial. Opinions of ancient Fathers on this point uncertain: this however is sure, that even the most innocent person hath great need of mercy, and even the absolved shall suffer the terror of that day, and the fearful circumstances of Christ's coming; *where then shall the wicked and the sinner appear?*

5. But the matter is of still more concernment. Many Christians, like the Pharisees of old, think that all is well with them if they abstain from such sins as have a name in the tables of their law, &c. But when the day of judgment comes, they shall be called to a severe account by their omniscient Judge; who, all prejudices being laid aside, shall judge us for our evil rules and false principles, by the severity of his own laws and measures of the Spirit.

6. The circumstances of our appearing and his sentence next considered. Men who, at the day of judgment, belong not to the portion of life, shall have three accusers: 1. Christ himself, who is their Judge: 2. Their own defiled consciences: 3. The Devil, their enemy, whom they served.

1. Christ shall be so, not only on account of those direct injuries before mentioned, but on the titles of contempt, unkindness, and ingratitude: and the accusation will be nothing else but a plain representation of those invitations, assistances, importunities, and constrainings, used by our dear Lord to draw us from sin, and to render it almost impossible for us not to be saved. [A short scheme is here drawn of what the wisdom and mercy of God contrived for bringing us safely to eternal happiness.]

2. Our conscience shall be an accuser, which signifies these two things; 1. that we shall be condemned for the ills we have done, and which we shall then, by God's power, clearly remember, seeing things as they really are with all their evil circumstances, &c.: 2. that not only the justice of God shall be confessed by us, in our shame and condemnation, but the evil of the sentence shall be received into us, to break our hearts in pieces; because we are the authors of our own death: this enlarged on.

3. The third sort of accusers are the devils; and they will do it with malicious and evil purposes: the prince of the devils hath *διάβολος* for one of his chief appellatives, 'the accuser of his brethren;' as the Holy Spirit is *παράκλητος*, a *defender*. Description of the manner in which the devil shall accuse even the saints and servants of God, declaring their follies and infirmities, &c.: manner in which they shall be defended and cleared by the Holy Spirit, *that maketh intercession for us*. Different case of the wicked described.

It concerns us therefore to consider in time, that he who now tempts us will hereafter accuse us, &c. Exhortation to prevent all the mischief arising hence, by a timely accusation of ourselves.

PART III.

III. Consideration of the sentence itself. 'We must receive,' &c. Nothing shall then be worth owning, or a means of obtaining mercy, but a holy conscience.

There are two great days, in which the fate of all the world is transacted. This life is man's day; in which he does what he pleases, and God holds his peace. But then God shall have his day too: the day of the Lord shall come, in which he shall speak, and no man shall answer, &c. Similitude drawn from the case of Zedekiah.

'According to what we have done in the body.' This is the greatest terror of all; for all mankind is an enemy to God; man's very nature is accursed, and his manners are depraved. Consideration of the things which we do in the body; how inconsistent with the precepts of the gospel; yet by those precepts we shall be judged. Nay, *every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment*: for which reason every one trembling may say with Job, *what shall I do when the Lord shall come to judgment?* This topic enlarged on: some other considerations proposed.

1. To relieve in some degree our sadness, and to encourage our efforts, we may consider that this great sentence, though it shall pass concerning little things, yet shall not pass by little portions, but general measures; not by the little errors of one day, but by the great proportions of our life. 2. This sentence shall be passed, not by the proportions of an angel, but by the measures of a man. 3. The last judgment will be transacted, not by strange and secret propositions, but on the same principles by which we are guided here: this explained. 4. Sentence shall pass on us, not after the measures of nature, and possibilities, and utmost extents, but in the mercies of the covenant, &c.

5. It is to be given by him who once died for us, and now prays and perpetually intercedes for us.

On these premises we may dare to consider what the irrevocable sentence itself shall be; *whether it be good or bad.*

1. If good, it will be infinitely better than all the good of this world; and every man's share in it will be greater than all the pleasures of mankind in one heap.

2. The portion of the good at the day of judgment shall be so great as to reward them in an infinite degree for all the ills and persecutions of life: this point enlarged on.

But how, if the portion be bad? And it is a fearful consideration, that it will be so to the greater part of mankind. This sad lot represented by some considerations.

1. Here all the troubles of our spirits are but little participations of a disorderly passion; and yet ambition, envy, impatience, ava-

rice, lust, &c., are all of them great torments: but there these shall be essential and abstracted beings; the spirit of envy, and the spirit of sorrow; devils that shall pour the whole nature of evil into the minds of the accursed, &c.

2. The evils of this world are material and bodily, and the mind is troubled because its instrument is ill at ease: but in those regions and days of sorrow, when the soul shall be the perfect principle of all its actions, the pains will be like the horrors of a devil and the groans of an evil spirit.

3. The evil portion of the next world is so great, that God did not create or design it in the first intention of things: it was incidental, and consequent on horrid crimes.

4. And when God did prepare a place of torment, he did not at all intend it for man: it was prepared for the devil and his angels, as the Judge himself says, Matt. xxv. 34.

5. The evil portion shall be continual, without intermission of evil: no days of rest, no nights of sleep, no ease from torment, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

6. And yet this is not the worst; for as it is continual during its abode, so its abode is for ever; continual and eternal: this topic enlarged on. Objections of Origen and some others against this doctrine of eternal punishment, noticed.

But that, in this question, what is certain may be separated from what is uncertain, we may consider:

1. It is certain that the torments of hell shall last as long as the soul lasts; which, as it is immortal either naturally or by gift, shall be tormented for ever, or until God finally takes away the life that he restored: this is the gentlest sentence of some of the old doctors.

2. But the generality of Christians have been taught to believe worse things of this state; and the words of our blessed Lord are *κόλασις αἰώνιος*, *eternal affliction* or *smiting*: and St. John, who well knew the mind of his Lord, confirms this, saying, that *the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night*: this topic enlarged on.

3. And yet if God should deal with man hereafter more mercifully and proportionably to his weak nature than he does to angels, yet he will never admit him to favor: he shall be tormented beyond all the measure of human ages, and be destroyed for ever and ever.

Concluding energetic exhortations, that we should prepare ourselves, whilst there is yet time, to meet the terrors of the final day of judgment.

SERMON II.

THE RETURN OF PRAYERS: OR, THE CONDITIONS OF
A PREVAILING PRAYER.

JOHN, CHAP. IX. VERSE 31.

Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

PART I.

IT is difficult to determine which is the greater wonder, that prayer should produce such vast and blessed effects, or that we should be so unwilling to use such an instrument for procuring them. Reasons for this, our extreme folly, given. Inefficacy of prayer which is offered up by wicked and hypocritical supplicants. *God heareth not sinners.* This a known case, and an established rule in religion. 'Wicked persons are neither fit to pray for themselves, nor for others.'

This proposition is considered, *First*, according to that purpose in which the blind man in the text spoke it; and it is shown that *God heareth not sinners*, in that they are sinners, though a sinner may be heard in his prayer, in order to a confirmation of his faith; but if he be a sinner in his faith, God hears him not at all, in that wherein he sins; for God is truth, and cannot confirm a lie; and whenever he permitted the devil to do it, he secured the interest of his elect, that is, of all that believe in him and love him.

Secondly, This proposition is considered in a manner which concerns us all more nearly: that is, if we be not good men, our prayers will do us no good: we shall be in the condition of them that never pray at all. God turneth away from the unwholesome breathings of corruption. The doctrine under discussion reduced to method, under various heads: these enumerated.

I. Whosoever prays whilst he is in a state of sin, or in the affection to sin, his prayer is an abomination to God. This truth believed by the ancient world; hence the appointment of baptisms and ceremonial expiations: ceremonies of the Gentiles and Jews considered: internal purity recommended by them. Some considerations on this head. 1. It is an act of profanation for any unholy person to handle holy things and offices: reasons given for this: 2. A wicked person, whilst he remains in that condition, is not a natural object of pity, &c. 3. Purity is recommended by the necessary appendages of prayer required or advised in holy Scripture; as those of *fasting*, of *almsgiving*, &c.: also by the various indecencies which are especially prohibited, (not only for their general malignity, but for the great hinderance they give to our prayers,) such as *unmercifulness*, which unfits us to receive pardon for our own trespasses; *lust*, and

uncleanness, which are direct enemies and obstructions to prayer, defiling the temple, and taking from a man all affection to spiritual things: this state fully dilated on, and its inconsistency with devotion and prayer to God explained.

PART II.

After the evidences of Scripture, and reason derived from its analogy, there is less necessity to take any particular notice of those little objections, which are usually made from experience of the success and prosperities of evil persons. If such men ask things hurtful and sinful, it is certain that God hears them not in mercy: this topic enlarged on; with various instances of success in improper prayers, turning out to the disadvantage or destruction of the petitioners.

II. Second general head: Many times good men pray, and their prayer is not a sin; but yet it returns empty; because although the man may be, yet the prayer is not, in proper disposition: and here the collateral and accidental hinderances of a good man's prayers are to be accounted for.

1. The first thing that hinders the prayer of a good man from obtaining its effects is violent anger, or a storm in the spirit of him that prays: disturbing effects of anger on the mind described. Prayer is an action, or a state of intercourse and desire, exactly contrary to the character of anger: its gentle and meek spirit, its soothing and calm influences, fully described.

2. Indifferency and easiness of desire is a great enemy to the good man's prayer. Answer of Diogenes to Plato: this compared with our intercourse with God in prayer. The dislike which God bears to lukewarmness stated; with the reasons of this dislike. He that is cold and tame in his prayers hath not tasted the delight of religion and the goodness of God; he is a stranger to the secrets of his kingdom: this topic enlarged on. Instances of fervent prayers of holy men in Scripture: character of one in the practice of St. Jerome. Strong exhortation to passionate importunity in prayer: example of our Saviour, who prayed with *loud cryings*; and of St. Paul, who made mention of his disciples in his prayers *night and day*.

3. Under this title of lukewarmness and tepidity may be comprised also these cautions; that a good man's prayers are hindered sometimes by inadvertency, sometimes by want of perseverance. Inadvertency indeed is an effect of lukewarmness, and a certain appendage to human infirmity; and is only remedied, as our prayers are made zealous, and our infirmities pass into the strength of the Spirit: this enlarged on.

But concerning perseverance, the consideration is something distinct; for when our prayer is for a great matter, and a great necessity, strictly attended to, yet we pursue it only by chance or humor, by fancy, or natural disposition; or else our choice is cool as soon as hot, and our prayer is without fruit, because the desire does not last. If we would secure the blessing and the effect of our prayers, we

must not leave off till we have obtained what we need. Farther observations on the want of perseverance: danger of remitting our desires and prayers for spiritual blessings indicated. Observation of St. Gregory, 'that God loves to be invited, entreated, importuned, with a restless desire and a persevering prayer.' Quotation of a similar tendency from Proclus: topic enlarged on.

4. The prayers of a good man are oftentimes hindered and rendered destitute of their effect, for want of their being put up in good company; for sometimes an evil and obnoxious person hath so secured a mischief to himself, that they who stay in his company share also in his punishment: instance of the Tyrian sailors, who, with all their vows and prayers, could not obtain a prosperous voyage whilst Jonas was in their bark. In such case the interest is divided, and the public sin prevails above the private piety. Story of the philosopher and Antigonus. So it is in the case of a good man mingled in bad company: if a curse be too severe for a good man, a mercy is not to be expected by evil company; and his prayer, when made in common, must partake of that event of things which is appropriate to such society. Purport of this caution; that a man mingle not his devotion in the communion of heretical persons, and in schismatical conventicles: the evil of such a practice dilated on, and examples given. But when good men pray with one heart, and in a holy assembly, that is, holy in their desires, and lawful in their authority, though the persons be of different complexions, then their prayers ascend to God like the hymns of angels.

The sum is this. If the man that makes the prayer be an unholy person, his prayer is not the instrument of a blessing, but of a curse: but when the sinner begins to repent truly, then his desires begin to be holy. Yet if they be holy, just, and good, they are without profit and effect, if the prayer be made in schism or in evil communion; or if it be made without attention; or if the man soon gives over; or if the prayer be not zealous; or if the man be angry: this topic carried on to the conclusion.

PART III.

III. The next inquiry and consideration is, What degrees and circumstances of piety are required to make us fit to be intercessors for others, and to pray for them with probable effect. It is said with 'probable effect,' because in this case we must consider whether the persons for whom we pray are within the limits and possibilities of present mercy. Instance of the emperor Maximinus, whom the prayers of all the Christians, even after he revoked his cruel decrees, could not save. This topic enlarged on.

But supposing the person for whom we pray to be capable of mercy, within the covenant of repentance; yet no prayers of others can farther prevail, than to remove this person to the next stage in order to felicity: this enlarged on. No prayers can prevail with

regard to an indisposed person ; as the sun cannot enlighten a blind eye, &c. Therefore

1. As the persons must be capable of mercy for whom we pray, so they that pray for others must be extraordinary persons themselves.

And if persons be of an extraordinary piety, they are apt and fit to be intercessors for others. This exemplified in the case of Job (ch. xlii. 7, 8.), and of Phinehas. It was also a vast blessing entailed on the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : because they had a great religion, they had a great power with God. History of the worship paid to God by the earliest nations : this improved by Abraham and his immediate descendants, when God established a church with them ; and God was their God, and they became fit persons to bless ; as appears in the instances of their own families, of the king of Egypt, and the cities of the plain. A man of ordinary piety cannot water another man's garden and bless it with a gracious shower : he must look to himself. Few indeed are those who can intercede for others ; they are as soon told as the gates of a city, or the mouths of the Nile.

But then we must consider what an encouragement this is to a very strict and holy life ; what an advantage it may be to our relatives, &c. if we chance to live in times of great trouble and adversity ; what benefits we may thence procure to our country.

We must consider also how useless and vile we are, when our prayers are of no avail to assist even the meanest person : the folly of a vicious advocate, or of an ordinary person pleading with God, exposed. And yet every one that is in the state of grace, every man that can pray without a sinful prayer, may also intercede for others ; and it is moreover a duty prescribed to him : this topic enlarged on.

2. That we should prevail in our intercessions for others, we must take care, that, as our piety, so also our offices be extraordinary. He that prays to reverse a sentence of God, &c. must not expect great effects from a morning or evening collect, or from an honest wish put into the recollections of a prayer, or a period put in on purpose. Conduct of Mamercus, bishop of Vienna, when his city and diocese were in danger of destruction by an earthquake. Times, manner, and circumstances of prayer dilated on. Prayer at the holy communion particularly recommended ; and the necessity of taking Christ with us in all our prayers.

One great caution given : that in our importunity and extraordinary offices for others, we must not make our account by a multitude of words and long prayers, but by measures of the Spirit, by holiness of the soul, justness of the desire, and usefulness of the request to God's glory, &c.

We must not be ashamed or backward in asking ; but our modesty to God in prayer hath no measures but these : distrust of ourselves, confidence in God, humility of person, reverence of address, and submission to God's will : these being observed, our importunity should be as great as possible ; and it will be the more likely to prevail.

3. The last great advantage towards a prevailing intercession for others is, that the person who prays for his relatives be one of extraordinary dignity, employment, or designation; for God hath appointed some persons, by their calling, to pray for others; such as fathers for their children, bishops for their dioceses, kings for their subjects, and the whole ecclesiastical order for all the men and women in the Christian Church.

And it is well this is so, since so few understand their duty to themselves and others. Excellence and utility of prayers for their flocks by the ministers of religion dilated on.

But here comes in the greatest difficulty of the text; for if *God heareth not sinners*, what infinite necessity there is that the ministers of religion should be very holy, since their very ministries consist in preaching and praying; to which two are reducible all the ministers ecclesiastical, that are of divine institution: this topic fully dilated on.

IV. Last consideration; Of the signs of our prayers being heard, concerning which there is not much of particular observation: but if our prayers be according to the warrant of God's word, if we ask according to God's will things honest and profitable, we are to rely on his promises, and to feel sure that we are heard; besides this, we can have no sign but 'the thing signified:' when we feel the effect, then we are sure that God has heard us; but till then we are to leave it with him, and not to ask a sign of that for which he has given us a promise. Yet there is one sign, mentioned by Cassian, that may be named: 'That it is a sign we shall prevail, when the Spirit of God moves us to pray, with a confidence and holy security of receiving what we ask.' But even this is no otherwise a sign, but because it is a part of the duty.

All may be summed up in the words of God by the Prophet: *Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, a man that seeketh for faith; and I will pardon it.* (Jer. v. 1.) Concluding observations.

SERMON III.

OF GODLY FEAR, &c.

HEBREWS, CHAP. XII. VERSE 28, 29.

Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

PART I.

DIFFERENT interpretation of the text proposed; that is, instead of, *Let us have grace*, 'We have grace:' reason for this; that the Apostle, having enumerated the great advantages which the gospel has above law, makes an argument *a majori*, and answers a tacit objection. The law was delivered with amazing terrors; but the gospel was given by a meek prince, with a still voice, &c. But that this may be no objection, he proceeds and declares the terror of the Lord; as if he should say, 'deceive not yourselves; our Lawgiver appeared so on earth, and was truly so; but now he is ascended into heaven, from whence he speaks to us.' His future terrors at his second coming dilated on. This truth may have power and efficacy to make us do our duty: this is the grace which we have to enable us to do so, &c.; and therefore the Apostle declares in the text, by way of caution, *our God is a consuming fire*.

Reverence and godly fear, they are the effects of this consideration, they are the duties of every Christian, they are the graces of God. They are here pressed only to purposes of awe, modesty of opinion, and prayers, against those strange doctrines which some have introduced into religion, to the destruction of all manners and prudent apprehension of the distance between God and man; such as are the doctrine of the necessity of a familiarity with God, a parity of estate, and an evenness of adoption; whence proceed rudeness in prayer, indecent expressions, &c.: this enlarged on: utility of the fear of God in this point of view.

Concerning this duty three considerations are urged; 1. How far fear is a duty of the Christian religion. 2. What men ought to fear, and on what grounds. 3. What is the excess or obliquity of fear, whereby it becomes a state of evil, and not a state of duty.

I. Fear is taken sometimes in Scripture for the whole duty of man; for his whole religion towards God: this shown.

Fear is sometimes taken for *worship*: this also shown. Thus far then *fear* is not a distinct duty, and cannot come under the text.

Therefore *fear*, as it is a religious passion, is divided as the two Testaments are; it relates to the old and new covenant, and accordingly hath its distinction. In the law God used his people like servants; in the gospel he hath made us to be his sons: this topic dilated on. Hence they of old feared God as a severe Lord; but we have not received that spirit *unto fear*, that is, servile fear; but *the spirit of adoption* and filial fear we must have: this enlarged on.

The proportions of Christian or godly fear are more exactly measured by the following propositions.

1. Godly fear is ever without despair; because Christian fear is an instrument of duty; and duty without hope can never go forward: this topic enlarged on.

2. Godly fear must always be with honorable opinion of God, without disparagement of his mercies, without quarrellings at the measures of his providence, or the rough ways of his justice; and therefore it must be ever relative to ourselves, our own failings and imperfections: this dilated on.

3. This fear is operative, diligent, and instrumental to caution and strict walking: for so fear is the mother of holy living; and the Apostle urges it by way of upbraiding: *What! do we provoke God to anger? Are we stronger than him?* meaning, if we cannot check the flowing of the sea, or add one cubit to our stature, how shall we escape the mighty hand of God?

Let us heighten our apprehensions of the divine power, justice, and severity, as much as possible, provided the effect pass on no farther, than to make us reverent and obedient: but that fear is unreasonable which ends in bondage and servile affections, &c.: its proper bounds are humble and devout prayers, holy piety, &c. To God's grace and mercy we may safely commit ourselves; but because we are earthen vessels under a law, assaulted by enemies and temptations, it concerns us to fear, lest we make God an enemy and a party against us. And this brings us to the next consideration.

II. Who and what states of men ought to fear, and for what reasons. For as the former cautions did limit, so this will encourage: those did direct, but this will exercise our godly fear.

The general reasons of fear, which concern every man, are not here insisted on; though every one, even the most confident and holy, has cause to fear, when the eye of God is ever on him, and he is assaulted by enemies from within and from without.

Instances only are given in the case of some peculiar men, who least think of it, and therefore have the greatest cause to fear.

1. First, are those of whom the Apostle speaks, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* They are persons of an ordinary course of life, who falling into no enormous crimes have no reflections and checks of conscience; whose faith is tempted, and whose piety does not grow; who yield a little, do all they lawfully can do; and study how much is lawful, that they may lose no temporal good. Many sorts of such persons, and their danger, described. 2. They also have great reason to fear, whose repentance is broken into fragments, and is never a whole and intire change of life; who resolve and pray against a sin, till that unlucky period arrives in which they use to act it, and then they as certainly commit it, as they will repent afterwards. There are many Christians who feel this feverish repentance to be their best state of health; who get not the victory over their sin, but remain within its power: this dilated on. Opinions of the primitive church and fathers thereon.

Such men ought to fear lest God should deride the folly of their oft-renewed repentance, and at length give them no farther opportunities of exercising it.

PART II.

Subject resumed. They have great reason to fear, whose sins are not yet remitted; for they are within the dominion of sin, within the kingdom of darkness, and the regions of fear: state of such persons described; and the course which they generally take, of relying on God's mercy, and hoping for pardon on the slightest conditions. Terrible state of those men who grow old in habitual sins, and yet think, if they die, that their account stands as fair in the sight of God's mercy, as St. Peter's after his tears and sorrow.

Our sins are not to be pardoned on such easy terms: this shown. There is great reason for such men to fear and tremble when their Judge summons them to appear: this enlarged on.

If we consider on what trifling grounds most men hope for pardon, (if that can be called hope which is but a careless boldness,) we shall see good reason to pity many, who are going on merrily to a sad and intolerable end. Pardon of sins is a mercy which Christ purchased with his blood, which he ministers to us on conditions of an infinite kindness, but yet of great holiness, obedience, and living faith: it is a grace that the most holy persons beg of God with mighty passion and diligence, expecting it with trembling fears and uncertain souls; whilst it enters on them by degrees and small portions. This conflict compared to the flowing of the tide, which retires oft and gains the shore by little and little. Example of David enlarged on. If we expect to find *the sure mercies* of David, we must gain them on the same terms; on such as are revealed, and which include time, labor, watchfulness, fear, and holy living. Pardon of sins is not easily obtained: but because there are sorrows and dangers and temptations environing us, it will concern all men to know when their sins are pardoned. A certain sign of this declared, as follows,

1. Sin makes God angry; and his anger, if not averted, will render us accursed and miserable.
2. Sin has obliged us to suffer many evils, even whatsoever the anger of God is pleased to inflict, and as in his several covenants he has expressed.
3. In the law of Moses sin bound them to temporal evils only, though sore and heavy: in the gospel Christ added the menaces of evils spiritual and eternal.
4. The great evil of the Jews was their abscission, or cutting off from being God's people, to which eternal damnation answers with us, &c.
5. When God had visited any of the sinners of Israel with a grievous sickness, then they lay under the evil of their sin, and were not pardoned till God took away the sickness; or the taking away the evil of the punishment was the pardon of the sin: and so it appears in the gospel, from Christ's words to the man sick of the palsy; Matt. ix. 2-6. The next step is this; that although under the gospel God punishes sinners with temporal judgments, and tokens of his

wrath, yet besides these lesser evils he has much worse with which to chastise the disobedient: he punishes one sin with another; vile acts with evil habits; these with a hard heart; this again with impenitence; and impenitence with damnation. Now because the worst of evils are such as consign us to hell by our perseverance in sin, as God takes off our love and our affections, our relations and bondage under sin, just in the same degree he pardons us; because the punishment of sin being taken off, there can remain no guilt: and since spiritual ills and progressions in sin, &c. are the worst of evils, when these are taken off, the sin hath lost its venom and appendant curse: in the same degree therefore that a man leaves off his sin, is he pardoned; and he is sure of it: for although a curing of the temporal evil was the pardon of sins among the Jews, yet we must measure our pardon by the cure of the spiritual: this topic enlarged on.

They have great reason to fear concerning their condition, who having been in the state of grace, having begun to lead a good life, and given their names to God by solemn and deliberate acts of the will, retire to folly, unravel all their holy vows, and commit again those crimes from which they ran. Evils of this return to folly enumerated. 1. He that so falls back does *grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which he was sealed to the day of redemption*: for if, at the conversion of a sinner, there is joy in heaven, the antithesis is evident. 2. This falling away after we have begun to live well, is a great cause of fear, because there is added to it the circumstance that it is inexcusable. The man hath been taught the secrets of the kingdom, and tasted its pleasures; his sin began to be pardoned, he felt the pleasures of victory and the blessings of peace; but he fell off, against both his reason and his interest: this enlarged on. 3. He that thus returns from virtue to his old vices is forced to do violence to his own reason, in order to make his conscience quiet: he has no way left but either to be impudent, which is hard at first, or to entertain new principles, and apply his mind to believe a lie: this enlarged on. 4. Besides all this, he that thus falls away may be said to add ingratitude to his load of sins: he sins against God's mercy, and throws away the reward of virtue for an interest which he himself despised the first day in which he began to take sober counsels. So that this man has great cause to fear; and if he does, his fear is as the fear of enemies and not sons: not that this fear is displeasing to God; for it is such an one as may arrive at goodness, and produce the fear of sons, if it be rightly managed. No fear is displeasing to God, whether it be fear of punishment, or fear to offend; but the effects of fear distinguish the man, and are to be entertained or rejected accordingly: this topic carried on to the end.

PART III.

Concerning the excess of fear, not directly and abstractedly, as it is a passion, but as it is subjected in religion, and as it dege-

nerates into superstition (*δεισιδαιμονία*), or fear of God, as if he were a tyrant.

But this fear was by some of the old philosophers themselves thought unreasonable in all cases, even towards God himself; and it was a branch of the Epicurean doctrine, that God meddled not with human affairs, and was to be loved and admired, but not feared; and therefore they taught men not to fear death, nor future punishment, nor any displeasure of God, &c.

But besides this, there was another part of its definition: 'the superstitious man is also an idolater, one that is afraid of something besides God.' The Latins, following the Greeks, had the same conception of this, and by their word *superstitio* understood the 'worship of demons.' What they meant by this explained. Fear is most commonly the principle, always an ingredient of superstition. This sin is reducible to two heads: 1. Superstition of an undue object; 2. Superstition of an undue expression to a right object.

Superstition of an undue object is that which the etymologist calls 'the worshipping of idols:' the Scripture adds, 'a sacrificing to demons.' It is not however necessary to dilate on this topic, since no Christians are blamable therein, except the Church of Rome, in the worship of images, angels, saints, &c.

But as it is superstition to worship any thing 'besides the Creator,' so is it to worship God otherwise than is decent, proportionable, or described. The atheist called all worship of God superstition; the Epicurean called all fear of God so, without condemning the worship of him: other wise men called all unreasonable fear and all inordinate worship superstition, but did not condemn all fear; but the Christian, besides this, calls every error of worship, in the manner or in the excess, by this name, and condemns it.

The three great actions of religion are, 'to worship God; to fear him; and to trust in him.' Hence, excess of fear, obliquity in trust, and errors in worship, are the three sorts of superstition. The first of these alone pertinent to the present discourse.

1. Fear is the duty we owe to God, as being the God of power and justice; the judge of heaven and earth, &c.; so great an enemy to sin, that he spared not his own son as a sacrifice for it. Fear is the great bridle of intemperance, the restraint of a dissolute spirit, the arrest of sin; it is the guard of a man under prosperity, and it gives a warning to those that are in the chambers of rejoicing, &c.

But so excellent a grace is soon abused in the best and most tender spirits: this shown. And fear, when inordinate, is neither a good counsellor nor a friend; for he who fears God as his enemy, is the most miserable person in the world: this enlarged on. Such persons do not believe noble things concerning God; do not think that he is ready to pardon his sinning servant; do not believe how much he delights in mercy, nor how wise he is to make abatement for our unavoidable infirmities: this topic enlarged on.

Moreover, he that is afraid of God cannot in that disposition love him at all; for what delight can there be in that religion which draws us to the temple as victims to be sacrificed?

But that the evil may be proportionable to the folly, there is no man more miserable in the world than he who fears God as his enemy, and religion as a snare. Whither shall such a man go? where shall he lay down his burden, or find sanctuary? This subject dilated on.

Almost all ages of the world have observed many instances of fond persuasions and foolish practices proceeding from violent fears and scruples in matter of religion. Examples of this folly among the ancient Pagans quoted. Similar ones among the Roman Catholic Christians, and the ancient Jews.

To this may be reduced the observation of dreams and fears from the fancies of the night; for the superstitious man does not rest even whilst he sleeps: this topic enlarged on.

2. But besides this superstitious fear, there is another fear directly criminal: this is called worldly fear, of which the Spirit of God hath said, *but the fearful and incredulous shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death*: that is, such fears as make men to fall in the time of persecution, who dare not own their faith in the face of a tyrant: this topic dilated on.

3. This fear is also criminal, if it be troublesome from an apprehension of the mountains and difficulties of duty, and is called pusillanimity. For some persons see themselves encompassed with temptations; they observe their frequent falls, and perpetual returns from good purposes to weak performances, &c.; and because they despair to run through the whole of their duty, think it as good not to begin at all, as to lose their labor after so much trouble and expense: this topic enlarged on.

Thus far concerning good fear and bad, that is, filial and servile: they are both good, if by servile we intend initial, or the beginning fear of penitents; but servile fear is vicious when it retains the affection of slaves.

But to the former sort of virtuous fear, some also add another, which they call angelical; that is, such a fear as the blessed angels have, who before God hide their faces, and *fall down before his footstool*, &c.

This is the same that is spoken of in the text; or rather all holy fear partakes of the nature of that which divines call angelical: this topic carried on to the end.

SERMON IV.

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVI. VERSE 41.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

PART I.

FROM the beginning of days man hath been so cross to the divine commandments, that in many cases there can be no reason given, why a person should choose some ways, or do some actions, but only because they are forbidden. Instance of the Israelites and Canaanites. The whole life of man is a perpetual contradiction. Instance of the absurdity of man's will in refusing the injunction to be temperate; and the evils of intemperance dilated on. Whereas our body itself is but a servant to our soul, we strive to make it master, or heir of all things: hence proceed the vices of the worst, and the imperfections of the best men: the spirit is in slavery, and when the body is not strong to mischief, it is weak to goodness. Even to the Apostles themselves our Lord addressed the words of the text.

The spirit, or inward man, especially as helped by the Spirit of grace, *that* is willing; for it is the principle of all good actions: but the flesh is a dull instrument; so weak, that, in Scripture, to be *in the flesh* signifies a state of weakness and infirmity.

The old and the new man cannot dwell together; and therefore here, where the spirit inclining to good and holy counsels associates with the flesh, it means only a weak and unapt nature, or a state of infant grace: for in this only is the text verified. Four distinct heads of the following discourse enumerated.

I. We are to consider the infirmities of the flesh naturally. Our nature is too weak for our duty and final interest; so that at first it cannot move one step towards God, unless God, by his preventing grace, puts into it a new capability. Primary object of man's creation. State of man after the fall. *By nature we are the sons of wrath*, that is, born heirs of death, which came on us through God's anger against sin. There is nothing in us that can bring us to felicity; nothing that can sanctify us; and so it is necessary that God should make us a new creation, if he means to save us: this enlarged on. And thus God does teach and invite us; lends us helps, and guides our hands and feet; constraining us, yet as reasonable beings: and as this is a great glorification of his free grace, so does it declare our manner of cooperation, and show the weakness, ignorance, and aversion of our nature from goodness: this enlarged on. Particulars instanced, in the temptations of pleasure and of pain, wherein the flesh will most certainly fall, unless assisted by a mighty grace.

1. In pleasure we see it by the public miseries and follies of the world. Instances given and dilated on, in the love of money; in carnal lust; and in drunkenness. 'Men are so in love with pleasure that they cannot think of mortifying their appetites: we do violence to what we hate, not to what we love.' Even amidst the glories of Christianity, there are so many persons covetous, intemperate, and lustful, even now when the spirit of God is given to render us liberal, temperate, and chaste, that we may well imagine, since all men have flesh, and all men have not the Spirit, that the flesh is the parent of sin and death.

2. And it is no otherwise when we are tempted with pain. So impatient are we of pain, that nothing can reconcile us to it; not the laws of God, the necessities of nature, the interests of virtue, or the hopes of heaven: we will submit to pain on no terms, but the basest; for if sin brings us to pain, we choose that, so it be in the retinue of a lust or a base desire: but we accuse God, and murmur, if pain be sent to us from him who ought to send it, and who intends it as a mercy: sad instance of human infirmity, in one of the forty martyrs of Cappadocia. Infirmity of the flesh in time of sickness dilated on. In these considerations we find our nature under great disadvantages: but it is no better in any thing else; it is weak in all its actions and passions: this enlarged on.

To sum up all the evils that can be spoken of the infirmities of the flesh, the proper nature and habitudes of men are so foolish and impotent, so peevish and averse to all good, that a man's will is of itself only free to choose evils: so that it is scarcely a contradiction to mention liberty, and yet suppose it determined to one object only: because that object is the thing we choose: this topic enlarged on. Till we are newly created, we are, as it were, wolves and serpents; free and delighted in the choice of evil, but stones and iron to all excellent things and purposes.

II. Second general consideration: Weakness of the flesh in the beginning even of the state of grace.

1. In some dispositions that are forward, busy, and unquiet, when the grace of God has begun to take possession of them, it seems to their undiscerning spirits so pleasant to be delivered from the sottishness of lust, and the follies of intemperance, that, reflecting on the change, they begin to love themselves too well, and despise those who are below them: having mortified corporal vices, they keep the spiritual: for this our Saviour censured the Pharisees.

2. Sometimes the passions of the flesh spoil the changes of the spirit, by natural excesses, &c.: it mingles violence with industry, fury with zeal, uncharitableness with reproof, censure with discipline, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

3. In the first changes and progresses of our spiritual life, we find a weakness on us, because we are long before we begin, and the flesh is powerful, and its habits strong, and it will mingle indirect pretences with all the actions of the spirit: this illustrated.

4. Some men are wise and know their weaknesses, and make strong resolutions, &c.; and what then? This shows that *the spirit is*

willing ; but the storm arises, and the winds blow, and the rain descends, and presently the whole fabric is thrown into disorder and ruin.

5. But some, when they have felt their follies, back their resolutions with vows, to fortify the spirit : but a vow will not secure our duty, because it is not stronger than our appetites.

6. Moreover, some choose excellent guides, and stand within their restraints ; the young adopting that of modesty, the more aged that of reputation, the more noble that of honor, and all that of conscience. These shown to be weak defences ; from the inclosure of which our nature is apt to break loose.

7. When the spirit is made willing by the grace of God, the flesh interposes in deceptions and false principles. If you tempt a man openly to some notorious sin, he steadily refuses : but if you put it civilly to him, and disguise it with little excuses and fair pretences, &c , the spirit instantly yields.

8. The flesh is so mingled with the spirit, that we are forced to make distinctions in our appetite. to reconcile our affections to God and religion, lest it be impossible to do our duty : we weep for our sins, but we weep more for the death of our dearest friends, or other temporal evils : we had rather die than lose our faith, and yet we do not live according to it, &c.

9. The spirit is abated and interrupted by the flesh, because the flesh pretends that it is not able to do those ministries which are appointed in order to religion : it is not able to fast, to watch, to exercise charity, to suffer pain, &c. : here the flesh betrays its weakness, for it complains too soon ; and the spirit of some men, like Adam who was too fond of his wife, attends to all its murmurs and temptations. Yet the flesh is well able to endure much more than is required of it in its usual duties : this shown.

The foregoing complaints are not without cause. The remedies of the evil next to be considered. Concluding exhortations.

PART II.

III. Third general consideration : Inquiry into the remedies of this mischief, if it be possible to cure an evil nature.

In order to this it is considered, 1. That since it is our flesh and blood that is the principle of mischief, we must not think to have it cured by washings and light medicaments, &c. but we must have a new nature put into us, which must be the principle of new counsels, and better purposes, of holy actions and great devotion ; and this nature is derived from God, is a grace and favor of heaven : this topic enlarged on. 2. Our life and all our discourses, observations, reason, &c., are too little to cure a peevish spirit, silly principles, bad habits, and perverse affections : art and use, experience and reason, may be something, but cannot do enough : there must be something else, and this is the Spirit of grace : therefore the proper

cure is to be wrought by those general means of inviting and cherishing God's holy Spirit, &c.

1. The first great instrument of changing our nature into the state of grace, and flesh into the spirit, is a firm belief in, a perfect assent to, and a hearty entertainment of the promises of the gospel: for holy Scripture speaks great words concerning faith: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. The second great remedy of our evil nature is devotion, or a state of prayer and intercourse with God: for the gift of his spirit is properly and expressly promised to prayer. (Luke xi. 13. &c.) The pleasures of this holy communion with God dilated on, and contrasted with the feverish, vain, and transient pleasures of the world.

3. As this cure is to be wrought by the Spirit of God, we must endeavor to abstain from those things which by a special malignity are directly opposite to the spirit of reason, and the spirit of grace; from drunkenness and lust: evils and dangers of these defiling sins deseanted on.

4. We must also avoid all flatterers and evil company: flattery does but bribe an evil nature, and corrupt a good one.

5. He that would cure his evil nature, must attend diligently to subdue his *chief lust*; which when he has overcome, the lesser enemies will more readily yield.

6. In all actions of choice he should deliberate and consider, that he may never do that for which he must ask a pardon, or suffer smart and shame.

7. In all the contingencies of chance and varieties of action, we must remember that we are the makers of our own fortune, and of our own sin: we must not charge God with it, nor consider the violence of our passions as any superinduced necessity from him.

8. We must avoid all delay in the counsels of religion; since every day of indulgence increases the evil.

9. We must learn to despise the world, or rather learn truly to understand it. Our nature is a disease, and the world nourishes it: but if we omit such unwholesome diet, our nature will revert to its first purities, and to the entertainment of God's grace.

IV. Fourth general consideration; How far the infirmities of the flesh can be innocent, and consist with the spirit of grace; for all these counsels are to be entertained by a willing and active spirit, &c.

1. If the flesh then hinders us in our duty, it is our enemy; and our misery is, not that the flesh is weak, but that it is too strong.

2. When it abates the degrees of duty and stops its growth, or prevents its passing on to action and effect, then it is weak, but not directly nor always eriminal. But to speak particularly,

1. If our flesh hinders us in any thing that is a direct duty, and prevails on the spirit to make it do an evil action, or contract an evil habit, the man is in a state of bondage to sin; his flesh is the mother of corruption and an enemy to God. Nothing which God exacts from us is made impossible to us: the willing is the doing; and he

who says he is willing to do his duty, but cannot, does not understand what he says, &c.

2. If the spirit and the heart be willing, it will pass on to outward actions in all things, where it ought or can.

3. With regard to those things which are not in our power, those in which the flesh is inculpably weak, or naturally or politically disabled, the will does the work of the outward, as well as of the inner man : this explained.

4. No man however is to be esteemed of a willing spirit, but he who endeavors to do the outward work, or to make all the supplies he can. And as our desires are great, and our spirits willing, so shall we find ways to supply our want of utility and express liberality, &c.

SERMON V.

OF LUKEWARMNESS AND ZEAL; OR, SPIRITUAL FERVOR.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. XLVIII. VERSE 10.

Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.

PART I.

CHRIST'S kingdom, being in order to the kingdom of his Father, must therefore be spiritual, because then it is that all things must become spiritual, not only by way of eminency, but by intire constitution and change of natures. The changed faculties, employments, and enjoyments of men, &c. in this state, dilated on. Contrast between our desires in this world and in the next.

Between these two states of natural flesh and heavenly spirit, the miseries of the world and the happiness of heaven, there is a middle state, the kingdom of grace, wrought for us by our mediator Jesus Christ, who came to reform our nature, &c. The religion which he taught is a spiritual religion ; it designs to make us spiritual, serving God not only with our hearts and affections, but with fervent, active zeal, according to the nature of things spiritual. Now though God always perfectly intended it, yet because he less perfectly required it in the law given to the Jews, they fell short in both these respects. For, 1. they rested in the outward action, thinking themselves chaste if they were not actual adulterers ; and, 2. They had no holy zeal for God's glory, nor any quickness of action, excepting a few zealots, who were inflamed rather than fervent : their character dilated on. All this Christ came to mend : to teach us to do our duty, both sincerely and fervently : for if we fail in either of these respects, we do *the Lord's work deceitfully*.

Here then is the duty of all. 1. God requires of us to serve him

with a whole or intire worship and religion : 2. He requires of us to serve him with intense affections : 3. After these topics the measures of zeal and its insubordinations will be discussed.

I. He that serves God with the body, without the soul, serves him deceitfully : for God says, *My son, give me thy heart.*

First, To worship God with our souls confesses one of his glorious attributes : it declares him to be the searcher of hearts, &c. : 2. It advances the powers and concernments of his providence, and confesses him ruler of all the affairs of men : 3. It distinguishes our duty towards God from all our conversation with man, &c. : 4. He that secures the heart, secures all the rest, because that is the fountain of all moral actions : 5. To sum up many reasons in one, God by requiring the heart secures the perpetuity and perseverance of our duty, its sincerity, its integrity, and its perfection : this topic enlarged on.

Secondly, He that serves God with the soul without the body, when both can be conjoined, *doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.* God will make all due allowance for wants and infirmities ; but as he hath rendered the body an apt minister to the soul, and hath given money for alms, power to protect the oppressed, knees to serve in prayer, and hands to serve our needs, the soul alone is not to work ; but the body must serve the spirit ; so that what one desires, the other may effect : this topic enlarged on.

Thirdly, They are *deceitful in the Lord's work*, who reserve one faculty for sin, or one sin for themselves ; or one action to please their appetite, and many for religion. Doctrine of Rabbi Kimchi and other Jews on this head. Cautions against the sin of pride in our virtues. Saying of St. Augustine on this point. St. Peter was safer by his fall than by his former confidence.

Two of the noblest Christian virtues are made to many persons a savor of death ; that is, faith and charity : some men think that if they have faith, it is enough to answer all the accusations of sin, &c. ; whilst others keep sin alive, and make account to pay for it ; God being put to relieve his own poor, at the price of the sin of another of his servants ; but the case of conscience in this particular is as follows. Charity is a certain cure of sins that are past, not that are present. He that repents, and quits his sins, and then relieves the poor, turns his former crimes to holiness. Faith is the remedy of all our evils ; but then it must be faith with repentance at first, faith with charity at last. The larger ingredient of virtue and evil actions will prevail ; but this is only when virtue is habitual, and sins are single, casual, and seldom committed ; without choice and affection : this topic enlarged on.

Fourthly, There is one deceit more in the matter of the extension of our duty, destroying the integrity of its constitution : for they do the work of God deceitfully, who think that he is sufficiently served by abstinence from evil, and who strive not for the acquisition of holy charity and religion. Observation of Clemens Alexandrinus on this point, regarding the Pharisees : topic enlarged on.

Fifthly, Those are deceitful workers, who promise to God, but

mean not to pay what they once intended ; people that are confident in the day of ease, and fail in that of danger ; they that pray passionately for a grace, and if it be not obtained at that price, go no farther ; such as delight in outward forms, and regard not the substance or design of an institution ; &c. Conclusion.

PART II.

II. The next inquiry is into the intenseness of our duty : and here it will not be amiss to change the word *deceitfully*, as some Latin copies do, into *negligently* ; implying that as our duty must be *whole*, so it must be *fervent*. Animated description given of persons whose affections in religious duty are lukewarm and languid. God is said to hate such a fixed state even worse than that of frigid indifference : wherefore it must contain some peculiar evils. These displayed.

1. It is a state of the greatest imprudence : for it makes a man to spend his labor for that which profits not, and to deny his appetite for an unsatisfying interest : he puts his monies into a broken bag, and thus loses the principal for not increasing the interest : this topic enlarged on.

2. The second appendant evil is, that lukewarmness is the occasion of greater evil ; because the remiss and easy Christian shuts the gate against the heavenly breathings of God's Holy Spirit ; he is tempted to security : whoever slips in his spiritual walking, does not presently fall ; but if that slip does not awaken his diligence and caution, then his ruin begins.

3. A state of lukewarmness is more incorrigible than a state of coldness ; while men flatter themselves that their state is good ; that they are rich and need nothing ; that their lamps are dressed : character of such persons dilated on.

It concerns us next to inquire concerning the duty in its proper instances ; in faith, in prayer, and in charity.

1. Our faith must be strong, active, patient, reasonable, and unalterable ; without doubting, fear, or partiality.

1. Our faith and persuasions in religion are most commonly imprinted in us by our country, &c. But whatever it was that brought us into it, we must take care, when we are in, that our faith stand on its proper and most reasonable foundations.

2. The faith and the whole religion of many men is the production of fear : that is but a deceitful and lukewarm faith which a man wants courage to disbelieve.

3. The faith of many is such, that they dare not trust it : they will talk of it and serve their vanity or interests by it ; but in any emergency they dare not trust it. Speech of Antisthenes to the Orphic priest recorded.

4. Some measure their faith by shows and appearances, by ceremonies, professions, and little institutions. But the faith of a Christian has no signification at all except obedience and charity : this enlarged on.

II. Our prayers and devotions must be fervent and zealous, supported by a patient spirit, set forwards by importunity, continued by perseverance, carried along by strong but holy desires, and ballasted by resignation to the divine will: then they are as God likes them, and do the work to God's glory and our interest effectually: this topic enlarged on. Lukewarm and fervent prayer contrasted under the similitudes of a sluggish creeping brook, and of a full and rapid stream.

III. Our charity also must be fervent. Our duty to God should be very pleasing to us; it must pass on to action, and do the action vigorously: it is called in Scripture *the labor and travail of love*. He that loves passionately will do not only what his friend needs, but what he himself can: this topic enlarged on.

Consideration concerning the degrees of intention and forward zeal.

1. No man is fervent and zealous as he ought to be, but he that prefers religion before business, charity before his own ease, the relief of his brother before money, and God before his friend or interest. Which rule is not to be understood absolutely, and in particular instances, but always generally; and when it descends to particulars, it must be in proportion to circumstances, and by their proper measures: this fully shown.

2. To the fervor and zeal which is necessary, it is required that constancy and perseverance be added. *Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*, said the Spirit of God to the angel of the Church of Smyrna. He that is warm to-day and cold to-morrow, hath not yet well chosen what side he will be of, does not see reason enough for religion, and has not confidence enough for its contrary; and therefore he is, as St. James says, *of a doubtful mind*: this topic enlarged on.

3. No man is zealous as he ought, but he who delights in the service of God: without this no man can persevere, but must faint under the pressure of an uneasy load. If he goes to his prayers as children go to school, if he gives alms like those who pay contributions, and meditates with the same willingness as young men die, such an one 'acts a part which he cannot long personate, but will soon find out many excuses to desert his duty:' this topic dilated on to the end.

PART III.

So long as our zeal in religion hath only the above-mentioned constituted parts, it hath no more than can keep the duty alive: but beyond this there are many degrees of earnestness, which are progressions towards perfection: of this sort is reckoned frequency in prayer, and alms above our estate. Concerning these instances two cautions are given.

I. Concerning frequency in prayer, it is an act of zeal so ready and prepared, so easy and so fitted to every man's affairs, necessities,

and possibilities, that he who prays but seldom, cannot in any sense pretend to be a religious person. Exhortations of Scripture on this head. The many things which urge a man to pray, recounted. The activity of Satan to hinder us in this duty pointed out, and the reasons of it. Utility of acquiring a habit of prayer, and the pleasure gained thereby. Caution above referred to, on this point, viz. that frequency in prayer, and that part of zeal which relates to it, must proceed only from a holy spirit, a wise heart, and a reasonable persuasion; not from passion or fear, imitation, desire of fame, &c. else it will be unblessed and unprosperous: if therefore it happen to begin on a weak principle, we must be careful to change the motive. Also, when you are entered into a state of zealous prayer and regular devotion, whatever interruptions you meet with, observe their causes, and be sure to make them irregular, seldom, and contingent: this enlarged on.

2. Concerning the second instance named, namely 'to give alms above our estate,' it is an excellent act of zeal, and needs no other caution to make it secure from illusion and danger, but that we should not let our egressions of charity prejudice justice. See that thy alms do not other men wrong, and they will never hurt thee by their abundance: this topic discussed, and our duty towards our own family, in this point of view, defined. Various other acts of self-dedication, self-devotion, austerity, liberality, and protection afforded to others, referred to this head.

3. The proper measures to be observed in acts of zeal, by which it will become safe and holy.

1. The first measure, by which our zeal may comply with our duty, and its actions become laudable, is charity to our neighbor; in which we particularly glorify God by imitating him: this charity in spiritual matters dilated on. Powers and ministries given to us all by God to promote his religion, and the good of other men's souls: this ought to be the object of frequent self-examination: method of this charity dilated on. Caution given, that zeal for our neighbor's amendment be only expressed in ways of kindness, not of cruelty or importunate justice: persecution through zeal for religion condemned: all bitterness of zeal reprov'd. Christ's reproof to Peter for drawing his sword. Zeal of the Jews for their religion commented: that of the Apostles contrasted with it.

2. The next measure of zeal is prudence; for as charity is the matter of zeal, so is discretion the manner. Let the end be consonant to the design; let charity be intended, and charity be done.

But there is also a zeal for religion or worship: and this hath more need of caution; for religion can be turned into a snare and abused into superstition, &c. Evils of this dilated on.

Therefore, 1. our zeal must never carry us beyond that which is profitable. There are many institutions and customs introduced into religion on very fair motives, and adapted to great necessities: but to imitate them when disrobed of their proper ends, is an importune and imprudent zeal: this applied to celibacy and to fasting. 2. Our zeal must never carry us beyond that which is safe: to some persons,

at their first entry on religion, no repentance seems sharp enough, no charities expensive enough, no fastings afflictive enough, &c. ; but the event is, that this passionate spirit evaporates; and indignation, hatred of holy things, carelessness, or despair succeeds to it. 3. Let zeal never transport us to attempt any thing but what is possible. Vow of M. Teresa : the spirit must be secured by the proper nature of the duty, the circumstances of the action, and the possibilities of the man. 4. Zeal is not safe, unless it be exercised *in a likely matter*: this is necessary to prevent scruples and snares, shameful retreats, and new fantastic principles. In all our undertakings, we must consider what is our state of life, our natural inclinations, our society and dependencies ; by what necessities we are depressed ; by what hopes we are biassed ; by these let us measure our hearts and their proper business. Return of the subject to exhortations in the cause of zeal.

SERMON VI.

THE HOUSE OF FEASTING ; OR, THE EPICURE'S MEASURES.

1 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. XV. VERSE 32.

Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

PART I.

THIS text is the epicure's proverb, begun on a weak mistake : thought witty by an undiscerning company ; and prevailing greatly, because it strikes the fancy, &c. Reason why the pagans recommended sensuality in this life, because they thought there were no enjoyments in another ; that the number of the days of darkness and the grave could not be told.

They are to be excused rather than us. They placed themselves in the order of beasts and birds, making their bodies nothing but receptacles of flesh and wine ; and therefore they treated themselves accordingly. But then, why should we do the same things, who are led by other principles, under a more severe institution, with better notices of immortality, &c. ?

To reprove the follies of mankind, and their improper motions towards felicity, the following topics are advanced :—

I. That plenty, and the pleasures of the world, are no proper instruments of happiness.

II. That intemperance is a certain enemy to it, making life unpleasant, and death intolerable.

III. Some rules and measures of temperance, &c. given.

1. Plenty and the pleasures of the world are no proper instruments of felicity. It is necessary that a man have some violence done to himself before he can receive them : this explained, and the bountiful provision made for man by nature considered. If we go beyond what is needful, as we find sometimes more than was promised, and very often more than we need, so we disorder the certainty of our felicity, by putting that to hazard which nature hath secured. For it is not certain, that, if we desire to have the wealth of Susa, robes of purple, and the dainties of Vitellius, we shall never want. It is not nature that desires these things, but lust and violence ; by a disease we entered into the passion and the necessity, and in that state of trouble it is likely we may ever dwell, unless we reduce our appetites to nature's measures : this topic enlarged on, and illustrated by examples. Happiness of the virtuous poor man in his cottage, his sound sleep, his quiet breast, his composed mind, his easy provision, his sober night, his healthful morning, and joyful heart, contrasted with the noises, the diseases, the passions, the violent and unnatural appetites, which fill the houses of the luxurious and the heart of the ambitious. Illustrations and examples.

2. Intemperance in eating and drinking is the most opposite course to the epicure's design in this world ; and the voluptuous man has the least share of pleasure : this topic enlarged on.

II. Second consideration : in which it is shown, 1. That intemperance is an enemy to health : 2. It gives less pleasure than the temperate table of the hermit or laborer, &c. : 3. It is an impure fountain of vice : 4. It is a destruction of wisdom : 5. It brings man to disrepute and a bad character.

1. It is an enemy to health, which has been called a ' handle by which we can apprehend and perceive pleasures ; and that sauce which alone makes life delicious : ' for what content can a full table administer to a man in a fever ? The excellency and delight of health described : also the feelings of a person restored to it from disease.

Health carries us to church, and makes us rejoice in the communion of saints : but an intemperate table makes us to lose all this ; being one of those sins which St. Paul affirms to be *manifest, leading before unto judgment*. It bears part of its punishment in this life, and has this appendage, that unless it be repented of, it is not remitted in the life to come ; so that it is punished both here and hereafter ; which the Scripture does not affirm of all sins. But in this the sinner gives sentence with his mouth, and brings it to execution with his hands.

Instances of gluttony among the ancient Romans, and the evils which thence ensued to them ; fevers, lethargy, and death ; so that the epicure's genial proverb might well be a little altered, *Let us eat and drink, for by this means to morrow we shall die*. But this is not all ; for such men lead a healthless life ; they are long in dying, and die in torment. Folly of men who have a terrible apprehension of death, and thus increase the pain and evil of it. Folly of those who go to temples or churches, and pray that God would give them

healthy bodies, &c. and when they arise from their prayers, pour in loads of flesh and seas of wine, lest there should not be matter enough for disease: this topic enlarged on.

The temptations which men meet with from without, in these cases, are in themselves most unreasonable, and soonest confuted. He that tempts me to drink beyond measure, what does he, but tempt me to lay aside my reason, or civilly invite me to a fever? this topic dilated on.

Report concerning Socrates, that when Athens was destroyed by the plague, he escaped, through the spare and severe diet to which he had accustomed himself: he had enough for health and study, philosophy and religion, for the temples and the Academy; but he had no superfluities to bring on groans and sickly nights. All the world of gluttons is convinced of the excellency of temperance in order to moral felicity and health; for after they have lost both, they are obliged to go to temperance to recover them. Fools, not to keep their health by the means which they seek to restore it! Such men (as St. Paul's expression is) *heap up wrath against the day of wrath*. When the heathens feasted their gods they gave nothing but a fat ox, a ram, or a kid; poured a little wine on the altar, and burnt a little frankincense: but when they feasted themselves, they had vessels of Campanian wine, turtles of Liguria, Sicilian beeves, &c. the same we do. So little do we spend in charity and on religion; so much on ourselves, to make ourselves sick, that we seem to be in love with our own mischief, &c.

PART II.

2. A constant full table is less pleasant than the temperate provisions of the virtuous, or the natural banquets of the poor. 'Thanks be to the God of nature, (said Epicurus,) that he hath made that which is necessary to be ready at hand, and easy to be had; whilst that which cannot easily be obtained is not necessary at all;' which in effect is to say, it cannot be constantly pleasant: for necessity and want make the appetite, and the appetite makes the pleasure; so that men are greatly mistaken when they despise the poor man's table, &c.

Fortune and art give delicacies, nature gives meat and drink; and what nature gives, fortune cannot take away, whilst every change can take away that which is only given by fortune, &c. Moreover, he that feasts every day, feasts no day; and however a man treats himself, he will sometimes need to be refreshed beyond it: but what will he have for a festival, who wears crowns every day? Even a perpetual fulness will make you glad to beg pleasure from emptiness, and variety from humble fare: this topic enlarged on, and illustrated.

3. Intemperance is the nurse of vice. By the experience of the world it is the nourisher of lust: and no man dare pray to God for a pure soul in a chaste body, if he lives intemperately, *making provi-*

sion for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it; for in this case he will find 'that which enters him shall defile him,' more than he can be cleansed by vain prayers that come from his tongue and not from his heart: particular evils specified to which intemperance gives rise.

4. Intemperance is a perfect destruction of wisdom. 'A full-gorged belly never produced a sprightly mind;' and therefore the Cretans were called *slow-bellies* by St. Paul, out of their own poet: this topic illustrated by many examples and apophthegms. The heavy and foul state of an intemperate person compared to that of the sun, clouded with fogs and vapors, when it has drawn too freely from the moisture of nature. But temperance is reason's girdle, and passion's bridle; the strength of the soul, and the foundation of virtue.

5. After what has been said there is less need to add that intemperance is a dishonor to the nature, person, and manners of a man. But naturally men are ashamed of it, and night is generally a veil to their gluttony and drunkenness.

III. Third general consideration; Respecting the measures of our eating and drinking, that neither our virtue nor our conscience may fall into an evil snare.

1. The first is our 'natural needs:' these are the measures of nature, 'that the body be free from pain, and the soul from violence.' Hunger, thirst, and cold, are the natural diseases of the body; food and raiment are their enemies, and therefore are the measures. But in this there are two cautions. 1. Hunger and thirst are only to be extinguished while they are violent or troublesome; and not to the utmost extent and possibilities of nature: this enlarged on. 2. Hunger and thirst must be natural, not artificial and provoked: for many men make necessities to themselves, and then think they are bound to provide for them: this enlarged on.

2. Reason is the second measure, or rather the rule whereby we judge of intemperance; for whatsoever loads of meat and drink make the reason useless or troubled, they are effects of this deformity: not that reason is the adequate measure; for a man may be intemperate on other causes, though he do not force his understanding and trouble his head: this topic enlarged on.

3. Though reason is strictly to be preserved, yet the measures of nature may be enlarged beyond the bounds of prime and common necessity; for besides hunger and thirst, there are labors both of the body and of the mind, and loads on the spirit from its communication with the indispositions of the body; and as the laboring man may be supplied with larger quantities, so may the student and contemplative man with more delicious and sprightly nutriment, &c.: but in these cases, necessity, prudence, and experience, are to make the measures and the rule.

4. Sorrow and a wounded spirit may as well be provided for in the quantity and quality of meat and drink, as any other disease; and this disease by this remedy as well as by any other: topic enlarged on.

5. Even when a man has no necessity on him, natural or artificial, it is lawful in some cases of eating and drinking to receive pleasure,

and to intend it. But in this case of conscience, these cautions are to be observed :

1. So long as nature ministers the pleasure and not art, it is materially innocent. 2. Let all the pleasure of meat and drink be such as can minister to health, and be within the former bounds. 3. It is lawful, when a man needs meat, to choose the pleasanter, merely for its pleasure. 4. Let the pleasure, as it comes with meat, so also pass away with it. 5. Let pleasure not be the principal, but used as a servant. 6. Let pleasure, as it is used within the limits of nature and prudence, be changed into religion and thankfulness.

To sum up these particulars : there are many cautions to make our pleasure safe, but any thing can make it inordinate ; and then scarcely any thing can keep it from becoming dangerous ; and the pleasure of the honey will not pay for the smart of the sting. Conclusion, on the madness of those who love to swallow death, diseases, and dishonour, with an appetite which no reason can restrain.

SERMON VII.

THE MARRIAGE RING ; OR, THE MYSTERIOUSNESS AND DUTIES OF MARRIAGE.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. V. VERSE 32, 33.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

PART I.

THE first blessing which God gave to man, was society : and that society was a marriage ; and that marriage was joined by God himself, and hallowed with a blessing. In the beginning, the world, being rich and empty, was naturally desirous of children ; a single life was reckoned a curse, and a childless person one hated by God : men were desirous of great families, to build them cities, and to become fountains of great nations : this was consequent on the first blessing, *increase and multiply*. The next blessing was, *the promise of Messias* : and that also increased to a wonderful degree the desire of marriage : to be childless in Israel was the greatest of sorrows to the Hebrew women.

But when the Messias was come ; when his doctrine was published ; when his ministers were few, and his disciples were to suffer persecution, &c. in which case the state of marriage produced many inconveniences ; it pleased God to inspire into the hearts of his ser-

wants a disposition and desires towards a single life; and on this necessity the Apostles and apostolical men published doctrines, declaring the advantages of it; not by the command of God, but by the spirit of prudence, for present and then incumbent necessities: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

But in this first interval, public necessity and private zeal, mingling together, did sometimes overact their love of a single life, even to the disparagement of marriage, and the scandal of religion: and this was increased by the occasion of many pious or converted persons renouncing their contract of marriage with unbelievers. Instances quoted: insomuch that it was reported among the Gentiles, that the Christians did not only hate all that were not of their own persuasion, but were enemies of the chaste laws of marriage. Hence it grew necessary for St. Paul to state the question right, to do honor to the holy rite, and to snatch the mystery out of the hands of zealous folly. The Apostle therefore so explains it, &c. that, as it begins with honor, so it may proceed with piety, and end with glory.

For although a single life hath in it such privacy and simplicity of affairs, such leisure for religious duties, and shows such a perfect mortification of our strongest appetites, that it is a state of great excellency; yet concerning the state of marriage we are taught by Scripture, and by wise men, that *marriage is honorable in all men*: so is not single life; for in some it is a snare, and a trouble, &c.: it is never commanded, but in some cases marriage is; and he that burns, sins often if he marries not. Marriage was ordained by God, was instituted in paradise, and had the first blessing. The mother of our blessed Lord was betrothed in marriage. The first miracle which Jesus did, was in honor of it: various excellences and honors of this state farther dilated on.

Single life makes men in one instance to be like angels; but marriage in very many things makes the chaste pair to be like to Christ. *This is a great mystery*: but it is the symbolical and sacramental representation of the greatest mysteries of our religion: this topic enlarged on. Hence it behoves all who enter into its golden fetters, to see that Christ and his church be in at all its periods, and that it be intirely conducted and overruled by religion; for so the Apostle passes from the sacramental rite to the real duty; *that the man love his wife, and the wife reverence her husband*: this part of the precept now proposed for discussion. Subject divided as follows:

I. The duty is propounded as it generally relates to man and wife in conjunction. II. The duty and power of the man. III. The rights, privileges, and duty of the wife.

I. *In Christo et ecclesia*: that begins all; and there is great need it should be so: for they that enter into a state of marriage, cast a die of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity. Life or death, felicity or a lasting sorrow, are in the power of marriage. A woman indeed ventures most, for she hath no sanctuary to retire to from a bad husband: this point enlarged on. And though the man can run from many hours of his sadness, yet he must return to it again: this

point also enlarged on. The worst of the evil is, that both fell into the snare by an improper way; Christ and his church were no ingredients of their choice. The folly of entering into marriage from worldly or improper motives fully dilated on.

2. Man and wife are equally concerned to avoid all offences of each other in the beginning of their conversation. Every little thing can blast an infant blossom: this topic enlarged on. After the hearts of man and wife are endeared and hardened by mutual confidence and experience, there are many remembrances, and some things present, that dash all little unkindnesses in pieces.

3. Let man and wife be careful to stifle little things, that, as fast as they spring up they may be cut down and trod on; for if they be suffered to grow in numbers, they make the spirit peevish, the society troublesome, and the affections loose by an habitual aversion.

4. Let them be sure to abstain from all those things which by experience and observation they find to be contrary to each other: this enlarged on.

5. Let them carefully avoid a curious distinction of *mine* and *thine*: for this hath caused all the laws, and all the suits, and all the wars in the world: let them have but one person and one interest: this enlarged on.

These are the duties of them both, which have common regards and equal necessities and obligations; indeed there is scarcely any matter of duty, but it concerns them both alike, and what in one is called *love* is in the other called reverence; and what in the wife is *obedience*, is in the husband *duty*: this topic carried on to the end.

PART II.

The next inquiry is more particular, and considers the power and duty of the man: *let every one of you so love his wife, even as himself*. She is as himself, the man hath power over her as over himself, and must love her equally.

A husband's power over his wife is paternal and friendly, not magisterial and despotic. The wife is under conduct and counsel; for the man's power is founded in the understanding, not in the will or force: this topic enlarged on, and illustrated by quotations, &c. And therefore, although there is just measure of subjection and obedience due from the wife to the husband, yet nothing of this is expressed in the man's character, or in his duty: this enlarged on. So that we cannot discourse of the man's right without describing the measures of his duty: that therefore follows next.

2. *Let him love his wife, even as himself*: that is his duty and the measure of it too. *Be not bitter against her*. And this is the least index and signification of love: a civil man is never bitter against a friend or a stranger, much less to him who enters under his roof and is secured by the laws of hospitality. But a wife does all that and more; she quits all her interests for his love; she gives him all she can give, and is as much identified with him as another person can possibly be: this state dilated on. Now he is worse than a viper,

who for reverence of this sacred union will not abstain from bitterness: the injustice and impropriety of brutal conduct in a husband towards his wife forcibly described.

The marital love is infinitely removed from all possibility of such rudeness: it is a thing pure as light, sacred as a temple, lasting as the world. That love which can cease was never true. The happiness of a man who is blessed by conjugal love beautifully described. Instances given of persons who have made the greatest of sacrifices for their wives.

But the cases in which this can be required are so rare and contingent, that Holy Scripture does not instance the duty in this particular: but it contains in it, that the husband should nourish and cherish her, making all the cares and evils of life as light and easy to her as possible by his love, &c.

3. Hither also is to be referred that he secure the interest of her virtue and felicity by a fair example: proneness of the woman to imitate her husband's ideas described and illustrated.

4. Above all other instances of love, let him preserve towards her an inviolable faith, and unspotted chastity; for this is the marriage ring, which ties two hearts by an eternal band, &c. This is a grace that is secured by all acts of heaven, by the defence of the laws, the locks and bars of modesty, honor and reputation, fear and shame, interest and high regards: this topic enlarged on.

These are the lines of a man's duty: the duties of the woman next described.

1. The first is obedience; which, because it is no where enjoined that the man should exact it, but is often commanded her to pay, gives demonstration that it is a voluntary cession which is required; such a cession as must be without coercion and violence on his part, but on fair inducements, and out of love and honor on hers: this state of obedience, and the usefulness of it, &c. described. Concerning its measures and limits we can best take accounts from Scripture. The Apostle says, *in all things as to the Lord*. St. Jerome mistook this, when he translated it, *ut ancilla domino*: real meaning of it, 'that religion must be the measure of a wife's obedience and subjection.'

But in this also there is some peculiar caution. For although, in things necessary to faith and holiness, the woman is subject to Christ alone, who only is the Lord of conscience; yet as it is part of the man's office to be a teacher, guide, and master, it will relate much to the demonstration of affection, if she obey his counsels, imitate his virtues, is directed by his wisdom, &c.: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. The next line of the woman's duty is compliance, which St. Peter calls *the hidden man of the heart*; *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*; and to it he opposes *the outward and pompous ornament of the body*; this is to be limited by Christian modesty, and the usages of the more excellent and severe matrons: folly of this extravagance dilated on: the brightest ornaments of a wife described; and the folly of those husbands who are pleased with the indecent gaieties of their wives, illustrated.

3. *Remember the days of darkness, for they are many*: the joys of the bridal chamber are quickly past, and the remaining portion of the state is a dull progress, without variety of joys, yet not without the change of sorrows: but that portion, which shall enter into the grave, must be eternal. Conclusion.

SERMON VIII.

APPLES OF SODOM; OR, THE FRUITS OF SIN.

ROMANS, CHAP. VI. VERSE 21.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?
For the end of those things is death.

PART I.

THE son of Sirach prudently advised, concerning judgment made of the felicity or infelicity of men, *Judge none blessed before his death; for a man shall be known in his children.* This thought dilated on; and various instances of profligate unworthy descendants of great and virtuous parents quoted: so that he who is cursed in his children cannot be reckoned among the fortunate.

What is here said concerning families in general is most remarkable in the retinue and family of sin: for it keeps a good house, which is full of company and servants; it is served by the possessions of the world, courted by the unhappy, flattered by fools, made the end of human designs, and feasted all the way of its progress, &c.

But then if we look to what are the children of this splendid family, and see what issue sin produces, it may help to untie the charm. Sin and concupiscence marry together, and feast highly: but the children of their filthy union are ugly and deformed, foolish and ill-natured: the Apostle calls them *shame and death*. These are the fruits of sin, *the apples of Sodom*; fair on the outside, but within full of ashes and rottenness. And the tree with its fruits go together: if you will have the mother, you must take the daughters. *What fruit had ye then?* That is the question.

In answer to which we are to consider, I. What is the sum total of the pleasures of sin: II. What fruits and relishes it leaves behind by its natural efficiency: III. What are its consequences by its demerit, and the superadded wrath of God, which it hath deserved.

I. 1. If then it be considered what pleasures there are in sin, most of them will be found to be very punishments. To pass over the miseries ensuing from envy, or murder, or a whole catalogue of sins, every one of which is a disease in its constitution and nature, we may observe, that nothing pretends to pleasure but the lust of the flesh,

ambition, and revenge : these alone cozen us with a fair outside ; and yet, on a survey of their fruits, we shall see how miserably they deceive us.

2. For a man cannot take pleasure in the lusts of the flesh, unless he be helped forward by inconsideration and folly. We see evidently that grave and wise persons, men of experience and consideration, are extremely less affected with lust and loves, &c. than the hair-brained boy : this topic dilated on.

3. The pleasures of intemperance are nothing but the relics and images of pleasure, after that nature hath been feasted : for as long as she needs, and as long as temperance waits, so long pleasure also stands by : but as temperance begins to go away, having done the ministries of nature, every morsel, and every fresh goblet, is still less delicious, and cannot be endured, but as men force nature by violence to stay longer than she would : this topic enlarged on ; and the fatal effects of intemperance described.

4. With pretenders to pleasure there is so much trouble to bring them to act an enjoyment, that the appetite is above half tired before it comes. It is necessary that a man should be wonderfully patient who is ambitious ; and no one buys death and damnation at so dear a rate as he who fights for it, enduring heat and cold, and hunger ; and who practises all the austerities of the hermit, with this difference ; that the one does it for heavenly glory, the other for uncertain honor and an eternity of flames : this passion farther dilated on ; and that of revenge discussed, which is pleasant only to a devil, or to a man who has the same accursed temper.

5. These sins, when they are entertained with the greatest fondness from without, must have very little pleasure, because there is a strong faction against them : something that is within strives against the entertainment ; and they sit uneasy on the spirit, when the man is vexed that they are not lawful : this illustrated, &c.

6. The pleasure in the acts of these few sins that do pretend to it, is a little limited nothing, confined to a single faculty, to one sense, &c. and that which is the instrument of sense, is the means of its torment : by the faculty through which it tastes, by the same it is afflicted ; for so long as it can taste, it is tormented with desire ; and when it can desire no longer, it cannot feel pleasure.

7. Sin hath little or no pleasure in its very enjoyment, because its very manner of entry and production is by a curse and a contradiction : it comes into the world like a viper, through the sides of its mother, by means violent and monstrous : this enlarged on.

8. The pleasures in the very enjoyment of sin are infinitely trifling and inconsiderable, because they pass away so quickly : if they be in themselves little, this makes them still less ; but if they were great, this would not only lessen the delight, but change it into torment, and load the sinner's spirit with impatience and indignation : this dilated on.

9. Sin hath in its best advantages but a trifling, inconsiderable pleasure : because not only God and reason, conscience, honor, interest, and laws do sour it ; but even the devil himself, overruled

by God, or by a strange malice, makes it troublesome and intricate ; so that one sin contracts another, and vexes the man with a variety of evils, &c.

10. Sin has so little true relish, and so trifling a pleasure, that it is always greater in expectation than it is in the possession. If men could see this beforehand, they would never pursue it so eagerly.

11. The fruits of its present possession, the pleasures of its taste, are less pleasant, because no sober person, no man that can discourse, likes it long. He approves it in the height of passion, and under the disguise of a temptation ; but at all other times he finds it ugly and unreasonable : the remembrance at all times abates its pleasures and sours its delicacies : this topic dilated on. Concluding remarks.

PART II.

II. Second general consideration. What fruits and relishes sin leaves behind by its natural efficiency. These are so many, as must needs affright the soul, and scare the confidence of every considerate person.

It is said that our blessed Saviour shall present his church to God *without spot or wrinkle*. Many have been the opinions concerning the nature of that spot or stain of sin : these recounted. But it is not a distinct thing, or inherent quality, that can be separated from the other evil effects of sin, which St. Paul comprises under the scornful appellation of *shame* : these now reckoned by their more proper names.

1. The first natural fruit of sin is ignorance. Man was first tempted by the promise of knowlege : he fell into darkness by believing that the devil held forth to him a new light. It was not likely that good should come from so foul a beginning : the man and the woman already knew good ; and all that was offered to them was the experience of evil. Now this knowlege was the introduction of ignorance : when the understanding suffered itself to be so baffled as to study evil, the will was so foolish as to fall in love with it ; and they conspired to undo each other. For when the will began to love it, then the understanding was set on work to commend, advance, approve, believe it, and to be factious in behalf of the new purchase.

It is not here meant that the understanding of man received any natural diminution ; but it received impediment by new propositions : it lost and willingly forgot what God had taught, went from the fountain of truth, and gave trust to the father of lies. The devil indeed grew more quick-sighted in abusing us ; but we became more blind by that opening of our eyes.

The philosophy of this mischief, or the connexion of causes between sin and ignorance, may be omitted : but it is certain, that whether a man would fain be pleased with sin, or continue quiet under it, or persuade others to be so, he must do it by false proposi-

tions, &c. Who in the world is a greater fool, a more ignorant and wretched man, than an atheist? The folly of such a person descanted on.

But though the devil never prevailed to a great extent in this, yet he has in a thing almost as senseless as atheism, and that is idolatry; which not only makes God after man's own image, but in the likeness of a calf, a cat, or a serpent; nay, makes man to worship a quartan ague, fire, water, onions, and sheep. This is the philosophy which man learned of the devil. What wisdom can there be in any one who calls good evil, and evil good; that says fire is cold, and the sun black; that fornication can make a man happy, or drunkenness make him wise? And yet this is the state of a sinner who delights in iniquity: he cannot be pleased with it if he thinks it evil; he cannot endure it, without believing this proposition, That there is in lust or drunkenness, pleasure and good enough to make amends for the intolerable pains of damnation: this enlarged on. Such is the sinner's philosophy. And no wiser are his hopes: he hopes without a promise, and believes that he shall have mercy for which he never had a revelation.

There are some sins whose very formality is a lie. Superstition could not exist, if men believed that God was good and wise, free and merciful: no man would dare to do in private, what he fears to do publicly, if he knew and thought that God sees him there, and will bring that work of darkness into light, &c.

We need not thrust into this account other evils that are the events of ignorance, but introduced by sin; such as are, our being moved by what we see strongly, and weakly by what we understand; by fables rather than syllogisms, by parables than by demonstrations, by examples than precepts, by shadows than by substances: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. Sin naturally makes a man weak, that is, unapt to do noble things; by which is not understood a natural disability; for it is equally ready for a man to will good as well as evil; and the understanding is convinced, and the hand can obey, and the passions can be directed to God's service: but because they are not used to it, the will finds a difficulty to do them violence, &c. There is a law in the members, and he that gave that law is a tyrant, and the subjects of it are slaves: this subject enlarged on; and the difficulty of breaking loose from wicked habits shown. Two things instanced, which seem great aggravations of the slavery and weakness of a customary sinner.

1. The first is, that men sin against their interest: they know they shall be ruined by it; that it will undo their estates, ruin their fortunes, destroy their body, impoverish their spirit, confound their reason, and destroy their hopes; but the evil custom still remains.

2. The second is, that custom prevails against experience. Though the man hath already smarted, though he hath been disgraced and undone, though he is turned out of service and unemployed, though he begs with a load of old sins on his back, yet this will not cure an evil custom: this topic dilated on.

Now this is such a state of slavery, that persons who are sensible, ought to complain that they serve lords worse than Egyptian task-masters. The abject slavery of sinners exemplified in various instances.

3. Sin naturally introduces a great baseness on the spirit, expressed in Scripture sometimes, by the devil's entering into a man; as in the case of Judas. So St. Cyprian speaks of those who after baptism lapsed into foul crimes. Men fall by this means into sins, of which there can be no reason given, which no excuse can lessen, which are set off by no pleasure, advanced by no temptation, and which deceive by no allurements: instances of such given. Progress of a sinner, and the wretched state of a confirmed one described.

PART III.

Although these are shameful effects of sin, and a man need no greater dishonor than to be a fool, a slave, and a base person, yet there are some sins which are directly shameful in their nature and proper disrepute: a great many are the worst and basest in several respects; that is, every one of them has a venomous quality of its own. Thus the devil's sin was the worst, because it came from the greatest malice; Adam's, because it was of most universal dissemination; Judas's, because it was against the most excellent person: this topic enlarged on. There is a strange poison in the nature of sin, that of so many sorts, every one of them should be the worst. Every sin has an evil spirit of its own, to manage, to conduct, and to embitter it: yet to some sins shame is more appropriate, and a proper ingredient in their constitution: such are lying, and lust, and vow-breaking, and inconstancy. Lust makes a man afraid of public eyes and common voices; it is a work of darkness; it debauches the spirit, and makes it to fall off from courage, resolution, constancy, and freedom. The shame which attends this vice more fully dilated on.

We see the existence of this degeneracy in sad experience. What arguments, what preaching, what necessity can persuade men to confess their sins? So ashamed are they, that they prefer concealing them before their remedy; although in penitential confession the shame is going off: but such is the fate of sin, that the shame grows more and more; we lie to men, and we excuse it to God.

If then we remember how ambitious we are for fame, honor, and reputation all our days, and when our days are gone; and that no ingenuous man can enjoy any thing if he lives in disgrace, let us consider, what an evil condition we are put into by sin; which renders us not only disparaged and despised here, but unpitied and dishonored in our graves; where indeed our disgrace will not sleep, but will cover us with shame and confusion, in the sight of men and angels, before the tribunal of God. Dreadful state of the sinner at that time dilated on.

III. Third general consideration. There is one other great cir-

cumstance of the shame of sin, which enlarges the evil of it; the added wrath of God. The rod of God, which 'cometh not into the lot of the righteous,' strikes the sinner with sore strokes of vengeance.

1. The first of these noticed, is that aggravation of the shame of sin, which consists in the impossibility of concealment, in most cases of heinous crimes. No wicked man that dwelt and delighted in sin, did ever go off from the scene of his unworthiness without a vile character: the intolerable apprehensions of sinners themselves, and the slightest circumstances lay open the cabinet of sin, and bring to light all that was transacted behind the curtains of night: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. A second superinduced consequence of sin, brought on it by the wrath of God, is sin. When God punishes sin with sin, he is extremely angry; for then the punishment is not medicinal, but final and exterminating. One evil invites another; and when God is angry, and withdraws his grace, and the Holy Spirit is grieved, and departs from his dwelling, the man is left at the mercy of the merciless enemy, who will receive him only with variety of mischiefs: the terrible state of such a sinner commented on.

3. Sin brings in its train fearful plagues and evil angels, messengers of the displeasure of God: of this the experience is so great and the examples so frequent, that it need not be dilated on. But one thing is remarkable; that God, even when he forgives the sin, reserves such remains of punishment, even to the best persons, as to show that every sinner is in a worse condition than he dreams of. Instances of this in the case of David, Zedekiah, and others, from profane history, &c. So much, and more is due to sin: and though Christ hath redeemed our souls, so that, if we repent, we shall not die eternally, yet he hath no where promised that we shall not be smitten.

Two appendages to this consideration. 1. That there are some mischiefs which are the proper and appointed scourges of certain sins: each has a punishment of its own which usually attends it, as giddiness does a drunkard: this enlarged on and illustrated. 2. That there are some states of sin, which expose a man to all mischief, by taking off every guard and defence, driving the good spirit from him, and stripping him of the guardianship of angels. This is the effect of habitual sin, of an evil course of life; and it is called in Scripture *a grieving of the good Spirit of God*: this dilated on. Concluding remarks on the deadly nature and lamentable evils of sin.

SERMON IX.

THE GOOD AND EVIL TONGUE.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. IV. VERSE 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

PART I.

PRELIMINARY observations on the prudence of holding one's peace. But by the use of the tongue God has distinguished us from beasts; and by the well or ill using it we are distinguished from one another; and therefore, although silence be perfectly innocent, yet it is rather the state of death than life. The tongue, in fact, is the band of human intercourse, and makes men apt to unite in societies: by it we sing the praises of God; by it our tables are made to differ from mangers, our cities from deserts, our churches from herds of cattle, &c. But the tongue is a fountain both of bitter waters and of pleasant: it sends forth blessing and cursing: it praises God, and rails at men, &c. This topic dilated on. Subjects of discourse proposed. 1. The vices of the tongue. 2. Its duty and proper employment.

I. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth: πᾶς ὁ σαπρὸς λόγος* corrupt or 'filthy' communication: so we read it; and it seems properly to note such communication as ministers to wantonness: this topic enlarged on.

But the word which the Apostle uses means more than this: meanings of the word *σαπρὸς* given; by which it is shown that we are forbidden to use all language that is in any sense corrupted, unreasonable, or useless; language proceeding from old iniquity or evil habits, called, in the style of Scripture, *the remains of the old man*, &c. Under this is forbidden, 1. Useless, vain, and trifling conversation: 2. Slander and calumny: 3. Dissolute, wanton, tempting conversation; and its worst ingredient, flattery.

I. First of trifling, vain, and useless conversation. *Let no vain communication proceed out of your mouth.* The first part of this inordination is *talking too much*; concerning which, because there is no rule or just measure for the quantity, discourse must take its estimate by the matter and end, and must change according to its circumstances and appendages. This point illustrated. Evils of *talking over much* considered; as well as the nature of *idle words*, such as are not useful to edification and instruction. Remarks on the expression, *every word that is idle, or empty of business.*

The case of conscience stated in this matter: I. That the words of our blessed Saviour, being spoken to the Jews, were intended as they best and most commonly understood them; and by *vain* they understood *false* or *lying*, not useless or imprudent, &c. II. Of

every idle word we shall give account; but yet so, that sometimes the judgment shall fall on the words, not on the persons, who shall merely have no honor or fair return from such discourses. III. If all unprofitable discourses be reckoned for idle words, and put on the account, yet even the capacities of profit are so large and numerous, that no man hath cause to complain that his tongue is too much restrained by this severity: this topic enlarged on. IV. Although in the latitude thus given, a man's *discourse* may be free and safe from judgment, yet *he himself* is not, unless he designs it, by an habitual and general purpose, to good and wise ends: concerning which he may, by the following measures, best take his accounts:

1. Let him speak nothing that can minister to vice, willingly and by observation.

2. If any thing be of a suspicious and dubious nature, let him decline to publish it.

3. Let him, by a prudent moral care, watch over his words.

4. Let him offer up to God in his prayers all his words, and then look to it, that he speak nothing unworthy to be offered.

5. Let him often interweave discourses of religion, glorifications of God, instructions to his brethren, &c. not only to sanctify the order of his discourses, but to call him back to retirement and sober thoughts, lest he wander and be carried off too far into the wild regions of impertinence.

V. This account is not to be taken by little traverses and intercourses of speech; but by greater measures, and more discernible portions; such as are commensurate to valuable portions of our time, for which every man is sure to be called to account: this topic enlarged on; and the evils of much talking pointed out.

These and many more such have given great advantages to silence, and made it to be esteemed an act of discipline and great religion: recommendation and practice of it among the ancients and early Christians, &c.

PART II.

Hitherto general excess in talking has been considered, without mention made of particulars. But because it is a principle and parent of much evil, it is with great caution to be cured, and the evil consequences will quickly disband. Some considerations on this point proposed.

1. Plutarch advises that 'such men should give themselves to writing:' but the experience of the world has confuted this.

2. Some advise, that such persons should associate with grave and wise men, before whom the better parts of discourse only are usually brought forward. And this is apt to give assistance by the help of modesty, &c.

3. A consideration of the dangers and consequent evils hath some efficacy to restrain loose talking, by the help of fear and prudent apprehension, &c.

4. Some advise that such persons should change their speech into business and action : but these are not sufficient for the cure alone, unless we add retirement : this shown.

5. Others advise that the employment of the tongue be changed into religion ; and if there be an *itch of talking*, let it be in matters of religion, pious discourses, &c. But this cure will, it is feared, be improper or insufficient : for in prayers, &c. a multitude of words is sometimes foolish, often dangerous ; and of all things we must beware not to offer unto God *the sacrifice of fools*, &c.

6. But God's grace is sufficient to all that will make use of it ; and there is no cure for this evil, but the direct obeying of counsel, and submitting to precept, and fearing the divine threatening ; always remembering, that *of every word a man speaks, he shall give account*, &c.

The vain tongue, and the trifling conversation, have some proper evils ; as, 1. *Stultiloquium*, or the speaking like a fool ; 2. *Scurrilitas*, or immoderate and absurd jesting ; 3. The revealing of secrets.

1. Concerning stultiloquy, it is to be observed that the masters of spiritual life mean not the talk and useless babble of weak and ignorant persons, &c. but the *lubricum verbi*, as St. Ambrose calls it, ' the slipping with the tongue,' by which prating persons betray the vanity of their spirit, and discover *the hidden man of the heart*. No prudence is a sufficient guard, when a man is in perpetual floods of talk ; and hence it comes that at every corner of the mouth a folly peeps out, or a mischief creeps in. A little pride and a great deal of vanity will soon escape, and many men will soon talk themselves into anger, &c.

2. Concerning scurrility, or foolish jesting, the Apostle so joins it with the former, *μωρολογία*, *foolish speaking*, &c. that some think this to be explicative of the other : reason given why this seems to be so. Subject dilated on, and illustrated. It should be considered how miserable every sinner is, if he does not deeply and truly repent ; and how discordant with such repentance is foolish, inconsiderate jesting. But the whole state of the question is thus briefly stated.

1. If jesting be unseasonable, it is also intolerable. 2. If it be inordinate, it is also criminal. 3. If it be in an ordinary person, it is dangerous ; if in an eminent, consecrated, or wise man, it is scandalous. 4. If the matter be not of an indifferent nature, it becomes sinful by giving countenance to vice, or ridicule to virtue. 5. If it be not watched, so that it complies with all that hear, it becomes offensive and injurious. 6. If it be not intended to fair and lawful purposes, it is sour in the using. 7. If it be frequent, it combines and clusters into formal sin. 8. If it mingles with any sin, it puts on its nature, &c.

Instances given of eminent men in the ancient church whose conversation was cheerful and pleasant : usefulness of this descanted on. But when the jest hath teeth and nails ; when it is loose, wanton, and unseasonable ; when it serves ill purposes, or spends better time ; it is then the drunkenness of the soul, &c.

But above all the abuses which dishonor the tongues of men,

nothing more deserves the whip of an exterminating angel, or the stings of scorpions, than profane jesting; which is a bringing of the Spirit of God to partake of the follies of man: this topic enlarged on.

3. The third instance of vain, trifling conversation, and immoderate talking, is the revealing of secrets; which is a dismantling and rending of the robe from the privacies of human intercourse. The evils of this practice enumerated. In one case it puts on new circumstances of deformity; when he that ministers to the souls of men, shall publish the secrets of a conscience, turning an accuser, weakening the heart of penitents, and driving them from their remedy by making it intolerable: this topic enlarged on.

The proper evils of the vain and trifling tongue have been enumerated: but hither also some other irregularities of speech are to be referred, although they are of a mixed nature.

1. The first of these is common swearing, against which St. Chrysostom spends twenty homilies; and by the number and weight of arguments hath left this testimony: that it is a foolish vice, but hard to be cured; infinitely unreasonable, but strangely prevailing, &c.: this topic fully dilated on.

2. The next appendage of vain and trifling speech is contention, wrangling, and perpetual talk, proceeding from the spirit of contradiction; the clamors and noises of which folly St. Paul reproveth: *Let all bitterness and clamor be put away.* Conclusion.

PART III.

OF SLANDER AND FLATTERY.

II. The mischiefs above cited from vain and foolish talking, are inferior to two which remain behind: 1. The spirit of detraction: 2. The spirit of flattery. The first is vile, but the second is worse; the very poison of the soul: and both are to be avoided like death itself.

1. Let no calumny, no slandering, &c. proceed out of your mouth. The first sort of this is that which the Apostle calls *whispering*; which means to abuse our neighbor secretly, by telling a private story about him; wherein the man plays a sure game, as he supposes; doing a mischief without a witness. Evils of this crime enlarged on, as the destroyer of friendship, of the peace of families, of the vital parts of charity, &c.

2. But such tongues as these, where they dare, and where they safely can, love to speak louder; and then it is *detraction*; when men, under the color of friendship, will wound a person's reputation, speaking some things of him fairly, in order that they may be believed without suspicion when they speak evil: this topic illustrated. This is what the Apostle calls *προνήσιαν*, a *crafty and deceitful way of hurting*, which renders a man's tongue as venomous as that of a serpent.

3. But the next sort is more violent; and that is, *railing* or *reviling*; which is often the vice of boys and rich men, proceeding from folly or pride. This is that evil which possessed those of whom the Psalmist speaks: *Our tongues are our own; we are they that ought to speak: who is Lord over us?* But St. James declares that *the tongue is an unruly member which no man can tame.* Our blessed Saviour, in restraining this hostility of the tongue, threatens hell fire to them that call their brother *fool*: evils of this practice farther dilated on.

4. The fourth instance of *calumniating*, filthy communication, is that which we properly call slander; the inventing evil things, or falsely imputing crimes to our neighbor. This is the direct murder of the tongue; for life and death (says the Hebrew proverb) are in the hand of the tongue: this topic illustrated: peculiar evils of it pointed out; as that it lies in the face of heaven, and abuses the ears of justice; it oppresses the innocent, defeats all the charity of laws, and calls on the name and testimony of God to seal an injury, &c.

5. The last instance of this evil now represented is *cursing*; concerning which this may be said, that although the causeless curse shall return on the tongue that spake it, yet, because very often there is a fault on both sides, when there is reviling or cursing on either, the danger of a cursing tongue is highly to be declined, as the biting of a mad dog, or the tongue of a smitten serpent. This topic enlarged on.

III. The third part of filthy communication, that in which the devil does the most mischief, is the spirit of *flattery*. Evils of this vice in common cases dilated on: but he that persuades his friend, who is unchaste in morals, that he is a holy and pure person; or that his looseness is a sign of a quick spirit, &c. this man hath given the greatest advantage to his friend's mischief; he hath made it grow in all the dimensions of the sin, till it becomes intolerable, and perhaps unpardonable. And what a fearful destruction and contradiction of friendship is this! the topic enlarged on. Various species of flattery described; for example, 1. Some flatter by giving great names, and propounding great examples; as the Egyptians hung a tumbler's rope on their prince, and a piper's whistle, because they called their Ptolemy by the name of Apollo, their god of music.

2. Others flatter by imitation, encouraging vice by making it popular and common.

3. Some pretend rusticity, or downright plainness, and on the confidence of that they humor their friend's vice, and flatter him to his ruin.

4. Some will dispraise themselves, that their friend may think better of himself, or less severely of his faults.

5. Others will reprove their friend for a trifle, as if that were all; for an honest man would have told him the worst. •

6. Some will laugh and make a sport of vice, and hear a friend's narrative of his adultery, or drunkenness, &c. with merriment; as if the everlasting ruin of his friend were a very good jest.

One caution in this case, however, is to be observed, viz. that we

do not think all praise given to our friend to be flattery ; for sometimes praise is the best conveyance for a precept and the encourager of infant virtue. Concluding remarks.

PART IV.

THE DUTIES OF THE TONGUE.

It was an old proverb, that ‘men teach us to speak, and God teaches us to hold our tongue.’ Advantages of proper silence dilated on. Plutarch said well, that ‘to be taught first to be silent, then to speak well and handsomely, is education fit for a prince.’ And that is St. Paul’s method here : first we are taught how to restrain our tongues, in the foregoing instances ; and now we are called on to employ them in religion.

We must speak *that which is good* ; any thing that may serve the ends of God and of our neighbor, in the measures of religion and usefulness : this topic enlarged on ; whereby it is shown that our speech must be such, *that it may minister grace*, something that may please and profit men, according as they shall need ; all which is reduced to these three heads : to instruct, to comfort, to reprove.

1. Our conversation must be *διδακτικός*, ‘apt to teach :’ for since all our hopes depend on obedience to God, and all obedience is grounded in faith, and faith is founded naturally in the understanding, it is not only reasonably to be expected, but is experimentally felt, that in weak and ignorant understandings, there are no sufficient supports for the vigor of a holy life : he therefore that carries to the understanding of his brother notices of faith, inferences of spiritual propositions, and arguments of the Spirit, forwards him in the work and practices of a holy life : this topic dilated on.

2. Our conversation must be *παράκλητος*, *apt to comfort* the disconsolate : nor can men here below feel greater charity than this : for since half the duty of a Christian in this life consists in the exercise of passive graces, God hath sent some angels into the world, whose office is to refresh the sorrows of the poor, and to lighten the eyes of the disconsolate : he hath made some creatures whose powers are chiefly ordained to comfort. But this is not all. The third person of the Holy Trinity is known to us by the name and dignity of the *Holy Ghost, the Comforter* ; and God glories in being *the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort* : therefore to minister in this office, is to imitate the charities of heaven ; and God hath fitted mankind for it : this subject enlarged on.

3. Our communication must in its just season be *ἐλεγκτικός* : *we must reprove our sinning brother ; for the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy*, says Solomon : we imitate the office of the great Shepherd, if we go *to seek and save that which was lost* : and it is a fearful thing to see a friend going to hell undisturbed, when the arresting him in his horrid progress may possibly make him to return : subject enlarged on. In the performance of this useful duty, the following measures are fit to be observed.

1. Let not your reproof be public and personal. If it be public, it must be general; if it be personal, it must be in private: and this is expressly commanded by our Saviour. But this caution is not always necessary; as in the case of a public and authorised person; where the crime is great, but not understood to be any at all; where certain circumstances of person allow it, as in the case of a bishop, &c.

2. Do not usually reprove thy brother for every thing; but for great things only: since that is the office of a tutor, not of a friend; and few men will suffer themselves to abide always under pupillage.

3. Use not liberty of reproof in the days of sorrow and affliction: for the calamity itself is sufficient to chastise the gaities of sinning persons, and bring them to repentance, though it may be fit to insinuate a mention of the cause of that sorrow, in order to repentance and a cure: but severe and biting language is then out of season.

4. Avoid all evil appendages of this liberty: for to reprove a sinning brother is, at best, but an invidious employment, though a charitable one; therefore we must not make it hateful by adding reproach, scorn, violent expressions, scurrility or bitter invectives: this topic enlarged on.

To the foregoing measures this piece of advice is lastly added; that no man should, at that time when he is reprov'd, give counsel and reproof to his reprover: for this betrays an angry spirit, makes discord out of piety, and changes charity to wrangling.

Persuasives for men to use proper reproof, and for others to suffer it.

If it be asked whether every man is bound to reprove every person, if he sins, and he converse with him; it is answered, that if it should be so, it were to no purpose, and for it there is no commandment. Every man that can, may instruct him that wants it; but every man may not reprove him that is already instructed. Conclusion.

SUMMARIES OF SERMONS

PREACHED AT GOLDEN GROVE.

SERMON I.

WHITSUNDAY.—OF THE SPIRIT OF GRACE.

ROMANS, CHAP. VIII. VERSES 9, 10.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.

PART I.

THE day in which the Church commemorates the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, was the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ; the first day that his religion was professed; when the Apostles opened their commission, and read it to all the people. *The Lord gave his Spirit (or his word), and great was the company of the preachers.* Observations on this change of *spirit* for *word*. The gospel is called *the Spirit*.

1. Because it contains such glorious mysteries, which were revealed by the immediate inspirations of the Spirit, not only in the matter, but also in the manner, and powers to comprehend them. This point explained and illustrated.

2. But when we had been taught all these mysteries, we could not, by any human power, have understood them, unless the Spirit of God had given us a new light, created in us a new capacity, and made us to be new creatures: this topic enlarged on.

3. The gospel is called *Spirit*, because it consists of spiritual promises and spiritual precepts; making all that embrace it truly, to become spiritual men: and therefore St. Paul adds an epithet, and calls it *a quickening Spirit, &c.*

4. But, beyond this, is the reason which is the consummation of all the faithful. The gospel is called *the Spirit*, because by it God has given us not only *the spirit of manifestation*, but *the Spirit of confirmation, or obsignation*, to all that believe and obey; that is, the power of God is come on our hearts, by which we are made sure, in the nature of the thing, of a glorious inheritance: this topic enlarged on and explained.

Meaning of the phrase, *in the Spirit*, given, viz. to be in the power of the Spirit: this explained and illustrated: excellent state

of a person who is thus in the Spirit, or in subjection to the Spirit. They that strive to be quit of this subjection love the liberty of out-laws, and the licentiousness of anarchy, &c. He that is in the Spirit, is under tutors and governors, until the appointed time of the Father, just as all great heirs are; only the first seizure which the Spirit makes is on the will. He that loves the yoke of Christ and the discipline of the gospel, is in the Spirit; that is, in the Spirit's power. On this foundation the Apostle has built two propositions: 1. Whosoever hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, &c.: 2. Whosoever is in Christ is dead to sin, and lives to the Spirit of Christ, &c.

I. All that belong to Christ have the Spirit of Christ. Immediately before the ascension, our Saviour bid his disciples *tarry at Jerusalem, till they should receive the promise of the Father*. Whoever stay at Jerusalem, and are in the actual communion of the Church of God, shall certainly receive this promise; for *it is made to as many as God shall call*. Manner in which the Spirit was formerly given described. But in the gospel, it is given without measure, &c.; so that Moses's wish is fulfilled; and all the Lord's people are prophets in some sense or other.

In the wisdom of the ancients it was observed, that there are four great cords which tie the heart of man to vanity and corruption; viz. pleasure, pain, fear, and desire: so that men are tempted, 1. To lust by pleasure; 2. To baser arts by covetousness; 3. To impatience by sorrow; 4. To dishonorable actions by fear: and this was the state of man by nature, and under the law, and for ever, until the Spirit of God came, and, by four special operations, cured these four inconveniences.

1. God gave us his Spirit, that we might be insensible to worldly pleasures, having our souls wholly filled with spiritual and heavenly relishes. A man that hath tasted of God's Spirit, can instantly discern the madness that is in rage, the folly and disease that are in envy, the anguish that results from lust, &c.; and he understands things truly as they are; that is, that charity is the greatest nobleness in the world, temperance the best security of health, and that religion has the truest pleasures. And all these relishes are but the antipasts of heaven, &c.

And when once we have tasted of the Spirit of God, no food but that of angels, no cup but that of salvation is agreeable to us. And there is no greater external testimony that we are in the Spirit, and that the Spirit dwells in us, than if we find joy and spiritual pleasure in the greatest mysteries of our religion: this subject fully enlarged on.

2. The Spirit of God is given to all who truly belong to Christ, as an antidote against sorrows, against impatience, against the evil accidents of the world, and against the sinking of our spirits under the cross. There are noted in Scripture two births, besides the natural: the first is, to be born of water and of the Spirit; the second is, to be born of the Spirit and of fire: to these may be added a third, or an operation of the new birth, but the same spirit, the Spirit

of rejoicing. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, &c.* There is a certain joy and spiritual rejoicing that accompanies them in whom the Holy Ghost dwells; a joy in the midst of sorrow, given to allay the pain of secular troubles, and to alleviate the burthen of persecution. This topic dilated on to the end.

PART II.

3. The Spirit of God is given to us as an antidote against evil concupiscences and sinful desires; and is then called *the Spirit of prayer and supplication*. Ever since the affections of the outer man prevailed on the ruins of the soul, all our desires grew sensual, and therefore hurtful: for ever after our body grew to be our enemy. In the looseness of nature and ignorance of philosophy, men used to pray, with their hands full of rapine, and hearts full of malice; and they prayed accordingly.

The Jews were better taught; but God gave the Spirit to them only in single rays: this subject enlarged on. But God hath poured his Spirit into our hearts, *the Spirit of prayer and supplication*. And now,

1. Christians *pray in spirit*, with sighs and groans; and know that God, who dwells within them, can as clearly distinguish those secret accents, as he knows the voice of his own thunder.

2. Likewise *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought*: it hath taught us that happiness cannot consist merely in freedom from afflictions, but in patience, resignation, and noble sufferance, &c.

3. Whereas only a Moses or a Samuel, a John or the Messias himself, could describe and indite forms of prayer to the accent of Heaven; now every wise and good man is instructed perfectly by the Scriptures what to ask for, &c.

4. The Spirit of God hath made our services to be spiritual, holy, the effects of choice and religion, the consequence of a spiritual sacrifice, and of a holy union with God. The prayer of a Christian is with the effects of the Spirit of sanctification: and this is by St. James called *the prayer of faith*, which is said to be certain to prevail.

5. The Spirit gives to us great relish and appetite for prayers: and this St. Paul calls *servings of God in his Spirit*; that is, with a willing mind: and they who pray from custom only, or with trouble and unwillingness, &c. give a great testimony that they have not the Spirit of Christ within them; that Spirit which maketh intercession for the saints.

6. The Spirit of Christ and of prayer helps our infirmities, by giving us confidence and importunity; for as is our faith and trust in God, so is our hope, and so is our prayer; weary or lasting, long or short, not in words, but in works and in desires; for the words are no part of the spirit of prayer: this consists in holy desires and holy actions.

7. Some men have thought of a seventh way, and explain our praying in the Spirit by a mere volubility of language; which is directly to undervalue the Spirit of God and of Christ, to return to the materiality and imperfection of the law, to retire from Christ to Moses, from real graces to imaginary gifts: this topic fully dilated on.

Thus have been described the effluxes of the Holy Spirit on us in his great channels. But the great effect of them is this; that as by the acts of the spirits of darkness and our own malice our souls are rendered carnal, that is, servants to the passions and desires of the flesh; so, on the other side, by the grace of God, and *promise of the Father*, and influences of the Holy Ghost, our souls are recovered from that degradation, and transformed into a new nature: this subject is next to be considered.

II. As soon as the tyrant sin is overcome, and a new heart is put into us, instantly we have a new name given us, and we are esteemed a new creation, having a new nature within us. This may seem strange; but it is one of the great mysteries of the gospel. Every man naturally consists of soul and body; but every Christian man who belongs to Christ, has more; for he has body, soul, and spirit. The text is plain on this head; *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*. And by Spirit is meant not merely the graces of God and his gifts, enabling us to do holy things; but the *Spirit of adoption*, through Christ, by which we are made sons of God, capable of a new state, intitled to another mode of duration, &c.: this subject fully dilated on.

This very mystery itself is the greatest possible encouragement to us in our duty, and by way of thankfulness. *He that gives great things, ought to have great acknowledgements*. If the fire be quenched, the fire of God's Spirit, God will kindle another in his anger that shall never be quenched: but if we entertain God's Spirit with our own purities, employ it diligently, and serve it willingly, then we shall be turned into spiritual beings.

If this be a new principle, and be given us in order to the actions of a holy life, we must take care that we receive not *the Spirit of God in vain*, and remember that it is a new life. *Every man hath within him either the Spirit of God or the spirit of the devil*: this topic enlarged on and illustrated. Here is a greater argument for a holy life than Moses had when addressing the children of Israel; *Behold I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*: this said Moses: but by this Scripture is set before us the good Spirit and the bad, God and the devil: we have to choose unto whose nature we will be likened, and into whose inheritance we will be adopted: this topic enlarged on.

The purport of this discourse stated to be, that since the Spirit of God is a new nature, we are thereby taught and enabled to serve God, by a constant course of holy living, without the frequent returns and interventions of such actions as men call *sins of infirmity*. Whosoever hath the Spirit of God, lives the life of grace; the Spirit of God rules in him, and is strong, and allows not such

sins which we think unavoidable : this topic enlarged on, and the question more particularly considered.

1. No great sin is a sin of infirmity, or excusable on that score : though indeed every sin may be said to be a sin of infirmity, in some sense or other. When a man is in the state of spiritual sickness or death, he is in a state of infirmity, a prisoner, a slave, weak in his judgment, impotent in his passions, &c. : but he that is thus in infirmity cannot be excused ; for it is the aggravation of the state of his sin : such a one is the servant of sin, a slave to the devil, and heir to corruption ; that is, he hath not the Spirit of Christ in him ; for *where the Son is, there is liberty* : this topic enlarged on.

2. Sins of infirmity, as they are small in their instance, so they put on their degree of excusableness only according to the weakness or infirmity of a man's understanding : this enlarged on.

3. The violence or strength of temptation is not sufficient to excuse an action, if it leaves the understanding still able to judge ; because a temptation cannot have any proper strength, but from ourselves, &c.

4. No habitual sin, which is repented of and committed again, is excusable under a pretence of infirmity ; but that sin is certainly noted, and certainly condemned, and therefore returns, not because of the weakness of nature, but of grace : the principle of this is an evil spirit, an habitual aversion to God, a dominion of sin : this topic enlarged on. Concluding remarks.

SERMON II.

THE DESCENDING AND ENTAILED CURSE CUT OFF.

EXODUS, CHAP. XX. VERSES 5, 6.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

PART I.

A MAN would not think it necessary that a commonwealth should hire orators to dissuade men from running into houses infected by the plague ; yet God has hired servants to fight against sin, and advocates to plead against it ; has made laws against it, and established a peculiar order of men to give an alarm at every approach of it. God hath edged sin about with thorns ; and sin of itself too brings thorns, &c. Moreover, it moves God first to jealousy, which takes off his friendship towards us ; and then to anger, which makes

him a resolved enemy : it also brings evil, not only on ourselves, but on our children, relatives, and posterity. If all this will not deter a man from sin, there is no hope left for his recovery ; but he must sink under the strokes of a jealous God.

God is a jealous God.—That is the first and great stroke he aims against sin. He speaks after the manner of men ; and in this we know that he is jealous, suspicious, inquisitive, and, lastly, implacable. 1. God is pleased to represent himself as a person very suspicious both in respect of persons and things, for which we give him cause enough : this fully shown. 2. And therefore he is inquisitive : he looks for that which he would fain never find, and so sets spies on us : this enlarged on and illustrated. These spies, the blessed angels and the accursed devils, good and bad men, our own conscience, the eye of Heaven, and God himself, all watch lest we rob God of his honor, and ourselves of our hopes ; for he hath chosen so to get his own glory, as may best consist with our felicity. But, 3. his jealousy hath a sadder effect than this : all this is for mercy ; but if we provoke his jealousy, if he finds us fixed in our spiritual transgressions, he is implacable, that is, he is angry with us to eternity, unless we return in time : and if we do, it may be that he will not be appeased in all instances ; when he forgives he makes some reservations ; he will punish us in our persons or estate, in our bodies or our children ; for *God visits the sins of the fathers on the children*. This is the second great stroke he aims against sin, and is now to be considered.

That God doth so is certain, because he saith he doth : and that this is just in him, is also as certain, because he doth it. But since God is pleased to speak after the manner of men, it may consist with our duty to inquire into the equity of this proceeding.

1. No man is made a sinner by the fault of another man, without his own consent ; for to every one God gives his choice, and sets life and death before all the sons of Adam ; and therefore this death is not a consequence to any sin but our own. And it is not said that *sin* passed on all men, but *death* : the death brought in by sin was nothing superinduced to man ; man was only reduced to his own natural condition, from which, before Adam's fall, he stood exempted by supernatural favor : also, before any man died, Christ was promised, by whom death was to lose his sting, and cease to be an evil ; and it does cease to be so to all who follow Christ. Hence the divine justice is vindicated in this matter. The material part of the evil came on us from our first father ; but the formality of it, the sting and the curse, is only from ourselves.

2. For the fault of others many may become miserable ; even all, or any of those whose relation is such to the sinner, that he in any sense may, by such inflictions, be punished or oppressed : in this case the influence is perceived ; the sin is infectious, not only in example, but in punishment. With respect to this, it is to be shown, 1. In what instances it is so : 2. For what reasons it is justly so : 3. In what degrees, and in what cases, it is so : 4. What remedies there are for this evil.

I. It is so in kingdoms, in churches, in families, in political, artificial, and even in accidental societies. This instanced in the case of the people whom David numbered; of the Gibeonites, Joshua, and Saul; in that of Saul's sons; of Ahab and his sons; of Solomon and the son of Bathsheba; of the family of Eli; in that of Cham and his posterity; of Amalek and his nation; and above all, in that of the Jews, who put to death the Lord of life: this dreadful example enlarged on. With regard to churches, the state of the seven churches in Asia is instanced. In addition, it may be remarked, that there is even danger to those who are in evil company, in suspected places, in the society and fellowship of wicked men: instances given.

II. The next consideration is, why this is so, and why it is justly so. First, then, between kings and their people, parents and their children, there is so great a necessitude and natural intercourse, &c. that the latter are by God and the laws of nature reckoned as the goods and blessings of the former: this enlarged on; and the severity of punishment when these our goods and blessings are injured or taken away from us. 2. As this is a punishment to us, so it is not unjust to them, though they be innocent; since the calamities of the world are incident to all, even the most godly persons: this enlarged on; moreover, they themselves may be sanctified by sorrows, and purified by affliction, and receive the blessing of it, &c. 3. God hath many ends of providence to serve in this dispensation of his judgments: he expresses the highest indignation against sin, and makes his examples lasting and most efficacious: it arrests the spirits of men, and restrains their looseness, &c. it serves to satisfy the fearfulness of such persons as think the wicked prosperous, and the proud happy: this explained and enlarged on.

III. The third consideration is, in what degree, and in what cases, this is usual, or to be expected. In the text it is instanced in the worship of images: and he who is so jealous of his honor in this particular, is also very curious of it in all others; and though the children are more solemnly threatened with punishment in this sin, yet we find it inflicted indifferently in any other great one.

One thing is strictly to be observed, that the wrath of God does not, as some erroneously have taught, descend only on children who imitate their fathers' wickedness: this is expressly against the text, and the examples of the thing. God afflicts good children of evil parents for the sins of their fathers. And this hath been observed even by wise men among the heathens: instances cited: and this was so in the case of Jonathan, who lost the throne of Israel and his life, on account of the sins of Saul. What has been said in vindication of divine justice need not be repeated. But so it is in the world. The posterity of a traitor become dishonorable and beggars. The subject enlarged on: the natural effects of sin, in the constitution of the body entailed on children, considered. The great preservative which this ought to be against every species of vice. Concluding exhortations.

PART II.

IV. Fourth consideration ; namely, what remedies there are for sons to cut off this entail of curses ; and whether, or by what means, it is possible for them to prevent the being punished for the sins of their fathers. And since this matter is so perplexed and intricate, it cannot but be thought, that there are ways left, not only to vindicate God's justice, but to reconcile man's condition to the possibilities of God's usual mercies.

The first means to cut off the entail of wrath from a family, is, for the sons to disavow those actions of impiety in which their fathers were deeply guilty. A son comes to inherit his father's wickedness in three ways : 1. By approving, or any ways consenting to his father's sin, as by speaking of it without shame, pleasing himself in the story, or being apt to do the like : 2. By imitation and direct practice ; when the curse is likely to come with accumulation : 3. By receiving and enjoying the purchases of his father's rapine and oppression, &c.

Now, in all these cases, the rule holds. If the son inherits the sin, he cannot call it unjust if he inherit the punishment. But to break the fatal chain of God's anger, a son is tied in all these cases to disavow his father's crime. But because the cases are several, he must also in several manners do it.

1. Every man is bound not to glory in, or to speak honorably of, the powerful and unjust actions of his ancestors : this topic enlarged on. Children are bound to pray to God to sanctify, to cure, to forgive their parents : this also enlarged on.

2. Those curses which descend from the fathers to the children by imitation, are to be cut off by special and personal repentance and prayer, as being a state directly opposite to that which procured the curse : but it must be observed, that no merely public or imaginative disavowal, no ceremonial and pompous recission of the fathers' crimes, can avail to interrupt the succession of the curse, if the children do secretly practise or approve, what they in pretence or ceremony disavow : this illustrated in the case of the Pharisees : *Wo unto you, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.*

3. But concerning the third case there is more difficulty. Those persons that inherit their fathers' sins by possessing the price of their fathers' souls, namely, by enjoying their unjust possessions, may quit the inheritance of the curse if they quit the purchase of the sin ; namely, if they pay their fathers' debts of justice, and of oppression. Still some measures are to be observed in this case ; nor is every man bound to give up all the land which his ancestors may have unjustly usurped. But though children of far-removed lines are not thus bound, yet others are, for various reasons. 1. Sons are tied to restore what their fathers usurped, or to make recompense for it, if the case be visible and notorious, and the oppressed party demands it : reason of this given. 2. Though by all the solemnities of law

the unjust purchase be established, and in conscience the heirs may continue to enjoy it without a new sin; yet, if we see a curse descending on the family for sake of the old oppression, or if we reasonably suspect such to be the case, then, by making all possible restitution, we may certainly remove the curse: this topic enlarged on.

The sum is this: as kingdoms and churches used to expiate the faults of others by acts of justice and censure, so the heirs and sons of families are to remove the curse descending from their fathers' lines on their house, by acts; by disavowal; by praying for pardon; by humbling themselves; by renouncing the example; by quitting all affection for the crime; by not imitating the kind of actions; and, lastly, by refusing to rejoice in the ungodly possessions.

But, secondly, after all this, cases occur, in which we find that innocent sons are punished. How may they prevent, or take off, the curse? this considered.

1. The pious children of evil parents are to stand firm on the confidence of divine grace and mercy; and on that persuasion to begin to work on a new stock: for it is as certain that a man may derive a blessing on his posterity, as that his parents could transmit a curse: by this he shall do more than escape the punishment of his father's follies: this enlarged on and illustrated.

2. But if great impiety and clamorous wickedness have stained the honor of a family, and discomposed its title to the divine mercies, it is not an ordinary piety that can restore this family: an ordinary, even course of life, full of goodness and innocence, will secure every single person in his own eternal interests; but that piety, which shall be a spring of blessings, and communicative to others, &c. must be very great and excellent: this topic enlarged on.

3. It is of great use for the securing of families, that every master of one order his life so, that his piety and virtue be as communicative as possible; namely, that he secure the religion of his family by a severe supervision and animadversion, and by cutting off all those unprofitable branches that injure the tree, &c.

4. If a curse be feared to descend on a family, let the descendants perform some heroical act of piety. Thus, if there should happen to be one martyr in it, this might reconcile the whole to God. Instance of Phineas, of the sons of Rechab, &c.

One farther piece of advice given to all parents and fathers of families, from whose loins a blessing, or a curse, may proceed; that they be particular in the matter of repentance; and after this, that they be fervent, hearty, and continual in prayer for their children, ever remembering, when they beg a blessing, that God hath put much into their hands. They that can truly bring down a blessing on their families are such only as lead a blessed life, &c. Conclusion.

SERMON III.

THE INVALIDITY OF A LATE OR DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. XIII. VERSE 16.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light (or, lest while ye look for light), he shall turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

PART I.

GOD is the eternal fountain of honor and the spring of glory; and yet he is pleased to say that our sins dishonor him, and our obedience glorifies him; though he can be really glorified by nothing but by himself and by his own instruments which he makes as mirrors to reflect his glory: thus he glorified himself in making the frame of the universe; and even when he destroyed the old world, he glorified himself in the image of his justice: but, above all, God rejoiced in his holy Son, who hath transmitted to us a great manner of the divine glorification, being to us the author and example of giving glory to God, &c.

He that hath dishonored God by his sins, hath no better way to glorify him, than by returning to his duty, and advancing the divine attributes. Concerning the philosophy of the expression *to glorify God*, much need not be said: certain it is, that, in the style of Scripture, repentance is the glorification of him; and the prophet, by calling on the people to *give God glory*, calls on them *to repent*. And this it was which Joshua said to Achan. (Josh. vii. 19.) The words of the text therefore may be read thus: *Repent of all your sins, before God cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains*. Hence we have the duty of repentance, and the time of it.

This exhortation of the prophet was always full of caution and prudence, but now is highly necessary: this shown. Certainly, nothing hath made more ample harvests for the devil, than the deferring of repentance on vain confidences, and the lessening it in extension and degree, whilst we imagine that a few tears will blot out the baseness of fifty years of impiety. For the curing of this evil, the nature of repentance is exhibited, and the inefficacy of a repentance which is deferred to a death-bed.

I. First, then, repentance implies a deep sorrow, as the beginning and introduction of this duty; not a superficial sigh or tear, but a hearty pungent sorrow: yet it must be observed that sorrow for sins is not repentance; not that duty which gives glory to God, so as to obtain of him that he will glorify us. Repentance is a great volume

of duty, and godly sorrow is but the frontispiece or title-page. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance*: sorrow is the parent, and repentance is the offspring. Our sorrow for sin is not to be estimated by our tears and sensible expressions, but by our active hatred and dereliction of sin.

2. It is a sad error among many who do some things towards repentance, that they mistake the first addresses and instruments of this part of repentance for the duty itself. Confession of sins is in order to the dereliction of them: but then confession must not be like the unlading of a ship, to take in new stowage. No confession can be of any use, but as it is an instrument of shame, humiliation, and dereliction of sin: this topic enlarged on.

3. Let us then suppose our penitent advanced thus far, as that he decrees against all sin, and in hearty purposes resolves to decline it, as having been his betrayer and destroyer: yet we must be curious (for now only the repentance properly begins) that it be not like the springings of the thorny or the high-way ground, soon up and soon down: various states of resolution commented on. That only is the beginning of a holy repentance, which goes forth into acts, whose acts enlarge into habits, and whose habits produce the fruits of a holy life.

From hence we are to take our estimate, whence our resolutions of piety must commence. He that resolves not to live well till the time comes that he must die, is as ridiculous in his great design, as he is impertinent in his intermedial purposes, and vain in his hope. How can a dying man, to any real effect, resolve to be chaste? for virtue is an act of election, and chastity is the contending against a proud imperious lust: what then does he resolve against, who can be no more tempted by his lust, than he can return to his youthful vigor? And since none of the purposes of a dying man can be reduced to act, by what law, reason, or covenant can we distinguish them from those of a lively and healthful person? this topic enlarged on. The hope of those persons shown to be vain, who go on in their evil ways till their last sickness; or whose purposes are for ever blasted with the next violent temptation, &c.

4. Lastly, suppose all be done; and that, by a long course of strict severity, mortification, and circumspection, we have overcome all our vicious, baser habits, and that we are clean and swept; yet this is but one half of repentance. To renew us, and to restore us to God's favor, *having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, we must give all diligence, and add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowlege, to knowlege temperance, to temperance patience*; (and so on) *to godliness, brotherly kindness and charity*. This is the sum total of repentance: we must not only have overcome sin, but we must, after great diligence, have acquired the habits of all those Christian graces which relate to ourselves, our neighbor, and to God: this topic pursued. Conclusion, on the difficulty of beginning a repentance which has been long delayed, &c.

PART II.

This great subject pursued; in which it is shown, 1. What parts and ingredients of repentance are assigned, when it is described in Scripture: 2. What are the absolute necessities of a holy life, and what is meant by the Scripture phrase, *to live holily*: 3. What directions or intimations we have concerning the last time of beginning to repent, or what is the longest period to which any man may venture with safety.

I. Repentance is not only an abolition and extinction of the body of sin, a bringing it to the altar, &c., but we must also *mingle gold and rich presents*, the oblation of good works and holy habits with the sacrifice; which has been already shown.

If we would see repentance in its full stature and constitution described, we shall find it to be one half of all that which God requires of Christians. Faith and repentance make up the whole duty of a Christian. Faith is a sacrifice of the understanding to God; repentance sacrifices the whole will to him: the one makes us disciples, the other servants of Jesus Christ: so that as faith contains all knowledge necessary to salvation, repentance comprehends the whole practice and working duty of a returning Christian. Whatsoever is practical, the practice of all obedience, is called in Scripture *repentance from dead works*; which means not mere sorrow from dead works, which is not sense; but supposes two terms, a conversion from dead works to living works; from *the death of sin to the life of righteousness*.

The lineaments of this great duty described out of the Old Testament; in which it is shown that there is nothing to countenance a persevering sinner, or a death-bed penitent.

The same also shown out of the New Testament. Practice of the primitive church in not admitting sinners to communion, till after a long time passed in penitence.

Repentance stated to be the institution of a philosophical and severe life, an extirpation of all impiety, a final passing through all the parts of holy living. Consideration whether this be possible on a death-bed, when a man is frightened into an involuntary, sudden, and unchosen piety. This first subject of consideration ended with a plain exhortation; that since repentance is a duty of such vast dimensions, it should not be crowded into such a narrow room that it may be stifled in its birth, &c. Reflections added: 1. That he who resolves to sin on a resolution to repent, by every act of sin makes himself more incapable of repenting, by growing more and more in love with sin, &c.: 2. To repent, signifies to be sorrowful, to be ashamed, and to wish a thing had never been done: then see the folly of this temptation; I would not sin, but that I hope to repent, that is, I hope to be sorrowful for having done it, to come to shame and self-reproach for it, &c.: 3. For it must be considered, that he who repents wishes he had never committed the sin. Does he then wish so on reason, or without reason? Surely, if he may,

when he has satisfied his lust, ask God pardon, and be admitted on as easy terms for the time to come, as if he had not done the sin, he has no reason to be sorrowful, or to wish he had not done it. But he that truly repents, wishes and would give all the world that he had never done it: surely then his present condition, in respect of his past sin, has some very great evil in it; or why else should he be so much troubled? This shown in the hard duty to which he is bound, &c. Concluding reflections on this topic.

II. On the necessity, the absolute necessity, of holy living. God hath made a covenant with us that we must give up ourselves, our bodies and souls, not a *dying*, but a *living* and healthful sacrifice. He hath forgiven all our old sins; and we have bargained to quit them, from the time we first enlisted under the banners of Christ. We have taken the sacramental oath, to *believe, obey, and keep our station*, against all adversaries, &c.

The pretence that God's commandments are impossible, shown to be false; assistance of God's grace given if we do our utmost, &c. We are to *follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*: this commented on and explained.

This then is the condition of the covenant; and it is certain that sorrow for not having done what is commanded us, and a purpose to do it, will not acquit us before God. For what purpose are all these injunctions in almost every page of Scripture, of *walking in light, of being holy as God is holy, of putting on the Lord Jesus*, &c. &c. but that it is the purpose of God, and the design of Christ, and of the covenant made with us, that we should expect heaven on no other terms but those of a holy life, in faith and obedience to Christ?

Now, if a person, who has been vicious and ungodly through life, can, for any thing which he may do on his death-bed, be said to live a holy life, then his hopes are not desperate. It will be a vain question to ask, whether or no God cannot save a dying man that repents; for God's power is no ingredient in this inquiry; but only his will, which is declared against such a supposition: the topic farther considered: miserable state of those men shown, who sow in the flesh, and would reap in the spirit.

III. Last inquiry; into the time, the latest time of beginning our repentance. What is the last period, after which all repentance will be ineffectual? To this captious question many things may be opposed: 1. We have entered into a covenant with God, to serve him from the day of our baptism to our death: this enlarged on: 2. Scripture names no other time but *to-day*: 3. The duty of a Christian is described by Scripture to be such as requires length of time and patient industry: 4. There is a certain time set for repentance, and beyond that all our industry is ineffectual. There is a *day of visitation, our own day*, and there is a *day of visitation, God's day*. This exemplified in the destruction of Jerusalem: the topic enlarged on.

Therefore concerning the time of beginning to repent, no man is certain but he that hath done his work. He that repents to-day,

repents late enough in not beginning yesterday : but he that puts it off till to-morrow, is vain and miserable.

But, it may be said, what will you have a man to do that hath lived wickedly, and is now cast on his death-bed ? Shall he despair, and neglect all movements of piety, &c. ? God forbid. Let him do all he can, for it is little enough.

But shall such persons despair of salvation. This only can be said ; that they are to consider the conditions which God requires of us, and whether they have done accordingly. If such persons have a promise of heaven, let them show it, and hope it, and enjoy it : if they have no promise, they must thank themselves for bringing themselves into a condition out of the covenant.

But will not trusting in the merits of Jesus Christ save such persons ? For that we must be tried by the word of God, in which there is no contract made with a person who lived in name a Christian, but in practice a heathen, &c.

But why may we not be saved, as well as the thief on the cross ? Because our case is not at all like his : this fully shown.

Therefore let no Christian, who hath covenanted with God to give him the service of his life, think that God will be answered with the sighs and prayers of a dying man. Let him not deceive himself : for no man can in a moment root out long-contracted habits of vice, nor exercise the duty of self-mortification, &c. on his death-bed.

SERMON IV.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. XVII. VERSE 9.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ?

PART I.

FOLLY and subtilty divide the greatest part of mankind : some are crafty enough to deceive, others foolish enough to be cozened : and yet the scales also turn ; for they that are most crafty to cozen others, are often the veriest fools : they rob their neighbor of his money, and lose their own innocency ; disturb his rest, and vex their own conscience ; throw him into prison, and themselves into hell, &c. Origin and progress of man's ignorant, helpless, and miserable condition described. The feebleness and wretchedness of those external aids, on which he too often relies, exposed ; also of that, to which he too often turns, when he has experienced their impotence ; namely, his own heart, *which is deceitful above all things, and*

desperately wicked. Deceitfulness of the heart may be reduced to two heads: a man sometimes deceives because he is false, and a staff because it is weak; but the heart because it is both. One sort of deceitfulness is its calamity, and the other its iniquity, which is the worse calamity of the two.

1. The heart is deceitful in its strength: when we have the growth of a man, we have the weakness of a child; the more advanced we are in age, the weaker are we in courage. The forward heat in new converts, and its subsequent coolness, described. This applied to the primitive church, and to the same in after times. This weakness of our heart accounted for, by our letting in the dominion of lusts, &c. Our unwillingness to pray is a great sign of our spiritual weakness.

And yet this weak heart is strong in passions, violent in desires, irresistible in its appetites, &c. This compared to the strength of a man in a fever or delirium; the strength not of health, but of fury and disease.

Examination of a heart that yields to the temptation of its lusts. Such a heart deceives a man, not because it cannot resist the temptation, but because it will not set about it; for it is certain that the heart can, if it list: this shown in various instances. The heart is deceitful in managing its natural strengths: it is naturally and physically strong, but morally weak and impotent.

2. The heart of man is deceitful in making judgment concerning its own acts: it does not know when it is pleased or displeased; it is peevish and trifling; it would and it would not, &c. Suppose a man that hath spent his younger years in vanity and folly, and is by the grace of God apprehensive of it, and thinks of returning to sober counsels: this man will find his heart so false, subtle, and secret, that it will be hard to learn whether he repents or no: this shown, and the subject enlarged on.

So deceitful is our heart in this matter of repentance, that spiritual masters are fain to invent suppletory arts and stratagems to secure the duty: and we are advised to mourn, because we do not mourn; to be sorrowful, because we are not so. Now if we be sorrowful in the first stage, how is it that we know it not? Is our heart so secret to ourselves? But if we be not sorrowful in the first period, how shall we be so, or how know it, in the second? We may as well be sorrowful in the third place, for want of sorrow in the second, &c.: so that we shall never be secure in this artifice, if we be not certain of our natural and hearty passion in our direct and first apprehensions.

Thus many persons think themselves in a good state, and make no question of their salvation; being confident, only because they are confident; and they are so, because they are bid to be so; and yet they are not so at all, but extremely timorous and fearful: for how many, who say they are sure of salvation, dare to die? So deceived is the heart in its own acts and opinions.

3. The heart is deceitful in its own resolutions and purposes: for many times men make their resolutions only in their understandings,

not in their will, &c. But suppose them advanced farther, their will and choice also being determined; see how the heart deceives them. 1. They resolve against those sins that please them not, or where temptation is not present; or they think by great zeal against some sins to gain an indulgence for others: this illustrated. 2. They resolve against sin, that is, they will not act it in the same circumstances as formerly: this explained. 3. They resolve against it when the opportunity is slipped, and lay it aside as long as the temptation shall please; even till it come again, and no longer: this enlarged on.

4. The heart is false, deceiving, and deceived, in its intentions and designs. A man hears the precept of God, enjoining us to give alms of all we possess: he readily obeys, and his charity appears lovely; but there is a canker at the heart: he blows a trumpet to call the poor together, and hopes the neighborhood will take notice of his bounty. A man with a true story may be malicious to his enemy, and by doing himself right may do him wrong. Some men pursue virtue with great earnestness, but cannot with patience look on it in another; where it is plain that reputation, not virtue, is the thing desired: and yet if you were to tell a man so, he would charge you with malice and detraction. It is easy to distinguish these things in precepts; but when the heart comes to separate alms from charity, God's glory from human praise, sincerity from hypocrisy, &c. it so implicates the question, and confounds the ends, that we have reason to think our best actions sullied by some excrescences.

Here, one would think, were enough to abate our confidence and the spirit of pride; to make us constantly stand on our guard, and keep a strict watch on our own hearts, as our greatest enemies from without. Concluding exhortations.

PART II.

Epictetus observes, that 'it is the beginning of wisdom to know a man's weaknesses and failings, in things of greatest necessity:' and we have here so many objects to furnish out this knowlege, that we find it the longest and the latest, before it can be obtained. Our hearts are blind, or our hearts are hardened: they do not see, or they will not see, the ways of God.

I. Our hearts are blind, wilfully blind. This ignorance is taken in on design. God hath opened all the windows of heaven, and sent the Sun of righteousness, and discovered the abysses of his own wisdom; he has made the second person of the Trinity to convey his precepts, and the third to inscribe the doctrine on the book of our hearts; with miracles and prophecies to be its arguments, and the whole world to be the verification of it, &c. This hath God done for us; and what do we for him? We stand in our own light, and quench that of God: we love darkness more than light, and act accordingly: this topic enlarged on.

To be more particular, the heart of man uses devices that it may be ignorant.

1. We are impatient of honest and severe reproof; ordering the circumstances of our persons and addresses, so that we shall never come to the true knowledge of our condition: this shown. Our heart is so impatient of seeing its own stains, that, like the elephant, it tramples in the pure streams before it drinks, in order that by muddying them it may not see its own deformity.

2. In order to this, we heap up teachers of our own, and they guide us, not whither, but which way, they please: for we are curious to go our own way, and careless of our hospital or inn at night. A fair way, and a merry company, and a pleasant easy guide, will entice us into the enemy's quarters; and such guides we cannot want. 'If we have a mind to be wicked, we shall want no prompters:' this topic enlarged on.

3. But the heart of man hath yet another stratagem to secure its iniquity by means of ignorance; and that is incogitancy or inconsideration. The grace of God is armor and defence enough against the most violent incursion of the spirits and works of darkness; but then we must hear its excellent charms, consider its reasons, remember its precepts, and dwell with its discourses: but this the heart of man loves not. If such incogitancy comes to be habitual, as it is in many men,—First, By resisting the motions of the Holy Spirit, then by quenching him,—we shall find the consequence to be, first an indifferency; next a dulness; then a lethargy; then a hatred of the ways of God, which commonly ends in a wretchedness of spirit to be manifested on our death-bed, &c. Indifference to religion still farther descanted on. The effect of all which is, that we are ignorant of the things of God; we make religion to be the work of a few hours in the whole year; and are without any appetite or affection for the severities of a holy life, &c.

II. But the heart is not only blind, but hard also. Not only folly, but mischief also, is bound up in the heart of man. If God strives to soften it with sorrow and sad accidents, it is like an ox, it grows callous and hard: consideration of particulars.

1. The heart is strangely proud. If men commend us we think that we have reason to be distinguished from others; if they do not, we suppose them to be stupid or envious; and we then are apt to speak well of ourselves, and ourselves only: this topic enlarged on.

2. The heart of man is deeply in love with wickedness, and with nothing else, against not only the laws of God, but against its own reason, interest, and security: for is it imaginable, that a man who knows the laws of God, the rewards of virtue, the horrid effects of sin; that considers the intolerable pains of hell; that knows the joys of heaven to be unspeakable, and yet attainable by a holy life; is it imaginable that this man should, for a transient action, forfeit all this hope, and incur all that calamity? Yea, but the sin is pleasant, and the man is clothed with flesh and blood, and the appetites are material, and importunate, and present, and the discourses of religion are

concerning things spiritual, separate, and apt for spirits and souls departed. To take off this, we will suppose the man to consider and to believe, that the pleasure of the sin is vain and transient; that it leaves bitterness behind it; that he remembers and considers, that as soon as the sin is past, he will have an intolerable conscience, and recollects also the miseries of eternity: yet that this man should sin! Nay, suppose the sin to have no pleasure at all, like that of swearing; nay, suppose it painful, like that of envy; what should make the man sin against reason, religion, and interest, without pleasure and for no reward? Here the heart betrays itself to be *desperately wicked*: this topic fully dilated on.

Many other topics might be mentioned, if time permitted; as that we are false ourselves, and dare not trust God; we love to be deceived, and are angry if we are told of it; we love to seem virtuous, but hate to be so; we are impatient, yet know not why; we are troubled at little things, and are careless of greater, &c. &c. Concluding exhortations, to watch our heart at every turn; to deny it its desires; to suspect it as an enemy; not to trust it in any thing; but to pray with importunity and constancy for the grace of God, to bring good out of these evils.

SERMON V.

THE FAITH AND PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS; OR, THE RIGHTEOUS CAUSE OPPRESSED.

I PETER, CHAP. IV. VERSE 17, 18.

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

PART I.

So long as men lived by sense and discourses of natural reason; so long as they were abated with human infirmities, and not at all heightened by the Spirit and divine revelations, they took their accounts of good and bad by their being prosperous or unfortunate: that only was accounted honest which was profitable; he only was wise that was rich; and those men were beloved of God, who received from him all that might satisfy their lust, ambition, or revenge.

But because God sent wise men into the world, and they were treated rudely by the world, and exercised with evil accidents; and this seemed so great a discouragement to virtue, that even these wise

men were more troubled to reconcile virtue and misery, than to reconcile their affections to the suffering; God was pleased to enlighten their reason with a little beam of faith; or else he heightened their reason by wiser principles than those of vulgar understanding, and taught them, in the clear glass of faith, or the dim perspective of philosophy, to look beyond the cloud, &c. And according as the world grew more enlightened by faith, so it grew more dark with mourning and sorrows: this topic enlarged on.

Adam was first placed in a garden of health and pleasure; from which when he fell, he was only tied to enter into the covenant of natural sorrows, which he and his posterity, till the flood, ran through: this state described: but such easiness and quiet was turned by the world into sin; till God destroyed mankind, that he might begin the government of the world on a new system.

Then God made new laws; and gave to princes the power of the sword; and men's lives were shortened; and slavery was introduced, &c. This state farther described, with the public evils which were then added to the personal miseries of mankind.

When Christ's line was drawn forth, and Abraham's family was chosen, to belong to God by a special right, God found out a new way to try that patriarch, even with a sound affliction; the offering of his son: this a type of Christ, but a type of sufferings. State of the chosen nation considered; their sufferings and afflictions increasing as the time of Christ's manifestation approached. Then Christ came, at which period the changed method of God's providence was perfected; for Christ was to do his great work by sufferings, and by sufferings to enter into glory. God made the same covenant with us that he did with his holy Son; and Christ obtained no better conditions for us than for himself; *The servant must not be above his master*, &c.: this topic dilated on.

The state of the gospel then is one of sufferings, not of temporal prosperities. This was foretold by the prophets: instances quoted. And as it was predicted, so it came to pass. Christ was the captain of our sufferings; and he began. His entrance into the world with all the circumstances of poverty, his suffering life, and his ignominious death, detailed. His passion may be said also to continue even after his resurrection, since he suffers in all his members, is crucified again, and put to open shame.

All that Christ came for, was, or was mingled with, suffering; God being more careful to establish in him the covenant of sufferings than to refresh his sorrows. The peculiar sufferings of Jesus described: but that which concerns this question most, is, that he established for us a covenant of sufferings: his doctrines are such, as suppose a state of affliction; his very promises were sufferings; his beatitudes were sufferings; his rewards and arguments to invite men to follow him, were only taken from sufferings in this life, and the reward of sufferings hereafter.

If we sum up the commandments of Christ, we shall find humility, mortification, self-denial, renunciation of the world, mourning, taking

up the cross, patience, poverty, and a dying for him, standing in the chief rank, and in the direct order to heaven: this subject dilated on.

Since this was done in the green tree, what might we expect should be done in the dry? Consideration of the manner in which God has treated his saints and followers in the descending ages of the gospel.

To begin with the Apostles, who were to persuade the world to become Christian; we shall never find that they used any arguments of temporal prosperity: and of all the Apostles, not one, except John, died a natural death. Their various sufferings commented on: those of St. Paul described.

And now began to work the greatest glory of divine Providence: here was the case of Christianity at stake. The world was rich and prosperous, learned, and full of wise men: the gospel was preached with poverty and persecution, in simplicity of discourse, and in demonstration of the spirit: this state farther described, and the victory which Christianity gained over the world.

Persecutions and martyrdoms in the early ages of the church described.

When persecution ceased, the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of Christ's design, was pleased to inspire the church with the spirit of austerity and mortification: this topic dilated on. And there is no state in the church so serene, no days so prosperous, in which God does not give to his servants the powers and opportunities of suffering for him: not only they that die for Christ, but they that live according to his laws, shall find many ways to suffer for him, in killing and crucifying the old man with his lusts, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

Let no Christian make any judgment concerning his condition or his cause, by the external event of things: for although in the law of Moses God made with his people a covenant of temporal prosperity, &c. yet in Christ Jesus he made a covenant of sufferings. Most of the graces of Christianity are suffering graces, and God has predestinated us to sufferings, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

God was fain to multiply miracles to make Christ capable of being *a man of sorrows*; and shall we think that he will work miracles to render us delicate? He has promised us a glorious portion hereafter; and shall we choose our portion of *good things in this life*? this subject enlarged on.

Christ considers nothing but souls; he values not their bodies or estates, supplying our want by his providence: and we are secured that our bodies may be killed, but cannot perish, so long as we preserve our duty and our conscience. Concluding reflections.

PART II.

It follows now that we inquire concerning the reasons of divine Providence in this administration of affairs, so far as he hath been

pleased to draw aside the curtain. In this valley of tears, it is no wonder if they rejoice who shall hereafter weep eternally, and that *they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

For innocence and joy were appointed to dwell together for ever. And joy went not first; but when innocence went away, sorrow and sickness dispossessed joy of its habitation; and now this world must always be a scene of sorrows, and no joy can grow here but that which is imaginary and fantastic: this enlarged on: but the same instant that sets us free from sin and the failings of mortality, wipes all tears from our eyes: this however is not in this world. In the mean time,

God afflicts the godly that he may manifest many of his attributes, and his servants exercise many of their virtues. For without the suffering of saints, God would lose the glories of bringing good out of evil; of being with us in tribulation; of sustaining our infirmities; of triumphing over the malice of his enemies. Without these sufferings, where would be the exaltation of the cross? where the trial of our faith? or the exercise of long-suffering? or the opportunities to give God the greatest love?—how should that, which the world calls folly, prove the greatest wisdom?—how should God be glorified by events contrary to expectation?

By the suffering of the saints, the Christian religion is proved to be most excellent and desirable. That man's nature is passible, is its best advantage; for by it we are all redeemed; that is, by the passiveness and sufferings of our Lord and Brother. *Do this and live*, was the covenant of the law: but in the gospel it is, *suffer this and live*. By the sufferings of saints, God chastises their follies, and suffers them not to grow into vices; we must not therefore call that a misery which he intends to make an instrument of saving them. By this economy God gives a great argument to prove the resurrection; since sorrow cannot be the reward of virtue, &c. The sufferings of saints make the sum of Christian philosophy: they are sent to wean us from the vanities of the world, &c. Christ nourishes his church by sufferings: he gives a single blessing to other graces, but a double one to the persecuted, who are innocent and afflicted like him: without this, patience would signify nothing. Moreover, great shall be the reward of that virtue which suffers persecution for Christ's sake: this topic fully dilated on.

But besides all this, there is another account to be made concerning the prosperity of the wicked; *for if judgment first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* that is the question of the Apostle, and is the great instrument of comfort to persons ill-treated in the actions of the world. Although the servants of God have suffered calamities from evil men, yet still it is preserved as one of the fundamental truths of Christianity, that all the fair fortunes of the wicked cannot make them happy, nor can persecutions make good men miserable, nor yet are their sadnesses arguments of God's displeasure against them. For when a godly man is afflicted and dies, it is his business; and if the wicked prevail,

that is, persecute the godly, it is only what was to be expected from them: but we must not judge of the things of God by the measures of men: this illustrated.

Sin is not virtue because it is prosperous: a little crime is sure to smart; but when the sinner is rich and prosperous and powerful, he gets impunity; but that is not innocence: rather *he treasures up wrath against the day of wrath*, and, by a continued course of sin, he is prepared for an intolerable ruin. The Spirit of God bids us look on the end of these men, not the way they walk, or the instrument of that pompous death. Various examples given of virtue and virtuous enterprises unsuccessful in this life. There is indeed no age or state in the world, that hath not ministered an example of an afflicted truth, and of a prevailing sin.

But what, after all, is the prosperity of the wicked? To dwell in fine houses, command armies, live luxuriously, &c. Yet consider, would any man amongst us kill his lawful king, to be heir of all these things? Would any man have God angry with him for them? A wise and good man certainly would not: it cannot therefore be any great happiness to thrive on the stock of sin: this topic enlarged on.

Instances of God's vengeance overtaking sinners or their posterity even in this life. But if we should look under the skirt of the prosperous and prevailing tyrant, we should find, even in the days of his joy, such allays and abatements of his pleasure, as serve to make him wretched even here, besides his final misery: this enlarged on: stings of conscience described: comforts of innocent poverty: so that they who admire the happiness of a prosperous tyrant, know not the felicities that dwell in innocent hearts, and poor cottages, and small fortunes.

A Christian, so long as he preserves his integrity, is bold in all accidents; he dares to die, and he dares to be poor; but if the persecutor dies, he is undone: this topic dilated on.

God hath many ends of providence to serve by the hands of violent and vicious men. By them he not only checks the beginnings of error and sin among his predestinate; but by them he changes governments, alters kingdoms, and is terrible among the children of men: this subject enlarged on.

He that shrinks from the yoke of Christ, from the burden of the Lord, will have cause, on his death-bed, to remember that by that time all his persecutions would have been over, and nothing would remain for him but a crown of glory: this topic enlarged on and illustrated. Conclusion.

PART III.

But that the persecuted may be aided as far as they are capable, some rules are propounded, by which they may learn to *gather grapes from their thorns*. Sorrow must be endured: but the evil and danger of the suffering must be declined, and turned, by spiritual arts, into medicine and health.

1. They that suffer any thing for Christ, and are ready to die for him, let them do nothing against him; for certainly they think too highly of martyrdom, who believe it able to excuse the evils of a wicked life. *A man*, says the Apostle, *may give his body to be burned, and yet have no charity*; and he that dies without charity, dies without God: this topic enlarged on.

2. He that suffers in a cause of God, must be indifferent what the instance be, so that he may serve God; must be indifferent in the suffering, so it be of God's appointment: let us choose God, and let him choose all the rest for us.

3. Whoever suffer in a cause of God, let them not be too forward to prognosticate evil and death to their enemies; but let them solace themselves in the assurance of the divine justice, by general considerations; and in particular, let them pray for their persecutors: this topic illustrated.

4. Do not trouble yourself by thinking how much you are afflicted, but consider how much you make of it: for reflections, &c., on the suffering itself can lead to nothing but pride, impatience, temptation, or apostasy. He that measures the grains and scruples of his persecution, will soon sit down and call for ease, or for a reward, &c.

5. Let your suffering be entertained by a direct election, not by collateral aids and fantastic assistances: this particularly applied to the case of martyrdom. And let no man hope to glorify God and gain heaven by a life of sufferings, unless he first begin in the love of God, and thence derive his choice and patience, &c.: this topic dilated on.

6. Lastly, when God has brought you into Christ's school, and entered you into a state of sufferings, remember the advantages of that state: consider how unsavory earthly things will appear to you, when under the arrest of death; the comforts of God's Spirit; the sweets of religion; the vanity of sin's appearances; your new resolutions; your longings after heaven; and all the things of God. And if God finishes your persecutions with death, proceed in them: if he restores you to the light of the world, change but the scene of sufferings into an active life, and keep your former principles: this topic enlarged on.

The whole of the foregoing discourse is now to be made use of, being removed to its utmost spiritual sense, which the Apostle does in the last words of the text: *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and the sinner appear?*

1. These words are taken out of Proverbs xi. 31. according to the translation of the LXX. *If the righteous scarcely be safe*: where the word *μόλις* implies that he is safe, but by intermedial difficulties: and *σώζονται*, he is safe in the midst of his persecutions: they may disturb his rest, and discompose his fancy; but they are like the fiery chariot to Elijah; he is carried up to heaven in a robe of flames: this topic enlarged on.

2. But *μόλις* may also signify *raro*. *If the righteous be seldom safe*: which implies that he sometimes is, even in a temporal sense. God sometimes sends halcyon days to his church, though it is often

the greatest blessing not to give us such too freely. But this is *μóλις*, scarcely done : and yet at times it is, and God refreshes languishing piety with such arguments as comply with our infirmities, to support our weak flesh, &c. and to this purpose also he sometimes sends the thunderbolts of his wrath against evil men, destroying their strongholds, &c.

And yet, the worst of evils that can happen to the godly, are better, temporally better, than the greatest external felicity of the wicked.

If it be hard with good men, with the evil it shall be far worse. The godly man is timorous, and yet safe ; impaired by evil accidents, but righted by divine comforts ; abused by the world, but yet an heir of heaven ; he hath nothing to afflict him but the loss of that which might be his danger ; and, in recompense for this, he hath God for his father, Christ for his captain, the Holy Ghost for his comforter.

But though Paul and Silas sang psalms in prison, under the hangman's whip, and in an earthquake ; yet neither the jailer, nor the persecuting magistrates could do so : for the prosperity of the wicked is like the winter's sun, or the joy of a condemned drunkard : this state dilated on at large. The godly, in short, are not made unhappy by their sorrows ; and the wicked are such, whom prosperity itself cannot make fortunate.

3. And yet, after all this, it is but *μóλις σώζεται*, not *σωθήσεται* : he " escapes but hardly here : " it will be well enough with him hereafter. When persecution hews a man down from a high fortune to the face of the earth, or from thence to the grave, the good man is but preparing for a crown ; and the tyrant does but first knock off the fetters of the soul, the manacles of passion and desire : and if God suffers him to finish the persecution, he then can but dismantle the soul's prison, and let the soul itself forth to fly unto the mountains of rest : this topic enlarged on : also the state of the prosperous wicked, who are as it were fatted for the slaughter, crowned for the sacrifice. Miserable indeed are they who cannot be blessed, unless there be no day of judgment ; who must perish, unless the word of God should fail.

SERMON VI.

THE MERCY OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENTS; OR, GOD'S
METHOD IN CURING SINNERS.

ROMANS, CHAP. II. VERSE 4.

Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

PART I.

FROM the beginning of time till now, all effluxes which have come from God, have been nothing but emanations of his goodness, clothed in variety of circumstances. He made man with no other design than that man should be happy, and by receiving derivations from his fountain of mercy, might reflect glory to him. This topic enlarged on, and the mercy of God traced through all his dispensations to mankind. The sense and paraphrase of the text is this; *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, &c.? Thou dost not know*, that is, thou considerest not, that it is for thy farther benefit God thus acts towards thee; the *goodness of God* is not a design to serve his own ends on thee, but thine on him: it *leadeth thee to repentance*.

The several parts of God's method in curing mankind, namely, *χρηστότης, ἀνοχῆ*, and *μακροθυμία*, laid down in order, and explained.

1. The first great instrument that God uses to bring us to him, is *χρηστότης, profit or benefit*. And this must needs be; for those instruments whereby we have a being, are so great mercies, that besides giving us the capacity of other mercies, they advance us in the greatest instances of promotion in the world. Our creation from nothing to something; our creation in a rank little lower than that of the angels, with a capacity for eternal blessedness, dilated on.

God's mercies in the production of us, and the sustaining still farther displayed. But when we degenerated and made ourselves by sin more base and ignoble than all other creatures; even then, from thenceforward, God began his work of *leading us to repentance* by the *riches of his goodness*.

God's blessings enumerated, in his causing us to be born of Christian parents under so excellent a law, which extends not to fallen angels; excellency of this law, and all it does for us, through the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, &c. enlarged on. And that we may know what he intercedes for, he hath sent ambassadors to declare the purport of his design. And therefore let us here consider, if it be not infinite impiety to *despise the riches of such goodness, &c.*

After the enumeration of these prodigies of mercy and loving-

kindness, much need not be said on the particular mercies of God to men : but the poorest person, besides the foregoing graces and blessings, hath enough, in the accidents of every day, to shame him into repentance. These divine mercies enumerated.

If with these good things we remain obdurate, a time will come, when our stony heart will be upbraided to us ; that we made God to sow his seed on the sand : this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

However, that we may see the greatness of God's goodness, he seldom leaves us thus : for if he sees that his mercies do not allure us and make us thankful, he continues his mercies still to us in a different guise : he is merciful in punishing us, that we may be led to repentance by such instruments as will scare us from sin : and here begins the second part of God's method, intimated in the word *forbearance*.

2. Ἄροχῆ, or *forbearance*. God begins his cure by caustics, by incisions and instruments of vexation, to try if the disease that will not yield to the allectives of cordials, frictions, and baths, may be forced out by deleteries, scarifications, and more salutary, but less pleasing physic. The word ἄροχῆ signifies *laxamentum* or *inducias*, that is, a suspension of God's temporal judgments, that is, a reprieve, or else an *ease and remission of them* ; in both of which, though in judgment, God remembers mercy : yet we are under discipline, and at least are shown the rod.

This subject considered first in general. The riches of the divine goodness are manifest in beginning this new method of cure by severity, though we may think the way of blessings and prosperity the best : this topic enlarged on.

Repentance is a duty that best complies with affliction ; this shown. And because God knows this well, and loves us better than we do ourselves, he therefore sends on us the scrolls of vengeance, *the hand-writing on the wall*, to denounce judgment : not that he always strikes as soon as he sends out his warrants : instances of Noah and Jonas : these were reprieves and deferrings of the stroke.

But God sometimes strikes once, and then forbears : instances given : these are the louder calls to repentance, but still instances of forbearance.

Indeed, many times this forbearance makes men impudent : instance of Pharaoh commented on. Cautions to us, not to let his forbearance have the effect of hardening our hearts, &c.

Exhortations, to remember the resolutions we may have made in any great danger or calamity : to take the account of our lives, and read over the lessons which God has given us ; the dangers we may have escaped ; the blessings we may have received ; the warnings that may have been given to us, &c. Conclusion.

PART II.

Third consideration, μακροθυμία, *long-suffering*. In this one word are contained all the treasures of the divine goodness : here is the length and extension of his mercy. And here also is much of the

divine justice: for though God forbears to destroy us, he does not forbear to punish us: and that he should thus bring us to himself, whether we will or not, by such gracious violences and merciful judgments, which he uses as his last remedies, shows not only a mighty mercy, but an almighty power. So hard is it to make us leave our follies, that were not the mercies of God effective with mighty power, every sinner would perish irrevocably. But this is the fiery trial, the last purgatory fire which God uses to purify the dross. When we are under this state of cure, we are so near to destruction, that the same instrument used to cure us, is also prepared to destroy us, &c. It is sad that we put God to such extremities; and it too often happens, as in long diseases, when the remedies which physicians use for the last seldom prevail. If, when our vices were young and our strength more active, &c. we suffered sin to prevail on us, in the midst of all those remedies which God applied to the beginning of our disease; much more desperate indeed is our recovery, when the disease is stronger, and our faculties more weak.

Yet though this be sad, and we should strive against coming to this extremity, if it be on us, we must do as well as we can: but then we are to look on it as a design of God's last mercy, beyond which, if we protract our repentance, our condition is desperately miserable; the whole state of which mercy we understand by the parable of the king reckoning with his servants that were in arrears to him: this explained. A sentence may be sad, but acted with a gentle instrument; and it is well for those who are condemned to pay the scores of their sins with a load of judgments, that this will not adhere to them through eternity. When God slew the 23,000 Assyrians for their fornication, that was a final justice on their persons, and consigned them to a sad eternity; for beyond such an affliction there was no remedy: but when God sent lions to the Assyrian inhabitants of Samaria, and drove them to inquire after the manner of the God in the land, &c. that was a judgment and a mercy too: the 'long forbearance of God,' who destroyed not all, led 'the rest' to repentance.

1. First observation: that when things come to this pass, and God is forced to the last remedies of judgment, this long-sufferance will little or nothing concern particular persons, but nations and communities of men: for if any are smitten with judgment, if God takes his hands off again, and so opens a way for their repentance by prolonging their time, that comes under the second part of God's method, the ἀροχῆ, or *forbearance*: but if he smites a single person with a final judgment, that is a *long-suffering*, not of him, but towards others; and God hath destroyed one to make others repent, the former's time being expired, and the date of his possibility determined: this explained.

2. And this must be observed, that we may truly estimate the acts of the divine justice and mercy. For all the world being but one intire argument of the divine mercy, we are apt to abuse it to vain confidence and presumption; first, mistaking the end, as if it would

be indulgent to our sin: this explained: and also mistaking the economy of it, and the manner of its ministration.

3. For if God suffers men to go on in sins, and punishes them not, it is not a mercy or a forbearance; it is a hardening of them, a consigning them to ruin and reprobation: and they themselves give the best argument to prove it; for they every day multiply their iniquity, and every day grow more an enemy to God.

A prosperous iniquity is the most unprosperous condition in the world: this illustrated. What wisdom, philosophy, experience, revelation, promises and blessings cannot do, a mighty fear can; and therefore God's mercy prevails, even when nothing can be discerned but his judgments.

God's mercy is often given to us in parts, and to certain purposes. Sometimes he only so forgives us, that he does not cut us off in the sin, but yet lays on a heavy load of judgment: instance of the Jewish captivity. Sometimes he makes a judgment less, and strikes more gently: instance of David (2 Sam. xii. 13.): sometimes he puts the evil off to a farther day, as in the case of Ahab and Hezekiah. And thus, when we have committed a heinous sin against God, we are not sure to be wholly forgiven on our repentance; but are happy if he so far forgive us as to spare us the pains of eternity: instance of David.

For if we sin and ask God forgiveness, and then are quiet, we feel so little inconvenience in the trade, that we are easily tempted to make a trade of it indeed: this topic enlarged on. No man that hath sinned can be restored to perfect innocence and perfect peace; so that he must watch and strive always against his sin; must mourn for it, pray for pardon, and always find cause to hate it, by knowing that he is for ever in danger on account of it, even though God may have pardoned him.

Sometimes we find a severer judgment happening on a people; and yet his mercy generally prevails over his justice. The result is, that God's mercies are not, and ought not to be instruments of confidence to sin, because the very purpose of his mercy is to the contrary; and the very manner of his economy is such, that his mercy goes along in conjunction with his judgments: this topic enlarged on.

The use of all the premises is that which St. Paul expresses in the text, that *we do not despise all this*; and he only despises not, who serves the end of God in all these designs of mercy, that is, who repents of his sins. But there are many despisers: these described, and their folly pointed out.

SERMON VII.

OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

2 PETER, CHAP. III. VERSE 18.

But grow in grace, and in the knowlege of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

PART I.

WHEN Christianity first enlightened the world, amazing the minds of men, entertaining their curiosity, and seizing on their affections, it was no wonder that whole nations were converted at a sermon, that multitudes were instantly professed, that their understandings followed their affections, and their wills followed their understandings, &c. All this was a great instance of providence, for the firm planting of Christianity, and affording precedents and examples to all future ages. Universality and fervor of piety among Christians in those early times descanted on. This lasted about three hundred years; after which it has gone on declining: heresies first crept in, pride increased, faith was weakened, and charity was lessened, &c.

But because such is the nature of things, that either they grow towards perfection, or decline towards dissolution, there is no proper way to secure religion, but by setting its growth forward.

The way of doing this indicated in the text, *but grow in grace*. Considerations proposed concerning, 1. What the state of grace is, into which we must enter, in order that we may grow in it: 2. The proper parts, acts, and offices of *growing in grace*: 3. The proper signs, consequences, and significations, whereby we may perceive that *we are grown*, and so judge of our state, &c.

1. Concerning the state of grace, it may be said, that no man can be in it who retains an affection for any one sin: this topic enlarged on. When we have left every sin, when we resolve never to return to the chains, when we have no love for the world, but such as may become a servant of God, then we may be said to have entered into a state of grace, whence this precept may commence, *grow in grace, and in the knowlege of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

And now the first part of this duty is, to make religion the chief business of life; for this is the great instrument to produce our growth in grace, and the perfection of a Christian; for a man cannot, after a state of sin, be instantly a saint, &c.: this topic enlarged on. God has sent us into the world for religion; we are but to pass through our pleasant fields or our hard labors, to lodge awhile in our fair palaces or in our meaner cottages; but then only it is that man does his proper employment, when he prays, acts charitably, restrains his lusts and passions, and strives to imitate his Saviour. Then he

is dressing himself for eternity, where he must abide, either in bliss or in misery, &c. Let us not be weary then in well-doing, &c. That is the first particular.

2. The second step of our growth is, when virtues grow habitual, apt and easy in our manners and dispositions. The way is long and difficult at first; but in the progress and pursuit we find all the knots made plain, and the rough ways made smooth. The spirit of grace is like a new soul within a man, giving him new appetites and new pleasures, rendering worldly things unsavory to his appetite, but those of religion delicious: this topic enlarged on.

3. But because, in the course of holy living, the sensible relishes, the flowerings of affection, the zeal and visible expressions do not always make the same emission, but we are sometimes more busy and intent on the actions of religion; in such cases we are to judge of our growth in grace, if, after every interval of extraordinary piety, the next return be more devout and affectionate, the labor more cheerful and active;—if religion returns oftener, stays longer, and leaves more satisfaction in the spirit: this dilated on.

4. To discern our growth in grace, we must inquire concerning our passions, whether they be mortified and quiet, complying with the ends of virtue, and under command; for since they are the matter of virtue and vice respectively, he that hath brought into his power all the strengths of the enemy, and the fortresses from whence the enemy infested him, he only hath secured a holy walking with God. But because this thing is never perfectly done, and yet must always be doing, grace grows according as we finish our portions of the work.

And although no man must take account of his being in or out of the state of grace, by his being dispassionate; yet, as to the securing that state, he must provide that he be not the slave of passion: so to declare his growth in grace, he must be sure to take the measures of his affections, and see that they be lessened: he must see if his fear be turned into caution, his lust into chaste friendship, his imperious spirit into prudent government, his revenge into justice, &c.: and not this only; in his scrutiny and judgment concerning his passions, he must watch against passions in the reflex act, against self-complacency or peevishness attending on virtue: this explained. Conclusion.

PART II.

5. He is well grown in or towards the state of grace, who is more patient of a sharp reproof than of a secret flattery. They who are furious against their monitors are incorrigible; but it is one degree of meekness to suffer discipline; and a meek man cannot easily be a bad man, especially in the present instance. But it must be observed that this is only a good disposition towards repentance and restitution; it is a sign of growth in grace, according as it becomes natural, easy, and habitual. To endure a reproof without adding a new sin, is the first step to amendment; that is, to endure it without

scorn, hatred, or indignation. 2. The next is to suffer reproof without excusing ourselves; which is only to set it aside in a civil manner. 3. Then he that proceeds in this instance, will admit it without regret, or secret murmuring and unwillingness. 4. But if, in addition to this, he voluntarily confesses his fault, and eases his spirit of the infection, then it is certain that he is not only a professed enemy to sin, but a zealous and prudent person, active against all its interests; who never counts himself at ease but while he rests on the banks of Sion, or at the gates of the temple; he reckons it no shame to be abased in the face of men, so that he may be gracious in the sight of God: this topic enlarged on.

6. He that is grown in grace and the knowlege of Christ, esteems no sin to be little or contemptible; none fit to be cherished or indulged in. He not only thinks that it is inconsistent with the love of God to entertain any indecency or beginning of a crime, but he always remembers how much it cost him to arrive at the good state to which the grace of God hath already brought him. It makes men negligent when they have an opinion that they are persons extraordinary in nothing; that a little care will not mend them; that another sin cannot make them much worse: but it is a sign of a tender conscience and a reformed spirit, when a man is sensible of every alteration; when an idle word is troublesome; when a wandering thought puts the spirit on its guard; when a too free merriment is wiped off with a sigh and a sad thought, a severe recollection, and a holy prayer.

7. He that is grown in grace, pursues virtue for its own interest, without the mixture of collateral designs and equally-inclining purposes. God, in the beginning of our returns to him, entertains us with promises and threats, and the apprehension of temporal advantages, with fear and with shame, &c.; and, at first, men snatch at the lesser or lower ends of virtue, and such rewards as are visible, and which God sometimes gives in hand, to entertain our weak and imperfect desires: this topic enlarged on. But perfect persons should serve God out of mere love to him and his divine excellences; and, doubtless, many come to that growth of charity, that the goodness and excellency of God are more pressing on their spirit than any considerations of reward; they love God for himself, and do their duties for the fruition of him and his pleasure; all that, is but heaven in another sense, and under another name.

8. Some men there are, who in the beginning of their holy walking with God, and while they are babes in Christ, are presently busied in delights of prayers, and rejoice in public communion, and count all solemn assemblies as festivals: but as they are pleased with them, so they can easily be without them: but it is the sign of a common and vulgar love, only to be pleased with the company of a friend, and to be as well without him: this enlarged on.

9. But as some are active only in the presence of a good object, but remiss and careless for the want of it; so, on the other hand, an infant grace is safe in the absence of a temptation, but falls easily when it is in presence. He, therefore, that would understand if he

be grown in grace, may consider if his safety consists only in peace, or in the strength of the Spirit. It is good that we will not seek opportunities of sin; but are we not too apprehensive of it when it is presented? or do we not sink under it when it presses us? This topic enlarged on.

10. No man is grown in grace, but he that is ready for every work; that chooses not his employment; that refuses no imposition from God, or his superior. A ready hand, an obedient heart, and a willing, cheerful soul, in all the work of God, and in every office of religion, is a great index of a good proficient in the ways of godliness. This is not to be expected from beginners; for they must be enticed with fit employments; and it may be that their office and work so fits their spirits, as to make them first in love with it, and then with God for giving it: this enlarged on.

11. Lastly; some there are, who are firm in all great and foreseen changes, and have laid up in the storehouses of the spirit, reason and religion, arguments and discourses enough to defend them against all violences, &c.: but something may be wanting yet; and in the direct progress towards heaven, that may be called an infallible sign of a great grace, and the greatest degree of it, when a man is prepared against sudden invasions of the spirit, surreptitious and extemporary assaults: this topic enlarged on. These are the parts, acts, and offices of our growing in grace: concerning which a few cautions must be interposed.

1. The growth of grace is to be estimated as other moral things are; not according to the growth of things natural. Grace does not grow by observation, and a continual efflux, and a constant proportion, &c.

2. It is not always to be discerned, in single instances, or in single graces.

3. We must be careful to observe that these rules are not all to be understood negatively, but positively and affirmatively: that is, a man may conclude he is grown in grace, if he observe in himself the characters above mentioned; but he must not conclude negatively, or that he is not grown in grace, if he cannot observe such signal testimonies: this enlarged on.

4. In considering our growth in grace, let us take more care to reckon matters that concern justice and charity, than those that concern the virtue of religion; because in these may be much, in the other there cannot easily be any illusion and cozenage.

To these parts and actions of a good life, or growth in grace, are added some considerations, which are rather signs than parts of it: such as, 1. To praise all good things, and to imitate what we praise: 2. To feel a noble emulation: 3. To bear sickness patiently, and to improve it: 4. Devotion and delight in prayer: 5. Whispers of God's Spirit, prompting us to obedience: 6. The offering of peace to those that have injured us, &c.: 7. Love to the brethren: 8. Not repining at the honors or fortune of others: 9. A freedom from temptation, &c.: 10. An excellent habit of body and of the material

passions : 11. Peculiar acts of devotion ; but though these may proceed from a great love of virtue, yet because some men may do these and no more, they are not to be relied on : but we must be content to work on still. Conclusion.

SERMON VIII.

OF GROWTH IN SIN ; OR, THE SEVERAL STATES AND DEGREES OF SINNERS, WITH THE MANNER HOW THEY ARE TO BE TREATED.

JUDE, VERSES 22, 23.

And of some have compassion, making a difference : And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.

PART I.

MAN has but one entrance into the world, but a thousand exits. And as in the natural, so it is in the spiritual state : nothing but the union of faith and obedience can secure our regeneration ; but there are a thousand passages turning to darkness. There are various stages and descents to death, as there are degrees of torment in the kingdom of sorrow : yet for every one of these stages of sin, God hath measured out a proportion of mercy. *If sin abounds, grace shall much more abound.* Yet there are some sins for which God hath not appointed a remedy : some men have sinned like the fallen angels, and have outrun the conditions of grace. This is a state to be avoided with all care and anxiety. The aim of this discourse stated :—to remonstrate on the several states of sin and death, and to show the remedies which God hath proportioned for them ; that we may observe the evils of the least, and so avoid the intolerable mischiefs of the greater ; lest we fall into such sins as the eternal God will never pardon.

I. *Of some have compassion.* These reduced to four heads or orders of men and actions : all which have their proportional remedies.

1. The first are those that sin without observation of their peculiar state ; either because they are uninstructed in the special cases of conscience, or because they do an evil against which there is no express commandment. Millions are in a state of sickness and danger, who are made to believe that they are in perfect health : and they do actions concerning which they never made a question whether they were just or not, nor were ever taught by what names to call them : this explained. Others sin, because the crime is not under the restraint of an express commandment, and there is no

letter of the law to condemn them by an express sentence: this enlarged on. 2. Men sin without an express prohibition, when they commit a thing that is like to a forbidden evil. When St. Paul had reckoned many works of the flesh, he adds, *and such like*; that is, all that have the same unreasonableness and carnality: this explained. 3. A man is guilty, even when no law names his action, if he does any thing that is a cause or an effect, a part or unhandsome adjunct, of a forbidden instance: this explained. 4. Besides the express laws of our religion, there is a universal line and limit to our passions and designs, which is called *the analogy of Christianity*, that is, the proportion of its sanctity, and the strictness of its holy precepts. This is not forbidden; but does it become you? Is it decent in a Christian to live in plenty and ease, and heap up money, and never to partake of Christ's passions? this subject dilated on. It is but reasonable that we should take account of our lives by the proportions, as well as by the express rules of our religion; for that which in the accounts of men is called reputation and public honesty, is the same which in religion we call analogy and proportion: this point enlarged on.

II. The next sort of those who are in the state of sin, and yet to be handled gently and with compassion, are those who entertain themselves with the beginnings and little entrances of sin: this point enlarged on: the compassion to be used to such persons is the compassion of a severe tutor or of a physician. Chastise thy infant sin by discipline and acts of virtue. He that means to be temperate, and to avoid the crime and dishonor of drunkenness, must not love to partake of the songs, or bear a part in the foolish scenes of laughter which distract Wisdom, and fright her from the company. Danger of admitting the first entrances of sin described, and illustrated by a beautiful simile.

III. There are some who are very much to be pitied and assisted, because they are going into hell, and, as matters stand with them, they cannot, or they think they cannot, avoid it. There are persons whose life is wholly in dependence on the will of others; and if the prince or patron be vicious and imperious, it is the loss of his dependent's fortune not to lose his soul: state of such persons enlarged on. So also it is when ignorant people are catechised into false doctrine, and know nothing but such principles as weaken the nerves and enfeeble the joints of holy living; they never heard of any other. State of those considered who follow great and evil examples, who are engaged in the public sins of a kingdom, which they understand not, and either must venture to be undone on the strength of their own little reasonings, or else must go where the popular misery has made the way plain before their eyes, though it be uneven and dangerous to their consciences. Many, if they be left alone, out of the sight of their tempter, go whither their education or custom carries them: but it is not in some natures to deny the face of a man and the boldness of a sinner, especially when it is not their interest to do so. These men are in a pitiable condition, and are to be helped by the following rules:—

1. Let every man consider that he has two relations to serve, and he stands between God and his master, or his nearest relative: in such cases it comes to be disputed, which interest is to be preferred; which of the persons is to be displeased, God or his master, God or his prince, God or his friend. If we be servants of the man, let us remember that we are also servants of God: this topic enlarged on.

2. The next advice to persons thus tempted is, that they should learn to separate duty from mistaken interest: let them both be served in their just proportions, when we have learned to make a difference. Take the counsel of the son of Sirach: 'Accept no person against thy soul, and let not the reverence of any man cause thee to fall.'

3. When passion mingles with duty, and is a necessary instrument of serving God, let not passion run its own course, and pass on to liberty, and thence to license and dissoluteness: this explained.

4. Let every such tempted person remember, that all evil comes from ourselves, and not from others; and therefore all pretences and prejudices, all commands and temptations, all opinions and necessities, are but instances of our weakness, and arguments of our folly; for unless we listed, no man could make us drink beyond our measures; and if I tell a lie for the advantage of my master or my friend, it is because I prefer a little money or flattery before my honor and innocence: this topic dilated on to the end.

PART II.

IV. The last sort of those that sin, and yet are to be treated with compassion, is of them that interrupt the course of an honest life with single acts of sin; whose resolution stands fair, and whose hearts sojourn in religion, or rather dwell there; though, like evil husbands, they go abroad and enter into places of dishonor and unthriftiness. Such as these all histories remember with a sad character: instance of David. God has given us precepts of such holiness and purity, meekness and humility, as have no pattern but Christ, no precedent but his own purity: and therefore it is intended that we should not live a life whose actions are chequered with white and black, half sin and half virtue. It is not meant by this that a man's life must be as pure as the sun: but it may be like the moon, in which there are spots, but they are no deformity; a lessening only and an abatement of light: this enlarged on. The danger of allowing ourselves to enter on the confines of vice, to see the beauties, as it were, of the enemy's country, described: comparison of Dinah, Jacob's daughter. When men thus fall, not by design, but by folly; not by malice, but by surprise; not by the strength of the will, but by the weakness of grace: they are to be treated with great compassion, and to be assisted by the following considerations and exercises:—

1. First, we should consider, that for a good man to be overtaken in a single crime, is the greatest dishonor and unthriftiness in the world. 'As a fly in a box of ointment, so is a little folly to him who

is accounted wise.' Evil of this dilated on. Every crime committed interrupts the acceptation of grace, and makes the man to enter into a state of enmity with God. Sins once pardoned return again to all the purposes of mischief, if we, by a new sin, forfeit God's former loving-kindness. Such imprudence compared with theirs, who throw away in one night the wealth of long saving. They sow much and gather little, stay long and return empty, &c. This consideration ought to be effective in restraining us from sins, if the particulars be summed up: for he that hath lived well, and then falls into a deliberate sin, is infinitely dishonored, is most imprudent, unsafe, and unthankful.

2. Let persons tempted to single instances of sin in a laudable life, be very careful that they suffer not themselves to be drawn aside by the eminence of great examples: instances cited. Exhortation, that we should first be as devout as David, and as good a Christian as St. Peter, and then we shall not dare, with design, to do that into which they fell by surprise: and if we should fall as they did, then, when we have repented like them, it may be said of us, that we did fall and break our bones, but God did heal and pardon us.

3. Remember, that since no man can please God, or be partaker of any promises, or reap the reward of any actions in the returns of eternity, unless he performs to God an intire duty, according to the capacities of a man so taught, tempted, and assisted, such a person must take care that he be not cozened with the duties and performances of any one relation. Some there are who think that all religion consists in prayer, or in public and private offices of devotion: others judge themselves as they are spoken of by their betters: some have been admired abroad, in whom their own family never saw any thing excellent, &c.

4. He that hath passed many stages of a good life, to prevent his being tempted to a single sin, must be very careful that he never entertain his spirit with the remembrance of past sins, nor amuse it with fantastic apprehension of the present. When the Israelites fancied the relish of the flesh-pots, they longed to return and taste: this topic enlarged on. We cannot stand, unless we be watchful in this particular.

These are the sorts of men who are to be used with compassion, concerning whom we are *to make a difference*, as says the text. Danger of the sins above-mentioned, and methods of our treating them in others, still farther dilated on.

II. *Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.* Some sins there are, which in their own nature are damnable; and some are such as will certainly bring a man to damnation: this topic dilated on. If any man hath fallen, by great and repeated crimes, into a sinful habit, his case is little less than desperate: but that little hope which remains, has its degree, according to the infancy or the growth of the habit.

1. For all sins less than habitual, it is certain a pardon is ready on repentance; that is, to all that sin in ignorance, infirmity, or inadvertency; in small instances, or infrequent returns; with involuntary

actions, or imperfect resolutions: but humility, and prayer, and watchfulness, are the direct instruments of the expiation of such sins.

2. But then, secondly, whosoever sins without these abating circumstances, that is, in great instances, where his understanding cannot be deceived; or in the frequent repetitions of any sin, where his choice cannot be surprised; where there is a love of the sin, and a power over his resolutions;—in these cases it is a miraculous grace, and an extraordinary change, that must turn the current of iniquity: and pardon is more uncertain, and repentance more difficult, and the man must be made miserable, that he may not be accursed for ever.

1. His pardon is uncertain, because there are some sins unpardonable, and they are not all particularly named, &c. 2. It may also be, that the time of pardon is past. 3. Pardon of such habitual sins is uncertain, because life itself is so; and such sins require much time for expiation. 4. Every delay of return is, in the case of habitual sins, an approach to desperation; because the nature of habits is like that of crocodiles, which grow as long as they live, &c. But as the pardon of these sins is uncertain, so the conditions of restitution are hard even to them who shall be pardoned. St. James (ch. iv. 1. 3.) plainly declares the possibility of pardon to great sins; these specified: and also (ch. v. 20.) implies it to an habitual sinner. But then, the way that he appoints for the restitution of such persons, is humiliation, penances, and afflictions, resisting the devil, returning to God with weeping and mourning, &c. (ch. iv. and v.) These are harder conditions than God requires in the former cases; and are a kind of fiery trial.

Some additional cautions given; since the nature of these sins is such, that they may increase in weight and duration; and then they will increase in mischief and fatal effects; and so go beyond the text. One more topic dilated on; namely, that there are some single actions of sin, of so great malice, that in their own nature they are beyond the limit of gospel pardon: several such enumerated. Conclusion.

SERMON IX.

THE FOOLISH EXCHANGE.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVI. VERSE 26.

For 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?

PART I.

WHEN God's mercy had decreed to rescue mankind from misery, and so triumphed over his own justice, the excellent wisdom of God resolved to do it in ways contradictory to the appetites and designs of man, that it might also triumph over our weaknesses and imperfect conceptions. Jesus Christ hath preached a new philosophy, and cancelled all the old principles; he hath reduced the appetites of sense to the discourses of reason, and heightened reason to the subtilities of the Spirit; for now sensual pleasures are not delightful; riches are but dross: now if you would enjoy life, you must die; if you would be at ease, you must take up Christ's cross; if you would be rich, you must abound in good works, &c. And therefore he having stated the question so, that either we must quit this world or the other, our affections to this or our interest in that, the choice is rendered easy by the words of the text; because the distance is not less than infinite: the comparison is between heaven and hell, eternity and a moment, &c. *What shall it profit a man? or what shall a man give?* Is there any exchange for a man's soul? The question is an *αὐξησις* of the negative. Nothing can be given as a price to satisfy us for its loss. The blood of the Son of God was given to recover it. When our souls were forfeited to God, nothing less could pay the price to him, who was yet not concerned in the loss, save only as regarded his pity: this topic enlarged on. After which it is proposed to consider, first, the propositions of the exchange; the world and a man's soul: secondly, what is likely to be obtained really of the world; and what are really the miseries of a lost soul: thirdly, what considerations may be applied to our practice.

1. First, then, suppose a man gets all the world; what is it that he gets? It is a bubble and a phantasm, and hath no reality beyond a present transient use; a thing that is impossible to be enjoyed, because its fruits and usages are transmitted to us by parts and by succession: this enlarged on.

2. It may be considered, that he who is the greatest possessor in the world, enjoys its best and most noble parts, only in common with inferior persons and the most despicable of his kingdom. The poorest artisan of Rome, walking in Cæsar's gardens, had the same pleasures which they ministered to their lord.

3. Suppose a man lord of all the world, yet since every thing is received, not according to its own greatness and worth, but according to the capacity of the receiver, it signifies very little as to our content. He to whom the world can be given, to any purpose greater than a private estate can minister, must have new capacities created in him : this topic enlarged on.

4. The greatest vanity of this world is remarkable in this ; that all its joys summed up together are not big enough to counterpoise the evil of one sharp disease, or to allay a single sorrow ; whilst a holy conscience can sweeten the most bitter potion of this world, making tortures and death itself a subject of joy.

5. Suppose a man lord of all this world, a universal monarch : this cannot minister content to him ; not that content which a poor contemplative man, by the strength of Christian philosophy, and the support of a very small fortune, daily enjoys. All his power cannot command the sea, or make his children dutiful and wise : this enlarged on. Imagine a person as blessed as can be supposed with regard to worldly interest ; when all his accounts are cast up, he differs nothing from his subjects or servants but in mere circumstance : he has more to wait at his tables, more ceremonies of address, and higher titles ; but can a multitude of dishes give him a good appetite ? or does not satiety cloy it ? this enlarged on.

6. But this supposition hath a lessening term. If a man could be born heir of all the world, it were something ; but no man ever was so, except him who enjoyed it least. But in the supposition it is, *If a man could gain the whole world* ; which supposes labor and sorrow, trouble and hazard, &c. that besides the possession not being secured to us for a term of life, our lives are almost expired before we become fixed in our purchase : this topic enlarged on.

II. But still all this is only a supposition, like the putting of a case, or a fiction of law. For if we consider how much every man is likely to get really, and how much it is possible for any man to get, we shall find the account far shorter yet, and the purchase most trifling and inconsiderable. For the world is enjoyed at the same time by all its inhabitants, and the same portion of it by several persons in their several capacities. A prince enjoys his whole kingdom, not as all his people enjoy it, but in the manner of a prince ; the subject in the manner of subjects : this enlarged on.

2. But consider how far short of the whole world the greatest prince that ever reigned did come. Instance of Alexander the Great. But why talk thus ? Every man that loses his soul for the world must not look to have the portion of a king : this enlarged on.

3. Though these premises may suffice to show that the supposed purchase is but vain, yet even the possession of it, whatsoever it be, is not pure and unmixed, but allayed with sorrow and uneasiness : this topic enlarged on.

4. He that enjoys a great portion of this world, hath most commonly the allay of some great cross, which, although God sometimes designs in mercy to wean his affections from worldly things, is yet an inseparable appendant and condition of humanity. We shall gene-

rally find him to be most happy that hath most of wisdom and least of the world; because he only hath the least danger and the most security.

5. And, lastly, his soul so gets nothing, that wins all this world, if he loses his soul, that it is ten to one but he that gets the one, shall thereby lose the other: for to a great fortune sin is so adherent and insinuating, that it comes to him in the nature of civility. Its possessor will have no real friends to point out to him the danger of his ways.

We may omit to speak of the habitual intemperance which is too commonly annexed to festive and delicious tables, where there is no other measure and restraint on the appetite, but its fulness and satiety. And although the grace of God is sufficient to great personages and masters of the world, yet it is a mercy mixed with danger. Happy are they who use the world, and abuse it not; who possess a part of it, and love it for no other ends but the necessities of nature, and the discharge of religious and charitable offices.

Conclusion.

PART II.

And lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? And now the question is finally stated; and the dispute is concerning the sum of affairs. Therefore when the soul is at stake, and that for its eternal interests, it is not good to be hasty without taking just measures of the exchange. But the nature of the bargain will be better understood, if we consider the soul that is exchanged; what it is in itself; what price the Son of God paid for it; and what it is to lose it.

I. First, if we consider what the soul is in its own capacity for happiness, we shall find it to be of an excellency greater than the sun, an image of the Divinity, &c. For the Scriptures inform us that *God made man after his own image*: this explained. But the soul is all that whereby we may be, and without which we cannot be happy: this topic enlarged on. The excellency of the soul may be inferred from the consideration, that we ourselves cannot understand how excellently perfect it is; that being the best way of expressing our conceptions of God himself: the means whereby the soul receives pleasure commented on. But the losing a soul is not a mere privation of those felicities, of which the soul is naturally designed to be a partaker, but it is an investing it with contrary objects, and cross effects, and contrary perceptions, &c.

II. Secondly, If we consider the price paid by the Son of God for the redemption of a soul, we shall make a better estimate of it than from the weak discourses of our imperfect philosophy. Not the spoil of rich provinces, not the value of kingdoms, not the price of Cleopatra's draught, nor any thing which was unable to retard for one minute the term of its own natural dissolution, could be a price for the redemption of one perishing soul, &c.

When God made a soul, it was only, *Let us make man, &c.* He spake the word, and it was done. But when man had lost this soul, which the Spirit of God breathed into him, it was not so soon recovered: this enlarged on.

A soul in God's account is valued at the price of the blood, and shame, and tortures of his beloved Son; and yet we throw it away for the exchange of sins that a man is naturally ashamed to own: this topic enlarged on. And all vice is unreasonable; the most splendid temptation being nothing but a well-weaved fallacy, a mere trick, a sophism, and an abuse of the understanding. What an affront then is this to the wisdom of God, thus to undervalue a soul in which our own interest is so concerned, and for which, when lost, he gave the ransom of his eternal Son! It may be said, that when a soul is so valued, we ought not to venture the loss of it, even to save the world: this explained.

III. But it may be, some natures, or some understandings, care not for all this. We proceed therefore to the third and most material consideration, namely, what it is to lose a soul; which Hierocles thus explains: "An immortal substance can die, not by ceasing to be, but by losing all well-being," or by becoming miserable; which agrees with the caution given us by our Saviour, *not to fear them that can kill the body only, but him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell*; which word signifies, not death, but tortures.

Some brief explication of the terms used in Scripture to represent to our understandings the greatness of this perishing: *hell-fire, brimstone and fire*; that which our Saviour calls *the outer darkness*; where, because God's justice rules alone, without the allays and sweet abatements of mercy, there shall be pure and unmingled misery, beyond all those expressions which the tortures of this world could furnish to the sacred writers.

This consideration represented in that expression of our blessed Saviour, which he took out of the prophet Isaiah, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. This quotation commented on, and illustrated from Isaiah xxxiv. 8, &c.; where the prophet prophesies of the great destruction of Jerusalem for all her iniquities. *It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Sion, &c.*

Comment on the words *for ever,—everlasting,—eternal,—the never-dying worm,—the fire unquenchable*. Being words borrowed by our Saviour and his Apostles from the Old Testament, they must have a signification proportionable to the state in which they have their signification; so that as this worm, when it signifies a temporal infliction, means a worm that never ceases giving torment till the body is consumed; when it is translated to an immortal state, it must signify as much in that proportion: this subject carried on.

Even if Origen's opinion were true, and accursed souls were to have a period to their tortures after a thousand years, would it not be madness to choose the pleasures of a few years here, with trouble, danger, uncertainty, labor, and the intervals of sickness; and this to endure the flames of hell for a thousand years together? If a man

were condemned to lie still, or to lie in bed in one posture for seven years together, would he not buy it off with his whole estate? But what is this to the minutes, years, and ages of eternity, where there is no hope? for hell could not be hell if there were hope.

And though the Scripture uses the word *fire* to express the torments of accursed souls, yet fire can no more equal the pangs of hell, than it can torment an immaterial substance: for they are to suffer the wrath of God, *who is a consuming fire*: and when God takes away all comfort from us, nothing to support our spirit is left; sorrow is our food, and tears our drink, &c. We may guess at this misery of losing our soul by the terrors of a guilty conscience, those terrible thorns of the soul: this topic dilated on.

Exhortation, that we take care, lest, for the purchase of a little trifling portion of this world, we come into this state of torment. Let us not have such a hardness against the threats and representations of divine vengeance. Way in which different men deceive themselves; some by taking up atheistical opinions,—others, by supposing that God is all mercy, forgetting his justice, and putting off all repentance to the last hours of life, &c.

Our youth, and manhood, and old age, are all of them due to God; and justice and mercy are to him equally essential. We should remember the fatal and decreitory sentence which God hath passed on all mankind: *It is appointed to all men once to die, and after death comes judgment*. And if any of us were certain to die next morning, with what earnestness should we pray! with what hatred should we remember our sins! with what scorn should we look on the licentious pleasures of the world! This topic enlarged on. He therefore is a great fool that heaps up riches; that greedily pursues the world; and at the same time *heaps up wrath to himself against the day of wrath*. Conclusion.

SERMON X.

OF CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

MATTHEW, CHAP. X. VERSE 16.

Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

PART I.

WHEN our Saviour entailed a law and a condition of sufferings, and promised a state of persecution to his servants, and withal had charmed them with the bands of so many passive graces; *being sent forth as sheep among wolves*, innocent and defenceless, &c.; their condition seemed nothing else but a designation to slaughter; and when an

Apostle invited a proselyte to come to Christ, it was, as it were, a snare laid for his life; for he could neither conceal his religion nor hide his person, &c. But though God bound our hands behind us, he did not tie up our understandings: although we might not use our swords, yet we might use our reason, &c.; and thus the disciples of Christ overcame the power of the Roman legions by a wise religion: and the Christian, though exposed to persecution, is so secured that he shall never need to die, but when circumstances are so ordered that his reason is convinced that it is then fit he should; fit in order to God's purposes and his own. For he that is innocent is safe against all the powers of the world, if they rule with justice; and he that is prudent will escape many violences that come from injustice; and no wit of man, no government, no armies can do more. Here then are the two arms defensive of a Christian; prudence against the evils of men; innocence against the evils of the devil and of his kingdom: this topic enlarged on.

In order to the following discourse, we are first to consider whether this can be a commandment, or what it is: can all Christians be enjoined to be wise and prudent? It is as if God commanded us to be eloquent, or learned, or rich. Prudence is a gift of God, a blessing of an excellent nature, which therefore cannot be imposed on us, as arising from ourselves.

To this it may be answered; that Christian prudence is, in many instances, a direct duty: this explained. Its parts and proper acts consists in the following particulars.

1. It is the duty of Christian prudence to choose the end of a Christian, that which is perfective of a man, satisfactory to reason, the rest of a Christian, the beatification of his spirit; and this is, to choose, desire, and propound to himself heaven, and the fruition of God, as the end of all his acts and his purposes: for in the nature of things, that is most eligible, which is most perfective of our nature, and which is the satisfaction of our most reasonable appetites: this topic enlarged on; and the emptiness of the things of this world shown, in comparison with the excellence of those things which belong to God and to religion.

2. It is a duty of Christian prudence to pursue this great end with apt means and instruments in proportion to that end. It cannot be a vigorous prosecution, unless the means have an efficacy or worth proportionate to the difficulty, and something of the excellency of the end which is designed: this topic dilated on; the value of the things sought explained, as well as duty, in fervency of prayer, watchfulness of conduct, resistance of temptation, &c.

3. It is an office of prudence to serve God, so that we may, at the same time, preserve our lives and estates, our interest and reputation, as far as they can consist together. The Christian religion carrying us to heaven, does it by the way of a man; and by the body it serves the soul, as by the soul it serves God; and therefore it endeavors to secure the body and its interest, that it may prolong the stage in which we are to run for the mighty prize of our salvation, &c. He that through an indiscreet zeal casts himself into a needless danger,

bath betrayed his life to tyranny, and tempts the sin of an enemy : he loses to God the service of many years, &c. He that invites the cruelty of a tyrant by his own follies, suffers as a wilful person, and enters into the portion and reward of fools. Hence the precept of our Saviour, *Beware of men*. Use your prudence to the purposes of avoiding their snares. *Walk circumspectly, not as fools*, &c. : if you fall into evil times, purchase what respite you can, by all honest arts, if you do not compromise your duty ; and when the tyrant drives you forth from all your guards and retirement, offering violence to your duty and tempting you to dishonest acts, then boldly lay down your neck to the stroke ; fear not to die the most shameful death of the cross or the gallows : this topic enlarged on : instances given of honest evasion and of religious prudence among the early Christians. Sometimes, however, they used improper arts and subterfuges : instance of this in the *libellatici*, or libellers, who gave money for false certificates of their having sacrificed to idols ; by which means they disgraced their religion, were excommunicated, and not received again but after a severe repentance. *He that confesseth me before men*, says our Saviour, *I will confess him before my heavenly Father* ; and if here he refuseth to own me, I will not own him hereafter. As this is against Christian nobleness and fortitude, so is it against Christian prudence to provoke danger, like those who, when inquisition was made after Christians, went and offered themselves to die. God, when he sends a persecution, will select such persons as he will have to suffer. In the mean time, let us do our duty, as long and as strictly as we can ; neither turning our zeal into the ambition of death, nor our prudence into craft and covetousness. Conclusion.

PART II.

4. It is the part of Christian prudence so to order the affairs of our life, as that, in all the offices of our souls and conversation, we may do honor to the religion which we profess ; for the follies and vices of its professors give great advantage to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and do alienate the hearts and hinder the compliance of those undetermined persons, who are apt to be persuaded, if their understandings be not prejudiced.

But as our necessary duty is bound on us by one tie more, in order to the honor of God's cause, so it particularly binds us to many circumstances, adjuncts, and parts of duty, which have no other commandment but the law of prudence. There are some sects of Christians which have some one constant indisposition, which, as a character, divides them from all others, and makes them reprov'd on all hands. Some are so suspicious and ill-natured, that if a person of gentle disposition fall into their hands, he is presently soured and made morose. Others do things so like what they condemn, that they are forced to insignificant distinctions, in order to make them-

selves believe they are innocent, whilst they offend all men besides : this topic enlarged on.

Never let sins pollute our religion with arts of the world, nor let us offer to support the ark with unhallowed hands, nor mingle false propositions with true, nor do things which are like to vices ; neither let us ever speak things dishonorable to God, nor abuse our brother for God's sake, &c.

Among ourselves also we serve the devil's ends, and minister to an eternal disunion, by saying and doing things which look unhand-somely : this explained.

One thing should be observed ; that here the question being about prudence, and the matter of doing honor to our religion, it is not enough to say we can with learning justify all that we do, and make all whole with three or four distinctions : this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

We must be curious in observing the circumstances of men, and satisfying all their reasonable expectations, and doing things at that rate of charity and religion, which they are taught, as being pre-scribed in the institution : this enlarged on.

But above all things, those sects of Christians, whose professed doctrine brings destruction and diminution to government, give the most intolerable scandal and dishonor to the institution ; and it had been impossible for Christianity to have prevailed over the wisdom and power of the Greeks and Romans, if it had not been humble to superiors, patient of injuries, charitable to the needy, obedient to rulers, &c.

There are some persons, whose religion is much disgraced, because they change their propositions, according as their temporal necessities or advantages return. They that in their weakness cry out against all violence as against persecution, and when they become prosperous swell out into tyrants, let all the world know that at first they were pusillanimous, and at last outrageous ; that their doctrine first served their fear, and at last served their rage ; and that they did not intend at all to serve God : and then who shall believe them in any thing else ? this enlarged on.

5. It is also a duty of Christian prudence, that the teachers of others by authority, or reprovers of their vices by charity, should make their own persons apt to do it without objection. He that means to gain a soul, must not make his sermon an ostentation of his eloquence, but the law of his own life : this enlarged on.

Hither it also appertains, that in public or private reproofs we observe circumstances of time, of place, of person, of disposition. The vices of a king are not to be opened publicly ; and princes must not be reprehended as a man reproves his servant. He also that reproves a vice, should treat the person with honor and civility, and by fair opinions and mild address place the man in the regions of modesty, and the confines of grace and repentance : this topic enlarged on.

6. It is a duty of Christian prudence not to suffer our souls to

walk alone, unguarded, unguided, and more single than in other actions and interests of our lives, which are of less concernment. If we consider how much God hath done to save our souls, and after all that, how many ways there are for a man's soul to miscarry, we should think it very necessary to call to a spiritual man to take us by the hand, and lead us in the ways of God, in the regions of duty, and through the labyrinths of danger: this topic enlarged on; wherein it is shown that it is at least worth our while to take a spiritual guide. But because we are in the question of prudence, we must consider whether it be necessary to do so. If a man's estate be questioned, or his life shaken by diseases, it is not thought enough to employ one agent, or to send for a good woman to minister the juices of her garden. But then is the soul the only safe and trifling thing about us? Are there not a thousand dangers, and ten thousand difficulties, and innumerable possibilities of misadventure? this topic enlarged on. But what advantage shall we reap from a spiritual guide? Much every way. For this is the way that God hath appointed, who in every age hath sent a succession of spiritual persons, whose office is to minister in holy things, and to be stewards of his household, dispensers of his mysteries, preachers of his law, &c.; and that which is good discourse in the mouth of another man, is in theirs an ordinance of God, and prevails by way of blessing: this topic enlarged on to the end.

PART III.

7. As it is a part of Christian prudence to take a spiritual man for a guide to the conduct of our souls, so it also concerns us greatly that we be prudent in the choice of him. Concerning which it will be impossible to give characters particular enough, without the aid of prayer, experience, and the grace of God: this enlarged on and explained. When St. John was to separate false teachers from true, he took no other course but to mark the doctrine which was of God; and by this he bids his scholars avoid the different heresies which then prevailed respecting the coming and the nature of Jesus Christ. But this will signify nothing to us: for all Christians *confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh*.

In the following ages of the church, men have been so curious to signify misbelievers, that they have invented and observed signs, which in some cases were real appendages of false believers, but yet such as might attach themselves to good members of the catholic church. Some few will here be remarked, that, by removing the uncertain, we may fix our inquiries on certain significations.

1. Some men distinguish error from truth, by calling the doctrine of their adversaries *new, and of yesterday*. And certainly this is a good sign, if it be rightly applied; for since all Christian doctrine is that which Christ taught his church, and which the Spirit enlarged or expounded, and the Apostles delivered, our account begins then; and whatever is contrary to what they taught, is new and false; and

whatever is besides what they taught, is no part of our religion. But if a truth returns, as it were, from banishment; if it was from the first, though the holy fire hath been long buried, we do not call that new, &c. : this topic enlarged on.

2. Some would have false teachers sufficiently signified by a name, or private appellative, as Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, or Socinian; and think it enough to denominate them not of Christ, if they are called by the name of a man. And indeed the thing is in itself bad: but if by this mark we esteem false teachers sufficiently signified, we must follow no man, no church, nor communion; for all are by their adversaries marked with an appellative of singularity and separation: this enlarged on.

3. Amongst some men a sect is thought to be sufficiently reprov'd, if it subdivides and breaks itself into little fractions, or changes its own opinions. If indeed its followers decline their own doctrine, no man hath reason to believe them on the reputation which they have thus forfeited or renounced, in changing that which they at first passionately set forth; and therefore we need not believe them farther than when they can prove what they say: but for the other part of the sign, when men fall out among themselves on account of other interests or opinions, it is no argument that they are in error concerning that doctrine, which they all unitedly teach or condemn respectively: this enlarged on.

4. Whoever break the bands of a society or communion, in whose confession they were baptised, bring scandal on their doctrines and persons, and give suspicious men reason to decline their assemblies, and not to choose them for any thing of their authority or outward circumstances. And St. Paul bids the Romans to *mark them that cause divisions and offences*; but the following words make the caution prudent and practicable, *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*: they that recede from the doctrine which they have learned, they cause the offence; and if they also obtrude this on their congregations, they also make the division. We must receive no doctrine which is contrary to that taught by Christ and his Apostles; but in that case must separate from the congregation, and adhere to Christ. But this is not to be done, unless the thing be evident and notorious: this topic dilated on.

5. The ways of direction which we have from Holy Scripture, to distinguish false Apostles from true, are taken from their doctrine, or their lives. That of the doctrine is the more sure way, if we can hit on it; but that also is the thing signified, and needs to have other signs. St. John and St. Paul took this way, for they were able to do it infallibly: this shown. And we also might do so as easily, if men would suffer Christian faith to rest in its own perfect simplicity, unmingled with arts, and opinions, and interests. When we choose our doctrine or our side, let us take that which is in the plain unexpounded words of Scripture. Next let us choose that which is most advantageous to a holy life, and to the proper graces of a Christian; in which St. Paul directs us: *Let us be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses*: for he that heartily pursues these

proportions, cannot be a bad man, though he were accidentally, and in particular explications, deceived.

6. But, because this is an act of wisdom rather than prudence, and supposes science or knowledge rather than experience, therefore it concerns Christians to observe the practice and rules of practice, which their teachers and catechists use in their spiritual ministry; for although many signs are uncertain, yet some are infallible, and some highly probable.

7. Therefore those teachers that pretend to be guided by a private spirit, are certainly false. *No scripture is of private interpretation*, saith St. Peter, that is, of private emission or declaration: this explained. Such pretence of a single extraordinary spirit is nothing else but the spirit of pride, error, and delusion; a snare wherewith to catch easy, credulous souls, &c.

8. Those are to be suspected for evil guides, who, to get authority among the people, pretend great zeal, and use great liberty in reprovng princes and governors, nobility and prelates, &c. Such homilies cannot be the effects of a holy religion, as undermine authority, make the people discontented, bold against their rulers, and immodest in their stations: this topic enlarged on.

9. The Apostles, in all prophecies concerning such men, have remarked lust to be the inseparable companion of these rebellious prophets. *They are filthy dreamers; they defile the flesh*, saith St. Jude. *They walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness*, saith St. Peter, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

10. Those prophets and pastors, that pretend severity and live loosely, or are severe in small things and give liberty in greater, or who forbid some sins and yet practise or teach those that serve their interests or their sect, are to be suspected and avoided.

11. The substance of all is this; that we must not choose our doctrine by our guide, but our guide by the doctrine, &c.

12. Besides these premises, there are other lesser lights that may help to make our judgment clearer; but only when they are in conjunction with some of the preceding characters, which are drawn by the great lines of Scripture: such as, for example, when the teachers of sects stir up unprofitable questions; causelessly retire from the universal customs of Christendom; cancel memorials of the greatest mysteries of our redemption; make their religion to consist in speculations, abstractions, raptures, or in outward ceremonies, &c. &c. Here indeed is the great necessity that we should have the prudence and discretion of serpents. But two or three cautions are to be inserted.

1. We cannot expect that by these, or any other signs, we shall be able to discover the characters of all men, whether they teach an error or not. It is enough that we decline those guides that would lead us to hell: we need not think that we are enticed to death by the weaknesses of every disagreeing brother.

2. In all discerning of sects, we must be careful to distinguish the faults of men from the evils of their doctrine: for some there are that speak very well, and do very ill; men of holy calling, but of unholy lives, &c.

3. Let us make one separation more, and then we may act according to the premises. If we espy a design or an evil mark on one doctrine, let us divide it from the other that are not so spotted: this topic dilated on.

These are the general rules of Christian prudence here chosen to be insisted on: there are others indeed more particular, and well worthy of our observance; namely, that we be careful to decline a danger, watchful against a temptation, wise in choosing our company, reserved and wary in our friendships, communicative in our charity, &c.: this topic dilated on to the end.

SERMON XI.

OF CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.

MATTHEW, CHAP. X. VERSE 16.

And harmless as doves.

PART I.

OUR blessed Saviour having prefaced concerning prudence, adds to the integrity of the precept, and the conduct of our religion, that we be simple as well as prudent, innocent as well as wary; otherwise prudence may turn into craft, and simplicity may degenerate into folly: this topic dilated on.

We do not live in an age when there is so much need to bid men be wary, as to take care that they be innocent. Indeed we are too apt to be loose and ungirt, exposing ourselves to temptation, others to offence, and the cause to dishonor; and we are open to every evil but persecution, from which we are close enough, and that alone we call prudence; but in the matter of interest we are wary as serpents, tenacious as grappling-hooks, and, above all, false and hypocritical as thin ice spread over a deep pit: this enlarged on.

It is a usual and a safe way to cozen under color of friendship or religion; but that is vastly criminal. To tell a lie for the purpose of abusing a man's belief, and by it to take possession of any thing to his injury, tends to the perfect destruction of human society; is opposed to God, who is truth itself; and is a base cowardly vice. It is also the greatest injury possible to the abused person: for besides that it makes against his interest, it renders him insecure and uneasy in his confidence; it makes it necessary for him to be jealous and suspicious, namely, troublesome to himself and others. Moreover, it robs the deceiver himself of the honor of his soul, debasing his mind and understanding. But the duty must be reduced to particular heads, in order to discover the contrary vice.

1. The first office of Christian simplicity consists in our religion and manners ; that they be open and honest, public and justifiable, the same at home and abroad : this is necessary ; because whoever is a hypocrite in his religion, mocks God, either denying him to be the searcher of hearts, or openly defying his omniscience and justice.

It is a crafty life that men lead, carrying on designs, and living on secret purposes, invading others' rights by false propositions in theology, &c. Such persons have abused all ages of the world, and all religions ; it being so easy for men to creep into opportunities of devouring the flock on pretence of defending it, and to raise their estates under color of saving men's souls.

It may sometimes concern a man to seem religious, and to show fair appearances, for God's glory, or the edification of a brother, or the reputation of a cause : yet this is only sometimes ; but it always concerns us, that we be religious ; and we may reasonably think, that if the colors of religion profit us so much, the substance would do so much more : this topic enlarged on. Neither doth the sincerity of our religion require that we should not conceal our sins : for he that sins, and dares to own it publicly, may become impudent ; and so long as in modesty we desire our shame to be hid, we are under the protection of one of Virtue's sisters. But if any other principle draws the veil, if we conceal our vices because we would be honored for sanctity, or would not be hindered in our designs, we serve the interest of pride or ambition, covetousness or vanity : this subject enlarged on. One thing more is to be added to the simplicity of religion ; and that is, that we never deny it, nor lie concerning our faith, nor tell our propositions and articles secretly, nor instruct novices with fraud ; but teach them honestly, justly, and severely, &c.

2. Christian simplicity, or the innocency of prudence, relates to laws both in their sanction and execution ; that they be decreed with equity, and proportioned to the capacity and profit of the subjects ; also that they be applied to practice with remissions and reasonable interpretations, agreeable to the sense of the words and the mind of the lawgiver. But laws are not to be cozened and abused by contradictory glosses and fantastic allusions ; for if their majesty be once subjected to contempt and easy resolutions, they will soon suffer the shame of prostitution : this subject illustrated, and enlarged on.

3. Christian simplicity relates to promises and acts of grace or favor ; and its caution is, that all promises be simple, ingenuous, agreeable to the intention of the promiser, truly and effectually expressed, and never less in the performance than in the expression : concerning which there are several cases. 1. All promises, in which a second or third person hath no interest, that is, promises of kindness or civility, are bound to pass into performance, though they may force you to some small inconvenience ; yet never to a great one : this explained. 2. Promises, in matters of justice or of grace, as from a superior to an inferior, must be so singly and ingenuously expressed, intended, and performed, that no condition is to be reserved to warrant their non-performance, but impossibility, or, what

is next to it, an intolerable inconvenience : in which case we may commute our promises, so we pay to the interested person a good at least equal to that which we first promised. And to this purpose it may be added, that it is not against Christian simplicity to express our promises in such words as we know the interested man will understand in a different sense, so that what we mean be not less than what he expects. Example of our Lord's promise to his disciples, that they should sit on twelve thrones, &c. God's dealing with mankind dilated on. He promises more than we could hope for; and when he hath done that, he gives us more than he had promised.

In this part of simplicity we Christians lie under a special obligation : for our religion being ennobled by the greatest promises, our faith made confident by the veracity of our Lord, and his words made certain by miracles, prophecies, and all the testimony of God himself; if we suffer the faith of a Christian to be an instrument to deceive our brother, we dishonor the sacredness of the institution, and become strangers to the spirit of truth and the eternal word of God : this topic dilated on to the end.

PART II.

4. Christian simplicity teaches openness and ingenuousness in contracts, covenants, associations, and all other such intercourses as suppose an equality of persons regarding matter of right and justice in the stipulation. Nothing is more contrary to our religion, than that we should deal with men as if we dealt with foxes, &c.

There are some in the world who love to smile, but their purpose is only to deceive; and many are so full of hypocrisy, that their arts can only be taken off, and their intentions laid open, by the society of banquets and the festive goblets. But it is an evil condition that a man's honesty shall be owing to his wine, and that virtue must live at the charge and will of a vice. The proper bond of societies and contracts is justice, and religion, and the laws, &c.

Because a man may be deceived by deeds and open actions as well as by words, it becomes a duty that no one, by any action done on purpose to make his brother believe a lie, abuse his persuasion and interest : this explained and illustrated. But when actions are of a double signification, or when a man is not abused or defeated of his right by an uncertain sign, it is lawful to do a thing to other purposes than is commonly understood. Flight is a sign of fear; but it is lawful to fly when a man fears not : this farther illustrated.

But as our actions must be of a sincere and determined signification in contract, so must our words. In all parts of traffic let our words be the signification of our thoughts, and our thoughts design nothing but the advantages of a permitted exchange. But the precept of simplicity, in matters of contract, hath one step of severity beyond this; for it is not lawful so much as to conceal the secret and undiscernible faults of the merchandise; but we must acknowledge them, or else affix prices diminished to such proportions and abate-

ments as these faults should make. He that secures his own profit, and regards not the interest of another, is more greedy of a full purse than of a holy conscience.

God sent justice into the world, that all conditions, in their several proportions, should be equal; and he that receives a good should pay one: justice is a relative term, and supposes two persons obliged; and though fortunes are unequal, and men are wise and foolish, honored and despised, yet in the intercourse of justice God has ordained that there should be no difference; and therefore it was esteemed base to dismiss a servant when corn was dear, and in the danger of shipwreck to throw out an unprofitable boy, and keep a fair horse, &c. This topic dilated on.

5. Christian simplicity hath also its necessity, and binds us towards our enemies, in questions of law or war. He that is a good soldier is not always a good man. Enemies are not persons bound by contract and society, and therefore are not obliged to open hostilities and ingenuous prosecution of the war; and if it be lawful to take by violence, it is not unjust to take the same thing by craft. But this is to be so understood, that where there is an obligation, either by the law of nations or by special contracts, no man must dare to violate his faith or honor, but must in these things act with the same ingenuousness as the world shows in the case of peaceful promises and the intercourse of relatives. This topic enlarged on and illustrated.

6. Thus we see how far the laws of ingenuousness and Christian simplicity have put fetters on our words and actions, and directed them in the paths of truth and nobleness; and the first degrees of permission in the way of simulation are in the arts of war and cases of just hostility. But here it is usually inquired, whether it be lawful to tell a lie or dissemble to save a good man's life, or to do him a great benefit? this point illustrated by cases from Scripture, as that of Abraham and Isaac, who told a lie in their danger to Abimelech, &c.; concerning which Irenæus gives a rule, That those, whose actions the Scripture hath remarked, and yet not chastised or censured, we are not, without great reason and certain rule, to condemn. But whether his rule can extend to this case is now to be inquired.

1. It is certain that children may be cozened into goodness, and sick men into health, and passengers in a storm into safety; because not only the end is fair, charitable, and just, but the means are such as do no injury to the persons who are to receive benefit, &c.

2. Sinners may not be treated with the liberty we take in the case of children and sick persons, because they must serve God by choice and election, and must not be cozened into their duty; and therefore they are to be treated with arguments proper to move their wills, &c. Sinners that offend God by choice, must have their choice corrected, and their understanding instructed, or else their evil is not cured.

3. For it is here very observable, that in intercourses of this nature we are to regard a double duty—the matter of justice, and the rights of charity; namely, that good be done by lawful instruments: for it is certain that it is not lawful to abuse a man's understanding,

with a purpose to gain him sixpence; it is not fit to do evil for a good end, or abuse one man to benefit another: this topic enlarged on and illustrated. 4. And now, on the grounds of this discourse, we may determine more easily concerning the saving of a man's life by telling a lie in judgment: instance of refusal in the case of Pericles: to lie in judgment is directly against the being of government, the honor of tribunals, and the command of God: therefore by no accident can it be hallowed; and all those crafty and delusive answers recorded in Scripture were extra-judicial, &c.: this topic fully enlarged on.

7. One thing more is to be added, that it is not lawful to tell a lie in jest. As Christian simplicity forbids all lying in matters of interest, &c. so does it prohibit us to lie in mirth; for *of every idle word a man shall speak, he shall give account in the day of judgment.* Nothing is easier than simplicity and ingenuousness, by which men converse, as do the angels; doing their own work, securing their proper interests, serving the public, and glorifying their Creator; but hypocrites, and liars, and dissemblers, spread darkness over the face of affairs, and are the enemies of justice, truth, peace, and all the comforts of society.

SERMON XII.

THE MIRACLES OF THE DIVINE MERCY.

PSALM LXXXVI. VERSE 5.

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call on thee.

PART I.

MAN, having destroyed that in which God delighted, the beauty of his soul, fell into an evil portion, and being seized on by the divine justice, grew miserable: state of this his sorrow dilated on. Yet in this misery God remembered his own creature, and by his mercy rescued him from the sword of his justice, the punishment of his guilt, and the disorder of his sin: the topic of God's mercy enlarged on. He that deeply considers it, and dwells awhile in the depths thereof, can hardly help talking wildly and without order in his discoursings: this illustrated.

It is proposed in the present discourse to consider, 1. That mercy, being an emanation of the divine goodness towards us, supposes us and found us miserable. But in this account of God's mercies, we must not reckon the miracles and graces of creation, or any thing of the nature of man, in the noble faculties and capacities for delight with which he endowed us, or the evil qualities and passions

imparted to other animals, which he imparted not to us: these are to be considered as acts of bounty rather than mercy; these God gave to us when he made us, and before we needed mercy; but when we forfeited all his favor by our sins, then that these endowments were continued or restored to us, this became a mercy, and ought to be so reckoned: for it was a rare mercy that we were suffered to live at all, or that the anger of God punished us so gently: but when the rack is changed into an axe, and the axe into an imprisonment, and the imprisonment into an enlargement, and the enlargement into an entertainment, and the entertainment into an adoption, these are the steps of a mighty favor and perfect redemption: this topic enlarged on. And if God be thus kind when he is angry, what is he when he feasts us with caresses of his more tender kindness?

2. But as a circle begins every where and ends no where, so does the mercy of God: after all this great progress, it began anew. Now that he had once more made us capable of mercies, God had what he desired, and what he could rejoice in; something on which he could pour forth his kindness.

3. God's mercies, or the mercies of his giving, came first on us by the mending of our nature: for the ignorance into which we fell is instructed, and better learned in spiritual notices, than Adam's morning knowlege in Paradise: our appetites are made subordinate to the Spirit, and the liberty of our will is improved, having *the liberty of the sons of God*. Christ hath done more for us in grace and advantage, than we lost by Adam: and as man lost Paradise and got Heaven, so he lost the integrity of the first, and got the perfection of the second Adam: his *living soul* is changed into a *quickenng spirit*, &c. But there are two great instances in which human nature is vastly advanced: 1. Besides body and soul, which was the sum total of Adam's constitution, God hath superadded to us a third principle, the beginner of a better life, *the Spirit*; by which the new man is renewed in us day by day: 2. The advancement of human nature by Christ, when he carried it up with him, at his ascension, above the seats of angels: this topic fully enlarged on.

4. To this it may be added, that the divine mercy is so enlarged towards us, that we are not only fellow-ministers and servants with the angels, and, regarding our nature in Christ's person, exalted above them, but we shall also be their judges: this explained and illustrated.

5. The next order of divine mercies to be remarked is also an improvement of our nature, or an appendage to it; for, whereas our constitution, both of body and soul, is weak and subject to mutilation and imperfection, &c., God hath, in his infinite mercy, provided for every condition rare supplies of comfort and advantage against natural defects and wants. Thus he gives to blind men better memories: want of children he recompenses with freedom from care and pain: sorrow he alleviates by the sympathy which he implants in the breasts of men, &c., God sent no greater evil into the world than the necessity of our eating bread in the sweat of our brows; but even

here he defeats the purposes of his wrath by the inundation of his mercy: for this labor and sweat of our brows is so far from being a curse, that without it our very bread would not be so great a blessing. And for the other part of the severe law and laborious imposition, that we must work out our spiritual interests with the labors of the spirit; though this may seem to be a device of torture, to punish man with continual vexation, yet it hath in it a large ingredient of mercy, or rather is nothing but an intire mercy in its constitution. For, if it were not for this, we had nothing of our own to present to God, nothing proportionable to the great rewards of heaven, &c.: this enlarged on.

6. As an appendage to this instance of the divine mercy, we may account, that, not only in nature, but in contingent and emergent events, God makes compensation to us for all the evils of chance and the hostilities of accident. Instance of Joseph; of the children of Israel in Egypt; the overturning of many kingdoms. In the mean time affliction serves religion, and tries the children of God. Instance of David, who would have suffered more had he suffered less: other examples cited.

They that love to talk of the mercies of the Lord, and to recount his good things, cannot but have observed that God delights to be called by appellatives which relate to miserable and afflicted persons: he is *the Father of the fatherless*, and *an Avenger of the widow's cause*; &c. On this ground let us account whether mercy be not the greater ingredient in that death and deprivation, when I lose a man, and get God to be my Father, &c. And if, in our greatest misery God's mercy is so conspicuous, what can we suppose him to be in his loving-kindnesses? The sum is this: God intends every accident should minister to virtue, and every virtue is the nurse of joy, and both of them are daughters of the divine goodness, &c.

PART II.

7. God having by these means secured us from the evils of nature and contingences, as our Father; he next makes provision for us to supply all those necessities which himself hath made. For even to make them was a great circumstance of his mercy: this instanced in the case of hunger and thirst; also in the case of our other desires or wants, and the large abundance of things created for their gratification. God uses us as Joseph did his brother Benjamin: we have many changes of raiment, and our mess is five times bigger than the provision made for our brothers of the creation. But the mercies of God are to be estimated also according as provision is dispensed to every single person; for, not to speak of his bounties to the rich, God hath also made provision for the poorest persons; so that if they can but rule their desires, they shall have their tables furnished: this topic enlarged on. It may also be observed, that there are vast provisions made for our health in the secret storehouses of nature; and these are so many miracles of Providence, that they give plain

demonstration of what relation we bear to heaven : this topic farther enlarged on : and it is shown that God plants remedies there, where the diseases are most popular ; and that every country is best provided against its own evils.

8. But because such is the bounty of God, that he hath provided a better life for the inheritance of man ; if he be so merciful in making provision for our less noble part, what rare arts may we expect from his mercy in securing to us our eternal portion ! Here it may be considered, that it is an infinite mercy of the Father of mercies, that he hath appointed to us such a religion as leads us to a vast felicity through pleasant ways : this topic enlarged on. It is concluded that we cannot be happy without being pious ; and that the Christian religion is the greatest security and most certain instrument of making a man rich, and pleasing, and healthful, and wise, and beloved : this remarked in two or three instances.

(1.) The whole religion of a Christian as it relates to others, is nothing but justice and mercy, certain parents of peace and benefit ; and, on such a supposition, what evil can come to a just and merciful, a necessary and useful person ? this explained.

(2.) And because there is no evil that can befall a just man, unless it comes by injury and violence, our religion hath also made as good provision against that too, as the nature of the thing will suffer : for by patience we are reconciled to the sufferance, by hope and faith we see a certain consequent reward, &c.

(3.) But when we consider that the Christian religion consists in doing good to all men ; that it is made up of mercies and friendly conventions ; and that all are to do good works for necessary uses, and not to be burthensome where it can be avoided ; what more can be wished for men in relation to others, and what can be more beneficial to themselves, than that they be such as others will value for their own interest, such as princes and nobles ought to esteem, and all men can make use of according to their several conditions ; so that unless a persecution disables them, they can not only maintain themselves, but oblige others to charity ?

(4.) To which may be added this material consideration : that all those graces, which oblige us to do good to others, are nothing else but certain instruments of bringing advantage to ourselves : this enlarged on.

(5.) The very charity, and love, and mercy, that is commanded in our religion, is in itself a great excellency ; not only in order to heaven, but to the comforts of the earth also ; and such, without which a man is not capable of blessing or comfort. And he that sent charity and friendship into the world, intended charity to be as relative as justice, and to have its effect both on the loving and the beloved person : this explained and illustrated.

The above account being so great, we need not reckon the collateral issues and little streams of comfort, which God hath made to issue from that religion to which he hath obliged us ; such as are mutual comforts—visiting the sick—instructing the ignorant—converting souls, &c.—Christian graces, which God hath made neces-

sary, and obliged us to possess them under pain of damnation ; that is, he hath made it so sure to us to become happy even in this world, that if we will not be so, he threatens to destroy us : this topic enlarged on. But other mercies must now be considered.

9. God, that he might secure our duty, with our present and consequent felicity, hath tied us with golden chains, and bound us not only with the bracelets of love and hope, but with the ruder cords of fear and reverence ; even with all the innumerable parts of a restraining grace. Various methods described by which God's interposing graces check the efforts of our desires, and prevent our bad and lustful designs from taking effect. And his mercy is not less in separating men from the occasions of sin ; from the neighborhood and temptation to it : this topic enlarged on.

10. The next order of mercies is of so pure and unmingled a constitution, that it hath at first no regard to the capacities and dispositions of the receivers : and afterwards, when it hath, it relates only to such conditions as itself creates and produces in the susceptible ; that is, the mercies of the divine predestination : this topic enlarged on.

11. Lastly ; all the mercies of God are centred in that which is the whole felicity of man ; and God is so great a lover of souls, that he provides securities and fair conditions for them, even against all our reason and hopes, our expectations and weak discoursings : this instanced in a few particulars. Conclusion.

PART III.

There are other orders of mercies : but, as the number is without measure, we can reckon only a few more, and them without order.

1. Good men have observed, that the providence of God is so great a provider for holy living, and does so certainly minister to religion, that nature and chance, the order of the world, and the influences of heaven, are taught to serve the ends of God and the spirit of man : this considered in the case of the Jews. But when the Christian religion had taken root and filled all lands, then the whole nature of things, the creation, became subservient to the kingdom of grace ; and the head of the religion is also the head of the creatures, and ministers all the things of the world in order to the Spirit of grace : this topic enlarged on.

2. But that which is next, and not much unlike the design of this wonderful mercy, is, that all the actions of religion, though mingled with circumstances of differing, and sometimes of contradictory relations, are so concentrated in God their proper centre, and conducted in such pure channels of reason and rule, that no one duty contradicts another ; and it can never be necessary for any man, in any case, to sin : this explained and commented on.

1. After all this, we may sit down and reckon by great sums his gracious gifts, and tell the minutes of eternity by his mercies. God hath given us his laws to rule us, his word to instruct us, his Spirit to

guide us, his angels to protect us, his ministers to exhort us: he hath revealed all our duty, affrighted our follies with the fear of death, exercised our faith, and confirmed our hopes, &c.: a large catalogue of his mercies farther enumerated: yet this is but one half. The mercies of giving only have been told: but those of forgiveness are greater, though not more. *He is ready to forgive*; and on this stock thrives the interest of our great hope, the hope of a blessed immortality. The state from which God desires to deliver us described: the easy conditions which he requires from us. In all the parts of our duty, it may be, there is but one instance in which we are to do great violence to our natural and first desires: nature and evil of a besetting sin dilated on.

2. God's readiness to pardon appears in this, that he pardons before we ask; for he that bids us ask for pardon, hath in design and purpose done the thing already.

3. Nay, God is so ready in his mercy, that he did pardon us even before he redeemed us. For what is the secret of the mystery that the eternal Son of God should suffer for us? He that did this is God: and when he did this that he might pardon us, was he at that instant angry with us? was this an effect of his anger or of his love?

4. God even pardoned us before we sinned; and when he foresaw our sin, he sent his Son to die for us: our pardon was effected by Christ's death many ages ago: and for the sins of to-morrow, and of the next day, Christ is already dead; is already risen from the dead; already makes intercession and atonement: this topic enlarged on.

5. There is yet a higher degree: for God so pardoned us once, that we should need no more pardon: he pardons us *by turning every one of us away from our iniquities*.

6. Moreover, a higher degree of pardon is still left beyond this: for although we do not abjure our covenant, renounce Christ, and extinguish the Spirit, yet we resist him, and grieve him, and go off from the holiness of the covenant, and return again, and very often step aside, and need this great pardon to be perpetually renewed: and to this purpose Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father: this enlarged on.

7. God is so ready to forgive, that he himself works our dispositions towards it by his preventing grace, without which we should not be found to hope for a pardon, nor to work for it, nor to ask it, nor to receive it: this topic enlarged on.

These are the great degrees of God's forwardness and readiness to forgive; for the expression of which no language is sufficient, but God's own words, describing mercy in all those dimensions which can signify to us its greatness: *His mercy reacheth unto the Heavens*, &c. But besides the former great lines of the mercy of forgiveness, there is another chain, which but to produce and tell its links, is to open a cabinet of jewels, where every stone is as bright as a star, &c.

1. God is long-suffering, though he be provoked every day, &c.: 2. he also forgives a sinner oftentimes, and takes a little thing for an excuse, &c.: 3. when God perceives himself forced to strike, yet

then he takes off his hand, and repents him of the evil : 4. when he is forced to proceed, he yet makes an end before he has half done, and is glad of a pretence to pardon us : 5. he forgets our sin, and puts it out of his remembrance : 6. he sometimes gives pardon beyond all his revelations and his declared will, &c. : 7. God pardons the greatest sinners, and hath left them on record : instances quoted, &c.

We see the largeness of this treasure : but we can see no end : for we have not yet looked on the rare arts of conversion, nor considered that God leaves the natural habits of virtues, even after the acceptation is interrupted, &c.

The result of this consideration is, that as we fear the divine judgments, so we should adore and love his goodness ; and let the golden chains of his mercy tie us to a noble prosecution of our duty, and the interests of religion : but let us never forget that mercy is like the rainbow ; it shines here as long as it is not hindered ; but we must not look for it after it is night.

SUMMARIES OF TEN SERMONS

ON

THE NATURE OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, &c.

SERMON I.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS EVANGELICAL DESCRIBED.

MATTHEW, CHAP. V. VERSE 20.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

REWARDS and punishments are the best sanction of laws ; and although their guardians sometimes strike softly in their execution of sad sentences, yet in the sanction they make no abatements, but so proportion the duty to the reward, and the punishment to the crime, that by these we can best tell what value the lawgiver puts on obedience. And therefore the law of Moses, whose rewards are merely temporal, *could never make the comers thereunto perfect* ; but the *superinduction of a better hope* hath endeared a more perfect obedience. Christ having brought life and immortality to light, &c. we

are enabled to do all that God requires; and he requires all we can do: this enlarged on.

The matter required in the text is certainly very great; for it is to be more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees, more holy than the doctors of the law, more virtuous than some that were prophets and high priests, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

Here then we have two things to consider; 1. what was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; 2. how far that is to be exceeded by the righteousness of Christians.

1. Concerning the first; we need not be so nice in the observation of these words, as to take notice that Christ does not name the Sadducees, though there may be something in it: this explained.

The Pharisees obeyed the commandments in the letter, not in the spirit: they minded what God spake, but not what he intended: they were busy in the outward works of the hand, but incurious of the affections and choice of the heart: this topic enlarged on.

2. In moral duties, where God expressed himself more plainly, they made no commentary of kindness, but regarded the prohibition so nakedly, that if they stood clear of that hated name which was set down in Moses' tables, they gave themselves a liberty, in many instances, of the same kindred and alliance: this illustrated.

3. They placed their righteousness in negatives; they would not commit what was forbidden, but they cared little for the included positive duty; and the omission of good actions did not much trouble them.

4. Still worse than this, they broke Moses' tables into pieces, and gathering up the fragments, took to themselves what part of duty they pleased, but let the rest alone. Lastly, St. Austin summed up the difference between pharisaical and evangelical righteousness in two words, *timor* and *amor*: they served the God of their fathers *in the spirit of fear*; we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *in the spirit of love* and of adoption. Hence they would do, 1. all that they thought they lawfully could do: 2. they would do nothing but what was expressly commanded.

This was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and of their disciples the Jews, which our Saviour reproves, and calls us on to a new righteousness, that of God, the law of the spirit of life, &c.: it concerns us therefore to look after the measures of this; it being a question of life and death eternal.

Now concerning this, we shall do very much amiss if we take our account from the manners and practices of the many who call themselves Christians; for there are *the old and the new Pharisees*. Indeed it would be well if it were no worse. But the world is too full of Christians, whose righteousness is very little and their iniquities very great. But let us leave off complaining, and go to the rule, and describe the necessary measures of righteousness evangelical.

1. Therefore, when it is said, that our *righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, let us first take notice, by way of precognition, that it must be at least so much: we must keep the

letter of the whole moral law : we must not do less than the Pharisees, who did the outward work, &c. : this topic enlarged on.

This much being supposed, our question is, how much more must we do? And the first measure is this : whatsoever can be signified and ministered to by the body, in that the heart or the spirit of a man must be the principal actor. We must not give alms without a charitable soul, nor suffer martyrdom but in love and obedience : and when we say our prayers, we mispend our time, unless our mind ascend up to God on the wings of desire, for desire is the life of prayer : this enlarged on. Solemn prayers and the sacraments and the assemblies of the faithful, and fasts and acts of external worship, are the solemnities and rites of religion ; but the religion of a Christian is in heart and spirit. True it is, God works in us his graces by the sacrament ; but we must dispose ourselves to a reception of the Divine blessing by moral instruments.

2. The righteousness evangelical must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees by extension of our obedience to things of the same signification. There must be a commentary of kindness in understanding the laws of Christ. We must understand all God's meaning ; we must secure his service ; we must be far removed from the dangers of his displeasure. And therefore our righteousness must be the purification and perfection of the spirit ; so that it will be nothing for us not to commit adultery, unless our eyes be chaste and our desires clean. A Christian must not be lustful ; and therefore he must not feed high, nor drink deep ; for these things make provision for lust : this topic enlarged on.

3. Of the same consideration also it is, that we understand Christ's commandments to extend our duty, not only to what is named, and what is not named, of the same nature and design ; but that we abstain from all such things as are like unto sins. Of this nature there are many ; as all violence of passion, gaming, prodigality of our time, indecency of action, easiness to believe evil of others, curiosity of diet, excess in ornaments, &c. He is dull of hearing indeed, who understands not the voice of God, unless it be clamorous in an express and loud commandment. Thus much concerning the first sort of measures of Christian righteousness ; those of caution and negative duty. But there are greater things yet behind.

4. The fourth thing noted therefore is, that Christian righteousness must be universal ; not a little kuot of holy actions scattered in our lives, and drawn into a sum at the day of judgment, but it must be a state of holiness. One duty cannot be changed or interposed for another ; and three virtues will not make amends for one remaining vice : this topic fully enlarged on.

5. Lastly, pharisaical righteousness was the product of fear ; and therefore what they must needs do, that they would do ; but no more. But the righteousness evangelical is produced by love, managed by choice, cherished by delight and fair experiences. Christians are a willing people ; and no man hath this righteousness, if he resolves to take all the liberty that is merely lawful, or to do no more than is

just commanded him: the reasons of which are plain: for, 1. The Christian that resolves to do every thing that is lawful will many times run into danger and inconvenience; and the lines of right and wrong are so nice, that he will often pass into what is unlawful imperceptibly. 2. He that will do all that he thinks he may lawfully do, need have an infallible guide always by him, to answer every case of conscience; for if he should be mistaken, his error is his crime, and not his excuse. 3. He cannot be innocent, so long as there are in the world so many bold temptations and presumptuous actions, so many scandals, and so much ignorance of the things of God, so many things that are suspicious, and of evil report, &c. 4. Besides all this, he that thus stands on his terms with God, and so husbands his duty, will never be exemplary in his life, or grow in grace, and therefore will never enter into glory.

And the case is very similar with them that resolve to do no more good than is commanded them: for no man does do all that is commanded him at all times; therefore he that will not sometimes do something more, besides that he hath no love and holy zeal, can never make any amends towards the reparation of his failings; &c.

We must also know, that in keeping God's commandments, every degree of internal duty is under them; and therefore, whatever we do, we must do it as well as we can: this topic enlarged on.

To this description of Christian righteousness as above, and opposed to the pharisaical, it must be added, that our blessed Saviour's precept is to be extended to the direct degrees of our duty. We must do more duties; and we must do them better. And though this be understood of the internal affection, because that must never be abated (for God is always to be loved and served with all our heart); yet, concerning the degrees of external duty, as prayers, alms, and the like, we are tied to a greater excellency in this degree, than were the Scribes and Pharisees. Farther consideration extended to this inquiry, namely, to how much more of external duty Christians are thus obliged. The sum of all declared to be; that the righteousness evangelical is the same as that which the ancients called "to lead an apostolical life:" this enlarged on to the end.

SERMON II.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONQUEST OVER THE BODY OF SIN.

ROMANS, CHAP. VII. VERSE 19.

For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.

WHAT the eunuch said to Philip, *Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or some other man?* may be asked concerning the words of the text. Does St. Paul mean this of himself, or of some one else? farther remarks on this topic. The text is one of those hard places of St. Paul, which, as St. Peter says, *the ignorant and unstable wrest to their own destruction*: farther remarks on this point. For the proper stating of this great case of conscience, there must be considered, 1. What are the proper causes, which place men and keep them in this state of a necessity of sinning. 2. The absolute necessity of our coming out of this condition. 3. In what degree is this to be effected. 4. By what instruments it is to be done.

1. With respect to the causes, &c., the first is the evil of our nature; which we may know by experience: this topic dilated on.

1. We have brought ourselves into an accidental necessity of sinning, by the evil principles which are sucked in by the greatest part of mankind. We are taught ways of going to heaven without forsaking our sins: of repentance without restitution; of charity without hearty forgiveness and love; of trusting in Christ's death without conformity to his life, &c.

2. To our weak corrupted nature, and our foolish discourses, men daily add bad habits and customs of sinning. Thus the evil natures, and the evil principles, and the evil manners of the world, are the causes of our imperfectly willing, and our weaker acting, in the things of God.

II. But what then? Cannot sin be avoided? Cannot a Christian mortify the deeds of the body? Cannot Christ redeem and cleanse us from all our sins? That is the next question.

He that saith he hath not sinned, is a liar: but what then? Because a man hath sinned, it does not follow that he must do so always. *Hast thou sinned? do so no more*, said the wise Ben-Sirach: and so said Christ. The case is indeed confessed, *that all men have sinned*, &c. But is there no remedy for this? Must sin for ever have the upper hand? God forbid. There was a blessed time to come; and, blessed be God, it hath long since come: *Yet a little while, and iniquity shall be taken out of the earth, and righteousness shall reign among you*: for that is in the day of Christ's kingdom, the manifestation of the gospel. When Christ reigns in our heart by his spirit, Dagon and the ark cannot stand together. As in the state

of nature no good thing dwells within us; so, when Christ rules in us, no evil thing can abide there: this topic fully enlarged on; whereby it is shown, that as there is a state of carnality, spoken of in the text, in which a man cannot but obey the flesh; so there is a state of spirituality, when sin is dead, and righteousness is alive: and in this state the flesh can no more prevail, than the spirit could in the other: this state still farther enlarged on.

III. In the next place, we are to inquire in what degree this is to be effected: for no man can say that he is totally clean from sin.

In the words of St. Gregory, All man's righteousness will be found to be unrighteous, if God shall severely enter into judgment with us: therefore, even after our innocence, we must pray for pardon: this illustrated. Concerning good men, the question is not, whether or no God could not, in the rigor of justice, blame their indiscretion, or chide them for a foolish word and a careless action, a fearful heart and trembling faith; these are not the measures by which he judges his children: but the question is, whether any man, that is covetous, or proud, or a drunkard, can at the same time be a child of God? Certainly he cannot. But then we know that God judges us by Jesus Christ; that is, with the allays of mercy, &c. By the measures of the gospel, *he will judge every man according to his works*. What these measures are, is now the question. To which it is answered, first, generally; then more particularly.

In general, thus: a Christian's innocence is always to be measured by the plain lines of the commandments; but is not to be taken into account by uncertain fond opinions, and scruples of zealous or timorous persons. Some men say, that every natural inclination to a forbidden object is a sin: if so, then a man sins whether he resists his inclinations or not; whether he prevails, or not; and there is no other difference but this; he that yields to his desires, sins greatest; and he that never yields, but fights always, sins oftenest: hence the very doing our duty supposes sin: this general topic enlarged on. But God judges of us only by the commandment without, and from the heart and conscience within: he never intended his laws to be a snare to us, &c. So much for the general measure. Consideration of particulars.

1. Every Christian is bound to arrive at such a state, that he have remaining in him no habit of any sin whatever. *Our old man must be crucified, &c.*

2. He that commits any one sin by choice and deliberation, is an enemy to God, and under the dominion of the flesh.

3. Every Christian ought to attain to such a state, as that he never shall sin, even by passion; that is, no passion ought to make him choose a sin.

4. There is one step more, towards which we must greatly strive; namely, to gain so great a dominion over our sins and lust, that we be not surprised on a sudden: this is indeed a work of time; and it is well if it ever be done; but it must be attempted.

IV. Next consideration, how all this is to be effected.

1. The first great instrument is faith. *Faith overcometh the world*: this topic enlarged on.

2. He that would be free from the slavery of sin, must always watch: nature of this Christian watchfulness explained and illustrated.

3. In the next place, he must be sure, in the mortifications of sin, to leave willingly or carelessly no remains of it, no nest-egg, no principles of it, or affections to it: if any such remain, they will prove to him as manna did to the children of Israel on the second day: it will stink and breed worms.

4. Let us, without further question, put this argument to a material issue: let us do all we can to destroy the whole body of sin; but let us never say we cannot be quit of our sin, before we have done all we can towards the mortification of it.

5. He that would be advanced beyond the power and necessity of sinning, must take great caution respecting his thoughts and secret desires: *for lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin*; but if it be suppressed in the conception, it comes to nothing.

6. Lastly, if sin hath gotten the power of you, consider in what degree it hath prevailed: if only a little, the battle will be more easy, and the victory more certain: but then be sure to do it thoroughly, because there is not much to be done. But if sin hath prevailed greatly, you have much to do: therefore begin betimes, and defer it not till old age shall make the task extremely difficult, or death impossible: this topic enlarged on. To sum up all; every good man is a new creature, and Christianity is not so much a divine institution, as a divine frame and temper of spirit; which if we pray heartily for, and endeavor to obtain, we shall find it as hard and uneasy to sin against God, as now we think it to abstain from our most pleasing sins. Conclusion.

SERMON III.

FIDES FORMATA; OR, FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

JAMES, CHAP. II. VERSE 24.

You see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

THAT we are justified by faith, St. Paul tells us: that we are also justified by works, we are told by St. James in the text; and both may be true: observations on this point. Purport of this discourse explained. The two Apostles spake by the same spirit, and to the same great design; though with differing intermedial purposes. Some preliminary observations necessary on this important subject.

1. That no man may abuse himself or others by mistaking hard words, spoken in mystery and allegory, such as *faith*, *justification*, *imputation*, *righteousness*, and *works*, we must consider that the word *faith* in Scripture is very ambiguous: this shown.

2. As it is in the word *faith*, so also it is in that of *works*; by which is meant sometimes the things done, sometimes the labor of doing, sometimes the good will, &c.

3. So again is it in the word *justification*; for God is justified, and wisdom is justified, and man is justified; and a sinner is not justified, as long as he continues in sin; and is justified when he repents and is pardoned, &c.

4. Not only the word *faith*, but also *charity*, and *godliness*, and *religion*, signify sometimes particular graces, and sometimes the union of them all.

5. Neither can this phenomenon be solved by saying that faith alone does justify, yet when she justifies, she is not alone, but good works must follow; which is said to no purpose: four reasons for this given.

The consequence of these observations is briefly this:

That no man should fool himself by disputing about the philosophy of justification, and what casualty faith has in it, and whether it be the act of faith that justifies, or the habit; whether faith as a good work, or faith as an instrument, &c. Let us rather look to the theology of it; the direct duty, the end of faith, and the work of faith; the conditions and instruments of our salvation, &c.; how faith can destroy our sin, and unite us to God: this part of the subject enlarged on.

The text has in it two propositions; a negative and an affirmative. The negative is, *By faith only* a man is not justified: the affirmative, *By works also* a man is justified.

1. With regard to the first; by *faith only*, is here meant, faith without obedience. For what do we think of those that detain the faith in unrighteousness? They have faith, else they could not keep it in so evil a cabinet: but yet the Apostle reckons them among the reprobates, who, for all their faith, shall have no part with faithful Abraham; for none are his children but they that do the works of Abraham: this topic fully enlarged on. So much for the negative proposition of the text, *a man is not justified by faith alone*, that is, by faith which hath not in it charity and obedience.

2. If faith alone will not do, what will? The affirmative part of the text answers: not faith alone; but faith, with works as an ingredient: *a man is justified by works*. It will be to no purpose to say that *faith* alone does justify, if, when a man is justified, he be no the nearer to salvation. Now that without obedience no man can see the Lord, is so evident from Holy Scripture, that he who denies it can have no faith. If faith purge not away our sins, it can never justify: this farther considered in general. Next come the particular considerations which follow.

1. No man's sins are pardoned, but in the same measure in which

they are mortified and taken away; so that if faith does not cure our sinful natures, it can never justify, or procure our pardon: and therefore it is, that as soon as ever faith in Jesus was preached, at the same time also they preached repentance from dead works: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. No man is actually justified, but he that is in some measure sanctified; for justification, when it is attributed to any cause, does not always signify justification actual: this topic explained.

3. He that does not believe the promises of the gospel cannot pretend to faith in Christ: but the promises are all made to us on the conditions of obedience; and he that does not believe them as Christ made them, believes them not at all: this subject enlarged on. Thus much for the affirmative proposition of the text, *a man is justified by works*. But there is still more in it to be considered. St. James does not say, *we are justified by works, and are not justified by faith*; for that had been irreconcilable with St. Paul: but we are so justified by works, that it is not by faith alone: it is by faith and works together; that is, *by the obedience of faith*. Faith and good works are no distinct parts, but members of one entire body: they together work the righteousness of God: this topic fully enlarged on. Some practical considerations proposed.

1. In the early ages of Christianity there was no distinction of sects and opinions in the Church: she knew no difference of men, but good and bad: there was no separation made except by piety and impiety; which is all one, says Epiphanius, with fidelity and infidelity: this topic enlarged on, and illustrated.

2. When our faith is spoken of as the great instrument of justification and salvation, let us take Abraham's faith as our best pattern, and that will end the dispute; because he was justified by faith, when his faith was mighty in effect; when it passed into an act of the most glorious obedience, &c.

3. Let every one take heed, lest by an importune adherence to, and reliance on a mistaken faith, he really make shipwreck of a right faith, like Hymenæus and Alexander, who lost their faith by putting away a good conscience.

4. From these premises we may see but too evidently, that though a great part of mankind pretend to be saved by faith, yet they know not what it is, or else wilfully mistake it, and found their hopes on the sand. Believing is the least thing in a justifying faith: for faith is a conjugation of many ingredients, and faith is a covenant, and a law, and obedience, and a work, and a sincere closing with the terms of the gospel in every particular: this topic enlarged on at full length. To live a wicked life, and then to be confident that in death God will pardon us, is not faith, but a direct want of faith. If we did believe the promises on their proper conditions, or that God's commandments were righteous and true, or that his threats were as really intended as they are terribly spoken, we should not dare to live at the rate we do. *But wicked men have not faith*, says St. Paul; and then the wonder ceases.

Let us therefore cast up our reckonings impartially; let us see

what will be required at our hands ; and let us not think that we shall be justified by faith, unless our faith be greater than all our passions. Conclusion.

SERMON IV.

Consecration Sermon, preached at Dublin.

LUKE, CHAP. XII. VERSES 42, 43.

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season ? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

THE words of the text shown not to be properly a question, the particle *τις* being, not interrogative, but hypothetical. In them something is insinuated, and much expressed.

1. That which is insinuated is only, who the stewards were whom Christ had, and would appoint over his church : they are not here named, but will be found out by their proper direction.

2. That which is expressed, is the office itself in a double capacity. 1. In its dignity, as a rule and government. 2. In the care and duty of it, which determines the government to be paternal and profitable. 3. Lastly, there is the reward of the faithful and wise dispensation of it. These are treated in order.

Who are these rulers of Christ's family ? The Apostles shown to be first meant by the text : they were the first stewards : but their office dies not with them. Here then begins the inquiry ; who are their successors ? Some say, all who have any work or office in the family ; others fix on the presbyters, saying that presbyter and bishop are the same thing, and have the same name in Scripture ; and, therefore, the offices cannot be distinguished. This opinion refuted.

Who then are successors in the apostolical order ?

I. It is certain that Christ appointed two sorts of ecclesiastical persons, — twelve apostles, and the seventy-two disciples : to these he gave a limited commission ; to those a fulness of power : to these a temporary employment ; to those a perpetual and everlasting one. From these two societies, founded by Christ, the whole church of God derives its two superior orders in the sacred hierarchy ; and as bishops do not claim a Divine right but by succession from the Apostles, so the presbyters cannot pretend to have been instituted by Christ, but by claiming a succession to the seventy-two. And then consider the difference ; for the seventy-two had nothing but a mission on a temporary errand, and we hear nothing of them in Scripture ; but on the Apostles Christ poured all ecclesiastical power, and

made them the ordinary ministers of that Spirit, which was to abide with the church for ever.

But we may see the very thing itself—the very matter of fact. St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, is by St. Paul called an Apostle: *other Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother*. This topic enlarged on.

Moreover, this great office passed forth into a demonstration and practice of the whole catholic church: testimonies of the ancient church, and of its adversaries, on this point, collected and commented on.

This part of the inquiry summed up in the sentence of the council of Chalcedon, determining the point in question; &c. The next consideration is that of the office itself.

II. This office is the stewardship, that is, episcopacy, or the office of a bishop. The word was chosen because it is in itself a monition of duty; and the faithful were used to it in the days of Moses and the prophets: this topic enlarged on. But our inquiry is not after the name, but the office, and the dignity and duty of it. It is called by St. Cyprian, “a high and a divine power from God of governing the church;” by St. Cyril, “a great and precious thing in the sight of God,” &c.: but the account on which it is so desirable, is the same that makes it formidable: this topic enlarged on. It is shown that the honor does not pay for the burden.

But to render this discourse more useful, we must descend to particulars: these will best be enumerated in a recital of the worthy offices and actions, by which Christian bishops have blessed and built up Christendom.

1. The Christian church was founded by bishops; not only because the Apostles, who were bishops, were the first preachers of the gospel, and planters of churches; but because the apostolical men, whom the Apostles used in planting and disseminating religion, were by all antiquity affirmed to have been diocesan bishops: this enlarged on; also the character for wisdom, &c., which is necessary to those who have succeeded them as stewards of Christ's family.

2. As bishops were the first fathers of churches, to which they gave being, so do they preserve them in being; for without sacraments there will be no church, or it will be starved and die; and without bishops there can be no priests, and, consequently, no sacraments. That also must needs be a supreme order from whence ordination itself proceeds: this enlarged on, with the consequent of this; namely, if sacraments depend on bishops, let them take care that holy materials be conveyed to the people, sanctified by a holy ministry, and ministered by holy persons; &c.

3. The like also is to be said concerning prayer; for the episcopal order is appointed by God to be the great ministers of Christ's priesthood in the intercourse of prayer and blessing. Hence may be considered what a calamity is a vicious prelate to that flock which he is appointed to bless and pray for.

4. All the offices ecclesiastical always were, and ought to be, conducted by the episcopal order, as is evident in the universal doc-

trine and practice of the primitive church: the consequence of which is no other than the admonition in the text. And, let it be remembered, that nothing can oblige the people to obey their bishops as they ought, unless the latter do to them that duty and charity which God requires: this topic enlarged on.

It may be observed, that the episcopal order is the principle of unity in the church. Several other great advantages of it described: also a description of what is a bishop's right employment; namely, to be busy in the service of souls, to do good in all capacities, to promote all public benefits, to propagate Christ's kingdom, &c.

As long as it was thus done by the primitive bishops, princes and people gave them all honor: this shown. But afterwards, when they fell into secular methods, and made their counsels vain by pride, or dirtied their sentences by money, they then beame like other men: and so it will always be, unless bishops be more holy than other men.

Concluding exhortations, on the great duty of bishops, and on the important interests that are entrusted to them: rules given for the direction of their conduct; danger of neglect energetically pointed out.

SERMON V.

A Sermon preached at the opening of the Parliament of Ireland,
May 8th, 1661.

1 SAMUEL, CHAP. XV. VERSES 22, 23.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams: For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

NOTHING is more easy than to say our prayers, and to obey our superiors; yet there is nothing to which we are so averse as to prayer, and nothing seems so intolerable as obedience: this topic enlarged on; also the great example of our blessed Lord in this matter. Meaning of *sacrifice* and *obedience* in the text explained. The text stated to be a perfect proposition, and to have no special remark in the words of it. It is instanced in the matter of obedience to God: but obedience to our superiors is really, and is to be accounted, obedience to God; for they are sent by him, and are his vicegerents, &c.

Two things are to be observed. First, we may perceive that God speaks to us, when he uses the ministry of men, as when he uses that of angels; one being as much declared, and as certain, as the other.

Secondly; there can be but two things in the world required to

make obedience necessary; the greatness of the authority, and the worthiness of the thing. The thing itself is but one; there is but one authority in the world, and that is God's. But is there no difference in the thing commanded? Certainly there is some; but nothing to warrant disobedience; for whatever the thing be, it may be commanded by man, if it be not countermanded by God. For, 1. it is not required that every thing commanded should of itself be necessary; for God himself often commands things, which have in them no other excellency than that of obedience: this enlarged on: 2. and if we pretend willingness to obey in such matters, when a divine command interposes, why should we desire to be excused if it be only a command of man? Can we become a law unto ourselves, and cannot the word and power of our superiors also become a law to us? this enlarged on: 3. but what if our princes, or our prelates, command things against the word of God? We must obey God and not man: this subject enlarged on, and mistakes of sectarians, &c. arising from it, pointed out. Considerations respecting what authority is to do in this case, and what sectarians and recusants are to do.

1. Concerning authority. All disagreeing persons, to cover their shame of disobedience, plead conscience for their judge, and Scripture for their law. On the same ground the superior may do what he thinks his duty, and be at least as safe as they are: this enlarged on.

2. The superior is tied, by the laws of Christian charity, so far to bend in his laws, as to pity the invincible ignorance and weakness of his abused people, *devoured by evil shepherds*: but this is to last no longer than till the ignorance can be cured, and the man be taught his duty: this enlarged on.

The next inquiry is, What must the disagreeing subject do, when he supposes the superior's command to be against the law of God? If he thinks so, and thinks truly, he must not obey in that. But because many think amiss in this case, there are some particulars to be considered by them.

1. Let such think charitably of others, &c. and that they themselves are fallible; that not all their opinions are from inspiration of God, &c.

2. Every man engaged against authority, would do well to study his doubtful opinion less, and humility and obedience more, &c.

3. In all disputes, he that obeys his superior can never be a heretic in the estimate of law, or a schismatic in point of conscience; so that he certainly avoids one great death, and, very probably, the other: this topic enlarged on.

Such are the blessings of obedience. Other considerations remain, which are highly proper to be addressed to the high and honorable Court of Parliament.

1. There is no better method of peace, than the reducing all men to obedience, and all questions to the measures of the laws: this explained.

2. This is true not only in religious prudence and plain necessity ; but it is the way which God has appointed and blessed, &c.

3. And because this is God's way of ending our controversies, the matter of authority is highly to be regarded : this explained.

4. Let no man be too busy in disputing the laws of his superiors ; for by that he seldom gets good to himself, and seldom misses to do mischief to others : this enlarged on.

5. Moreover, the laws and decrees of a national church ought, on account of their own advantages, to be esteemed as a final sentence in all things disputed : the thing is a plain command : see Heb. xiii. 7. : this topic enlarged on. Observations on such a passive obedience as does not acquit a man before God.

Another part of the text still remains to be handled : this from want of time is included in a brief exhortation to the honorable auditory.

The judicial power of majesty is now delegated to them, &c. It is not reasonable to expect that the subject should obey them, unless they obey God, &c. Exhortations addressed to them more particularly on their capacity of union and government, and the special duties thereby incumbent on them.

1. Take care that all power and counsels be employed in doing honor and advantage to piety and holiness : this enlarged on.

2. As God is to be obeyed, and you are to take care that he be, so God must be honored by reverence and religious obedience paid to those whom he hath been pleased to honor in the dispensation of his blessings and the ministration of his religion : this enlarged on.

3. In the same proportion, you are to take care of all inferior relatives of God and of religion : this explained.

4. You cannot obey God, unless you do justice ; for this also is *better than sacrifice* : particular topics in this case insisted on.

5. As *obedience is better than sacrifice*, so God also said, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice* ; meaning, that mercy is the best obedience.

Concluding recommendations to union among themselves, and cautions against divisions.

SERMON VI.

VIA INTELLIGENTIE.

JOHN, CHAP. VI. VERSE 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

PRELIMINARY observations, on the peaceable nature of Christianity, and the folly or wickedness of quarrels and dissensions which men raise about it. Let us then go to Christ for the truth, and he will tell us an easy way of ending our quarrels; by 'doing the will of God.' First considerations on the ways which men have propounded to find out truth, on the foundation of which Christian peace might be established.

1. That there is but one true way, all are agreed on; and therefore almost every church, that lives under a government, proposes a collective body of articles, and calls this the true religion, &c.; but of this there can be no end, or agreement, &c.

2. Others recommend submission to an infallible guide; and this is the way of the Romish church: reasons against such a method urged.

3. Some wise men have undertaken to reconcile the differences of Christendom by a way of moderation and mutual concession: instances of proposers, and of synods held for this purpose: also causes of its failure.

4. Others endeavor to make the matter clear by plain statements, and intelligible definitions, &c. This would be a good way, if all men were wise and considerate, &c.

5. As a last remedy, some good men have proposed a way of peace, rather than of truth; i. e. that all opinions should be tolerated, and none persecuted. Reasonableness of this rule stated: also the reasons which prevent the effects desired.

What then is to be done? Must truth be for ever in the dark, and the world for ever divided and disturbed? The wise Governor of the world has not here forsaken us; he has given us excellent directions. Observations on the question, 'What is truth?' and on our means of discovering it. As God is the author, so he is the teacher of truth; and the way to learn it, is to follow the words of the text.

In the handling of this text, it is considered, first, that the certain causes of our errors are nothing but direct sins, &c.: next, that holiness is the only way of truth and understanding.

1. No man understands the word of God, as it ought to be understood, unless he lays aside all affections to sin: for Aristotle himself observes, that "wickedness corrupts a man's reasoning:" it

gives him false principles and measures of things: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. He that means to understand the will of God and the truth of religion, must lay aside all inordinate affections to the world. Instance of the Jews, whose hearts were blinded by their hopes, which dwelt on secular advantages: this topic dilated on.

3. No man, how learned soever, can understand the word of God, or be at peace in the questions of religion, unless he be master of his passions: this also enlarged on. Thus it appears that our evil life is the cause of our quarrels and ignorance in religion. The right way of knowledge is next to be described. "Do God's will, and you shall understand his word."

1. In this inquiry, one thing must be taken for a *præcognitum*, that every good man is *θεοδιδακτος*, is "taught of God." And therefore it naturally follows, that by how much nearer we are to God, by so much better we are likely to be instructed. This being supposed, we can easily proceed in the economy of this Divine philosophy: for,

2. There is, in every righteous man, a new vital principle; the Spirit of Grace is the Spirit of wisdom, and teaches us by secret inspirations, by proper arguments, by actual persuasions, by personal applications, by effects and energies: and as the soul of a man is the cause of all his vital operations, so is the Spirit of God the life of that life, and the cause of all actions and productions spiritual: this topic fully enlarged on and illustrated.

3. Sometimes God gives to his choicest, his most elect and precious servants, a knowledge even of secret things, which he communicates not to others. Instance of Abraham, and of Daniel: this promised to be the lot of the righteous man in the days of the Messias.

4. A good life is the best way to understand wisdom and religion; because by the experiences and relishes of religion, there is conveyed to us a sweetness, to which all wicked men are strangers.

5. Lastly, there is a sort of God's dear servants, who walk in perfectness; who 'perfect holiness in the fear of God;' and they have a degree of clarity and divine knowledge more than we can discourse of, or conceive; and this is called by the Apostle, *ἀπαύγασμα τοῦ Θεοῦ*. Christ is this 'brightness of God,' manifested in the hearts of his dearest servants, &c. But that we may not dwell on things mysterious, how is it effected, that a holy life is the best determination of all questions, and the surest way of knowledge?

1. It is effected by holiness as a proper and natural instrument: for as the eye sees visible objects, and the understanding perceives intellectual objects, so does the Spirit perceive the things of the Spirit. 'The natural man knows not the things of God; for they are spiritually discerned.' This topic enlarged on.

2. Holiness is not only an advantage in the learning of wisdom and righteousness, but in the discerning that which is wise and holy from what is trifling, useless, and contentious: to one of these heads

all questions will return; and therefore, in all, we have from holiness the best instructions: this subject enlarged on.

3. Holiness of life is the best way of finding out truth and understanding; not only as a natural medium, nor only as a prudent medium, but as a means by way of Divine blessing. We have a promise of this in St. John's Gospel, ch. xiv. 21.; and on this we may rely: this subject considered at large.

4. When this is reduced to practice and experience, we find not only in things of practice, but even in deepest mysteries, that every good man can best tell what is true, and best reprove an error: this subject enlarged on.

Application of the doctrine of the text. It is a sure rule, if the holy man best understands wisdom and religion, then, by the proportions of holiness we shall best measure the doctrines that are obtruded on us. And therefore,

1. That is no good religion, whose principles destroy any duty of religion.

2. It is but a bad sign of holiness when a man is busy in troubling himself and his superiors in little scruples and fantastic notions about things which do not concern the life of religion, or the pleasure of God, &c.

3. That is no good religion that disturbs governments, or shakes the foundation of public peace.

Concluding exhortations, to such as are, or intend to be, of the clerical order: that they see here the best compendium of their studies, the truest method of wisdom, and the only infallible way of judging concerning the disputes or questions of the Christian church.

SERMON VII.

Preached at the Funeral of the Lord Primate of Ireland.

1 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. XV. VERSE 23.

But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

PRELIMINARY observations, on the weak and limited state of man in this world; on the hope of man in the resurrection of the soul, even in this world, from sorrow and sad pressures, &c.; on death as the end of all his mortal hopes, and joys, and troubles; and on the resurrection from death; from the death of the body, to the life of the soul, &c.

The great hinges of our religion are these: 1. Christ is already

risen from the dead : 2. we also shall rise in God's time and our due order ; for Christ is the first-fruits : this topic enlarged on.

1. Christ is the first-fruits : he is already risen from the dead, for he alone could not be held by death. Death was sin's eldest daughter ; but Christ was conqueror over both, and came to take away one, and to disarm the other. This was a glory fit for the Head of mankind ; but it was too great and good to be easily believed by incredulous and weak-hearted men : doubts stated, objections answered, and proofs alleged. This article was so clearly proved, that men became no longer ashamed of the cross, &c. ; but it soon came to pass that the religion of the despised Jesus infinitely prevailed : nature of this religion described, &c. : conduct of its disciples, &c. : so that men could no longer doubt of the resurrection of Jesus, when they saw such forcible reasons for belief : these enumerated. He therefore is the first-fruits ; and if we hope to rise through him, we must confess that he is first risen from the dead. That is the first particular.

2. There is an order for us also : we too shall rise again. If it was done once, it may be done again ; for since it could never have been done but by an infinite Power, that infinite must also be eternal and indeficient. When man was not, what power, what cause, made him to be ? Whatsoever it was, it did then as great a work to raise his body to the same being again : this topic dilated on.

Opinions, even of the heathens, were not against this mystery. God makes it credible to us by sleep, the image of death, &c. Nature herself is a sufficient preacher on this point : instances of night and day, of the seasons, of generation and corruption, &c. : the Old Testament and the New, the words of Job and the visions of the prophets, the history of Jonas, Jews, and Christians, the faith of believers, and the philosophy of the reasonable, all join in the verification of this mystery. God's intent declared in his translation of Enoch. But Christ, the first-fruits, is gone before ; and himself did promise, that when he was lifted up, he would draw all men after him. *Every man in his own order ; first Christ, then they that are Christ's at his coming.* Concerning this order some observations are to be made.

3. First Christ, and then we ; and we therefore, because Christ is already risen : but it must be remembered, that the resurrection and exaltation of Christ was the reward of his perfect obedience and pure holiness ; and he calling us to an imitation of the same, prepares a way for us to the same resurrection : there are no other terms ; no other method by which God, who brought Christ to glory, will bring us.

4. Furthermore ; *Every man in his own order ; first Christ, and then they that are Christ's.* But what will become of those that are not Christ's ? There is an order for them too : first *they that are Christ's, and then they that are not his.* There is a first and a second resurrection even after this life : *the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Now blessed are they that have their portion here ; *for on these the second*

death shall have no power. As for the recalling of the wicked from their graves, this is no more a resurrection than the taking of a criminal from prison to the bar is a giving of liberty: this subject enlarged on and illustrated. Exhortations to those who profess their belief in this article of the resurrection. Considerations on the uncertainty of life, and the certainty of all men, whatever be their station, lying down in the grave. Piety of the Christian church in commemorating great and worthy persons. Example of St. Paul considered. Character of the Lord Primate dilated on. Conclusion.

SERMON VIII.

Countess of Carbery's Funeral Sermon.

2 SAMUEL, CHAP. XIV. VERSE 14.

For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again: neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

PREVIOUS observations on the mortality of man and his subjection to death, as the effects of sin and disobedience. *All must die. We are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.*

1. We are as water, weak and of no consistency, always descending, abiding in no certain place, unless where we are detained by violence, &c.

2. But besides the weaknesses and natural decay of our bodies, if chances and contingencies be innumerable, then no man can reckon our dangers, and the preternatural causes of our deaths; so that he is a vain person whose hopes of life are too confidently increased by reason of his health, &c. : peculiar dangers of infancy exhibited.

3. But in the middle way the case is altered. Nature is strong, and art is apt to give us ease and remedy: but still there is no security. Peculiar diseases to which men are incident, and various stages of them, described, &c. Our farther likeness to water insisted on.

4. In all the process of our health we are running to the grave: private vices and quarrels, public wars, &c. enlarged on: so that we make ourselves like to water spilt on the ground, throwing away our lives, as if they were wholly unprofitable. There is no redemption from the grave: the topic commented on and illustrated.

This consideration intended as a severe monitor of carefulness; that we should so order our affairs as to be partakers of the first resurrection, that is, from sin to a life of grace; for such only can or

will be called a resurrection from death to life: the taking of the wicked from their graves to the bar of judgment, can scarcely be called a resurrection: such are but the solemnities of an eternal death: the wicked are spilt like water, and shall never be gathered up again. But the godly also come under the sense of the words: they descend into the grave, and are no more reckoned among the living; they have no more concern with what is done under the sun, &c. It is true, they envy and murmur not; they are consigned to kingdoms where these passions disturb them not: “yet there is a relation continued still.” Opinion of Aristotle, that the dead take thought for the good of the living: that also of the church.

We must remember, that in this world we are something besides flesh and blood: we may not, without violent necessities, run into new relations; but must preserve the affections which we bore towards our dead when they were alive: we must not so live as if they had perished, but as pressing forward to the most intimate participation of the communion of saints: this topic enlarged on. Though to us they are as water spilt, yet to God they are as water fallen into the sea; safe in his comprehension.

Farther consideration of the sentence: this descending to the grave is the lot of all men: the rich is not protected through favor, nor the poor for pity; the old man is not revered for his age, nor the infant regarded for his tender years: youth and beauty, learning and prudence, wit and strength, all lie down equally in dishonor: this subject enlarged on.

Well, it may be said, this is a sad story. Is there no comfort after this? *Shall we all go hence, and be no more seen, and have no recompense?* Is there no allay to this great calamity?

Yes, there is a *yet* in the text; *yet doth he devise means, &c.* All this sorrow and trouble is but a phantasm, and receives its account and degrees from our present conceptions, &c. Death is nothing but the middle point between two lives: this illustrated from Scripture.

We must not venture to determine what are the circumstances of the abode of blessed souls in their separate dwellings; yet possibly that might be easier than to tell what or how the soul is, and how it works when in the body, &c.

Certain it is that the body hinders many actions of the soul: it is an imperfect body, a diseased brain, or a violent passion, that makes fools; for no one has an imperfect soul; &c. That the soul is alive after our death, St. Paul affirms: *Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.* It is a weak and unlearned proposition to say, that the soul can do nothing of itself, without the provisions of the body. Reasons given against such a supposition.

To which this consideration may be added; that our souls have the same condition that Christ's soul had in the state of separation; because he took on himself all our nature, and all our condition, &c.

But if these arguments should fail, yet the felicity of God's saints cannot fail: for suppose the body to be a necessary instrument, &c..

yet then God devises other means that his departed be not expelled from him. For God will restore the soul to the body, and raise the body to such a perfection, that it shall be an organ fit to praise him on: it shall be made spiritual, to minister to the soul, when the soul shall become a spirit: this topic enlarged on. In the mean time, whatever may be the case with regard to the soul's separate consciousness, it will concern us only to secure our state by holy living, leaving the event to God; that *whether present or absent, whether sleeping or waking*, whether perceiving or perceiving not, *we may be accepted of him*. Character and conduct of Lady Carbery displayed. Conclusion.

SERMON IX.

THE MINISTER'S DUTY IN LIFE AND DOCTRINE.

TITUS, CHAP. II. VERSES 7, 8.

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity; sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

PRELIMINARY observations on the degrees and orders which God ordained when he first created the world, and also when he created it afresh under the gospel. All Christians are holy unto the Lord: Christians, however, must be not only holy, but eminently so, &c. But in this affair there are many steps and degrees of progression.

1. All God's people must be delivered from all sin.—Christ came to present his church *without spot or wrinkle*.

2. Christians must acquire all the graces of God's Holy Spirit. An Apostle gives the catalogue, 2 Pet. i. 5.

3. There is yet another degree to be added thereto: it is not enough for a Christian to be free from corruption, and to have these graces; but *they must be in us and abound*: this enlarged on.

4. There are yet three more steps beyond this. God requires of us perseverance: it is not sufficient to *dwell in holiness*, we must still pursue it, and that unto the end.

5. Besides this extension of duration, there must be intension of degree: we must aim at perfection: *be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*.

6. And after all this, we must be so for ourselves, and we must also be so for others; we must be so to please God, and we must be so to edify our brethren. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven*: this enlarged on.

These considerations premised, as including the duty of all Christians whatsoever, and as a foundation to what is addressed to the clergy.

Ministers of the gospel are separated beyond this separation. God hath separated them again, and put them anew into the crucible: by them God intends to plant holiness in the hearts of men, &c.

To them these things are spoken properly, these powers really conveyed; and on them God hath poured his spirit plentifully, &c.: and if he accepts none of the people unless they have within them the conjugation of all Christian graces, it is scarcely possible to express by words that which God requires of his ministers. Here then is, 1. their duty: 2. the degrees and excellency of it.

The duty is double: 1. holiness of life: 2. integrity of doctrine. Both of these have their degrees.

1. The holiness of life and conversation that is befitting a minister of the gospel described. He must be a pattern to others.

2. Integrity of doctrine: four qualifications necessary; it must be incorrupt, grave and chaste, sound in speech, evidently demonstrated. Also it must be sincere, not polluted with foul intentions and devices of secular interest. But it is proposed to handle the duties and degrees of them together, &c. It is required of every minister, that in all things he show himself a pattern of good works. This is on all accounts necessary: 1. in general; 2. in particular.

1. In general. The very first words of the Psalter are an argument of this necessity. The primitive church would not admit a man to the superior orders of the clergy unless he could repeat all David's Psalter by heart, so wisely and mysteriously by God made preliminary to the whole office.

To the same purpose is the observation of St. Jerome concerning the vesting of the priests in the Levitical ministrations. The words of David (Ps. l. 16, 17.) considered. The primitive church would admit no man to holy orders who had done public penance. Letters of P. Hormisda to the bishops of Spain commented on. But all this is general: there are considerations yet more particular and material.

1. A minister of an evil life cannot do so much good to his charges: he pulls down as fast or faster than he builds up: he is contemptible to his people; he cannot preach with fervor and efficacy; he cannot love to see others better than himself; and thus like will beget like.

2. A wicked minister cannot with success and benefit pray for the people of his charge: and this is a great matter; for prayer is the key of David, and God values it so highly, that Christ is made the prince of all intercession, &c.: this topic fully enlarged on.

3. The ecclesiastical order is by Christ appointed to minister his Holy Spirit to the people: but can he minister it, from whom the Spirit of God is departed? this enlarged on.

4. Consider, that every sin committed by a minister of religion, is more than one; and it is soon espied too; for more men look on the sun in an eclipse, than when he is in his beauty.

5. The accounts which an ungodly minister of religion shall make, must needs be intolerable, when the sins of his neglected flock shall be added to his own.

6. Every minister that leads an evil life, is that person whom our blessed Saviour means under the odious appellation of a hireling: this explained.

7. These things have been said, that you sin not: but this is not the great thing here intended: ministers may be innocent, and yet not *zealous of good works*: but if they be not this, they are not true ministers of Jesus Christ. Concluding pious exhortations.

PART II.

II. Rules and measures of doctrine, which ministers are to teach the people, next considered.

I. Let them be sure that they teach nothing but what is found in Scripture. This rule alone were sufficient to guide us, if we were not weak, wilful, ignorant, and abused, and if the holy Scriptures had not received so many interpretations and various meanings, &c.: this topic enlarged on. Some rules and advice given on this head.

1. Because it is not to be expected that every minister should have all the gifts of the Spirit, &c., they may make use of the labors of those worthy persons, whom God has raised up as lights to the world: several such recommended, &c. In the interpretation of Scripture there are ways of doing it well and wisely, without the too laborious methods of weary learning, &c.: therefore,

2. In all interpretation of Scripture, the literal sense is to be presumed and chosen, unless there be evident cause to the contrary: reasons for this: three corollaries mentioned, as consequent to this proposition.

3. We must remember that not the grammatical or prime signification of the word only is the literal sense; but whatsoever was the prime intention of the speaker, though the word to be taken metaphorically may signify more meanings than one: this topic dilated on: errors of different sects enumerated.

4. We must admit in the interpretation of Scripture but one literal sense; that is, but one prime literal sense, agreeably to the purity and simplicity of the Spirit of God, &c.

5. Yet others that are subordinate may be intended subordinately, &c.

6. Lastly, sometimes the literal sense is lost by a plain change of the words, which, when it is discovered, must be corrected by the fountain; and till it be, as long as it is pious and commonly received, it may be used without scruple: this illustrated.

II. There is another sense or interpretation of Scripture; and that is mystical or spiritual: this explained. Some short rules given.

1. Though every place of Scripture hath a literal, yet every one hath not a spiritual or mystical sense; and, therefore, Origen was blamed for resolving all into spirit and mystery.

2. Whoever will draw spiritual senses from any history of the Old or New Testament, must first allow the literal sense, or else he will soon deny an article of necessary belief.

3. In moral precepts, &c., there is no other but the literal sense to be looked for.

4. If the letter of the story infers any indecency or contradiction, then it is necessary to look for a mystical sense: some other cases mentioned where it may be useful: folly of some mystical commentators displayed: instances of very absurd glosses given.

Some other rules for the more particular duty of ministers.

1. Though they are to teach the people nothing but what is the word of God, yet by this is to be understood all that God spake expressly, and all that by certain consequence can be deduced from it: this enlarged on. *Quest.* But how shall our reason be rightly guided in this case? To which it is answered,

2. In the making deductions, the first great measure to direct our reason and our inquiries is the analogy of faith: this explained, &c.

3. It is necessary also that we be very diligent in reading, assiduous in the studies of Scripture, &c.

4. Next to the analogy of faith, the consent of the Catholic church should be our measure, &c.: not indeed distinct from, much less against Scripture, for that were a contradiction: this enlarged on.

Next head of the Discourse. The doctrine of a minister must be grave and reverend; without vain notions, pitiful contentions, &c.: the rules for which are easy.

1. Do not trouble the people with controversies, or with what engenders strife: this topic enlarged on.

2. Let not sermons and discourses be busy arguings about hard places of Scripture: this also enlarged on.

Third head of the Discourse. Let your speech be salutary and wholesome: rules given.

1. It is never out of season to preach good works: but when any one does this, let him not indirectly disgrace them, by telling how his adversaries spoil them: this topic enlarged on.

2. In deciding questions and cases of conscience, never strive to say what is pleasing, but what is profitable, &c.

Lastly, the Apostle requires of every minister of the gospel that his speech and doctrine should be unreprouable; not such against which no man can cavil, but such as deserves not blame: rules and advices given for this.

1. Be more careful to establish a truth than to reprove an error.

2. If any man have a revelation or discovery, be not too quick to condemn it: reasons for this given.

3. Let no man from his own head reprove the religion that is established by law and a just supreme authority: this explained.

4. Whatever Scripture you pretend for your doctrine, take heed

that it be not chargeable with foul consequences : this explained and illustrated. If you will not have your doctrine reprehensible, *do nothing with offence*. Frame your life and preaching to the canons of the church, the doctrines of antiquity, and the sense of the Holy Fathers : reasons for this given. Concluding exhortations.

SIR GEORGE DALSTON'S FUNERAL SERMON.

I CORINTHIANS, CHAP. XV. VERSE 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable.

WHEN God, in his infinite wisdom, had decreed to man a life of labor and a body of mortality, &c., he was pleased to do two great things which might confirm the faith and entertain the hopes of his servants, who were ill used by the accidents of this world.

1. First, He sent his Son to take on him our nature, that no man might think it hard to suffer, when God thus spared not his own Son, &c.

2. Next, He taught, not only by revelation and his prophets to the church, but by competent methods to all mankind, that the soul of man does not die. Right deductions of the ancient philosophers and others on this point related and commented on. When they descended to particulars, they fell into error : instance of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls : this notion prevailed amongst the uninstructed of the Jews. Though God was pleased at all times to communicate notices of the other world sufficient to encourage virtue, yet he was ever sparing in telling the secrets of it : subject enlarged on. In this life, then, we see plainly that our portion is not, &c. Three propositions to be considered.

1. The servants of God in this world would be very miserable, were it not for their hopes of what is to come hereafter.

2. Though this be a place of hopes, yet we have not our hopes only here, &c.

3. The consummation and perfection of the felicity of the godly, when all their miseries shall be changed into glories, is in the world to come ; which is the main thing here intended by St. Paul.

1. The servants of God in this life are troubled and afflicted : they must live under the cross. This shown in extraordinary sufferings, also in the ordinary occurrences of life.

Hence it was, that the very heathens fetched a strong argument for a day of recompense hereafter : hence, also, our Lord convicted the Sadducees. Hence St. Paul observes, *he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that dili-*

gently seek him. Hence, also, the argument of our blessed Saviour, *God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*: that is, the rewarder of them, who are not dead, but fallen asleep, and shall be restored at the resurrection, to receive their rewards, &c.: this topic enlarged on. Neither is this so to be understood, as if the servants of God were so wholly forsaken by him in this world, so left to the malice of evil men, that they have not many refreshments, and great comforts, &c. But God, who intends vast portions of felicity for his children, does not reckon these little joys to the account of his elect. But as for the evil which they have, it is such as their Saviour had; and, bad as it is, it is to be chosen rather than a better; because it is the highway of the cross; a sharp, but a short step to bliss: parable of Dives and Lazarus commented on.

II. Second head. *Not in this life only* have the godly hopes; therefore hereafter. As soon as they die, as soon as the soul goes out of the body, it is blessed: blessed, though not perfect: an objection here removed. The proposition itself taken up: in the state of separation, departed souls perceive the blessing and comfort of their labors; they live after death, &c.

This was the undoubted opinion of the Jews before Christ, and after; and therefore our Saviour's words to the converted thief, wherein he undoubtedly spake so as to be understood: this topic farther enlarged on. But this we learn more perfectly from the raptures of St. Paul: instances also from the book of Revelation given and commented on. But to make this proposition useful and clear, some things are to be added by way of supplement.

1. Reasons given why this place of separation was called paradise, &c.

2. As the spirits of good men were said in the Old Testament *to be with Abraham*, so *the being with Christ* is the specification of their intermediate state in the New Testament: this enlarged on.

3. It is to be noted, that although our blessed Saviour is, in the Creed, said to descend into hell, yet this does not prejudice his other words, *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise*: this explained.

4. It is observable, that in the mention of paradise by St. John, he twice speaks of *the tree of life*, but never of *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*: this explained, &c.

III. Third head. The great reward of the godly shall be at the day of judgment, after the resurrection of the dead.

At his coming, at his glorious appearing, we also shall appear glorious: this shown from 1 John, ii. 28. and iii. 4. *We shall then see him as he is*; but this beatific vision shall not be till then: this topic enlarged on, proved, and illustrated from Scripture.

This doctrine shown to have been that of the primitive church. It is that of the Greek church unto this day, &c.

This doctrine shown to overthrow the arguments for a state of purgatory.

The proposition being established, let us consider that God is our God when we die, if we be his servants while we live: this topic

enlarged on. Some men, by reading or hearing strange opinions, have fallen into a desperate melancholy; and others have so totally despaired of the divine mercy, as to lay violent hands on themselves: and yet they only thought this or feared it; and might have altered it if they would have hoped and prayed: reflections on this subject.

Now it is well with us, and we may secure our welfare for ever; but within an hour it may be otherwise with any of us: reflections on this topic. The exposition of the text is finished; but another text, and another sermon, as it were, still remains. Exhortations to caution and amendment of life, and the securing of God's favor. Example of Sir George Dalston proposed: his character delineated. Conclusion.

SERMON

On the Anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason.

LUKE, CHAP. IX. VERSE 50.

But when James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

PARALLEL of fire in the text. Difference of character between the persons in the text, and those of the day.

The words of the text in their own order point out, 1. the persons that asked the question: 2. the cause that moved them: 3. the person to whom they addressed it: 4. the question itself: 5. the precedent they urged from a fallible topic, in a special and different case.

1. The persons were disciples of Christ, and Apostles. They were angry, and therefore it is not surprising that they sinned: not the privilege of an apostolical spirit, &c., can guard from sin those who are overruled by a passion: this topic enlarged on. The spirits of these 'sons of thunder' had been inflamed under the law, and therefore their blessed Lord reproves them for ignorance, not of the law, but of his spirit.

But we need not look far for persons, professing, at least, to be disciples of Christ's school, yet as great strangers to his merciful spirit, as if they had lived under the law, or had been foster-brothers to Romulus, suckled by a wolf: and they are Romanists too, presented to us by this day's solemnity, who call themselves Christians and Jesuits.

One would have thought that such men, set forth with such merciful appellatives, would have endeavored to support the ruinous

fabric of the world's charity, and not have pulled it over our ears. Inquiry made into this anti-christian depravity, and the sermons of those who blast royalty, and breathe forth treason and slaughter, contrary to the spirit of our Lord.

Bloody doctrine of Sanders, our countryman, quoted and commented on, also that of Emmanuel Sà, who, in his Aphorisms, affirms it to be lawful to kill a king, if the pope hath sentenced him to death. Many other instances brought forward. Such doctrines were not denied by the Romanists to Arnald, the French king's advocate: horrid acts of French regicides, commended by papistical writers of eminence. Similar language used by Baronius. Apologists for the Jesuits Guignard and Garnet noticed: enumeration of the above-mentioned writers, who would fain make such doctrine catholic: if it prove to be but apostolic too, then is found out an exact parallel for James and John, the Apostles: and whether the See Apostolic may not be sometimes of a fiery and consuming spirit, we have such examples at home, that we need seek no farther for a resolution of the question. Instance of the bull of excommunication put forth by Pius V. against Queen Elizabeth, in which is a command for men to turn rebels, and a necessity for their being traitors: history, nature, and consequences of this bull exposed and commented on. Instance of Sixtus Quintus, who pronounced a speech in full consistory, comparing the assassination of Jacques Clement on Hen. III. to the exploits of Eleazar and Judith. Thus much for the persons that asked the question.

II. Next inquiry; the cause of their angry question. This is learned from the foregoing story; particulars of it cited: reflections on the subject of indiscreet and uncharitable zeal: danger of allowing religion, which ought to be the greatest antidote to malice, to become its greatest incentive, &c. Case of the persons alluded to by the day, compared with that of the disciples.

Endeavors to make a just discovery of the cause which moved such traitors to so accursed a conspiracy.

It is shown that there was no cause at all given to them by us; none were put to death for being Roman Catholics, or punished on account of their religion.

Act of the 13th of Elizabeth against the papal bulls commented on: comments on the farther laws against recusancy, against seditious and traitorous books, and against the residence of popish priests in England; making the first finable with a pecuniary mulct, the two latter capital, as being of a treasonable nature. Concerning seditious and traitorous publications, little need be said. The banishment of the priests was the highest acme of the severity of this state against them: alleviations of this severity enumerated. It is next shown that this proscription was for just cause, as the case then stood, and deserved on their part. It is also shown that it was but reasonable, in case they obeyed not the proscription, that their disobedience should be punished capitally.

It is shown that the traitors were encouraged and primarily moved

to this treason, by the prevailing opinion on that side, that it is lawful to depose heretical princes; and not only this, but that it is also necessary, and that Roman Catholics are taught to do it *sub mortali*. Nay, more, the killing such, in case of necessity, or of greater convenience, is not excluded.

If these things be put together, and we should prove to be heretics in their opinion, we are in a fair way, both prince and people, and need look no farther why fire was called for to consume us, nor why we may fear it another time: farther observations on this subject, and the great danger of the assumed power of the pope. So much for the cause of this query of the disciples, when their Lord, for his difference in religion, was turned out.

III. Which when they saw, *they said, Lord*. It was well they asked at all, and would not too hastily act what they too suddenly intended: it would have been their best warrant, could they have gained his permission. But that was not likely: nothing could be more strange to his disposition: this shown.

Difference between Mahometanism and Christianity in this case pointed out. Practice of the primitive church falsely accounted for by papistical writers. Christ's conduct on the night when he was betrayed considered. Conduct of martyrs. Doctrine of the council of Toledo.

Hence may be drawn a strong antithesis between the spirit of our blessed Saviour, who answered the question of the text, and that of the fathers confessors, of whom was asked the question of the day.

The conduct of these men next considered, as not only misinforming their penitents, but as concealing their intended purpose: for even in this way the persons to whom the question was propounded made themselves guilty of the intended machination: this point argued in two ways.

1. The treason was not revealed to these fathers confessors in formal confession, but only propounded to them in way of question or consultation; not subject to their penitential judicature, &c.

2. If it had been, this did not bind them to secrecy. General reasons why confessions in some cases may be revealed. Doctrine of the church of England, on this head, is in the affirmative: also that of the Roman church. Four cases enumerated, in which it allows the seal of formal confession to be broken; the last of these being that of treason. Examples of such publication both in France and in Rome. Instances given from Sozomen and Origen of the lawfulness of such publication; so that it is vain to contend that the seal of confession is founded on Catholic tradition. So much for the persons to whom the question was propounded: they were the fathers confessors in the day; but it was Christ our Lord in the text.

IV. The question itself follows, *Shall we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*

The question was concerning the fate of a whole town of Samaria: in our case was no more; the fate of a whole kingdom. It had been well if such a question had been silenced by a direct negative, or put

off indefinitely, &c.: for it was such, that a Christian could not doubt about it, though he had been fearfully scrupulous in his resolutions: this explained.

But to the question. It was fire they called for; the most merciless of the elements,—the fittest instrument for merciless men. It was fire they called for; but not like that in the text,—not fire from heaven. They might have called for that, as loud and as long as those priests did, who contended with Elijah: none would have descended to consume such a sacrifice, &c.

V. Lastly; it was a fire so strange, that it had no example. The Apostles, indeed, pleaded a mistaken precedent; they desired leave to do but *even as Elias did*. The Greek and Roman churches retain only this clause: and really these Romano-barbari could never pretend to any precedent for an act so barbarous. Instances of cruel persecution given from sacred and profane history; by which it is shown that nothing was ever so bad as this accursed treason. Concluding exhortation to thankfulness and praise to God for our escape.

TEXTS

OF

JEREMY TAYLOR'S SERMONS.

TWENTY-FIVE SERMONS,

BEING FOR THE WINTER HALF-YEAR.

	PAGE
I.—Doomsday Book ; or Christ's Advent to Judgment. 2 CORINTHIANS V. 10.—For 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.	277
II.—The Return of Prayers ; or, the Conditions of a prevailing Prayer. JOHN IX. 31.—Now we know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.	283
III.—Of Godly Fear, &c. HEBREWS XII. 28, 29.— Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.	288
IV.—The Flesh and the Spirit. MATTHEW XXVI. 41.—The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.	294
V.—Of Lukewarmness and Zeal ; or, Spiritual Fervor. JEREMIAH XLVIII. 10.— Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.	296
VI.—The House of Feasting ; or the Epicure's Measures. 1. CORINTHIANS XV. 32.—Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.	303
VII.—The Marriage Ring ; or, the Mysteriousness and duties of Marriage. EPHESIANS V. 32, 33.—This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband	307

- VIII.—Apples of Sodom; or, the Fruits of Sin.
 ROMANS VI. 21.—What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 311
- IX.—The good and evil Tongue.—Of Slander and Flattery.—The Duties of the Tongue.
 EPHESIANS IV. 29.—Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 317

TWENTY-SEVEN SERMONS,

BEING FOR THE SUMMER HALF-YEAR.

- I.—Whitsunday.—Of the Spirit of Grace.
 ROMANS VIII. 9, 10.—But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. 324
- II.—The descending and entailed Curse cut off.
 EXODUS XX. 5, 6.—I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 328
- III.—The Invalidity of a late or death-bed Repentance.
 JEREMIAH XIII. 16.—Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light (or, lest while ye look for light), he shall turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. 333
- IV.—The Deceitfulness of the Heart.
 JEREMIAH XVII. 9.—The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? 337
- V.—The Faith and Patience of the Saints; or the righteous Cause oppressed.
 I PETER IV. 17, 18.—For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 341
- VI.—The Mercy of the Divine Judgments; or, God's Method in curing Sinners.
 ROMANS II. 4.—Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 348

- VII.—Of Growth in Grace, with its Proper Instruments and Signs.
 2 PETER III. 18.—But grow in grace, and in the knowlege of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, both now and for ever.
 Amen. 352
- VIII.—Of Growth in Sin; or, the several States and Degrees of Sinners, with the Manner how they are to be treated.
 JUDE 22, 23.—And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. 356
- IX.—The Foolish Exchange.
 MATTHEW XVI. 26.—For 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? 361
- X.—The Serpent and the Dove; or, a Discourse of Christian Prudence.
 MATTHEW X. 16.—Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 365
- XI.—Of Christian Simplicity.
 MATTHEW X. 16.—And harmless as doves. 372
- XII.—The Miracles of the Divine Mercy.
 PSALM LXXXVI. 5.—For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call on thee. . . 376

TEN SERMONS

ON THE NATURE AND FAITH OF OBEDIENCE, &c.

- I.—The Righteousness Evangelical.
 MATTHEW V. 20.—For I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven. 382
- II.—The Christian's Conquest over the Body of Sin.
 ROMANS VII. 19.—For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. 386
- III.—Faith working by Love.
 JAMES II. 24.—You see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 388
- IV. Preached at an Episopcal Consecration.
 LUKE XII. 42, 43.—And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 391
- V.—Preached at the Opening of the Parliament of Ireland.
 1 SAMUEL, XV. 22, 23.—Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams: for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. 393

VI.—Via Intelligentiæ.

JOHN VII. 17.—If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. 396

VII.—Preached at the Funeral of the Lord Primate of Ireland.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 23.—But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 398

VIII.—Countess of Carbery's Funeral Sermon.

2 SAMUEL XIV. 14.—For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him. 400

IX.—The Minister's Duty in Life and Doctrine.—In Two Parts.

TITUS II. 7, 8.—In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity; sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. 402

Sir George Dalston's Funeral Sermon.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 19.—If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable. 406

Preached on the Anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason.

LUKE IX. 54.—But when James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? 408



