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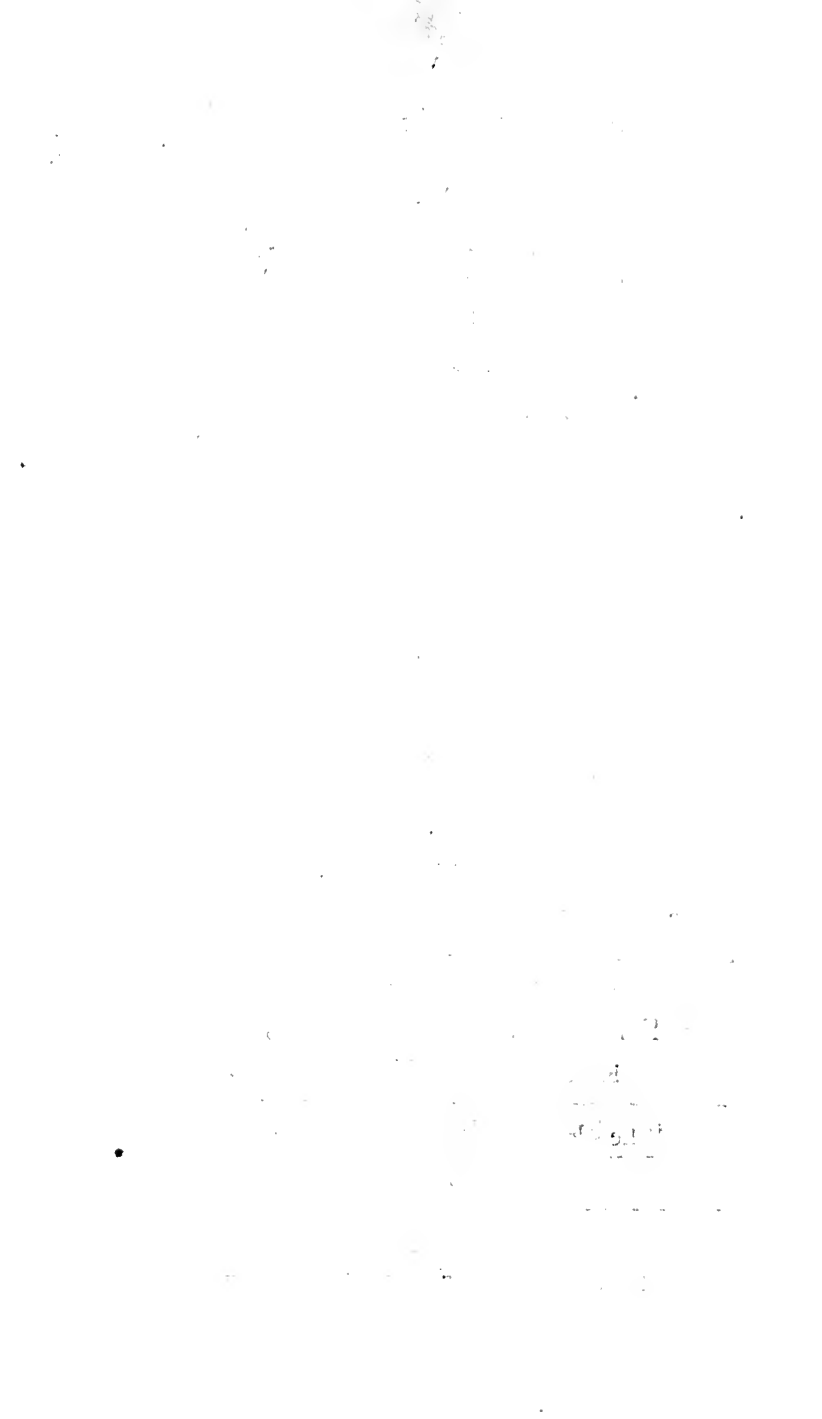
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Discourse XXXIII. Dr. *Hole.*

The SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 4, 5, 6.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness, &c.

ALmighty God having in the first commandment settled the true object of divine worship, and confined it wholly to himself, in opposition to all manner of idols, or false Gods; he proceeds in this second commandment to direct us in the right way of performing it; which is not done by any images or visible representations of him, but in a spiritual manner, suited to his nature and will. This is the true design of these words, “thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.” This commandment being negative, I shall first consider what is therein forbidden, and then what is commanded. The things forbidden, are the “making, and worshipping of any graven image.” Not that all making of images, pictures, or representations of any creature, is hereby prohibited; or that the trade of a painter, carver, or engraver, are unlawful; for we find some images made and appointed by the order of God himself, as the cherubims, the brazen serpent, and t’ like: and Moses ascribes the skill of “Aholiab and Bezaleel, in working the work of an engraver, to the holy spirit of God.” So that all images or representations of things are not here absolutely forbidden, for that would condemn

all pictures, or likenesses of any thing, and render our very coin unlawful. But the images here forbidden to be made, are images of God, or representations of the divine nature; which being spiritual and immaterial, may not be represented by any bodily shape. For God being infinite and incomprehensible, cannot be represented by any image, without debasing and disparaging him: and therefore the prophet enquires, “to whom will ye liken God, or what likenesses will ye compare unto him?” And the apostle bids us, “not to think the God-head to be like unto gold and silver, or stone graven by the art and invention of man;” and much less, “to change the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, to birds, or four-footed beasts, or creeping things.”

There is such a vast disproportion between an image, and the divine nature, that we cannot liken one to the other, without affronting and dishonouring God. An image can only be made of corporeal things; and for such as are finite and corruptible, to make an image of God, is to bring down that infinite being to the dimensions of a finite creature; and in effect to deny the spirituality and incorruptibility of his nature. And therefore we find a very strict charge given to the Israelites, against image-making: “Take good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no image in the day when the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire; that you corrupt not yourselves, and make you a graven image.” And in this commandment, we have an express prohibition of making any likeness or similitude of God, by any thing either in heaven above, as by the sun, moon, and stars; or in the earth beneath, as by the fowls of the air, the four-footed beasts, or creeping things; or in the water under the earth, by the fish, or any thing in the sea; no,
nor

nor yet by the likeness of man, the Lord of all these. For, tho' God made man in his own image, yet man is not to make God in his ; by reason of the infinite distance and disproportion there is between them. And when God is described in scripture with eyes, hands and arms, and the like, yet this is done merely in compliance with our infirmities, and is spoken after the manner of men, and to be understood in a way becoming the divine majesty : but cannot justify the making any image of him, or the picturing him in any human shape, which is to prostitute our maker, and to think him such as ourselves. This is to confine omnipresence to a place, circumscribe immensity, and degrade the deity to the properties and infirmities of human nature. We may not then represent God in a bodily shape, or form false apprehensions of him in our mind, by making him like ourselves ; much less are we permitted to worship any image or representation of God ; “ thou shalt not bow down to it, or worship it.”

In which words there is a two-fold worship implied ; the one external, in the outward reverence, and bowing the body ; the other internal, consisting in the inward worship and reverence of the mind. And we are here forbidden to give any bodily worship to images, by bowing or falling down to them. The Israelites were strictly charged, “ not to serve other Gods, or bow themselves unto them.” And such were sharply reprov'd, who bowed the knee to Baal, or fell down before any idol. The idolatry of the heathens is frequently set forth by prostrations, bowings, and other visible acts of bodily reverence, used to their false deities ; which being tokens of the inward devotion of their minds towards them, were invasions of God's prerogative, and therefore strictly forbidden. But the internal worship and reverence of the heart, is here chiefly forbidden to be given to images ; for this is to

make them Gods, and to give the glory due to God only, to the works of mens hands, which is idolatry to be abhorred by all Christians. And not only the worshipping of images, but of God, by them is here prohibited. The worshipping of false Gods, is th idolatry condemned in the first commandment. The worshipping the true God in a false way, is the idolatry forbidden in this. The ruder and more barbarous nations that mistook the object of worship, and paid it to stocks and stones, were guilty of the former; some of the wiser, and more knowing among the heathen, who when “they knew God, yet glorified him not as God,” were guilty of the latter. These two are in scripture stiled idolaters; as we read in the first chapter to the Romans, where these wiser heathens are charged with it, because tho’ they knew God, by the creation of the world, yet they worshipped him in a way unsuitable to his nature, namely, by images and corporeal resemblances of him, “changing his glory into “the similitude of men, beasts, and birds.” And tho’ they did not terminate their worship in the images, but only served God by them, it being impossible for the wiser part of them to take that for a God, or maker of the world, which they either made with their own hands, or saw made with their own eyes; yet their worshipping of God this way, so unworthy of him, is in scripture called idolatry. The papists, who worship God much after the same manner, and have recourse to the same distinctions, to skreen themselves, ought seriously to consider this. It is most certain, that there is a peculiar and incommunicable piece of homage due to the great creator of all things, upon the account of his infinite and adorable perfections, and our great obligations to him. This is what we call divine worship, and is challenged by God himself in the old testament, and confined to him, by our Saviour,

in the new, in those words ; “ thou shalt worship
 “ the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve :”
 and tho’ those who worship images, and other things,
 would excuse it, by making these things not the ob-
 ject of worship, but only means and helps to direct
 it to God himself ; yet it is to be feared, that much
 more goes to the image than to God. To prevent
 which I shall proceed in the next place, to consider
 the sanction by which this prohibition is enforced.
 And that is taken partly from God Almighty’s jea-
 lousy and tenderness for his honour ; “ I the Lord
 “ thy God, am a jealous God ;” and partly from his
 just indignation, and severe punishment of those who
 violate and invade it ; “ visiting the iniquities of the
 “ fathers upon the children, unto the third and
 “ fourth generation of them that hate me.”

The jealousy of God ought to be a sufficient
 argument to deter any from offering him this kind
 of affront or indignity. For if the jealousy of a man
 is justly to be dreaded, by all who give occasion for
 it, because it stirs up his highest resentment, for
 any violation of his honour, and arms him with a
 more than ordinary courage to vindicate it ; certainly
 the jealousy of God, who is tender of his honour,
 and so able to repair it, is much more to be dreaded
 by all who wilfully invade it.

That God is thus tender and jealous, impatient
 of any rival, and will admit of none to participate
 with him in the love and honour he requires from
 us, we learn from the prophet Isaiah ; “ I am the
 “ Lord, this is my name, and my glory will I not
 “ give to another, nor my praise to graven images.”
 The jealousy here ascribed to God, must not be
 taken for such a vexatious, disquieting passion, as is
 wont to ruffle and discompose mankind, for that is
 inconsistent with the divine nature ; but must be
 understood by way of accommodation and simili-
 tude to our understanding. The Hebrew word in

the original signifies a strong, as well as a jealous God : importing that he is able to vindicate his honour, and will certainly punish all injuries offered to it. Jealousy of itself without strength is but an impotent and contemptible passion, but when armed with an almighty power, is justly terrible ; and therefore Moses in this very precept about images, tells the Israelites, “ the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, he is a jealous God ;” and elsewhere brings in God thus declaring, “ they have moved me to jealousy, with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities ; a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” Let me then ask of all, whose hearts and affections stray from their maker, “ Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, are we stronger than he ?” can our heart bear up, or our hands be strong in the day that he shall visit us ? no ; “ it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And yet that will be our case, if we forsake God, and follow idols. Which leads me to another part of the sanction of this law, taken from the justice of God, in punishing the breakers of it, in those words ; “ visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” To visit, is sometimes taken in a good sense, for beholding another with an eye of pity and compassion ; in which sense David prays, “ visit me, O Lord, with thy salvation.” Sometimes in a bad sense, for looking on with an eye of fury and revenge, and visiting with judgments and calamities ; which is the meaning in this place, where God threatens to punish the offenders against this law, both in their persons and posterity. And he “ visits this iniquity upon the fathers themselves ;” of this kind the holy scriptures afford many examples,

God executing his judgments upon idolaters, and frequently punishing his own people, when they revolted from him, and set up their molten images.

He also “visits this iniquity of the fathers upon the children;” this we find verified in many of the kings of Israel and Judah, who for their idolatry were punished not only in their own persons, but in their posterity; God “recompensing the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them,” and that “to the third and fourth generation;” those being generations which a man may live to see. And as the prosperity of children is one of the greatest comforts of human life, and all parents delight to behold such flourishing branches of their own; so to see them in misery and trouble, is a melancholy heart-breaking. And therefore Almighty God, to deter men from transgressing this law, denounces vengeance against the posterity of such as break it, threatening their “Children to the third and fourth generation,” and punishing their idolatries, thro’ the whole line they are capable of seeing. By which it appears that sinners entail a curse upon their offspring, and make the children miserable by their impieties.—But how can it consist, (some will say) with the justice and goodness of God, to punish the children for the sins of their parents? especially he having declared, that “the soul that sinneth, shall die; and the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; but the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked upon him.” Now to this the answer is easy and obvious. For God’s visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, is always upon supposition of their making their fathers sins their own; by imitating their ill examples, and treading in the steps of their impieties; for so God himself tells them, “if your children forsake my law, and

“ walk not in my statutes, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their sins with scourges :
 “ but, if the son forsake the iniquities of his father,
 “ he shall not die, he shall surely live, saith the
 “ Lord.” God never visits the sins of the fathers upon penitent and reforming children ; but if they imitate their fathers wickedness, it is but just and righteous, that they suffer for them : in which case, they are punished not for their fathers sins, but their own. And because idolatrous parents are too apt to corrupt their children by their own evil counsel and example, therefore Almighty God, to deter them from it, threatens to punish the fathers in their children ; which he may as well do, as in their houses and estates, or any thing belonging to them : For children are part of the goods and substance of the parents, who are deeply concerned in their welfare or misery ; and therefore God may justly visit them, in those dearest pledges, if they mislead them into their impieties. In which case he doth not so much make the children suffer the punishment of their fathers sin, as the fathers suffer for their own. Almighty God may, and often doth, visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children with temporal punishments ; but then, tho’ the calamity be the child’s, yet the punishment is properly the father’s : he is wounded in one of the nearest and tenderest parts of himself, tho’ it may work together for good to the repenting child. Indeed God never visits the father’s sins upon the children with eternal punishment ; in which sense every one must bear his own burden ; but he justly may and doth with temporal evils, for the correction and amendment of both. But who are the persons against whom this threat is denounced ? why, them that hate him ; that is, those who transgress his laws. For as the loving God, is expressed by keeping his commandments, so the break-

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ing them, is stiled hating of him. But idolaters and the worshipers of images are more especially called haters of God. For as the adulteress shews her hatred and contempt of her husband, by giving herself to the embraces of another ; so they who follow their own inventions, and give that worship to images, which is due only to God, cast off the love of God, and may be truly said to hate him. Having thus considered the negative part of this precept, which forbids the making and worshipping of images, I proceed to the affirmative, as to what is required of us ; and that is to worship God, after a due manner, in a way suitable to his nature and will.

This commandment requires us to serve God suitable to his nature ; not by images or corporeal resemblances, for he having no bodily parts, cannot be represented in any bodily shape, and which to attempt, is a great debasement to his infinite majesty and glory : but he being a spiritual essence, must be served with spiritual worship, and so our Saviour declares, “ God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and truth.” For the better understanding whereof, it should be observed, that the worshipping of God in spirit and truth, doth not exclude all bodily worship, nor yet the use of rites and ceremonies ; neither of which are inconsistent with spiritual worship. To worship him then in spirit and truth, is to worship him with our spirits, and not with the tongue only ; it is to draw nigh to him with our hearts, and not barely with our lips ; and to serve him truly and sincerely, in opposition to all feigned, formal, and hypocritical service. In short, to serve him suitably to his nature, is to have our affections raised towards him, in a way becoming his several attributes ; that is, to love him for his goodness, to fear him for his greatness, to trust on him for his faith-

faithfulness, and to honour him for all his divine and adorable perfections. Again,

To worship God rightly, is the doing it agreeable to his will, as well as suitable to his nature; we must serve him according to his own direction and appointment; for divine worship being that homage which we as creatures owe to our great creator, 'tis but just that we should worship him after the manner he has commanded; which not to do, is to disclaim his authority, and to be governed only by our own will. But may nothing be done in the worship of God, unless expressly commanded by him? To answer this truly, a distinction ought to be made, between the substantial parts of divine worship, and the accidental, or alterable circumstances thereof. As for the substantial part of religion, consisting of all that is necessary to be believed or done in order to salvation, that requires the express precept and revelation of God, without which nothing is to be so esteemed. For he best knows how he will be served; and having declared his mind in the holy scriptures, they ought to be the rule and standard of our duty: Since to add thereto, would be to charge it with imperfection, and to make a new religion of our own. But as for the circumstantial part of divine worship, such as time, place, gesture, and the like, these not being particularly determined by God in the holy scripture, are in a great measure left to every one's discretion in their private worship, and to the prudence and authority of superiors in the public service of the church, whom we ought to obey in such things; so as care be taken, that the rites and ceremonies enjoined, are suitable to those general rules of order, decency, and edification, prescribed by God, and becoming his service; and that they are not enjoined and observed, as essential parts of worship, or necessary to salvation, for that would
be

be to add to the substance of religion, and to teach for doctrine the commandments of men ; but only as outward circumstances, for the order and decency of public worship, and as things that may vary, as times, places, and other occasions may require.

The worship of God then, recommended in this command, is both internal and external. By the former is meant, the worship of our hearts and souls, whereby we inwardly admire and adore his divine excellencies ; esteeming, loving and fearing him, as our great creator and best benefactor : And this not in pretence and appearance only, but in sincerity ; “ not in words or in tongue, but in deed “ and in truth,” from the very bottom of the heart. By the latter is meant the worship of the body, or when we express the inward reverence of the mind by the outward humble gestures of the body ; which God frequently calls for, and David exhorts us to in these words, “ O come let us worship and fall “ down and kneel before the Lord our maker.” This is what some expositors of this commandment have thought to be here principally intended ; making the internal worship of the soul, to be required in the first commandment, and the external worship of the body to be commanded in this. And as God forbids the bowing down, or giving any bodily worship to graven images, so he requires, this and other gestures of bodily adoration, to be given to himself. But because all humble gestures and acts of bodily reverence have been despised by some, and too much neglected by others, it may not be improper to recommend and enforce this external bodily worship. Let it then be considered,

That God claims this external worship as due to himself, and threatens to punish such as give it to others. He here forbids the bowing or falling down to any graven images, as an invasion of his prerogative,

gative, and declares that the prostituting of our bodies as well as souls to them, will stir up his jealousy. How sharply are the Israelites reproved for bowing the knee to Baal; and the idolatry of the heathen is frequently expressed in scripture, by their “serving other gods, and bowing down unto “them.” Again, almighty God created the body as well as the soul, and united them together for his service, and therefore he expects the homage of both. Indeed, the service of the heart, is what he principally demands and regards; my son, give me thy heart; that being the best offering we can make to a spiritual immaterial Being, without which all other service is but dead and ineffectual. But yet he expects the humility and adoration of the outward man; he calls for the ear, to hear instruction; for the eyes to be lifted up in prayer; for the tongue to speak the praises of our maker; in a word, he expects that our whole man should bow with the profoundest awe and reverence to him, before he will bow his ear, and be inclined to hear us; and justly too, “for it is he that made us and not we “ourselves,” and therefore all the members of our bodies ought to be employed and devoted to his service. And as our bodies as well as souls partake of the benefits of Christ’s redemption, so should both be dedicated to him, and join together in his service. The apostle tells us, we are not our own, to dispose and order ourselves, as we please; but “being bought with a price, we are to glorify “God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are “his.” Lastly, we hope to be glorified hereafter, in our bodies as well as souls, and therefore both ought to glorify him here. Many and great things are said concerning the future felicities of our bodies, in particular that they “shall be fashioned like unto “Christ’s glorious body.” And if they are to be crowned with such invaluable blessings hereafter,

it is but reasonable by engaging them in his service here, that we should prepare and fit them for the next world.

Thus we see what is required of us in this commandment ; namely, to raise our minds above all gross sense and fancy in our adorations of our maker ; not framing any outward images or resemblances to worship him by ; nor forming any false notions or misrepresentations of him, by thinking him such a one as ourselves : but we are here commanded to entertain high and worthy thoughts of him, conceiving of him as a Being transcendently perfect, infinitely superior to all, in goodness, justice, wisdom, and power ; and as such to be loved, feared, trusted, and honoured above all ; and to direct all our service to him with such apprehensions. This is to worship him in spirit and truth. And the body as well as the mind is to be employed in these adorations. The negative precept here, “ thou shalt not bow down to a graven image,” includes the contrary positive duty, “ thou shalt bow down to the Lord thy God ;” meaning, that we ought to worship God with our body, as well as our mind. This commandment then as much requires us to bow down and kneel, and give bodily worship unto God, as it forbids us to give it to a graven image. And the practice of holy men in all ages hath been agreeable hereto, who have been as forward to do the one, as to refuse the other. In the old testament we find the people of God always using a posture of reverence in the worship of God, by standing, kneeling, or prostrating themselves. In the new testament, we find our blessed Saviour and his disciples, in all their prayers unto God, either bowing, kneeling, or prostrating themselves before him ; which is that glorifying of God with their bodies, enjoined and practised by them. Indeed, the inward reverence and devotion of the mind,

mind, will always draw after it this outward reverence of the body; and therefore the whole worship of God, is represented in scripture by these external visible acts of adoration. Hence bowing and kneeling unto God is generally in scripture used to signify the worshipping him. "O come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our maker. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God." This therefore is here required to be paid unto God and no other, and that because he is a jealous God, infinitely tender of his honour, and impatient of any competitor in this incommunicable homage, belonging to him. Again, he threatens to visit "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the fourth generation," who thus invade and defraud him of his honour; that is, their posterity shall fare the worse for it, their childrens children shall be capable of less favour, and be more strictly and severely dealt with on this account. The justice whereof has been before vindicated.

Lastly, to encourage the observance of this law, he adds, that he will "shew mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments." Not that he will forbear to punish the offending children of good men; no, we find him declaring, "That if their children forsake his law, and keep not his commandments, he will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their sin with scourges; nevertheless (saith he) my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them." That is, he will deal more favourably with them for their parents sake. The misdeeds of some shall not interrupt his kindness to the rest of their posterity, or blot out the memory of their goodness. This we find verified in the posterity of Abraham, and the other patriarchs, in whom almighty God overlooked many and great provocations for their sake,
mix-

mixing mercy with severity, and setting them at last in the promised land. And here we may observe the vast difference and disproportion, between the proceedings of God in the way of justice and in the way of mercy: “he visiteth the iniquities of disobedient parents, to the third and fourth generation; but, he sheweth mercy to a thousand generations,” of those who obey him. He soon forgets the wrongs done him, but keeps our good works in everlasting remembrance. Which should teach us not only to imitate him herein, but encourage us to serve and obey so good a master. And lest any should vainly expect these instances of divine goodness, without observing the commands annexed to them, the last words of the commandment confine them wholly to those, “that love God and keep his commandments.” As the revolters from God were before stiled haters of him, so they who obey his laws, are here said to love him. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, (saith our Saviour) he it is that loveth me.” And elsewhere, “if any man love me, he will keep my word.”

To conclude then, we may learn from this commandment the happiness of descending from good parents, who bequeath a blessing, and derive a mercy upon their offspring to many generations. And the unhappiness and sad misfortune of such as are born of disobedient parents, who entail misery and a curse upon their whole posterity: which should teach us, not only for our own, but our children’s sake, to be ever mindful of keeping God’s laws, and very tender of breaking them.

Discourse XXXIV. Bp. Beveridge.

The THIRD COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God, &c.

THE dreadful solemnity, with which the ten commandments were delivered by God to Moses, from Mount Sinai, was a sight so terrible, that Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake. And the people when they saw the fire, black darkness and tempest, and heard the thunder, the trumpet and voice of God, “they removed and stood a far off, and said to Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Imagine therefore, that we heard the voice of God, proclaiming loud in our ears, from the midst of glorious, and yet dreadful fire, lightnings, thunder, and the sound of trumpets; “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.” Had we this thought frequently in our minds, who could dare to prophane the sacred name of God, by oaths, curses, blasphemies, and dreadful execrations, on every slight and frivolous occasion, as is now the common practice?—To preserve then the innocent, and reclaim those who are guilty, of this wicked custom, I will first consider the meaning of the words, and then make use of such reasons

sons and arguments, as may be proper to dissuade men from it.

“ To take the name of God in vain,” is, in the literal sense, to use the sacred name of God, lightly and commonly, to vain, idle, needless and insignificant purposes, tho’ we do not swear by it, or call God to witness the truth of what we say. To have that name often in our mouths, on every trifling occasion, shews that we have not an awful respect for him in our hearts. This is the beginning of evil, and generally prepares the way to swearing. We should therefore at first, hinder children and young persons, from using familiarly and commonly, the name of God. This will beget reverence to it, and restrain the abuse. They should be checked and punished when they call on God, either at their play, work, or on any occasion, but what is serious. By constantly doing this, we should stop one common inlet to this wicked practice. If we thus discharge our duty to our children and servants, it will put us in mind also of our own neglect and failings. For by reminding them not to take the name of God in vain, we shall be ashamed to be guilty of it ourselves. I fear the frequent practice of abusing the name of God, by parents, masters, and mistresses, gives occasion to children and servants to do the same; and is the reason why they dare not reprove and punish them, for so offending. But sad must be the case of those, who are afraid to do their duty to their children and servants, when yet they shall be severely punished by God, for not doing it. Let such consider, that tho’ they are exceeding culpable themselves in this point, yet that they still ought to reprove and punish those who are under their care for the like offences: because they will thereby do their own duty, prevent a great deal of mischief, and avoid being guilty of the sins of others. But to take the name of God in

vain, is most properly, to swear, either rashly, without heed and reverence, on any just and weighty occasion; or falsely, without regard to truth, not knowing whether what we say is true or not.

There are some who think, that if people do not mention the sacred name of God, in their asseverations, they are not guilty of taking God's name in vain, tho' they swear by any thing or creature else. But whoever considers, what our Saviour said to the scribes and pharisees, concerning swearing, will find the relation every thing and creature in the world has to their great creator, is so close and dependent, that he who swears by the one, does also swear by the other. He who swears by the altar, offering or temple, swears by him, to whom that altar is erected, to whom that offering is made, and to whom that temple with its service, is devoted, that is to God. He who swears by heaven, swears by him who governs therein. He who swears by the earth, swears by him whose footstool it is, who made and preserves it. He who swears by Jerusalem, does it by the great God whose city it was. He who swears by his head, the fountain of life, swears by him who made it; in whose hands is the power of life and death. So that people may swear, without using the name of God, and consequently may offend against this commandment without literally taking the name of the Lord their God in vain. Let none then satisfy themselves, with any such idle distinction, as to imagine they do not swear, unless they pronounce the sacred name of God, when they do it by other things. Indeed, it is better to swear by any thing that does not immediately relate to God, than by his sacred name; because it creates less horror, gives less offence, and is not so bad an example. For tho' all oaths are very bad, yet some are much worse, and more wicked than others.

The guilt then of taking God's name in vain, may be contracted, by swearing by any thing that has relation to God, tho' his name is not directly used ; and therefore all sorts of oaths are comprehended under the third commandment : which contains a prohibition of all light, rash oaths in our conversation, as well as all false oaths, whether in private company, or public courts of judicature, before the magistrate. I shall now only consider all light and rash oaths, whether true or false, hurtful or idle. For the name of God is despised and profaned, if used on slight occasions, tho' what we swear be true ; because the thing was not worthy so much weight, as an oath usually requires. And that no one is to swear in light, trivial concerns, will appear, by considering the nature of an oath.

An oath is a most religious thing ; we acknowledge by it God's omniscience and omnipotence, and declare, that he knows the very secrets of our hearts ; that he can and will punish us, if what we affirm is not true, or that we intend not to perform what we then promise. An oath is the solemn calling on God to bear witness, that what we utter with our mouths, we in our hearts believe to be exactly true ; and entreating him to punish and take vengeance on us, if we intend not what we say and promise. The heart of man lies secret to all the world ; that therefore we may know whether a man speaks true or false, an oath was appointed ; by which we appeal to God as a witness, that our heart and mouth agree ; or if they do not, it implies, that we desire God to take vengeance on us, and punish our impiety to him, and falsehood to man. Can any thing be more serious and religious than a solemn oath ? So that every time we take an oath, by any thing relating to God, we call God to witness the truth of what we say, and to revenge himself on us, if it be false. Let all

then remember the serious nature of an oath, and consider, whether it should be used on such light and frivolous occasions, as is too generally done by men, tho' what they swear is true. It is an awful thing to call on the great God of heaven and earth, the maker and preserver of us all, on whose will we alone depend for every moment of our lives. How dare we then require him to attest and witness matters of such small concern, as we should be ashamed to desire of any serious neighbour? An oath is to make an end of strife, and for confirmation of truth; but then it ought to be a truth of weight and importance, that such strife is about. Every allowable oath should be taken, "in truth, judgment and righteousness;" with the heart, with the understanding, and a good conscience; in order to discover the truth, that judgment may be righteously administered. Where none of those good ends are answered, the name of God is not to be sworn by. Did men examine their past oaths, they would soon find, how few were sworn in truth, judgment and righteousness; how few tended to discover any truth of importance, or contributed to do justice, or to promote righteousness. It would then appear, that every oath, except those sworn before a magistrate, was taken vainly, lightly, rashly, presumptuously, and wickedly; so far from doing any good, that they are matter of shame, humiliation and repentance before God.

Remember also, that such light, rash, and presumptuous oaths, are not only improper and indecent, but are most solemnly forbidden by God; who says to every one,—“Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.” Would God himself descend from heaven, with such solemnity, as you have heard, to forbid the taking his name in vain, had it not been of the greatest moment and importance to us? It is only for our advantage here and here-

hereafter, that God instructs us in his will, and tells us what to do, and avoid, in order to his blessing and making us happy. Did we spend every day in oaths, curses and profaning God's holy name and word, it would not interrupt his happiness; but it will hurt ourselves, and everlastingly destroy both our bodies and souls, not to comply with his will and commands. For these oaths will some time or other be avenged by God; "who will not hold him "guiltless, that taketh his name in vain." If not guiltless, then to be sure, we shall be held guilty of the violation and breach of God's laws, and liable to the punishment due to such offenders and notorious crimes. What particular punishments such are obnoxious to in this life, is not declared; but their sin is so provoking and presumptuous, and has so little temptation to it, that they have much both to apprehend and fear. The prophet tells us, "because of swearing the land mourneth;" the land was then afflicted with several plagues and heavy judgments, by reason of the frequent oaths and perjuries among the people. And I dare say, many among us, are afflicted, blasted and undone, by this audacious contempt and profanation of God's name, who little think from whence the curse and secret canker came. And how should it be otherwise? will God bless those who daily take his name in vain, defy his laws, and curse him to his face; who call for vengeance on themselves and others, almost every word they say? Can they expect a blessing, who scarce ever mention God, but in the way of blasphemy; and make few other prayers than for plagues and mischiefs, damnation and eternal wrath? How merciful is God, that he does not grant what these poor wretches so earnestly ask him? But let such be assured, that without sincere repentance and leaving off their sin, however God may forbear them in this world, he will most certainly,

according to their own curses and repeated wishes, condemn and confound them in the world to come. Those prayers that came from hell, which pleased their ears and filled their mouths so often, shall be heard, to send them to accompany those cursed spirits, on whom they have so frequently called. Let them then remember, that it is a dreadful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God; who has declared, "he will not hold him guiltless "that taketh his name in vain."

If then we reflect on what has been said,—That an oath is a most sacred, serious, and solemn act of religion, intended by God for the confirmation of truth, the doing justice and judgment to all men, and to put an end to strife.—That it is a most indecent, unseemly thing, to apply such serious and religious affirmations, as oaths are, to light, trivial words, and matters of no weight and moment.—That all such oaths are utterly forbidden by God's express command; and that the breach thereof will as surely be avenged by him, as God is true, who said it. If all these things are duly considered, common swearing can never be so harmless and innocent, as some seem to imagine. And if not, how ought we most seriously to repent of it? These considerations nearly concern us, as people that pretend to believe in God, that acknowledge the divine authority of the scriptures, and profess ourselves Christians. There is no answering any of these arguments; no one pretends to justify their practice of swearing, either from scripture, reason, or the authority of wise and good men. Is it not then strange, that what is so impossible to be excused, or justified, should yet so generally obtain? That what every one condemns in himself and others, should be suffered to prevail and reign, as it were without controul? Especially if we further

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Remember, that there is neither pleasure nor prophet to be reaped from this ungodly practice. They who are most addicted to swearing, can give no reason, why they so often commit this abominable sin ; they freely acknowledge, that there is in it neither pleasure nor advantage. Other sins have one, if not both these temptations, to captivate mankind ; they either satisfy some sensual appetite, or gratify some covetous desire of profit ; at least they hope to find their account in it. But the swearer gives away his soul for nothing. Of all offenders he makes the worst bargain, gives himself up to everlasting pains and sorrows, for that which no one advised or tempted him to, nor approved of ; and which he himself never liked whilst doing, nor remembered afterwards with any satisfaction or content. Let any one call to mind, the many oaths and profanations of God's holy name, he has been guilty of, and see if he is either the richer, wiser, or better esteemed. And who would continue in a practice that brings with it neither pleasure nor advantage ? Indeed, " what shall it profit a man, to " gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? " But it is still worse, to lose his soul for nothing. In all other offences, men aim at some end, and have some motives and temptation thereto ; but in this there is no end or temptation, so that a man is condemned by himself and every other person. Besides, it is a practice that all condemn in their wives and children, their servants and relations. Who would not stand amazed, be angry and ashamed, to hear their wives and children, answer them with oaths on all occasions, and mingle blasphemies and curses in their common discourses ? And yet the laws of God allow it no more in the one than the other. No sex, nor age, nor person of any degree, can pretend to a privilege of offending God.

Neither wife or children will be excused before God, for following the evil example of husband and father ; because all should live by the rule of God's law, and not by any one's example. But yet it is certain, that he shall be punished, who gives such an ill example to wife and children. And what a sort of hell must there be in that house, where every one despises God, and tramples under feet his laws, and none left to reprove, or intercede with God, for his mercy and forbearance towards a family so wicked and profane. These are some of the most proper arguments which occur, to dissuade all from light and rash swearing. They are such as our own sense and reason may and will suggest. And the condemnation of the guilty will be the greater, as they in their own hearts and consciences know all the reasons and arguments against swearing, as much as the most learned ; and therefore want not to be instructed in the duty, so much as to be reminded of what they before knew.

Let then such as have been guilty of this wicked practice, sincerely repent, ask God's forgiveness, and beg the assistance of his grace, to keep them from falling into it for the future. Let us all carefully watch over ourselves, that we speak not hastily and unadvisedly with our lips ; remembering God is always present, and hears every word. Let us not on every trifling occasion, give way to anger, which is the parent of many oaths. The least opposition to our judgment, or contradiction to our will, is often a provocation to curse and blaspheme God's holy name ; as if that would mend and make things better. Those who are given to swearing should above all things avoid drinking and gaming. If such when they are sober, serious, and in their senses, can hardly forbear swearing, how can it be expected that they should when they have lost their reason, and are little less than mad ? They who abhor

hor an oath when sober, will yet courageously swear if intoxicated with liquor; such therefore should by all means, avoid an excess, that so naturally and easily provokes to passion. And as to gaming, there are few that follow it, but what swear excessively; few that lose their money, but also lose their patience and temper. Gaming is one of the most destructive vices men can fall into, and provokes to the greatest anger. It ruins most men at last, and is worse in mean and poor people, than the rich; because it excessively wastes that time, which they can poorly spare from the care and labour which is necessary to support themselves and families; and spends that small substance which should supply their wives and children with necessaries of life. Lastly, it occasions oaths and curses, blasphemies and dreadful execrations in a most fearful manner; and therefore whoever would avoid swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, must shun gaming, tho' but for trifles.

And next to the preventing this wicked practice in-ourselves, we should endeavour to promote the glory of God, by doing good to others. When our neighbours are apt to swear, we should calmly tell them, we would sooner believe them without an oath; and when they find we deal thus christianly and friendly by them, they will be more on their guard. Those who are more immediately under our care, and depend on us, we may be more free with; even to reprove and punish such as are guilty of dishonouring God. Let us not suffer our children to swear, without our anger, and immediate chastisement; nor keep any servant, that is guilty of this wicked practice; for God will not bless their labours. Let us employ no workmen, who will not do their business without swearing; nor relieve no poor, who thus offend God. Were we to take these courses, we should in a little time,
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see a great change and reformation of manners. This was formerly the sin of the rich, the easy, and thoughtless great men of the world; but now the poorer sort do by this sin of swearing the most provoke God. Is it not a strange and amazing thing, to hear people swear at the plow, at their horses, and cattle, and any thing that comes in their way? People that depend on the blessing of God, for their daily bread, are hourly provoking him to blast and confound them. Ought not such persons to be made more sensible of their duty, and to pay more honour to their constant heavenly benefactor? Shall they less fear to defy their maker, and despise their redeemer, than to speak disrespectfully of their superiours, parents, or masters? Let me then hope, desire, and pray, that the sense of God's honour, the sense of his command, the sense of our duty, and the danger we run, by committing this sin of swearing, may influence us to consideration, repentance and amendment, that so we may be ever restrained, from "taking the name of the Lord our God in vain;" always remembering, "that he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Discourse XXXV. Bp. *Burnet*.

The FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.
Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy
work ; but the seventh day is the sabbath
of the Lord, &c.

THIS is one of the ten commandments which God delivered from Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses, to the people of Israel. It is the last of the first table, and is a fence to the observance of the three former ; as the last in the second table, “ thou shalt not covet,” is to all that precede it. For if the heart is restrained from inordinate desires and passions, it will be easy to abstain from the sins forbidden in the other commandments. And if we “ sanctify the Lord’s day,” by reflecting seriously on the majesty and attributes of that great God, who “ made the heavens and earth ;” this will give us such impressions of him, as to preserve us from worshipping any other God, or from worshipping the true God by any image. “ For to whom “ can we liken him,” that made all things of nothing ? this will also preserve in us such an awe of him, as that we shall think and speak of him, with reverence and godly fear ; and will effectually restrain us from all vain oaths, but most of all from swearing falsely, which is one of the highest indignities that can be offered to his holy and great name.

Religion

Religion is, or ought to be, the great and constant business of our whole lives. Indeed as our bodies require so many things of us, that they must have a large share of time and thought, so they would soon engross all, and the sense of religion would be quite lost in the world, if there were not some set times appropriated for the remembrance of it, and for the solemn worship of God. Public worship is necessary to preserve mankind from falling into atheism on the one hand, and into idolatry on the other. Since if men were only to worship God alone, and apart, it would be more easy for them either to neglect it quite, or to corrupt it according to their various fancies, than when companies and bodies of men assemble and meet together. For the maintaining and advancing the true ends of religion, it is therefore necessary to have times appointed for the service of God; and that on certain days, there should by public assemblies of such numbers of men, as can conveniently be brought together in one place. This is also a great means for preserving union, peace, and love in the world. But these days should not return so seldom, as to have the sense of religion, which is raised in us one day, to be quite worn off before another returns. Our minds, that are apt to be unsteady and forgetful, must be frequently refreshed, with the remembrance of those things which relate to God, in order to govern our lives and actions; and which will restrain us from sinning against God, and excite us to all the acts of virtue and godliness. Yet on the other hand, since our bodies have so many necessities that cannot be relieved without much hard labour, it was also necessary that such days for the service of God, should not return too often; lest there should be such frequent interruptions thereby given to our affairs, as to hinder and prevent the business of life. God therefore, the master of all
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our time, having made us and all things about us for our use ; who is a gentle master, and lays on us no yoke, but what is easy, and who knows best what our natures can bear, and what is most fit both for body and mind, has here commanded that the seventh day shall be kept holy : that is, separated from the common business of life, and dedicated to his service. And that God might give this commandment, which is so necessary a means for preserving religion in the world, the more authority, tho' he could at once have perfected the whole order of the creation, yet he chose rather to do it in a course of six days, than all at once ; which being finished, he rested on the seventh day, that by so great an example, the observation of a rest on that day might be recommended with the more authority to all mankind.

There are indeed other words added in the fifth of Deuteronomy, to those in the text ; as, “ Remember thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, “ and that the Lord thy God brought thee out “ thence, thro' a mighty hand, and by a stretched “ out arm ; therefore the Lord thy God commanded “ thee to keep the sabbath day.” These words indeed related to the Jews only, and so were a more particular enforcement of it on them ; but the consideration of the rest after the creation, is universal, and regards all mankind ; it being a true rule, that all laws are to be extended, as far as the reason of them goes. But there having been some disputes and controversies concerning the sabbath, for the satisfaction of the scrupulous I will more particularly consider its primitive institution, its morality and perpetual obligation, its change from the last to the first day of the week, and the manner how we ought to sanctify it.

As to the institution of the sabbath, there is a difference between learned men. Some refer its beginning

beginning to the promulgation of the law, or at farthest to the sending of manna to the Israelites ; grounding their notion upon this, that till then we do not read in all the history of the patriarchs and first ages of the world, of any sabbath observed and sanctified by the fathers of those days, which would not have been neglected had any such command been given. Others, who to me seem nearer the truth, place its origin so high as the creation of the world, from these words, “ On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” Here God is said to sanctify the day when he rested ; which was precisely on the seventh day after the creation. So that the sabbath is one day younger than man, ordained for him in his state of innocence, that his faculties being then holy and excellent, he might employ them, especially on that day, in the spiritual worship of God his creator. And altho’ we find no more mention of the sabbath, until Moses had conducted the children of Israel in the wilderness, which was about 2450 years after the creation ; yet it is not to be supposed, that among the people of God, who were very careful in observing the law, and delivering it to their posterity, that the observation thereof in keeping this day, utterly ceased ; but rather was continued among those who feared God, till again invigorated with new authority, from mount Sinai.

With respect to the morality of the sabbath, it ought to be observed, that those things are said to be moral, and of the law of nature, which are in themselves rational and fit to be done, tho’ there was no express command to enjoin it. So that where there is a great equity in the thing itself, enough to sway a rational and honest man, to the doing it ; this is to be esteemed moral, and authorized by the law of nature. That is of positive institution,

institution, which is observed only because it is commanded, and hath no intrinsical goodness, or reason in itself to recommend it to our practice, but obligeth only upon the injunction and authority of another ; as for instance, it is naturally good to obey our parents, to abstain from murder, theft, adultery ; and to do unto others, as we would like to have done unto us. These things we are obliged unto by the very light of reason and principle of nature, tho' there had been no written law of God to impose them. But then there were other things to which God obliged some of his people, that had nothing to recommend them, besides the authority of his commands ; such were the various ceremonies under the law. The first are therefore most properly called moral and natural commands, the last positive and instituted. The former are commanded because good ; the latter are good because commanded. However certain it is, that a convenient portion of our time is due unto the service and worship of God, by natural and moral right. For surely it is but fit and reasonable that God should have some part of our life and time, who created us on purpose that we might serve and glorify him. And could we ourselves, had it been left to us, have set apart less time for his service, than God hath done ? Indeed the law of nature doth not dictate to us any particular day, one more than another, for the worship of God ; so that without the positive command of God, one day is not better than another. And therefore there is a memento prefixed to this command, “ remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day,” which is not added to any other precept ; intimating to us, that the observation of a particular day is not a dictate of nature, but a positive law imposed by God ; and which had it not been revealed, we should not have been obliged to observe it. Hence,
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this command may be called moral-positive; moral, in that it requires a due portion of our time to be dedicated to the service and worship of God; positive, in that it prescribes the seventh day for that purpose, which the light of nature did not prefix.

We are then evidently as much bound to keep a sabbath as the Jews were, tho' not to the exact circumstances of the day. Nay, this command was obligatory, even in paradise itself, in the state of innocency, and therefore contains nothing in it unworthy the state of a christian; for it is no ceremonial command, nor one of those which were typical of Christ, and abolished at his coming; but there still lies a strict and indispensable obligation upon us, to observe a sabbath holy to the Lord. The reasons of this command are all of them moral and perpetual, and therefore obliges us christians. The equity is the same to us as it was to them; that we should allow one day in seven to the worship of that God, who so liberally allows us six for our ordinary affairs. The ease and refreshment of our bodies, from the labours of our calling, is now as necessary as it was then; and we are still as much obliged with thankfulness to remember and meditate upon the great mercy of our creation, as they were. And therefore, if these were sufficient reasons, why the Jews should observe a particular sabbath, they are still forcible and cogent to bind us. But tho' the sanctifying of a sabbath be thus obligatory to christians, yet it is not the sabbath-day, that the Jews and the people of God, before Christ's coming into the world, were bound to observe, that we are to keep. For it is with good reason and upon good authority, changed from the last day of the week to the first; from Saturday to Sunday, called now the Lord's day, because it was the day of the week on which our Lord and Saviour rose from the dead; in memory of which, and as a thankful acknowledgment of the great mercy of our redemption,

tion, fully completed by his resurrection, the sabbath hath been translated to this day, and is now celebrated thereon, by all the churches of Christ. And this change of the sabbath, is the next thing I proposed to consider.

And as the first institution of the sabbath, was by divine authority, so is the change thereof. For as God rested from his labour on the last day of the week, so did Christ from all his sorrows and afflictions on the first, when he had fully completed the work of our redemption. Christ not only sanctified this day by his resurrection, and the apostles confirmed the observation of it, by their writings and practice; but the apostles themselves required the first christians to meet together on the first day of the week; which was at that time honoured with the name of the Lord's day, and has been ever since in all ages of the christian church observed as the day dedicated to the service and worship of God, and to the celebrating of our Lord's resurrection on that day from the dead, to whom he "gave all power both in heaven and earth."

Having thus opened to you the ends of this commandment, and the reasons for the change made in the day, I proceed in the last place, to consider the manner of sanctifying this day aright, so as to avoid extreams on all sides. We must then remember, that the "sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath, and, that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day." The Jews, to whom this commandment was frequently repeated in terms that imported much strictness, and a great severity on those that transgressed it, at last raised the observation of it to a superstitious niceness. They came, as most hypocrites are apt to do, to place all religion in those outward performances, that had an appearance of great exactness in obeying the law punctually; and therefore they took occasion from

the miracle that our Saviour wrought on the sabbath day, and from his disciples plucking some ears of corn, when they were hungry, to represent him as one that profaned the sabbath. But, since it has been already shewn, that the end of the sabbath is to keep alive in the hearts of men a more deep sense of our duty to God, and of the obligations that religion puts us under, and not to load us with superstitious observances, or scrupulosities in smaller matters, it appears from thence, that only such an observation of the Lord's day is required, as tends to perfect and advance the service of God. We ought indeed to make the sabbath our delight, to rejoice on that day, to put from us the common concerns of life, "not speaking our own words, "or doing our own ways;" that is, not letting our hearts run out into projects and cares relating to our own affairs, or wasting our time in unnecessary discourse; but to rejoice in the liberty to which Christ hath called us, who hath delivered us from this part of the Jewish bondage, and assured us, "that the sabbath was made for man:" and therefore a nice and scrupulous anxiety in small matters, favours more of the Jewish spirit, than the christian temper. But as we ought to be aware of this extreme, so we are much more in danger of another, I mean that of prophaning this day, either by minding our temporal concerns and affairs, or, which is yet much worse, by thinking we are on this day excused from our labours, that we may serve our lusts and pleasures with so much the more freedom. If the ceasing from labour, is made an occasion to intemperance and disorder, to sloth and idleness, to vice and debauchery; this is plainly to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. God did, in the old testament, reckon it among those blessings he had heaped on his people, that he "gave them his "sabbaths to be a sign between him and them, that
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“ they might know that he was the Lord ;” and as this, if well improved, is an excellent mean for setting forward the designs of religion ; so, on the other hand, we walk contrary to God, and disobey his will, if we do not improve such blessings, by keeping holy the Lord’s day, and not to profane it by servile work or sinful practices.

The proper ways of sanctifying this day, are first, the spending some considerable portions of time in our secret meditations, prayers, and studies ; and we ought to review the past week, and observe how far we have been endeavouring to do our duty to God, and our neighbour ; to examine wherein we have failed, what sins or errors we have been guilty of, what former vows and resolutions we have broken, into which of our former sins we have relapsed, or into what new ones we have fallen, and whom we have any way wronged in word or deed. All these things we ought to call to mind, that we may humbly confess them before God, be truly grieved for them, sincerely repent of and forsake them, and then to form holy and firm resolutions not again to fall into them. We ought also to observe what particular providences of God have occurred to us the past week, either such as tend to awaken and quicken us in our duty, or oblige us to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings to God. Those who are not well instructed in religion, should take pains to encrease their knowledge, by reading or causing to be read to them, such portions of scripture, or other good books, as may give them some farther instruction, in order to the working out their “salvation, with fear and trembling.”

When a good man has been thus employing some part of the morning, in fitting himself to appear before God, then he ought to go to the house of prayer, remembering that the scriptures join these two together. “ Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and

“reverence my sanctuary.” We ought to consider the prayers and praises of the church, as the public services which we offer up to God, and in which we must remember, what a terrible condemnation they fall under, who “draw near to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, when their minds and hearts are far from him.” We should therefore join our hearts with our lips in every part of the worship. And when we pronounce the confession of sins, we must confess our secret ones to God; when the absolution is read, we ought most humbly to beg our share therein; when the psalms and hymns are repeated, we should raise up our souls, and rejoice in God, for the great blessings commemorated in them; while the lessons are reading, we ought to observe what particular instructions, reproof or consolation arises to us, from any part of them; in the collects, and chiefly the litany, we should pour out our hearts to God, for the graces and blessings which we ask of him; in the thanksgiving we ought to join in an humble acknowledgment of those mercies, which we have particularly met with from God. When we make confession with our mouths of our faith, we must be sure to join with it the belief of our hearts; otherwise we lye to God, when we say we believe that to which our hearts do not consent. While the commandments are repeated, we ought to remember both our former sins, and the infirmities of our nature, together with the temptations to which we are exposed; so shall we have a true sense of our wants, both of “mercy and of grace to help in time of need.”

When we hear sermons we ought particularly to observe, what parts of scripture are thereby rendered more intelligible to us, that so we may afterwards read these with more profit. We ought also to observe what sins are reproved in them, what duties

duties are recommended, what resolutions of doubts, or directions are given, wherein we are more immediately concerned, that so we may lay them up in our hearts, and afterwards reflect upon them. We are not to hear sermons, as men who intend only to censure them, but as becomes those who are resolved to be the better for them, and when we get home we are to consider frequently in our thoughts, such passages in them, as are likely to have a good effect on us, in “order to our growing in grace, “and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour “Jesus Christ.” If these rules ought to be minded by us every Lord’s day, much more should it be on days of communion; in which we are called to a more immediate commemoration of the death and sufferings of our Saviour, and to renew our vows to him. As then we again dedicate ourselves to him, and receive the fullest pledges of his love, we must awaken our minds to a greater seriousness, to more contrition for our sins, to more earnestness in our prayers, to greater firmness in our resolutions, to a higher fervour of charity, in our intercessions for others, to a fuller assurance of faith, and more elevated acts of praise and thanksgiving to God, for all his mercies. But above all, for that astonishing effect of his love to mankind, in sending his son into the world to save sinners; in giving him to die for our sins, raising him again from the dead, and crowning him with glory and honour. Thus we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God, in all the several parts of the public worship; nor ought we to think it too hard a burthen to return a second time to evening prayer, and sermon; we should rather rejoice at our going often to the house of God together. For if we despise these solemn assemblies, we may thereby provoke God to visit us with a famine, not of “bread, or of water, but of hearing “the word of the Lord.”

When the public worship is ended, every one of us ought for some time, to recollect his thoughts, and renew his vows and good resolutions; and remembering what we have learned, either from the word of God, or the sermon, to raise in our minds such a sense of things, as is agreeable thereunto. Masters of families ought also to bring their families together to prayer, to the reading some portions of scripture, and of other good books; and we ought to edify and admonish one another, by singing of psalms, and serious godly discourses. It is also an act of charity, highly becoming this day, to “visit the sick, the widows and the fartherless in their affliction,” to comfort the afflicted, to reconcile differences between neighbours, and to do such other acts of love and kindness, without disturbing too much our own devotion, as may tend to their good; by which, peace, kindness, and love may be preserved among friends, neighbours, and acquaintance. For by so doing, we serve God, and advance the true ends, as well as the honour of religion.

Thus I have shewn what are the particular duties of keeping the sabbath; by which we may perceive how generally God is dishonoured on this day; the due observation whereof, is one chief means, that God hath appointed to promote and encrease religion in the world. And the neglect, or prophaning of it, is one great occasion of that forgetfulness of God, that immorality and impiety, which so much abounds. For if men on this day, do not regard their souls, and the concerns of religion, when they are at leisure, and not engaged about their ordinary affairs; how is it to be expected, they should have much thoughts of religion, when their minds are distracted with their temporal concerns, and their bodies fatigued with labour. We ought then to think it one of the greatest blessings

sings to a nation, that God gives them his sabbaths; and those who despise this day, and wish it was gone, as imagining it too great an interruption to their affairs, may provoke God to shut them out of his rest, even that rest, or “keeping of the sabbath, which remains for the people of God.”

Let us then consider well of how much importance our immortal souls are. For, “what shall it profit us, if we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls.” Shall we labour all the week, for our bodies, which are perishing, and yet think it too much to dedicate one day in seven, to the care of our souls that are to live for all eternity? let us consider what a miserable thing it is to be ignorant of our duty, in the midst of so much light and knowledge as we enjoy; and which may be easily acquired by any who will spend but a few hours once a week, to learn instruction. If we will chuse a wilful ignorance, we may provoke God to give us up to that darkness, in which some delight. But if we will hearken to his voice, and apply ourselves to the hearing and learning of his laws, he will make us to learn wisdom, in the inward part; he will by the assistance of his grace, “so open our eyes, that we may behold the wonders of his law; and so quicken our hearts, that we may run the ways of his commandments; he will guide us here with his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory.”

Discourse XXXVI. Bp. *Hopkins.*

The FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 12.

Honour thy father, and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

AS there is nothing wherein the truth and power of godliness, and the life of religion, is more concerned, than in a conscientious performance of relative duties, because they daily occur; so there is no subject more ungrateful to men, than to be reminded of these duties, and reproved for the neglect of them: however, the frequent occasion we have to practice them, renders it necessary to consider how to perform them.

I begin with the honour and reverence that is due from children to their parents. Reverence to parents consists in having a respectful love for, and an awful fear to offend, them: not such a fear as terrifies, for that is slavish and tormenting; but an obliging fear that will create esteem and veneration; that will engage us to observe their commands, and refrain from whatever is displeasing to them. This reverence should be expressed in our words and actions. Our expressions must be full of respect and honour, giving them such titles as their quality and condition require; our words, in answering them, should be few, humble and submissive. It is but reasonable we should give them the most obliging language, who first taught and instructed us to speak. We must also reverence them with a decent, modest,

modest, and respectful bodily behaviour, shewing all external signs of honour. Joseph, tho' highly exalted in the court of Pharaoh, when he brought his sons to receive the blessing of Jacob his father, bowed himself with his face to the earth. All sour, morose, and unseemly looks towards a parent is threatned to be severely punished. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

But as we must honour them with reverence, so especially with obedience; without which all external respect is meer formality. "Children, obey your parents in all things, for that is well pleasing to God." We are obliged to pay them both active and passive obedience. Active, in observing all their commands, that are not contrary to the laws of God; and passive, in suffering their anger and resentment, with all patience and submission, when they require to be performed what is sinful; rather than to disobey God. If they chasten and correct us for their own pleasure, yet we are to reverence them, to bear with their infirmities, to conceal and not expose their weakness to others. And if they are reduced to poverty, we are obliged liberally to assist them, according to our ability; it being a sin the most unnatural, for children that can relieve their necessitous parents, to suffer them who were the cause and authors of their life, to want a livelihood and comfortable subsistence. We must also honour our parents, by regarding their good instructions, and imitating their pious examples. "My son, says Solomon, keep thy father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother." 'Till we are set free by their consent, we ought not to enter into the state of marriage, without their knowledge and approbation. If we seriously consider that we owe to our parents our lives, educa-

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tion, and many other benefits, we should never think any thing too much to do for them. Oh! the cares, anxious thoughts, and perplexing fears, which our parents have continually had for our welfare. And can we so return their love and tenderness, as to despise their persons, or become stubborn and disobedient? If we have any ingenuity in our nature, or that the principles of reason and equity are not quite extinguished in us, we should requite the love and sollicitude which our parents have shewn us, in the most ample and acceptable manner that is possible. If any by disobedience have brought down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave, let such seriously consider, what an unnatural sin they are guilty of: and since they cannot beg pardon of their parents, let them ask it of God, the great and universal father of all; and beseech him, not to revenge their disobedience, by the undutifulness of their own children.

As to the duty of parents to their children, that respects either their temporal or spiritual good. The former consists in protecting and providing for their bodies; as the other does for their souls. This the law of nature requires. In brute beasts there is so strong a parental affection, as that they will expose their lives to the greatest hazard, for the preservation and defence of their young. And if the instinct and impulse of nature is so powerful in irrational creatures, how much more should it prevail on us, who have reason given us on purpose to perfect nature? Their weakness and impotency demand from us our care and protection. To how many diseases and dangers are their feeble infancy exposed? and their growing childhood, thro' want of care and experience, daily leads them into many more. Parents therefore are to guard and defend them from every threatned injury: and if it is inhuman for parents to neglect the care of their children,

dren, much more wicked and diabolical is it to hurt or destroy them : yet this is the too common practice of many wretches, who to conceal their shame, either abandon or murder their innocent babes. And as parents are to protect their children from incident evils, so are they to provide necessaries and conveniences for them, according to the station, in which providence hath placed them : even infidels and heathens are taught by the light and law of nature to make provision for their own. If we cannot leave them a sufficiency to subsist on, we should fix them to some business or employ, by which thro' God's blessing they may procure a livelihood. " Children are not to lay up for the parents, " but parents for children." And we ought to place them to such business, as is most agreeable to their genius and inclination ; otherwise they will be uneasy all their days. The duty of parents to their children relating to spirituals, consists in taking care of their souls, and promoting their eternal happiness. Their first concern is to have them baptised, and admitted members of Christ's church ; and whoever neglect this, is highly culpable, and acts very injuriously by their children. They are afterwards to instruct, admonish, and educate them in the knowledge and fear of God. Would parents bring them to the love of piety and virtue, whilst their minds are flexible, and before they are filled with vanity, the next generation would not be so debauched in their youth, nor obdurate in old age, as is every where now too visible and apparent. Such instructions should be done in an easy familiar way, by catechising and instructing them in the grounds and principles of the Christian religion.

A good example is another duty of parents. If we blaspheme the name God, by swearing and cursing, abuse ourselves or others by riot and intemperance,

perance, how can we expect our children should revere that dreadful name we profane, and love that sobriety and temperance we recommend, but do not practise? What effect can words have, when we contradict them in our actions? If our children improve in wickedness, by our ill examples, what will our exhortations and admonitions avail, unless to reproach ourselves, and encrease our own condemnation? But if parents will with tenderness and affection instruct their children in the ways of virtue and religion, and confirm them in the practice thereof by their own good example, none would behave undutifully, or live wickedly, but such as are in their nature deplorably vicious. However, if neither instruction, nor good example will prevail, then correction and discipline become a necessary duty; tho' to inflict it, may be as uneasy to the parent as the child. Reason and not passion should prescribe the measure of punishment. Immoderate correction does not amend and reform children, but either exasperates, and makes them more stubborn, or else dispirits and stupifies them. "Fathers should not provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged." But where age and decency permit, the severity of discipline is sometime necessary, if used with prudence. "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chastens him betimes. Lastly, parents are to offer up fervent and earnest prayers to God for their children; beseeching him to own and provide for them, to make them heirs of glory, and coheirs with Jesus Christ. That he would give them a convenient portion of temporal good things, whereby they may be enabled to serve him with greater cheerfulness; also to bestow on them spiritual blessings, and at last to bring them to eternal glory.

As for supreme magistrates, their duty is to establish the true worship and service of God, to reform

form all corruptions and abuses, to distribute justice impartially, to maintain the cause of the poor and oppressed, and restrain the insolence of proud oppressors. Governors ought to be exemplary for virtue and piety, because the eyes of their subjects are upon them. They ought to fear God above all, to seek his honour and glory, to be prudent in their designs, faithful in their promises, wise in their counsels, observant of the laws, careful of their subjects welfare, merciful to the poor, kind to the good, terrible to the evil, and just towards all; ever remembering they are men who must give an account unto God of the trust he hath reposed in them. The duties of subjects towards princes and magistrates are honour, obedience, and prayer to God for them. We must honour and reverence them in our thoughts and words; speaking what good we know, and prudently concealing their vices and infirmities. To publish the faults of governors can only tend to alinate the affections, and relax the obedience of subjects. Much more wicked is it, to falsely calumniate them by reviling whispers, or suspicious intimations, and to insinuate into the minds of the people sad fears and apprehensions of dangers. All which makes their subjects to despise if not hate them. We ought to honour them by contributing cheerfully out of our substance, when the necessities of affairs require it. Obedience is another duty we owe them: We are commanded to be "subject to the higher powers, to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as sent by him. For the powers that be, are ordained of God." Fervent and earnest prayers for our governors is also a great duty of subjects. "Let supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving thanks be made for all men, especially for kings and all in authority." A crown is a heavy, tho' glittering

glittering ornament, and the welfare of thousands depends on the prudent counsels of a prince. The cares and burdens of government are weighty and constant; we ought therefore earnestly to pray, that magistrates may be endued with sufficient abilities to discharge their high and important office, to God's glory and their subjects happiness.

The duties of husbands to their wives are to love, provide for, and instruct them; to act with tenderness, respect and prudence towards them: Love adorns all relations, and is the foundation of this. Tho' want of love will not dissolve the band of marriage, yet it destroys the comforts of a married state. A wife is the chiefest object of our love, even above parents, children, and friends. We must "leave father and mother for our wife. We must "love our wives as ourselves," be as careful and tender of their good as our own, and resent any injury done to them, the same as if offered to us; they two being but one flesh. So that we are to love our wives, with as much tenderness and natural affection as we do ourselves: Nay, husbands must love their wives, as Christ did the church, which was better than he did his own life; for he shed his most precious blood for her. We are to love our wives as Christ loved his church, by bearing with and forgiving their weaknesses, by being willing to submit to many inconveniencies for their sakes, by interposing between them and any danger, and by promoting their spiritual good and benefit. A husband is to provide for his wife, to nourish and cherish her, to impart to her, according to his ability what her occasions require. He ought not to spend in riot and excess among lewd and wicked companions, what should go towards her support and maintenance. "If a man provides not for his own house, he hath "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." As the husband is the head of the wife, so is he the fountain

fountain of knowledge and wisdom, and therefore should instruct, advise and direct her, in all emergencies, especially in her duty to God. Indeed, where the wife is blessed with greater prudence and knowledge than the husband, he then ought to submit to her advice, tho' not to her authority; but this she must tender him with all modesty, respect, and submission. The husband is also to be tender and mild to his wife, and not to torment her by provoking words or actions. If the wife carefully perform her duty, she ought to be treated with love and kindness, to receive praise and commendation. Her failings should be rebuked with meekness, and so as to discover more of sorrow than anger. Perpetual quarrels embitter the comforts of life, and hinder each from performing their respective duties. Where contention between man and wife reigns, business is neglected and ruin ensues; and nothing is regarded but how to quarrel and rail at one another. Respect and honour is due unto the wife, as being the weaker vessel; a husband is not to be observant to her humour, for that will dishonour him; nor is she to be a slave to him, for that would dishonour her; but she ought to be treated as a kind and dear companion. Lastly, a husband must manage his authority with prudence, not with rigour and violence: The best way to preserve his authority is, by discretion, sobriety, and an exemplary good life; this will produce a reverent esteem and veneration from the wife and family; but a humourous lightness or severity, will expose men to the contempt of both. He that will not reverence himself, will not be revered by others; but where there is a mixture of prudence and purity, these will make a man truly awful, and induce the wife and family to esteem and imitate him.

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The duties of wives to their husbands, are subjection and obedience, respect and reverence. Wives are to "submit unto their husbands, as unto the Lord." As the "church is subject to Christ, so must wives be subject to their husbands in every thing. The head of the woman is the man, for the woman is of the man. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man." Man was prior to the woman in the creation, and is therefore superior in nature. "A woman is not to usurp authority over the man, for Adam was first formed, and then Eve." And the apostle directs wives to "be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good and obedient to their husbands." Another duty is respect and reverence: "Let the wife reverence her husband." As he is her head and superior by God's appointment, she ought to reverence him with fear; not a servile and slavish, but an awful and loving fear. She should endeavour to frame her affections and outward behaviour agreeable to the inclinations of her husband's; to rejoice when he is pleased, to be uneasy when he is offended. She ought to be helpful and assisting to him in all things; to his soul, by promoting religion and piety in him; to his body, by expressing due care and tenderness; to his good name, by defending his reputation from any injurious slanders; to his estate, by a prudent and frugal management of all his domestic concerns. She is not to dispose of any part of his estate contrary to his mind and consent; her proper office being to govern the family with industry, care, and fidelity. She is to be adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, with sobriety, modesty, and good works. Her countenance, gesture, and words should be such, as to express the inward calmness and serenity of her mind. Imperious, clamorous, and turbulent women are a torment to themselves and their husbands. There are also mutual duties to be performed

formed by each ; such as prayer, prudence in governing their families, discreet education of children, mutual love, and bearing with each others infirmities.

The duties of servants to masters are obedience, reverential fear, diligence, honesty, and veracity. Their obedience is required in all things not contrary to the law of God : “ Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.” Should the commands of masters be impertinent, imperious or tyrannical, yet servants are no more exempted from obedience, than masters shall be from punishment, for requiring unreasonable things. Servants are also to suffer patiently the reproofs and corrections of their masters, “ without answering again,” or murmuring. A quiet, silent submission is required, even when the servant hath given no just cause for being rebuked, but that it proceeds from the unprovoked rage and passion of a master. The apostles command is, “ servants be subject to your own masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward ; if a man for conscience towards God suffers wrongfully, and takes it patiently, this is praise-worthy, and acceptable to God. But if when we are buffeted for our faults, we take it patiently, what room for glory in this.” Indeed, of all things belonging to the duty of a servant, this is the most difficult, and nothing can sweeten and make it tolerable, but a sense of duty and the expectation of a reward from God. Reverential fear of masters is another duty of servants, who are commanded “ to be subject to their masters with all fear.” This fear is to be expressed in their words and actions : In their words, by forbearing all irreverent, muttering, and indecent expressions ; by giving such respectful titles as their place and station require ; by speaking well of them, if they can, with truth ; or otherwise

to be silent, and conceal their infirmities : In their actions, by a modest and respectful behaviour, by observing their commands, and doing what they think will be pleasing and acceptable to them. Diligence is another duty : He is not a faithful servant who is slothful and negligent, for if he doth not use his strength and time in his master's service, he is a thief and robs him of so much advantage. Servants are also to be just, faithful, and honest, not to defraud their masters of the least thing, but to serve them with fidelity and integrity. Many have been reduced and ruined by the unfaithfulness and carelessness of servants, either stealing from them, or prodigally wasting their properties. Truth and veracity is another duty : Lying is a sin very odious to God, and most detestable to men. Servants are as the hands and eyes of masters, and ought to report nothing but what is true. Lying is the effect of cowardice, of a base slavish fear. Lastly, servants are to serve their masters with goodwill and singleness of heart ; not as men-pleasers, only with eye-service, who are no longer diligent than their masters are present ; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Servants are to have respect not so much unto men as unto God ; and to serve well, because God hath commanded it. Let their service be never so mean, painful, and laborious, yet if they perform it out of conscience to God's command, he esteems it as done to himself, and will hereafter bountifully reward them. And this is a great encouragement for servants to persevere in well-doing.

As to masters, their first duty is a prudent care in the choice of servants. This is a concern of great moment, on which the comfort and happiness, or the trouble and misery of a family doth much depend. The qualifications of a servant are, ability to discharge the duties of his place, an upright

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right conscience, and piety towards God : The last is of great importance, tho' too little regarded ; for few enquire about their servants principles in religion, but chuse them, as we do beasts of burden, the most strong and able. But this is very imprudent and sinful. Masters should never think servants fit for their service, unless they are careful to worship that God, whom both are bound to serve and obey. Wicked servants will corrupt a whole family ; their lewd examples will soon tempt others to be as bad as themselves. To this may be imputed that general profaneness so prevalent in most families, especially where there are numerous servants. Children by conversing with such, here imbibe the first rudiments of vice ; learn the first syllables of oaths, curses, and obscenity ; and who, for their easy docility and ready aptness therein, are applauded by these impious wretches. Such servants are the pests of mankind, as they corrupt those in their youth, who may afterwards have an influence on the state and commonwealth ; and thereby render them a shame to their families, and a curse to the kingdom. For where servants are wicked, children are more influenced by their flattery and examples, than the authority and command of parents. It is therefore the wisdom and concern of masters to chuse such servants as know their duty, and make conscience of performing it ; in whose integrity and fidelity they may repose themselves in safety. Another duty of masters is to govern their servants with prudence, and to make a reasonable provision for them. A master's demeanor should be grave and awful, and his very countenance beget reverence. If a master's behaviour is mean and indiscreet ; servants will grow familiar and contemptuous : Not that masters are to command with rigour, or to give ill and reviling language, for that will discourage servants, and make them hate their place;

but there should be such a mixture of mildness with gravity, of love with authority, as that the servant should be both compelled and inclined to obedience. Power may force submission, but only reason and gravity can render masters venerable. The commands of masters should be lawful, for servants have a supreme lord and master in heaven, whom they must fear and obey. A servant is obliged to work, but not to lye, steal, or cheat for a master; they must "obey God rather than men." As to correction, prudence must be the measure of what is fit, according to their age, temper, and the nature of the offence. It should be inflicted for reformation and amendment, and not out of passion and revenge; reproof is generally the best discipline.

Another duty of a master, is to provide for the bodies and souls of servants. He is obliged to supply them with all things necessary. "Masters are to give unto their servants what is just and equal." To detain from them the reward of their labour as covenanted and agreed for, is a crying and provoking sin. The care of their souls is also the master's concern. For he is priest and prophet in his own house, as well as lord and king. He is to instruct his family in religion, to inform their ignorance, excite them to serve God, to pray with and for them, to direct them in the way to heaven, and, above all, to set before them a holy, pious example. Masters should remember, that as their servants have immortal souls, so God hath entrusted the care thereof to them. Masters should instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, rebuke the disobedient, discard the incorrigible and audacious; and more especially require their servants religiously to observe the Lord's day, in the due observance of which a great part of the life of religion consists. — Thus have I considered the mutual duties of these several

several relations ; and it is necessary to observe, as a general rule, that if one party omits to discharge his duty, this is no excuse for the other. Should a father be careless and cruel, yet the child's duty still remains ; should a master be tyrannical and severe, yet a servant is to reverence, fear, and obey him ; and so of other relations.

To the precept in this commandment, "honour thy father and mother," is added as a motive and encouragement, the promise of long life. Indeed this promise was made to the Jews, and concerned the land of Canaan, which was a type of our enjoying the felicity of heaven, as a reward for our observing the laws of God. For, as the apostle says, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promises of this life, and that which is to come." He that "desires to live, and loveth many days, let him depart from evil and do good." But in all promises of temporal blessings, a condition is implied, that they shall only be fulfilled, if they promote our eternal happiness ; and therefore God doth often in mercy abridge this promise, by taking us from the world, lest it should take us from him.

Discourse XXXVII. Dr.
Lupton.

The SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THE natural impressions and obligations of moral duty, which immediately relate to the preservation of human life, are such strong guards to secure it, that nothing surely but a very powerful temptation, can ever break thro' them. Other sins more easily prevail over us, because they are agreeable and pleasing to our corrupt inclinations; but, corrupted as our nature is, there is something so shocking in the sin of murder, that a man must offer the utmost violence to his own natural disposition, before he can prevail with himself to destroy his own, or his neighbour's life. And lest any thing should be wanting, to render these strong bonds of duty still more inviolable, God hath been pleased to confirm and enforce the voice of nature by this express revealed law, thou shalt not kill. In discoursing on these words, it will be necessary to adjust the latitude and extent of the commandment, and then to represent the guilt and danger which men incur by transgressing it.

As there are some instances of murder which are not universally allowed to be such, but are often palliated under various pretences and false colours of vindication; so there are some cases where-
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in one may violently take away the life of another, without violating this command. The lawfulness of this, in the case of self-preservation, is so certain and obvious, that it can scarce admit of any mistake, so long as this necessary caution is observed, that a man should not on every little suspicion or appearance of danger, presently invade his neighbour's life, tho' he may innocently do it; but only when the danger is so manifest, that he must unavoidably, either give, or receive, the fatal stroke. The lawfulness of war, on some occasions, and under certain restrictions, is also plainly warranted by the authority of holy scripture, as well as by the nature and reason of things, the situation and circumstances of human affairs; it being often impossible for states and kingdoms to support their just rights, or even preserve themselves or their allies from utter ruin, by any other means than war. Magistrates are likewise invested with a just authority to inflict capital punishments on offenders, by cutting off the corrupted members of the body politic, for the preservation and benefit of the whole society. The innocence of that person also is abundantly clear, who thro' ignorance or unavoidable accidents, deprives another of life. For an action which has no foundation in the will and intention of the agent, is not properly a moral action, and consequently cannot be criminal. And therefore under the Mosaical dispensation, there was a sanctuary provided by divine appointment, for every one who was so innocently unfortunate, as to kill his neighbour ignorantly and at unawares, lest the avenger of blood should pursue and slay him, before his innocence could be sufficiently cleared. So that whoever knowingly and designedly, (but not ignorantly or accidentally) without any necessity, arising from any imminent and unavoidable danger of his own destruction, does take away or

invade his neighbour's life, is guilty of the sin forbidden in this commandment. And this imputation of murder properly falls on them who thus deprive their neighbour of life, either by open assault and violence, by stratagem and secret contrivance, by shedding his blood themselves, or engaging others to embroil their hands in the murder; either by acting as principals or accessaries, by command or persuasion, by threatening or encouragement, by direct concert and consultation, or by suggestion; either by bearing false witness against him themselves, or by suborning others; or by any instruments, means, or methods, which are not allowed by divine authority.

And from hence it likewise follows, that every person, who knowingly and wilfully destroys his own life, is guilty of murder. For he has no authority to become the instrument or cause of his own death. We are not the proprietors of our lives, and therefore may not dispose of them at pleasure. God who gave them hath the only right to take them away: So that whoever offers violence to his own life, manifestly invades the prerogative, and usurps the right and authority of God. Duels also are direct violations of this commandment; being to be ranked in the number of those violent attempts on human life, which are not allowed by divine authority: and therefore the guilt of murder is chargeable on those who engage in them. The liberty allowed to a private man of destroying his neighbour's life, is both by natural and revealed law, solely confined to the case of self-preservation; but that plea is utterly foreign to the condition and circumstances of him, who formally gives or accepts a challenge. And he adds to the sin of making an unnecessary attempt on his neighbour's life, by needlessly throwing himself into the utmost danger of losing his own. Nor can mutual consent
and

and permission excuse or be any just vindication of such men, as thus expose their lives; because God being the sole proprietor, the absolute lord of every man's life, no one has any right to dispose of, or determine the duration of it, nor to transfer the disposal of it to another. Lastly, this commandment extends not only to our actions, but to our words, to the secret intentions and affections of our hearts. Our blessed Saviour expressly applies it to the several degrees, and various effects of causeless anger, breaking forth into bitter, reproachful language; and the apostle tells us, that hatred is murder, and inconsistent with the hopes of heaven. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Having thus considered the latitude and extent of the commandment, I proceed,

To represent the guilt and danger which men incur, by transgressing it. If the measure of this transgression is taken, either from the indignity thereby offered unto God, or from the injury done to man, from the punishments expressly denounced against it, or from the anguish and horror which it is apt to leave on the mind, we shall find abundant reason to assign it a place amongst the most heinous crying sins. The first instance of murder in the world, was closely followed with perplexity, oppression of spirit, and intolerable despair. "My punishment (said Cain, the abandoned fugitive) is greater than I can bear; or rather, My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. Every one that findeth me shall slay me." It was a dismal, but natural apprehension, which his guilt suggested to his thoughts, that the whole creation must be alarmed on the occasion, and stand ready to execute vengeance on him. And that weight of confusion, which natural conscience lays on such sinners, must be vastly increased by the severe expressions of God's indignation

dignation against them. “The Lord abhors the
 “blood-thirsty.” Atonements and means of satis-
 faction were by divine institution provided for the
 sins of the people, in several other instances of a
 very high and provoking nature ; but God hath
 expressly forbid shewing mercy and compassion to a
 murderer, or taking any satisfaction for his life.
 “If any man hate his neighbour, and smite him
 “mortally that he die, thine eye shall not pity
 “him. Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life
 “of a murderer, but he shall surely be put to
 “death.” Not the cities of refuge, nor the holy
 altar of God, (a sanctuary the most sacred and in-
 violable) could exempt such an unpardonable offen-
 der from punishment ; “if a man come presumptu-
 “ously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile,
 “thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he
 “may die.” And when the irreversible sentence of
 death is pronounced on him, the reason given is,
 that in the image of God, made ne man. Contempt
 of God is the great aggravation of sin, which in this
 of murder is aggravated to a singular height. Not
 satisfied with defying his laws, and assuming his do-
 minion, they insult his very being by defacing and
 destroying the only image of himself, which he hath
 impressed on the visible world. The injury done
 to man, is also very notorious ; for other injuries
 may be repaired, or admit of some compensation,
 but this is utterly irreparable. Other injuries may
 rob a man of his estate, reputation, or some par-
 ticular advantages ; but this summary of mischief
 deprives him all at once of every temporal benefit
 and satisfaction : Nay, it may prove fatal to the
 sufferer’s soul, as well as body, and at once involve
 him in the first and second death, by depriving him
 of that space to repent, which might have been ne-
 cessary to his eternal salvation. Or, should the in-
 jury not follow the sufferer in a future state, and
 press

press him down into everlasting destruction, as not happening to him when in an impenitent state; yet it must be an heavy weight to him, even in respect to his view of that eternity, into which he is so suddenly sent.

For who can bear the thoughts of being hastily dispatched into the other world? Who is not exceedingly desirous of going down to the grave in peace and quiet? Even the best of men would be glad of a few leisure minutes at the last, deliberately to review and lament their past defects and miscarriages; would be glad of a little calm and undisturbed space of time, in the conclusion of their lives, to adorn their souls, and prepare them for their immediate appearance before the glorious and unspotted presence of God. How dreadful then must that injury be, which deprives men of circumstances so advantageous and desirable? Such is the guilt and danger attending the transgressing of this commandment, in the first instance of it, as signifying wilful murder, or offering unlawful violence to our neighbour's life.

I shall next consider the reasons of the guilt and danger of those persons, who destroy their own lives. That they are transgressing against this commandment, has been already proved; it will therefore be needless to shew, that they are involved in the guilt, and obnoxious to the punishment of murder in general; but they expose themselves in a particular manner, to the greater condemnation, by some singular sentiments and dispositions, which are commonly the foundation of this unnatural crime. For instance, if men destroy themselves, to avoid present sufferings, do they not tacitly declare, that God shall not act by them as he pleaseth; that they will resolutely break thro' what he hath determined and established; that they will not be confined to such circumstances as he hath allotted them;

them ; but will wrest their lives out of his hands, and not suffer him to prolong them, beyond the limits of their own pleasure ? And if this is the secret language of their hearts, what can be expected, but that God should execute the severity of his wrath upon them ? Or, if pride, envy, and ambition do so govern their minds, as that in the abundance of their arrogance and resentment they will violently remove themselves out of the world, perhaps because they are not advanced to a more advantageous situation in it ; what can they reasonably expect or imagine, but to feel the weight of Solomon's observation, "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall?" A fall into eternal as well as temporal destruction. For what foundation can there be of hope that God will forgive a flagrant sin, without the sinner repenteth ? and how can a man truly repent of a sin, in the very commission of which he dies ? There are some other sins, besides that of offering direct violence to a man's life, which have been usually esteemed branches of self-murder ; as intemperance, or the indulgence of any other vice, which impairs the health and destroys the life.

As to the guilt and danger of engaging in duels, these being manifest instances of wilful murder, such persons expose themselves to the severities of God's indignation denounced against it. Those who die in such engagements go into the other world, not only void of charity, which is absolutely necessary to their future happiness, but glowing hot with wrath and fury. And when such passions have the last possession of their souls, what society of spirits can they be qualified for, to live with to all eternity ? Or, should they not immediately perish in the conflict, yet is their guilt the same in the sight of God, the searcher of hearts, who judges of mens wicked attempts, not by the success

cess or event of them, but by the designs and intentions from which they proceed. And dare a man hazard eternal and unspeakable misery, for the sake of resenting an affront, or redressing an injury, how great soever? Is it a rational conduct, only to avoid a groundless imputation of cowardice, for a man to run such hazard to testify his false courage, by insulting the Lord of heaven and earth, and spending the last efforts of his strength and life, in an act of defiance and rebellion against him that gave them? For supposing duels the only possible means of redressing some kinds of injury, it would not from thence follow, that recourse should be had thereto, by those who call themselves christians, and acknowledge the divine authority of the holy scriptures, which enjoin us not to “avenge ourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for, saith the Lord, vengeance is mine.” If the world hath advanced some mistaken notions, in direct opposition to God and the gospel, can those who espouse and are influenced by them, be properly numbered amongst the servants of Christ? Every man who professeth the gospel, is obliged to an inviolable exercise of patience, meekness and forbearance, under the various circumstances and occurrences of life, in imitation of our Lord and Saviour. How inconsistent then is it, for a Christian to be governed by such false notions of honour, as are directly contrary to the fundamental rules of his duty?

Whoever faithfully and constantly adheres to virtue and the positive commands of God, despising every imputation and reflection levelled against him, gives a much stronger evidence of true greatness and generosity of mind, than those who relinquish their duty to avoid that uneasiness which such treatment occasions. Every great mind will make favourable allowances for little infirmities and heats of passion, which are the unhappiness of human nature,

ture, and too apt to arise amongst dearest friends ; nor is he less inclined to make all lawful satisfaction, for any injury he hath inadvertently offered his neighbour. To fear men more than God, is the most dishonourable misapplication and degeneracy of fear. To be deterred from obedience by the uneasy apprehension of being censured for the faithful discharge of it ; or to be laughed and frightened out of our duty, are certain indications of a weak, little, and base spirit, which for want of ability to support itself, readily gives up the most excellent ornaments and accomplishments, when any attempt is made on them. Those therefore who engage in duels, from fear of suffering some seeming calumnies and reproaches, do at once forfeit all just pretensions to true honour and generosity of mind, all claim and title to eternal salvation.

Lastly, we must take diligent heed, not to transgress this commandment, by the intentions and affections of our heart, tho' no actual violence is committed. Those who have not sufficient degrees of natural courage, or want favourable opportunities actually to defile their hands with blood, may yet sacrifice their neighbour in their secret thoughts and wishes, and indulge their imagination in the view of those mortal wounds they dare not give ; and men, who are afraid to handle the instruments of death, may shoot out their arrows, even bitter words, and pierce the souls of their brethren, with the expressions of cruelty, malice and contempt. But the Christian law is, that "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council ; but whoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." And this demonstrates the excellence of the gospel of Christ, that as moral duty is therein raised to the most elevated

vated height of perfection, so more especially does it recommend and promote the exercise of universal charity and benevolence, by an absolute prohibition of all strife, variance, clamour, evil speaking, wrath, hatred, envy, and malice; for these every disciple of Christ has solemnly renounced, and whoever indulges them, dishonours the profession, and forfeits the gospel privileges.

Let then the use and application of this discourse be, that the heinousness of the sin of murder should raise in us a proportionable abhorrence of it, and the utmost esteem and desire of those qualities and practices, which are most directly opposite thereto; that we should not only have the tenderest regard to the preservation of our neighbour's life, but to the comforts and conveniences of it; that instead of violence and injury, we should abound in acts of beneficence; that anger should be prevented by habitual meekness; malice by loving-kindness and compassion; revenge by constant endearments; and hatred by complacency and delight. So shall we fully answer the end of the commandment; and being thus heavenly in our dispositions here, we cannot fail of obtaining an inheritance in those mansions of everlasting peace, love and joy, where our Saviour is gone to prepare a place for us.

Let the consideration of what has been said, possess our minds with the greatest horror and abomination of this sin of murder; and make us extremely watchful of ourselves, that we never fall into it, but keep at the farthest distance, and tremble at the least approaches towards any degree or instance of it. Let us pray for and endeavour to obtain an humble, meek, and charitable temper; more especially, for the continual assistance of God's grace, which can alone prevent, preserve and restrain us from this, or any other the most enormous transgression. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

Discourse XXXVIII. Bp.
Burnet.

The SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

AS this was one of the ten commandments spoken by God himself, so the punishment of it under the Jewish law, was likewise appointed by God ; “ and the man that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.” But tho’ in the new testament there are no laws of this nature, against this or any other sin, yet there are much more terrible denunciations made of the judgments of God against it : For, as the author of our blessed religion was, in his own person, holy, harmless, and undefiled ; so he has most strictly charged us to be “ pure and holy in all manner of conversation, as he who called us was holy,” without which we are assured, “ we shall not see the Lord ; and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.”

One part of the judgment of God, against those who live not answerably to their holy profession is, that “ God gives them up to uncleanness, and to vile affections ;” and so odious were all the sins of the flesh to the holy apostles, that they charged the first christians, “ not to keep company with any man that was called a brother,” that is a christian, “ if he was a fornicator, a covetous man, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner, and
“ with

with such an one no not to eat." St. Paul also warns us, "not to deceive ourselves, for neither fornicators; adulterers, thieves, covetous men, drunkards, revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." And reckoning up the works of the flesh, he begins at adultery, fornication, and uncleanness; and concludes, "hath they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" and that therefore, "they that are Christ's, that is true Christians, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." The same apostle does also most earnestly charge the Ephesians in these words; "but fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becomes saints." And to avoid all approaches to it, he charges them "to abstain from filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient." By which is meant all steps towards impurity, lewd jests, and indecent discourses; to which he adds, "for this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God." And because there were in those days, as well as in this corrupted age, some who made light of this sin, and perhaps scoffed at the judgments of God, which were declared against it; he says of these, "let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore partakers with them." The same things are repeated by him in his epistle to the Colossians; and in his second epistle to the Thessalonians he tells them, that as it was "the will of God, that they should abstain from fornication;" so it was also the great means of preserving themselves pure, even their sanctification; and that tho' the worship of idolaters was commonly defiled

with great licentiousness, and many disorders of this sort, yet “ God had called Christians not to uncleanness, but to holiness.” And in the visions of St. John, whoremongers are in two different places reckoned among those that are “ shut out of the new Jerusalem, and who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Nor did our Saviour only condemn acts of uncleanness, but he being the author of a religion designed for the cleansing of our hearts, has carried the precept further in these words ; “ ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery ; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” In this he strikes at the root of sin, which is in the heart ; for when lust is once conceived there, it bringeth forth sin ; and of this sin it may more particularly be said, that when it is finished it bringeth forth death. For Solomon, whose heart was corrupted by those impure desires, tells us, from sad experience, that he who is enticed by a harlot, “ goeth after her as an ox to the slaughter, as a fool to the correction of the stocks ; till a dart strike thro’ his liver, and as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life ;” and he concludes, “ her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” Now tho’ there may seem to be an extreme severity in our Saviour’s charging impure looks and desires with the sin of adultery ; yet this, instead of making the yoke of the commandment heavier, makes it really lighter : It being much harder for us to maintain our purity, if we let our eyes and desires wander after forbidden objects, than it will be to stop the first motions to sin ; and with holy Job, to “ make a covenant with our eyes, and upon that

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that to say, “why then should I think upon a maid?”
St. Paul also useth this argument to persuade us to
purity, that “the body is made not for fornication,
but for the Lord;” that we are all one body in
Christ, and therefore, that our bodies are the
members of Christ; that by this sin, those bodies
that are sanctified, come to be defiled, and that
“our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which
“is in us;” and elsewhere he says, “that if any
“man defile the temple of God, him shall God
“destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which
“temple we are.” Now if it would give us hor-
ror to see the house of God defiled, by putting un-
clean beasts in it; or which is worse, if we saw the
churches prostituted by making them public places
of lewdness and vice, we ought, according to St.
Paul’s reasoning, to esteem it a much more heinous
thing, if these living temples of God should be
thus prophaned.

From hence we see, that if we believe the holy
scriptures, and take the new testament to be the rule
of our life; nothing can be more clear and ex-
press, than that these sins are so odious to God, that
no man who lives in them, can have any part or
portion in the mercies of God, but that he is of
the number of those workers of iniquity, that are
to be cast out “into outer darkness, where there is
“weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for
“ever.” These laws are set us by a holy God,
who is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity,”
for only the pure in heart and life shall see him.
—Nor can the spotless lamb of God suffer any to
follow him, who with the swine love to wallow in
this defilement. If we think these precepts hard,
and these threatenings terrible; this is only for want
of due consideration. We must then govern our-
selves according to the doctrine of Christ, or re-

nounce our christianity, if we would rather gratify our impure appetites and desires, than keep our bodies thus pure and holy ; there is no reconciling this to our holy faith, we cannot be both the members of Christ, and the members of a harlot. We must not therefore flatter ourselves with false notions, as if these were only dreadful words given out to fright us ; they are true, or all christianity is only a cunningly devised fable. For there are no parts of the whole new testament more plain and express, and less liable to any doubtful meaning, than these which have been now delivered ; and therefore, if we believe that God has revealed his gospel, as the only means by which we can fly
 “ from the wrath which is to come, when Jesus
 “ Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his
 “ mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance
 “ on them that know not God, and that obey not
 “ the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall
 “ be punished with everlasting destruction, from
 “ the presence of the Lord and from the glory of
 “ his power.” Then we must be very diligent and sedulous to obey these precepts, that “ so cleans-
 “ ing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and
 “ spirit, we may perfect holiness in the fear of God,
 “ and glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits,
 “ which are God’s.”

And besides all that hath been said of the wrath and judgments of God against these sins, if we will but consider the state and order of this world, and our temporal and eternal interest, we shall see many other reasons concurring to enforce the observance of these commandments, and obliging us to acknowledge, that they are holy, just, and good. As for married persons, they have mutually given their faith to one another, by a solemn vow and oath made in the presence of God ; so that in this sin both perjury and impurity meet together in the same

same action. The married man that lets his heart wander after other objects, neglects his own house, loaths his wife, and hates his children. Consider you husbands what you do, in the words of Solomon, “left you give your honour unto others, and
 “ your years unto the cruel : left strangers be filled
 “ with your wealth, and your labours be in the
 “ house of a stranger ; and you mourn at last,
 “ when your flesh and your body are consumed.”
 When you have nothing left but poverty and shame, rottenness, or loathsome painful diseases, together with a guilty conscience ; more exhausted with the horrors of a vicious life, than the body, that is perhaps disfigured, or, at least, violently tormented, with the remnants of those loose and unruly appetites. Follow therefore the advice of the wise man, “ drink waters of thy own cistern,
 “ and running waters out of thine own well, (a figure of speech importing a man’s living happily
 “ with his own wife) let them be only thine own,
 “ and not strangers with thee ; let thy fountain be
 “ blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth,
 “ and be thou ravished always with her love. And
 “ why wilt thou, my soul, be ravished with a
 “ strange woman ? For the ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.”
 Let us not flatter ourselves with this, that our sins are secret, and no eyes sees them ; nor yet wait for the twilight, and because we have disguised our face say, no eye shall see me ; but we should remember, that God “ compasses our paths, and is acquainted
 “ with all our ways, and besets us before and behind :” And tho’ we may foolishly say, “ surely the darkness shall cover me, yet even the
 “ night shall be light about us ; yea the darkness
 “ hideth not from him, but the night shineth
 “ as the day ; the darkness and the light are both
 “ alike to him.” Alas ! all these stolen pleasures that

are now so sweet, when our iniquities shall compass us about, and make us possess many wearisome days and nights; when between a wasting body and a guilty mind, a ruined fortune and a broken family, we feel the arrows of the Almighty piercing us, and the poison of them drinking up our spirits: When our sins have left us nothing in the decays of nature, but shame and infection, tribulation and anguish; then, even when perhaps it is too late, we shall think of crying unto God, and repenting of our sins, after they have left us and not we them; and forsaking them only, as not being able to live any longer in them.

O foolish people and unwise! Why will you not in time consider what shall be the end of all these things? Ye adulteresses, that against the decencies of your nature, and that modesty which is the peculiar ornament of your sex, forget the vows of marriage, and your covenant with God; consider what you lose when you cast off your innocence, and make yourselves the reproach of your husbands, to whom you should be a crown; how you draw infamy on your children, by intermixing a spurious and uncertain brood; how you rob your husbands of their honour, your children of their fame, and yourselves of your reputation and credit; how you dissolve the tie of marriage, and the affection of a married state; how by an indecent and unchaste deportment, you raise terrible disquiets and uneasiness in the minds of your husbands, “for jealousy is the rage of a man.” It provokes a revenge that often cannot be appeased but with blood, either that of the injured husband, or the object of his jealousy; and the guilt of such blood lies chiefly on the woman, whose unchaste deportment has kindled the furious passion. Your sin is often robbery, as well as adultery and perjury, when the child of one man inherits the estate of the other on whom he

he is imposed, and who carries away either the whole, or at least his share in an inheritance, that of right belongs to others.

Consider this, all ye that defile the marriage bed, and think to face it out before the world, either with the hypocritical shews of piety, or with a loud and clamorous boldness. Remember you have to do with God, “who will bring to light the hidden “things of darkness,” and who will perhaps raise such horrors in your souls, that you will not be able to bear your own burthen, but become a terror to yourselves, as well as a reproach to all that belong to you. As for those who have, perhaps, some apprehensions of the guilt of defiling the married bed; and therefore, that they may have less remorse for the free range of pleasure, in which they intend to live, will not enter into a married state, but deny themselves in no appetite, and so live loose and un-governed lives: Let such persons, “who walk in “the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their “eyes, remember, that for all these things God “will bring them into judgment.” Consider that these pleasures of sin, that are but for a season, will waste your strength; expose your life and health to many dangers, and above all corrupt your minds: They will entice you to be the instruments of tempting others to sin; by bringing a double guilt upon you, both your own and the persons whom you delude. Remember you will be the instrument of giving being to an illegitimate issue, who are born to inherit shame and contempt, poverty and misery; you refuse to follow the method that God has appointed for the increase of mankind, but chuse that which your brutish appetites suggest. You who follow forbidden pleasures, run yourselves into such a shameful course of life, as to be often tempted to deny and disown it, even with oaths and bitter imprecations. There is a fatal connection of sins one

with another : Ill actions commonly give suspicions, from whence often arise challenges and accusations, and these cannot be thrown off but by bold denials and impudent falsehoods, which are too frequently confirmed by bloody oaths. Injustice of all sorts also proceeds from this ill course of life ; persons who promise themselves to one another, are often false therein, and so carry a curse with them into any marriage which they may afterwards contract. In short, these men walk after the flesh, and not after the spirit ; they prefer their own inordinate affections to the laws of God, and the precepts of the gospel. For St. Paul hath expressly said, that
 “ to avoid fornication, every man ought to have
 “ his own wife, and every woman her own husband ; and if any cannot contain let them marry ;
 “ for it is better to marry than burn. Therefore, I
 “ beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain
 “ from fleshly lusts, which war against your souls ;
 “ remember that you are redeemed from your vain
 “ conversation ; be ye therefore as obedient children,
 “ not fashioning yourselves according to your
 “ former lusts. Remember that whoredom and
 “ wine take away the heart ; and that, by the means
 “ of a whorish woman a man is brought to a morsel of bread ; therefore keep you from the evil
 “ woman, and from the flattery of the tongue of
 “ a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in
 “ thy heart, neither let her take thee with her
 “ eye-lids ; for the woman whose heart is snares and
 “ nets, and whose hands are brands, is more bitter
 “ than death. Whoso pleaseth God shall escape
 “ from her ; but the sinner shall be taken by her ;
 “ and he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall into
 “ this pit.”

Lay these things to heart seriously, and in time, before you have purchased the knowledge of them at too dear a rate. Consider further, that if such ad-

advices were given by Solomon, under the old dispensation, in which, by reason of the infirmity of the Jewish nation, and for the hardness of their hearts, many things were dispensed with to them; certainly they are much more binding to us christians, who are called to so high a degree of purity. Therefore, it is not enough for us to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, but we are commanded to walk “as the sons of God, and to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. It is the peculiar character of christianity, that it obliges us to mortify our bodies, to crucify the flesh, to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man; so that the same mind may be in us, that was in Christ Jesus. We must abstain even from all appearances of evil;” which is set forth in this noble figure, “hating even the garment that is spotted by the flesh;” that is, our abhorring every approach to any degree of defilement.

If you think these things are difficult, and not easy for flesh and blood, that is not to be denied; but if you follow the methods recommended in the scriptures, you will find the difficulty to grow daily much less. Nor, indeed, ought you to think it hard, if you are required to be at some pains for the saving of your souls. You are willing to put yourselves to trouble for every thing else; the learning of a trade, the following of husbandry, the life of a soldier, are all things of great difficulty, and that yield but a small reward; yet men submit themselves to much toil and drudgery in every one of these. Most mens diversions and pleasures put them to a good share of trouble; and is it to be imagined, that so great a thing as eternal life, should be obtained without any difficulty or labour. --- Yet after all, the labour is not so great, but it may

may be overcome. If men will by rioting and drunkenness, by sloth and idleness, and by exposing themselves to such temptations, as they may easily avoid and resist in the beginning, if they are a little watchful ; I say, if they will by such methods “ be laying in provision for the flesh, and for its lusts and affections,” then it is no wonder, if their appetites thus indulged, should be high and unruly. But if they will learn to be sober and temperate, and study by fasting often to subdue the body ; if they will avoid all that company and those occasions that betray them into these sins ; keeping themselves free from the first steps, in which the appetite is yet but weak and feeble, and will follow the works of their calling with care and application, so as to employ their thoughts and time in them : And if they will make choice of such diversions, as do not betray them into these temptations, they will then find it very easy to resist or avoid them. The heathens understood this, and even one of the lowliest of their poets tells us, that the strength and arts of lusts perish, if men take care to be well employed and are not idle.

In the next place, you ought to follow the rule of religion, and to take a help-mate, with whom you may hope to live happily together. Where the husband and wife are united to each other with the bonds of virtue and religion, and love one another in the Lord ; as this is a kind of heaven upon earth, so it secures their hearts from impure and wanderings desires, as long as they so continue and remain. In order to this end, you ought to be very careful in the choice you make in marrying yourselves, or your children ; that you may not sacrifice both the peace and purity of your lives, to those base considerations, upon which many of those, who even pass for wise persons, in the esteem of the world, chuse a consort ; and sell themselves or their children

dren for a little money, or some other secular ends. But those who would marry in the Lord, that is as becomes Christians, ought to make such a choice, that in the company of the person, with whom they are to lead their lives, they may hope to serve God, and to save their own souls: Therefore the virtue and piety of the person, ought to be the first and chief thing minded; not but that other considerations ought also to have a part and share therein: But when regard is only had to wealth, or other carnal ends; then the marriage will be soon repented of, the bed loathed, nothing but brawlings and contention, and at last a dissolution of that sacred faith.

To the sins of our fathers, this age has added the open giving up of marriages, and the parties allowing themselves that, which no religion nor law can allow them, to live impudently in a consortship with other persons, as if they were married to them; which is a degree of wickedness, that we have added to the former measure of our sins, and which without this was measure heaped up and running over. God grant it may not be the filling up the measure of our fathers; and that God who has threatened, “that he will be a swift witness against the adulterers, and the false swearers,” do not for the sake of those breakers of wedlock, who become guilty of both these sins at once, arise against this nation to judgment because of those crimes, whereof men are so far from being ashamed, that they openly commit them in the sight of the sun.

To conclude, let every man pray earnestly to God, that he would assist him with his grace to subdue and mortify this body of sin, with all its lusts and evil affections. And such as do earnestly beg this of him, and do also make use of the means which he hath appointed to keep themselves pure and undefiled, may rest assured and well satisfied; that

that he who gives liberally to all men, and upbraideth no man, will either grant continence, which St. Paul “ calls a special gift of God, that indeed “ every man hath not ;” or to such whom by not granting this, he calls to a married state, which is honourable in all men ;” he will grant a blessing in their marriage : For a good will is said to be the gift of God, “ a prudent wife is from the Lord ; and “ God, from whom cometh down every good and “ perfect gift,” will certainly grant to all such, as do earnestly seek to him, either one or other of these gifts, as he sees may be best for them. Therefore, to end all in the words of the same apostle, “ lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted “ word, which is able to save your souls.”

Discourse XXXIX. Bp.
Hopkins.

The EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

AS the former commandment requires chastity in our persons, so this does honesty and uprightness in our dealings; a virtue immediately founded on that first practical principle, of all human converse, which our Saviour lays down; “whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them:” and recommends it to us, as the sum and epitome of all the scriptures; “for this is the law and the prophets.” A principle, that carries such innate light and clear evidence in itself, that the very heathens frequently inculcate it in their writings, as the primary dictate of that morality, which they taught. This is a maxim we all assent to, not by any elaborate instructions, dint of arguments or long train of consequences; but it masters our understandings by its native evidence, and springs up in us, as an unpremeditated resolve of reason. Both God and nature have set up this standard in our consciences. And usually there needs no other judge of our actions towards others, than by comparing them with what in the like cases, we would think just and fit to be done to us. It may be, we are all partial to ourselves, in our present concerns; and whilst we only look that way, we may possibly seek all advantages to promote them,

them, tho' to another's detriment. But reason and religion will teach us to put ourselves in their stead, and then to manage our transactions with them, as we should judge just and reasonable, were we in their condition. And therefore when we deal with others, we should first act to ourselves both parties. For instance, a servant should consider, what respect he would require, was he in the same circumstances with his master, and had servants under him. Children should consider what duty and obedience they would expect, were they parents of children. Subjects, what honour and submission they might reasonably demand, were they magistrates; and so in any other relation: and when they have thus seriously pondered it in their own thoughts, let them then perform the same duties to others, in their real condition, as they judged to belong to them, in that which was only imagined. For it is a never-failing rule to direct our practice, that what we judge due to us, were we in another man's condition, is certainly as due to him in his own; and if we do not so act, we betray a great deal of selfishness, and sinful partiality. This is a rule applicable to all affairs; and there is scarce any one occurrence of a man's life, but he may regulate himself, according to this direction; and, indeed, there scarce needs any other. Whatsoever then we have to transact with another, tho' perhaps we might take such advantages of him, as possibly he might never know, or be able to redress; yet let us seriously ask our consciences, if we could be content, and think it honest and just, to be so used ourselves; and if not, whatsoever the temptation be, either of gain, pleasure, or profit, let us reject it with scorn, as that which would make us violate the first principle of common honesty among men, and contradict the laws both of nature and scripture. Was this rule more generally observed
among

among men, the world would not have that cause to complain of rapine, extortion, oppression, fraud, and injustice, as now it hath. The rich would not grind the face of the poor, nor the poor unjustly clamour against the rich. Superiors would not tyrannize over their inferiors, nor inferiors murmur or rebel against their superiors; but an equal peace, an uniform justice, would overspread the whole earth; and “righteousness would run down our streets as a mighty stream.” And therefore let me once more recommend it, (for indeed I cannot press it too often) that we would frequently set this golden rule before us, and do nothing to any other person, which, were we in his capacity, we should think unjust to be done unto ourselves: and whatsoever we would expect from others, as our due, were we in their place; even that ought we to perform to them, or otherwise we must condemn ourselves. This is a dictate of nature and right reason; the sum of the law and the prophets. And all those various precepts which are given us in scripture, for the conduct of our lives, are but as so many lines that meet in this centre. And if we apply it to each particular command of the second table, we shall find them to be all founded on, and interpreted by this. We are required to honour our superiors, to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, false accusations, and coveting what belongs to another; and all this according to the same measures, that we would have others perform these very duties to us. So that self, which is now the great tempter to wrong and injure others, was it governed by this universal maxim, would be the greatest patron of other mens rights and properties. I have the longer insisted on this, it having such general influence on the right ordering of our conversation; and because the most visible apparent violation, of this natural law, is by the sin of theft,

forbidden

forbidden in this commandment of which I am treating.

Theft in general, is an unjust taking, or detaining, what is lawfully another man's. He is a thief, who withholds what ought to be in his neighbour's possession, or takes from him what he before possessed. For all theft presupposeth a right and property in another. God is the great Lord and proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" by him, and of him, are all things; according to the pleasure of his will, they are and were created; and he hath granted unto man a large charter of the world, of every thing that is good. "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men." A large and regal gift, whereby he hath made over unto man all sublunary things, reserving unto himself the sovereignty and supreme lordship of all, and requiring only from man the homage and payment of obedience; and yet this large charter and donation gave no particular propriety unto any: for had man continued in his happy and innocent state, there would have been no need of meum and tuum, or any partition of these earthly possessions; but common blessings had been enjoyed in common by all. But sin entering into the world, mens desires after earthly enjoyments grew immoderate, and their attempts to attain them injurious to others; so that it became necessary to prescribe bounds and limits, that each man knowing his assigned portion, might rest satisfied therewith, and be restrained from invading and usurping on the rights of others. And there was no other way to effect this, but by human laws, mutual compact and agreement, declaring the rights and properties of every man. So that it is law which determines property, and there is nothing ours, or another's, farther than this assigns it to us.

Indeed,

Indeed, equity must sometimes interpose to moderate the letter of the law ; for in some cases should we rigorously prosecute our right, and insist upon every punctilio, we might call our due, it would become intolerable, and be a breach and violation of the law of Christ, and of charity, which requires us rather to part with our own in small matters, than to be vexatious or contentious. Thus you see how all right and property first came into the world. A general right by the donation of God ; a particular right, by the sanction of laws, allotting to each man his portion ; which to invade or take from him, is injustice, or theft.—But as to theft, there are many kinds thereof. The highest and chiefest is that which is committed against God by sacrilege. Sacrilege is an alienation from God, of whatsoever he hath appropriated to himself, or that is upon good grounds dedicated to the encouragement and maintenance of his honour and service. Indeed, the alienating what hath been given to superstitious or idolatrous uses, cannot be justly branded with sacrilege, for it was not so much given to God, as to ignorance and superstition ; and therefore our ancestors have done well and piously, in dissolving those nests of unclean birds, the monasteries, that were so numerous and burthensome in these kingdoms. But where any thing is indeed consecrated to God, and set apart for the maintenance and encouragement of his worship and service, it is no less than sacrilege and robbing of God, to alienate any part of this to secular uses. And of this God himself grievously complains, “ will a man
 “ rob God ? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say,
 “ wherein have we robbed thee ? in tithes and of-
 “ ferings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have
 “ robbed me, even this whole nation.” Certainly those things which are appointed for the worship

and service of God, whether originally by divine right or not ; yet they cannot be alienated, nor detained without involving the persons, or the nation who doth it, in a great sin : for this is to rob God of his right. Again,

Theft may be committed against men, by an unjust seizure, or detention, of what belongs to them ; and this may be done, either by fraud or force ; and therefore our Saviour in reciting the commandments mentions them both, do not steal, defraud not. This is a sin, that God hath threatened with many severe curses and punishments. The temporal punishments, which the scripture pronounces, is an ample and sufficient restitution ; and therefore Zacheus, when he was converted, offers a four-fold restitution to those he had wronged. “ If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” And yet besides this restitution, sometimes the offenders were put to death, especially if to their theft they added cruelty and oppression. This appears in the parable of Nathan, when he had most artificially aggravated the rich man’s crime, in taking away the poor man’s lamb, he so raised David’s compassion and indignation, that he pronounces this sentence ; “ the man that hath done this thing shall surely die ; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” So that under the law of Moses, it was in some cases lawful to punish a thief with death ; tho’, usually, restitution was only required. Indeed our law condemns them to death ; and yet we see how many persist in this wicked course of life, notwithstanding that severe punishment : and if the fear of death will not deter them, that of restitution would be much less effectual. But besides the punishment of the law, God leaves a curse upon what is gotten by theft and deceit ; a curse that will blast and consume all

all such wicked increase. Luxury and intemperance usually devour what is got by rapine; God by his righteous judgment making one sin the vengeance of another. And therefore, saith the wise man, "The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; and, as the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." God many times raises up such against them, as will make them refund their ill gotten treasure. Thus God threatened the "Chaldeans, because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." Such unjust acquisitions tend only to treasure up for themselves and their posterity want and poverty. And therefore if we desire to prosper in the world, and to have our substance encrease and multiply, we must be sure that no gain of robbery or oppression, fraud or deceit, be found in our hands, for this will devour our lawful acquisitions.

Besides great anxiety of mind doth always accompany ill-gotten wealth. It is a sin so much against the light of nature, that conscience, if not totally hardened, will be forever tormenting them with uneasy thoughts and reflections; for the fear of detection, of shame, and punishment incident thereto, must needs be a continual misery to them. But what is acquired fairly and with a good conscience, by an honest and lawful calling, whether more or less, it brings this contentment with it, that a man may quietly sit down and rejoice in that portion, which the providence and bounty of God, his most gracious and heavenly father, hath afforded him. He drinks no widows tears, nor orphans blood; he eats not the flesh of the poor, nor breaks the bones of the needy; his conscience checks him not when feeding on what his honest labour and industry hath procured; and tho' it be but a bit of

bread, or cup of cold water, yet is he entertained at a continual feast. And what he eats is far more savoury to him, than all the heightened delicacies of rich oppressors. Therefore better is a “ little
 “ with righteousness, than great revenues without
 “ right. For a little that a righteous man hath, is
 “ better than riches of many wicked.” Robbery and deceit also provoke God to cut such men off, by some untimely stroke, and immature judgment; either by the hand of human justice with shame and reproach, or of divine justice with wrath and vengeance. For so it is threatned, “ Thou, O God,
 “ shall bring them down into the pit of destruction;
 “ bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half
 “ their days.” That is, they shall not live to that period which the course and strength of nature would otherwise permit; but the hand of God will cut them off in the midst of their vigour, and flourishing years. But, however it may be with some of them in this life; if they escape the reproach of men, and the sword of justice; yet they shall certainly be eternally miserable. Their ill gotten goods shall not be able to redeem their souls, to bribe the justice of God, or to obtain the least solace and comfort. And what wretched fools are they, who must everlastingly perish, for gaining of things that are perishable. “ Not thieves, nor covetous, nor
 “ drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall
 “ inherit the kingdom of God.” Where then shall their portion be, but in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, that is unquenchable? where the Lord will spoil their very souls, as the wise man’s expression is; “ rob not the poor, for the Lord will
 “ plead their cause, and will spoil the souls of those
 “ that spoiled them.” And thus you see the various ways that God hath threatned to punish this first and greatest kind of theft, of taking away the right of another.

Another

Another kind of theft, is oppression and unreasonable exaction; taking advantage either of the weakness or necessity of others, and imposing such unequal conditions upon them, as they cannot bear, without their detriment and ruin. Contrary to the express words of God, “if thou sell aught unto thy neighbour, or buyest aught at thy neighbour’s hands, ye shall not oppress one another.” Thus those who let out money at an extravagant interest, or rigidly exact it from insufficient persons; also the great, who force the meaner sort into disadvantageous bargains, and make them thro’ fear, to sell at an under price; these, and the like, tho’ not condemned by human laws, are yet guilty by the law of God, of no less sin than oppression, a sin hateful both to God and man. The prophet calls it, “a plucking off their skin from them, and their flesh from their bones, and chopping them in pieces, as for the pot.” All unmercifulness and hard dealings with others, is a kind of theft. For the law of nature, and much more the law of charity, obliges us so to deal with others, as not to give them cause to complain of us to God; and in the bitterness of their spirits to imprecate on us the severity of his wrath and vengeance.

Again, To detain from others what is their due, either by equity or compact, is another kind of theft. How many are there whose profuse riot and luxury are maintained at the expence of the poor creditors ruin; who often have no other satisfaction than good words, and scarce any thing to live on, but tears and sighs? How many withhold the hire of poor labourers, who when wearied out in service, cannot receive for necessary refreshment, that small reward which his labours, with the toil and sweat of his own brows, required and earned. “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; at his day thou shalt give him his hire,

“neither shall the sun go down upon it. For he
 “is poor and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry
 “against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto
 “thee.” And in all our bargains and agreements,
 we are bound to perform them, tho’ never so much
 to our prejudice, unless the other party will release
 the contract. For this is one character of a good
 man, “he that sweareth, and covenanteth to his
 “own hurt, and changeth not;” but upon demand
 is ready and willing to perform and execute his agree-
 ment.

Another kind of theft is, in buying and selling; and this is of a very large extent. For the subtilty of man hath found out so many artifices to defraud and over-reach others, that to recount them, is almost as difficult as to escape them. Such are the false weights and measures, that are an abomination to the Lord; also false and counterfeited wares, over-commending, or undervaluing of goods for advantage, and many other unjust contrivances, which mens consciences better know, than another can suggest. The apostle hath sufficiently cautioned and threatened such men; “let no man go beyond,
 “or defraud his brother in any matter, because the
 “Lord is an avenger of such.” There is a day coming when the false weights shall be weighed, and the scanty measures measured, by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly we may deal so craftily, that those whom we over-reach can take no advantage against us, to right themselves by law; but we should remember, that the great judge will at the last day avenge them upon us. Then all accounts shall be balanced, and what remains shall be certainly paid; tho’ not to the injured, yet to the justice of God, who is the great and universal creditor. Thus we have seen what the negative part of this command is, as to many particular instances thereof; others I could have mentioned had time
 time

time permitted ; and since every negative implies a positive, I shall now proceed to consider what is the duty required from us. Which is, first, that all of us should have some calling. Secondly, That we should be contented with that state and condition of life, in which providence has fixed us.

First, Thou shalt not steal ; Therefore every man ought to have a calling, whereon he may comfortably subsist, and by his labour and industry, at least provide necessaries for himself and family. “ He “ that provideth not for his family hath denied the “ faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Some there are who live without any calling, such are like idle drones, that consume the labour of others ; lazy vagabonds, to whom the greatest charity would be correction ; who only serve to devour misplaced alms, and defraud the truly poor of relief. And we may rank with these some others who are neither serviceable to God, nor their country ; who have nothing of true worth in them, being the most unprofitable members of the commonwealth, and only live to kill and destroy one another, in their drunken quarrels. It is certain, that those whom God hath liberally endowed with his earthly blessings, have no necessity for manual employments and labour ; but yet they may within their own sphere find business enough, to employ their time and thoughts, so as to render them the most beneficial men on earth, and make them to be loved and honoured by others. For by their authority and example, by the largeness of their income and revenues, and the dependence that others have on them, they might be as influential to promote goodness and virtue, as too often they are to countenance and encourage vice. But as some have no employment, so others have an unlawful one, whose only business is to teach and inculcate vice, and excite men to it. And how many such are there, who

live by encouraging of wickedness in others, who are continually making use of all allurements to entice unto evil, recommending debauchery first to the fancy, then to the will and affections?

There are others who indeed have a lawful and honest calling, but then they are negligent and slothful; and which tends to poverty. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall poverty come as one that travaileth;" drawing nearer by soft and silent degrees. Poverty also tempts to theft, as Solomon says, "lest I am poor and steal." And therefore this command, which forbids theft, must by consequence enjoin labour and industry in our lawful callings. According to the apostle, "let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth;" and so by industry, of a thief, he may become a benefactor and alms-giver. And as this commandment requires that we should be employed in some calling; so it,

Secondly, enjoins us contentment with that portion of earthly good things, which our heavenly father allots us. "Be content with those things ye have." And certainly he that is not content with what God allows him, lies under a great temptation, by fraudulent and unjust courses, to carve out his own condition to himself, and invade the rights and properties of others. Discontent and covetousness are the root of all injustice. He that thinks himself injured, because he enjoys not so much as others, will be apt either thro' fraud or violence to encrease his substance, by taking from his neighbour. Let us therefore in time check this repining temper, and be satisfied with that provision which God hath afforded us; and tho' it be not the most delicate, or the most sumptuous, "yet having
food

food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Let us look upon all other things as superfluous or indifferent; and not murmur tho' we should never attain them. For whatsoever is necessary to our subsistence, God's providence and blessing on our industry will supply us with; and we ought not to repine for not having, what we do not absolutely want.

I shall conclude this discourse by an exhortation to those who are conscious to themselves of having wronged others. Let then such know, that they are in duty bound to restore the thing stolen or purloined, if it be in their power; if not, restitution must be made another way, by an adequate, ample, and satisfactory compensation; it not being enough to confess the sin to God, and beg his pardon; but restitution of the thing, or recompence for it, with the damage sustained, must also be made and rendered, without which pardon and remission of the guilt from God, can never be expected. And the reason is, because as long as any detains another's right and property, such continues in the same sin; for unjust possession is a continued and prolonged theft. And certainly that repentance of any sin, can never be true or sincere, of which tho' we seem to repent, yet we continue in. And without a true repentance, how can God's pardon be expected? but perhaps some will say, what if those we have defrauded are dead, how can restitution be then made them? To which I answer, In such case we are bound to make satisfaction to their children or representatives; and if there are none to be found, then we ought to dispose of it in acts of charity and piety. Some possibly may think this a very hard lesson of instruction, yet this is the rule of christianity, the inflexible laws of justice, and without complying therewith, we can have no reasonable hopes, of obtaining God's pardon. For which may we all fit and prepare ourselves.

Discourse XL. Dr. *Hole*.

The NINTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

AS the former commandment is intended to defend our properties, from wrong and violence ; so this is designed to preserve our good name from slander and defamation ; a good name is so excellent and valuable a thing, that the very subsistence of some, the conveniency and happiness of all, do much depend thereon. The wise man tells us, “it is rather to be chosen than great riches ;” indeed the one without the other will afford but little comfort. And elsewhere he says, “a good name is better than precious ointment ;” for it yields a sweet favour to all about us, it perfumes the air we breathe in, scatters its fragrancy abroad, and transmits the odour to posterity. And as a good name is in itself highly desirable, so is it a very tender thing, easily wounded, and sometimes incurable ; for which reason this commandment was given to secure it from all unjust assaults. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” This precept being negative, I shall first consider what is therein forbidden, which in general, are all the ways of injuring the credit and reputation of our neighbour, either publickly or privately ; as

By bringing a false accusation, or giving a false testimony against any in courts of judicature ; which is wounding of mens good name within the
very

very letter of this commandment. This may be done, either by charging any person with what they know to be false, as that of Potiphar's wife, who charged Joseph with incontinence, when she knew to the contrary ; such also were they who falsely accused our Saviour as an enemy to Cæsar, and his apostles as troublers of the world, and turning it upside down. This crime, however common, is a work of the devil, and those who practise it are the children of that wicked one. Again, bearing of false witness may be done, by concealing something that is true, whereby great injury may happen to men ; or, by affirming a thing with a higher degree of assurance than our knowledge extends to. In the first case, he that kills another, in his own defence, or in the execution of justice, may be condemned as a murderer, if those alleviating circumstances are not brought to light : And in the other, he that attests a thing as certain, which he believes to be only probable, gives a false testimony, because what he asserts or swears to, may, for aught he knows, be otherwise. So that in either case, he that thus swears, is guilty of bearing false witness.

Another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour, is that of lying ; a vile practice, against which we have many express texts of scripture : as, “ Lye not one to another, put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.” The evil of lying is very apparent ; for it perverts the end of speech, which is freely and fairly to communicate our minds to each other. It robs our neighbour of that debt of truth which is due to all men, and makes the tongue, which was given for the glory of God, and the good of one another, to become the instrument of deceit and dishonour to both. And therefore our Saviour tells us, “ that lying is of the devil, who was a liar from the
 “ beginning,

“beginning, and the father of it,” and they who delight therein, shall have their portion with him, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Slandering is another instance of bearing false witness against our neighbour. And this consists in raising or spreading false reports of him, to the prejudice of his fame and character. This is too common a fault among men, who whet their tongue like a sword, which cuts as a sharp razor; wounding the reputation of others, without consideration or remorse. And this is done, sometimes by fixing black and infamous characters on men, to their prejudice and great detriment. We find our Saviour himself could not escape the lashes of slandering tongues, for he was branded with characters the most infamous; an impostor, a blasphemer, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. And his apostles were stiled, seditious, and troublers of the world. And among ourselves, how often do we hear the odious titles of proud, covetous, malicious, and the like invidious epithets, fixed on persons deserving a better character?

Detraction is another crime condemned by this commandment. Detraction differs from slander in this, that the latter is a wrongful imputation of some vice; the other is a wilful lessening of another's virtue. The one consists in a charge of evil on our neighbour, the other in undervaluing and obscuring the good he does. This of detraction is a fault no less frequent than injurious. When the merits of any person shine forth, with a brighter lustre than others, many are busy to cast a cloud on them, and sully the glory of his best actions. A detractor loves to find flaws and blemishes in the best things, and to derogate from the praise of the most worthy. He is uneasy under the commendation of others, thinking it lessens his own worth, and therefore seeks to raise fame on the ruin of others; by diminishing the good, aggravating the evil, blaming the
prin-

principles, disparaging and perverting his best actions, and most innocent designs. But this is directly opposite to that part of charity which we call candour and ingenuity, for that inclines men to commend the virtues, and good qualities of others, giving every thing its due weight; and instead of disclosing, will hide a multitude of sins; charity gives all persons and actions their just praise, and so far from speaking, it thinketh no evil.

Flattery is another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour; and this differs from the former, in that as the detractor takes off from another's worth, the flatterer adds too much to it, and so hurts his credit as much in the excess, as the other diminishes from it. The flatterer represents persons and things otherwise than they are, extolling some too high, and giving greater characters of them than they deserve. There are some who will celebrate such virtues in another, which they know is not in them; and others, who if they see one guilty of a vice, will conceal that and commend him for the contrary virtue, calling "evil good, and good evil, light darkness, and darkness light," from whence have proceeded many notorious evils.

All judging and censuring of others, scoffing at, and exposing them to contempt, are here condemned, as bearing false witness against our neighbour. We are commanded, to "judge not lest we are judged," and Solomon tells us, "he that mocketh his neighbour is void of understanding." That is, he doth not well consider the damage and detriment he thereby does him. For this is many times a great prejudice to the name, and also to the quiet and interest of another. These are the more open and public ways of hurting the credit of our neighbour, and are here forbidden, as bearing false witness against him. Besides these, there are other more secret and private ways of wound-

wounding another's reputation, that fall under the prohibition of this commandment, as back-biting, whispering, and tale-bearing; and which, tho' less observed, are by no means the less injurious. Nay are oftentimes the more dangerous, by not being seen and discerned, before they have done incurable evils. These sort of evil-speakers work like moles under ground; and as men may suffer more by the invisible hollowness of an earthquake, than the loudest blusters of a storm; so the credit of our neighbour may receive deeper wounds by the invisible darts of secret calumnies, than by the bolder strokes of open and public slanders.

Back-biting is the speaking evil of another behind his back, by which many have greatly suffered; an enemy that comes behind and unawares, being far more dangerous, than a known and declared one. Against the latter we may arm and defend ourselves, but the other attacks us cowardly, when we are ignorant of his designs. And therefore we find the back-biter in the black list of the greatest sinners; and numbered with those who are to be excluded the kingdom of heaven. Whereas a good man is described to be one who back-biteth not his neighbour; and is thereby fitted to ascend the holy hill.

Whispering is that sort of back-biting, that consists in relating mens failings in private. This is an artificial and very malicious way of defaming, and many times makes greater impressions than more open calumnies. For he that is intrusted with this secret generally obliges another with it, and so it is communicated to others, till it creeps about like infection, and leaves the party's reputation wounded beyond redress. These also are in the catalogue of such as are given up to a reprobate mind, and who without repentance shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Tale-bearing is somewhat a more open

open way of defaming, and signifies the telling tales of others as a piece of news, and to find matter of talk, which is often done to the great prejudice of mens good name, and therefore God Almighty gave an exprefs charge againſt it, “ thou ſhalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer, among the people.” The word in the original ſignifies a trader in ill reports and ſtories of other men. This is what the pſalmiſt condemns in ſome, “ who ſit and ſpeak againſt their brother, and ſlander their own mother’s ſon, whoſe words are as ſwords, and wound even to the innermoſt parts of the belly.” Theſe, beſides the evil they do to mens good name, deſtroy the peace and quiet of the whole neighbourhood ; “ for a tale-bearer ſtirreth up ſtrife, and ſeparateth very friends.”

Thus we ſee what is forbidden in this commandment, namely, all manner of evil ſpeaking, both open and ſecret, public or private, to the prejudice of the fame and reputation of another, which is in ſome reſpect to bear falſe witneſs againſt one’s neighbour. But becauſe all the motives and occaſions of this evil are forbidden with it, therefore the apoſtle commands us “ to lay aſide all malice, and all guile and hypocrifiſies, and envyings, and all evil ſpeakings.” To lay aſide all malice, which whets the tongue againſt one another ; all guile, which tips it with falſehood and diſſimulation ; all hypocrifiſy, in diſparaging or flattering of others ; all envyings, which ſours mens minds and corrupts their diſcourſes ; all evil ſpeaking, which breeds the poiſon of aſps under their lips : In a word, let us lay aſide all pride, ſelf-intereſt, evil ſpeaking, faction, and whatever may tend to ſlander and defamation. I now proceed to conſider what duties are required of us in this commandment. And firſt,

We are to preſerve the honour and good name of our neighbour. This is what St. Peter means, when

when he commands us to honour all men; that is, we are to be so tender of the honour or reputation of every one, as instead of impairing, to do all we can to preserve and advance it. And this honour and esteem for all, is founded on some excellency common to mankind; who have all the image of God stamped upon them, and should therefore in reason, have a suitable regard paid even to the meanest person. For tho' some are in a more exalted station, and whose greater parts and power may demand higher degrees of it, yet some measure of honour and respect is due to that common nature of whom all are partakers; and that is to have a tender regard for the good name of every one, and to preserve all men as far as we can from reproach and contempt; for, as the wise man says, he that mocketh, or despiseth, the poorest man, despises his maker. It is a contempt of God to despise or vilify such as bear his image, and we debase ourselves in abusing those who are so nearly allied to us by an affinity of nature; whom we ought to honour and esteem for God's sake, and to love them for our own. We should be as tender of their character and reputation, as those of ourselves. If we see a man suffer, under a slander which we know to be false, we are obliged to appear in his defence, to assert and vindicate his abused innocence, and to the best of our power, remove such unjust aspersions. This is implied in not bearing false witness, and is a part of justice we owe to the reputation of all men.

But further; this commandment requires truth in our words and promises. For the not bearing false witness, signifies our bearing true witness, which we are to regard in all our speeches; for a good man is one who speaketh the truth from his heart. This should be observed in public courts of justice, and in all private commerce and conversation. In
courts

courts of justice, when we are summoned to bear witness for or against any, we must speak the truth from our hearts. This is a matter of great consequence to the lives and fortunes of men, on which the safety and security of both do very much depend. And therefore the oath administered on such occasions, is, that men should speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The truth; without forging or falsifying any matter which perverts judgment and justice. The whole truth; without concealing any part out of favour or prejudice to either party, which prevents justice from being rightly administered, and may occasion much wrong. Nothing but the truth; without adding any doubtful and uncertain conjectures, whereby a jury may be induced to give a hard and injurious sentence. These are the properties of a good witness, upon whose testimony men's lives and estates depend. A faithful witness will not lye, or forge any thing; but a false witness will utter lyes. And, "he that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness, but a false witness deceit." All who are required to give evidence in any cause, should be careful to confine their testimony to such things only as they know to be true. For it is this that preserves the public peace and welfare, prevents injustice and wrong, and secures to us quiet and tranquility of mind, and whereby we also promote God's glory. Joshua bids Achan "give glory to God by speaking the truth, in the matter of the wedge of gold." By speaking truth we glorify and reverence God's attributes, and conform to his nature and will, who is truth itself, and requires truth in the inward parts; but we highly dishonour him, by bearing false witness, because we thereby disown all love and fear of him.

Moreover as this commandment requires truth in courts of justice, so does it in all our conversation

and commerce with each other ; we being enjoined to “ speak every man truth with his neighbour.” In all private converse our Saviour’s advice is, “ that “ our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay ;” that is, to affirm or deny nothing contrary to the truth, but to declare things as they are, without falsifying or forswearing. For these are of the evil one, who was a liar from the beginning, and the father of them ; but God is truth, and his servants are stiled children that will not lye, who have a veneration for truth in all their words and actions. Truth is too sacred a thing to be prostituted, or trifled with. It being the cement and safeguard of all society, and what ought to be inviolably observed in all our communications with one another ; more especially in our promises and contracts, where our words should correspond with our thoughts, and be agreeable to our purposes and resolutions, in performing such agreements as we have made. It is such a serious regard to truth, that can only answer the end of speech, which was given as a means to convey our mind and meaning, and to be the instrument of intercourse and mutual confidence between each other. So that he who useth his tongue to the speaking truth, employs it as God hath appointed ; but a liar contradicts and inverts the design of speech, by making his tongue instrumental to promote and propagate falshood, deceit, and slander. Indeed, truth is what all men owe to one another, and whoever falsifies or equivocates with his neighbour, does an act of great injustice, by depriving him of that right of truth, which God hath made due to every man ; and he most notoriously bears false witness, who speaks one thing, and intends another. And therefore,

Another virtue required in this commandment, is an honest simplicity in all our words and actions. By this the heart will be void of all evil purposes and designs,

designs, and possessed only with just sentiments and strong desires of doing good. He that inwardly designs to hurt and injure another, generally disguises his intentions by outward fair speeches, and so conceals the wickedness of his heart by the flattery and falshood of his tongue ; but he that hath good wishes for others, his tongue will not vary from his heart, nor his actions from either, but a true harmony and agreement will be found in both ; even that simplicity and godly sincerity, in which all men are directed to have their conversation.

But this simplicity consists in several particulars ; namely, in a freedom from all malice, which is the vilest of all the passions, stiled therefore not only wicked, but is wickedness itself : For malice is compounded of anger and hatred, but more dangerous than both. It is a secret, subtle, and mischievous passion, having the craft of the fox mixed with the cruelty of the tyger. It fills the heart with gall, tips the tongue with falshood, and, as Solomon says, will not suffer men “ to sleep till they “ have done evil.” But an honest simplicity of mind is free from all this ; it desires all good, and intends no evil, to his neighbour ; it has the wisdom of the serpent, and yet retains the innocence of the dove, and will not harm any, in body, goods, or name. And the simplicity here required is to be free from all guile, hypocrisy, and dissimulation. Such things put false colours upon mens words and actions, make them appear to be what they are not, and set them upon using much art and industry, to carry on the disguise. They that have recourse to these measures, speak one way and act another, profess the greatest respect, when their designs are most dangerous, and by fair speeches palliate the foulest actions. David complained that his greatest enemies, were those who pretended the most friendship. Says he, “ it was not an open enemy, that

“ did me this dishonour, but my companion and
 “ my own familiar friend, they that eat of my bread
 “ laid wait for me. Judas came to our Saviour with,
 “ hail master ! and kissed him at the same time he
 “ betrayed him.” And St. Paul was in great perils
 by false brethren, who spake him fair, when they
 designed him the greatest mischief. This is but too
 much practised in our days, wherein the ancient sim-
 plicity of our forefathers, is in a great measure lost,
 and men are degenerated into craft and subtilty, lay-
 ing snares in their discourse, and traps in their ways
 and dealings ; directly contrary to the simplicity re-
 quired in this commandment, by which we are not
 only forbidden to bear any false witness, but are
 enjoined to have our speeches agree with our minds,
 and our actions to bear a true testimony to our
 words, to lay aside all guile and hypocrisy. Last-
 ly, the simplicity here required implies a freedom
 from all envying and evil speaking. Envy sours
 mens minds, and imbitters their tongues. Ill-will
 never speaks well, but aggravates all miscarriages,
 and therefore to cure these vices of the tongue,
 we must discard all spite and envy from our minds,
 so prejudicial to the good name of our neighbours,
 and learn that charity, which envieth not, and will
 not suffer us to think or speak amiss of any.

Thus we see what is forbidden, and what required
 in this commandment ; to the former belong all the
 wicked arts of impairing or hurting our neighbour’s
 credit ; to the latter appertain all the good and
 christian methods of promoting and preserving their
 reputation. For the better observing our duty
 herein, it will not be amiss to recommend the ad-
 vice of St. Paul, “ study to be quiet, and do your
 “ own business.” Now study implies an earnest at-
 tention of mind, accompanied with diligent enquiry
 and endeavours after something ; and the apostle
 making quietness a matter of study, shews the ex-
 cellency

cellency of it, and that it is worth studying, to attain it. That it is worth our study, the many benefits we reap from peace, and the various miseries that flow from contention, may easily satisfy us. And if we would preserve each other's good name, let us mind our own business, and not intermeddle with other mens; for they who thrust themselves into other peoples concerns, generally make bold with their reputation, assuming all wisdom to themselves, and scarce allowing others enough to understand or manage their own affairs. Hence the apostle joins busy-bodies and tatlers together; adding, that they "wander about from house to house not only idle, but tatlers, and speaking what they ought not." To conclude then this commandment, we are here directed to avoid all unjust ways of lessening, or detracting from the honour or reputation of our neighbour, which is bearing false witness against him; and likewise to do all the right and service we lawfully can to his good name, which is bearing true testimony to and for him.

Discourse XLI. Dr. *Hole*.

The TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exod. xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,
 thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,
 nor his man servant, nor his maid servant,
 nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that
 is thy neighbour's.

TH E S E words contain the tenth and last commandment in the decalogue; the design whereof is to regulate the inward thoughts and desires of the heart, and to keep them from all unlawful lusting or coveting what is another's. The former precepts expressly relate to the outward man, restraining the external acts of violence and injustice; but this extends to the inward man, putting a check to all secret unlawful desires, tho' they never come into act, and refining the heart, which is the spring of all evil, from all unjust inclinations; for "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies." Indeed, all the laws of God are spiritual, for they reach and affect the heart; and therefore our Saviour in expounding the commandments, declares, that all internal motions to sin are prohibited, as well as the outward acts.

God

God in this commandment expressly arraigns the thoughts, and condemns the very intention of our hearts, towards what is evil ; thou shalt not covet. He requires us not to deprive our neighbour of his right, nor even to wish or desire it ; and to abstain, not only from all unjust actions, but from all covetous inclinations. For this law forbids the sin of covetousness, or an inordinate lusting after, or desiring what belongs to another. There may be an honest and regular desire of others goods, when confined to just and lawful means of obtaining it ; since without this, there can be no traffick or commerce. None will buy or purchase any thing of another, unless he has a mind thereto ; trade and commerce depend on the liking and desiring one another's goods. But then there are besides irregular desires, whereby men covet the goods of others, and would unjustly obtain them ; and such are gross violations of this commandment. Some things of our neighbours cannot lawfully be parted with, others not without great loss, inconveniencies, or reluctancy ; in such cases, to desire our neighbour's goods, is an evil covetousness ; and which leads me to consider the several objects of concupiscence mentioned in this command.

We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's house ; that is, not only his habitation, but whatever he is rightfully possessed of ; these he ought quietly to enjoy, without any secret wishes or desires of ours after them. 'Twas Ahab's sin to covet Naboth's vineyard, and we shall be as guilty to covet our neighbour's house, or farm, unless in an honest way, when the owner is willing legally to part with them, on terms that are just and right. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's wife, because this should not be ; for whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. No consent of parties can dissolve the bonds of wedlock, or violate the

laws of chastity, and therefore all such desires must be sinful; for they being made one by mutual agreement and God's institution, their hearts must not stray from each other, nor others run towards them. To covet or withdraw the affection of either, is a manifest breach of the laws of God and nature. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's servant, whether man or maid. For these are part of our neighbour's goods, made so by mutual covenant and promise; and by the laws of God and man, he hath a right to their labour and service, which none may lawfully desire or deprive him of. Indeed a master and servant may lawfully part by consent, or he may remove an idle unfaithful servant, and then they are free to any other; but none may secretly wish for, entice, or seduce another's servant, for this is a breach of justice and charity, and creates difference among neighbours. This is to do to another, what we should not like to be done to us, and is very contrary to that love and kindness we ought to bear to one another. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's ox or ass, that is, any of his cattle, flock, or herd. In these things our neighbour has so just a property, as may not be invaded so much as by a wish, for then it possibly would go farther; coveting will lead to purloin, and embezzle; for next to desiring is defrauding. And therefore this commandment checks the first motions and tendencies to such evil, for it cautions us not only against robbing and stealing our neighbour's cattle, but forbids all thoughts and desires leading thereto: Nay, so far from coveting or hurting his cattle, we are to save and succour them in all their wanderings; for our Saviour commands, that if our neighbour's ox or ass fall into a pit, we should help him out, and if he goes astray, to bring him home. Lastly, we are forbid to covet any thing that is our neighbour's; the former part of the
com-

command relates to things of weight and consequence ; and that we might not think ourselves at liberty to desire the smallest matters belonging to our neighbour, 'tis added, "nor any thing that is his." Some there are, who will own it unjust and unreasonable, to covet another's house, wife, servant, or cattle, and yet think a little corn, grafs, wood, or apples, such trifles as not to be minded ; and so are apt to indulge, not only their hearts in coveting, but also their hands in purloining of them. But this commandment corrects all such mistakes, by requiring us not to covet any thing that is our neighbour's, he having an equal right to small, as well as greater matters ; and he that violates God's authority in the one, will soon do it in the other. For many by using to pilfer in little trifles, have proceeded to things of greater value ; which should make men avoid the beginnings of this vice, and not to meddle with their neighbour's property in the lowest matters. Thus I have shewn the sin forbidden in this commandment.

But it must be remembered, as before observed, that all the motives and inducements to any sin, are also prohibited with the sin itself. And we shall find many evils condemned by this law, leading to the great sin of covetousness. As first, discontent with our present condition, is forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of coveting ; for he that likes not his own circumstances, will covet what he should not, and thinking he hath not enough, will be ever uneasy and desirous of more. Discontent deprives men of the comfort of what they enjoy : Ahab could take no pleasure in the glory and greatness of a kingdom, whilst he coveted Naboth's vineyard. For he came "to his house heavy" and displeas'd, he laid him down on his bed, turned away his face, and would eat no bread." This folly leads men to fraud and injustice. The apostle declares,

clares, that they who being uneasy at their present fortunes, do covet to be rich, “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown them in destruction and perdition.” Discontent with our condition, says the wise man, “frets the heart against the Lord;” as if he dealt hardly with them, and denied to give what they desired or deserved. It makes them find fault with the dispensations of divine providence, as thinking other men’s lot better than theirs; and which leads first to coveting, and then purloining what is another’s. Envy is another sin forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of this evil concupiscence. This is an effect of the former, and naturally leads to covetousness. For he that is discontented with his own condition, will envy others, and that naturally begets inordinate desires and hankerings after it. This sin offers great indignity to God, for it will not allow him to dispose of his own blessings. The envious person would have things ordered, not by the wisdom of the divine will, but his own fancy and humour: He would be the sole carver of his own, and other men’s fortunes, and therefore grudges and murmurs if any have more than he thinks proper; which is a great affront to the wisdom and authority of our maker. It is also high injustice to our neighbour, to covet what is his, and repine at his prosperity, when we ought to rejoice thereat. Nor is it a small injury to a man’s self, for it destroys the peace and tranquility of his mind, and deprives him of all the comfort he might reap from the prosperity of others; this envious coveting of another’s property, serving only to fret and gall his mind, to weaken his body, and bring leanness and rottenness into his bones. Another occasion of covering here forbidden, is an immoderate care

care and anxious solicitude for the things of this life ; for which reason our Saviour gives a strict caution against it ; says he, “ take no thought for
“ your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall
“ drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put
“ on : Is not the life more than meat, and the body
“ than raiment ?” Not that our Saviour here condemns all prudent, moderate care about earthly things, nor requires us to cast off all thoughts and concern for our body ; we being commanded to “ provide things honest in the sight of all men,
“ and not to be slothful, but diligent in our business.” But our Saviour’s charge is, not to give way to any anxious, perplexing, or solicitous cares about these things ; such as to distrust God’s providence, or to put men upon inordinate desires and endeavours after what is not their own ; for these destroy property, disturb the peace and order of the world, violate the laws of God, and bring destruction to the souls of men ; and therefore our Saviour uses many arguments, whereby to cure such carking and immoderate cares.

For he sends us to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, “ who sow not, neither do they
“ reap, nor gather into barns, and yet our heavenly
“ Father feedeth them ; and are not we much better than they ?” To check all solicitous thoughts about meat and drink, he minds us of the provision made for all inferior creatures, how he “ feeds
“ the ravens,” and will not suffer a “ sparrow to
“ fall to the ground ;” and can we think he will starve his own children ? To cure all anxious cares about raiment, he sends us to the lillies of the field,
“ to consider how they grow, they toil not, neither
“ do they spin ;” and yet, says he, Solomon “ in
“ all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these ;
“ and if God so clothe the grass of the field that
“ to-day

“to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe us?” Lastly, he shews the vanity of all such carking and distrustful cares, which can neither add “one cubit to our stature,” nor one grain to our estate without God’s blessing; which will sooner be obtained by a devout dependance on his providence, than by all the anxious and indirect arts of our own contrivance. These, together with idleness and pride, are the principal motives and occasions of that sinful concupiscence, condemned in this commandment, which we must carefully watch against, as the enemies of our souls, and the obstacles of our salvation. In a word, let us subdue the first motions of discontent, envy, and ambition, which will otherwise betray us into greater evils; for by suffering our hearts to covet, we let loose our hands to picking and stealing, and shall thereby incur the miseries and punishments both of this life and the next.

Having considered the negative part of this commandment, which forbids all coveting or desiring what belongs to others; I shall now proceed to the affirmative part of it, which instructs us in what is required; namely, contentment with our own condition, according to the apostle, “let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.” In treating of this great duty, I will shew the nature of contentment; the reasonableness of it; and lastly, propose some directions for attaining it.—Contentment is such a satisfaction of mind in any condition, as to be easy to one’s self and others. True contentment springs from the mind; it ariseth not from the abundance of outward things, which often brings disquiet, but from the inward frame and disposition of the soul, that thankfully enjoys, and prudently acquiesces, in whatever portion is allotted.

lotted. Therefore St. Paul declares, that “ he “ coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel, “ but had learned to be content with his own “ estate.” Indeed, with any estate that should happen to him ; for he “ knew how to be abased, “ as well as how to abound ; both to be full and “ to be hungry, to abound and suffer need.” Contentment is such a well-pleasèdness with our condition, as to render us easy to ourselves. “ The “ good man, saith Solomon, shall be satisfied from “ himself.” He hath such a spring of joy and peace from within, as keeps him from murmuring and repining, and makes him chearfully to receive whatever God is pleasèd to allot him. And the good effect of this virtue, not only renders him easy to himself, but to all others. For contentment preserves us from all the evil effects of envy, and makes us rather to rejoice, than repine at another’s prosperity.

But the reasonableness of this virtue of contentment will more plainly appear, if we consider, that whatever our state and condition may be, yet ’tis allotted us by God, the sovereign disposer of all things, from whose bounty flows all that we receive. “ The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,” which he bestows on the sons of men, as he thinks fit. We are debtors to him for our very being ; we are made by his power, and daily supported by his providence, for “ in him we live, move, and “ have our being.” So that we ought rather to be contented and thankful for what we have, than murmur and complain for what we want. And as we can claim nothing as our due, neither can we challenge any thing as our desert ; for we “ are “ less than the least of all God’s mercies,” and can merit nothing at his hands. We should therefore be content and receive with gratitude what we have. And if to the sovereign right and title of
almighty

almighty God, we add the consideration of his wisdom and goodness, we shall see far greater reason to be content with our portion; for what we have is allotted us by an all-wise and gracious hand, who knows what is better for us, than we can do for ourselves. We often wish and long for those things, that will do us more harm than good. But God in his wisdom best knows what is proper and fit for us, and dispenses his goodness to us in such proportion, as most tends to promote our welfare; and therefore we ought, in point of interest, as well as conscience, humbly and thankfully to acquiesce in what he orders. For to be dissatisfied with our condition, is, in effect, to prefer our judgment to his, and to think ourselves wiser than God. And to be displeas'd with his allotment, is the ready way to forfeit our maker's favour, and provoke him to recall what we have, instead of giving more. Besides, there is a peculiar happiness attending contentment; for a contented mind is always easy: it creates a constant calm, an undisturbed tranquility within; but discontent and envy disquiet the mind, and raise a perpetual storm in the hearts of men. Content is true happiness, the blest estate of heaven, the joy of glorified saints, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; who are not only pleas'd with their own joys and blessedness, but delighted with those of others: but discontent and envy are the passions and torment of wicked spirits, whose own uneasiness, like so many furies, makes them tear and devour one another.

Lastly, I shall prescribe some rules for the better attaining this excellent art of contentment. And as this useful virtue is seated chiefly in the mind, we must begin there, and endeavour to bring our minds to our condition. The reason why so few attain this art is, because they take not the right method. Men are solicitous enough to bring their
estates

estates to their minds, which being too large to be satisfied with earthly things, is a vain attempt ; for he that “ loveth silver shall not be satisfied “ with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with “ increase.” But to act rightly, we must labour to bring our minds to our estate, and to rest satisfied with whatever the divine wisdom and goodness allots for us, which better knows what is fit for us, than we can do for ourselves. Again, in order to be content with our condition, we should consider that all earthly things are insufficient to make us happy. Some weakly imagine, that if they could arrive to such an estate, or attain such a degree of honour, dignity, and preferment in this world, they should then be so happy, as to be satisfied without seeking or desiring more ; and yet, when they have obtained their wish, they find their cares and troubles greater, and themselves more uneasy than before : And therefore, Cyneas the philosopher wisely told Pyrrhus, on his informing him of the designs he had on Rome, Sicily, and Carthage, that if he could not be content with his own kingdom, neither would he be satisfied with the whole world. Indeed such things will not satisfy us, for they rather increase, than allay the thirst of the soul. So that let the world flow ever so much upon us, our desires will run faster and exceed them. Wherefore it will be our wisdom to fix our affections on higher and better things.

To learn this lesson of contentment, we must subdue all pride and haughtiness of mind, for he that is highly opinionated will think he hath not what he deserves ; this will make him repine, desire more, and envy others : But he that has humble thoughts of himself, will be thankful and content with any thing. We must also be diligently employed in that business and calling wherein God hath placed us, for that will secure his blessing on
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our endeavours, and bring us content. “The blessing of God (saith Solomon) maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow with it.” He who hath that, is rich in any condition, and doth not want a competency. ’Tis idleness that occasions want, covetous, and envious thoughts, which industry chases away and leaves no room for. We must also take care to live within the bounds of our estate; for he that exceeds it, will contract debts that unavoidably lead to danger and discontent. Frugality, temperance, and honesty are excellent helps to contentment, there being a blessing annexed to these things, which brings peace to the mind, and prosperity to our affairs; but extravagancy and dishonesty are ever attended with a curse, which disquiets the mind, diminishes the substance, and lays a foundation for misery and trouble. Again, if we would get and preserve a contented mind, we must more observe those who are below, than such as are above us; for the splendor of greatness is apt to dazzle the eye, to create envy and discontent. He that too much admires the wealth, honour, and power of another, will be easily induced to envy their happiness, and be discontented with his own condition; but if he looks below him, and considers how many want what he enjoys, this will teach him to be content and thankful for his own allotment. Nature is content with a little: He that lives by the necessities of nature is easily supplied; but he that feeds a carnal and sensual appetite, multiplies his wants, and makes artificial necessities, which drive away contentment. Lastly, to acquire this grace of contentment, we must learn to fix our trust and dependance on God, who hath promised never to leave nor forsake us. He alone is able to satisfy the cravings of our souls, to supply the wants and necessities of our bodies. All other things leave us when we most need them; they are
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of no use in times of sickness, the hour of death; or day of judgment; and therefore, let us not “trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.”

Thus I have shewn what is required and forbidden in this and the other commandments; and the wise man’s “conclusion of the whole matter is, “fear God and keep his commandments, for this “is the whole duty of man;” and which our Saviour hath comprised in the love of God and our neighbour.

The fear of God will restrain us from “having “any other Gods besides, or before him,” which is the first commandment. He that hath this holy awe and reverence for the divine majesty, will dread to offend him; either by the guilt of atheism; idolatry, or worshipping any rival deities. The sense of his power and greatness, as our Lord and master, will make us to honour and serve him only. The fear of God will keep us from worshipping him, contrary to his word and will, as by images or pictures, which is the thing forbidden in the second commandment. He that truly fears God, will not worship the creature, instead of the creator, much less give his glory to graven images. The sense of God’s jealousy of a rival, and the vengeance he hath denounced against such, and their posterity, should teach us to worship God, as he hath commanded, in spirit and in truth. The fear of God will keep men from profaning his sacred name, and beget a veneration for it, which is the substance of the third commandment. The want of this holy fear and reverence, is what makes men venture so boldly to take God’s name in vain, by rash and false swearing; to invade his property by sacrilege, to despise his ministers, and detain their maintenance from them; to pollute his sanctuary by profaneness, and to think meanly of persons,

sons, places and things, dedicated to his name : but did we stand in awe of God, as we ought, we should not dare to sin thus against him. Did we truly believe, the “ Lord will not hold them guiltless, that thus take his name in vain,” we should more honour his holy name, and avoid detracting from it. Lastly, the fear of God will make us remember to keep holy the sabbath-day, and to have a due regard to the times set apart and devoted to his service, which is required by the fourth commandment. If we fear God, we shall not profane those days by working at our calling, much less by following the works of sin ; but rather conscientiously rest from all our labours, the better to attend God’s worship, and the exercises of religion : especially considering the liberal allowance God hath given us, of six days in the week for our use, and reserving only one in seven for his own service. And surely he that hath any fear of God, or honour for him, will be afraid and ashamed to deny him this. Thus we see how the fear of God runs thro’ the first table of the law, and at once comprizes and enforces the duties we owe to God.

The next thing to be considered, is the duties we owe our neighbour, contained in the commandments of the second table, which are only performed by keeping of them. By observing the fifth commandment, we discharge our duty to all our superiors ; which is to “ honour our parents,” both natural and civil, and to “ obey those that are set over us in church and state ;” to which we are encouraged by the promise of long life here, and eternal bliss hereafter. By keeping the sixth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to one another’s lives, and the body and soul of both ; which is to take the best care we can of the health, safety, and welfare of each, and avoid maiming,
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murdering, and destroying of either. By observing the seventh commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to our neighbour's wife; we abstain from all uncleanness in thought, word, and deed; and "keep our vessels in sanctification and honour;" we preserve a pure and inviolable chastity, and are thereby true to our marriage vows and promises. By observing the eighth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to our neighbour's goods and substance; which is not to steal, take away, or withhold his right from him; not to over-reach him by any methods of fraud or deceit, nor lessen his substance by robbery or oppression; but to use our best endeavours to preserve, promote, and advance his prosperity. By keeping the ninth commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to the credit and good name of our neighbour; which is, not to blast it, by bearing false witness, lying, slander, and defamation; nor to undermine it by secret whispering, talebearing, and backbiting: but as much as possible to silence all villifying, and detracting language of other men; to vindicate every one from unjust aspersions, and endeavour to preserve the reputation of others. Lastly, by the tenth commandment, we are restrained from all unjust covetous desires, and from indirectly obtaining what belongs to our neighbours; and are thereby taught to be content with what is truly and honestly ours, and willing that all others should also enjoy what is their right and property. Thus as our duty to God, is included in the fear of him; so our duty to our neighbour is contained in keeping the commandments; which two things are so full and comprehensive, that the wise man calls them, the whole of man.

For this is the whole duty, end, and happiness of man. This is the whole work and business incumbent on man, and about which we are to em-

ploy ourselves in this world ; not that we are to neglect the duties of our calling, and to have our minds always on religion ; but that we must make it our main and chief business, and prefer it above all other. To “ fear God, and keep his commandments,” is a matter of universal concern, to all men ; none are exempted, this being the whole duty, or principal business that belongs to every man. This is the end of man ; for God gave him faculties above other creatures, that he should honour, fear, and obey him. He is not distinguished from brute beasts, so much by reason, as by religion and the fear of God. So that this is the whole essence and end of man. And to fear God, and keep his commandments, will qualify and prepare us for happiness, and secure to us our future bliss. It will raise our natures to their highest perfection, and conform us to the divine nature, which nothing but the practice of religion and virtue can do. So that this is the whole work and business, the end and design, the interest and happiness of man ; all which are so many powerful arguments to persuade us to the practice of it.

From what hath been said, let us learn to live always in the fear of God, and that will keep us to our duty. Let us often meditate on the infinite power of God, which is able to punish all offences ; for “ if we set him always before us, we “ shall never do evil.” Let us not fear men, whose power can reach no farther than the body or goods, but “ fear him who can destroy both body “ and soul in hell.” Let us consider and reflect on his impartial justice, and frequently have in remembrance his infinite mercy, that we may “ fear the “ Lord for his goodness,” and dread to offend his justice. Let us live in constant obedience to his commands ; than shall we perform our duty to our neighbour, and thereby “ keep a conscience,
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“ void of offence, both towards God and man.”
For what “ doth the Lord our God require of
“ us, but to fear and serve him, to walk in his
“ ways, and keep his commandments, for this
“ is the whole of man ;” always remembering, that
“ God will bring every work to judgment, with
“ every secret thing, whether it be good or
“ evil.”

Discourse XLII. Abp. *Sharpe*.

Of our LOVE to GOD.

Matt. xxii. 37.

—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

THE question which the lawyer asked our Saviour, in all probability, was one of those, that was then much controverted among the Jewish doctors, as to which commandment was the greatest in the law of Moses: some teaching that the law of circumcision; others, that the law of sacrificing; others, that the moral duties of the law, those of loving God, and our neighbour, were the greatest commandments: and of this latter opinion was the lawyer himself, and our Saviour confirmed him therein, by this answer; “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Intimating, that the foundation of all religion, is first the loving of God, and next the love of our neighbour. All the duties, prescribed by Moses, and the prophets, are summed up in these two, and may be reduced to them. He that saith, love God, and our neighbour, in effect tells us the whole of our duty; all other points of religion being comprehended and contained therein. My design at this time is to consider the first and great commandment; that of “loving God, with all our heart, soul and strength.

“strength.” And I shall first explain, what is meant by loving God; then shew in what respects, and upon what grounds this is the first and greatest commandment; and lastly, make some inferences from the whole.

As to the first, every one so well knows what is meant by love, it being a dictate of nature, that it would be impertinent, to give instruction therein. But as there is a difference between divine and sensual love; the love of God, and of worldly things, it will be proper to consider both. And it must be observed, that the latter is usually attended with much greater transports of passion than the former: tho’ if the love of God be sincere, it will produce as real and visible effects, as the love of any sensible object in the world can do. Not that any should measure their love to God, by what they perceive in themselves towards visible objects; and imagine that they do not sincerely love God, because they feel not such violent transports of fear and hope, desires and longings, joy and delight, impatience and uneasiness, as perhaps they experience, when their hearts have been set upon things and persons on earth. For the love of God is not so passionate, as animal, sensual love; but it is as real and permanent, as strong and effectual, as the other, only more still and calm. And the reason is plain, because the one flows from our intellectual, reasonable nature; the other from our sensual, animal affections. And yet it may sometimes happen, that the more ardently, and intensely, a man loves God, the more will his animal passions conspire with that love, and be as vigorous on all occasions to express it, as if they were employed about some visible object. Holy David seems to have been thus affected. His love and devotion to God was expressed with violent raptures of passion, equal to the highest sensual love; but as this is a temper

to be found in few, therefore I shall give such an account of our loving God, as may be true, without that fervor of passion. And there are several things, that seem necessarily required to the true and sincere love of God, even from them who are the least susceptible of passionate expressions. As that we have a great esteem of God; that we earnestly desire to partake of his perfections; and we heartily endeavour to obtain his favour, by doing whatever is pleasing to him.

The first thing implied in the love of God, is to have a great and just esteem for him. To have such worthy apprehensions concerning God, such certain and well-grounded persuasions, of his adorable perfections, of his infinite goodness, love and kindness to us, as that we may conceive him to be the best, the most excellent and amiable of beings. Such is the make of human nature, that we cannot love any thing, of which we have not some knowledge and apprehension, and such as represents the object to be lovely and desirable. Our opinion and fancy first leads the way, and then follow desire and affection. So that in order to our sincere loving of God, we must labour to know something of his nature, to consider him the most amiable of all beings; and then we cannot but place our hearts and affections on him. When once God appears to us, what he really is in himself, the possessor of all perfections, the fountain of all good, the author of all that happiness we now enjoy, or can hope for hereafter; when once we are truly persuaded, that every good and desirable thing is in God, absolutely and most perfectly; and that all the excellencies we admire in this world, all the delightful things that here attract our hearts, are every one of them but so many rivulets, derived from the inexhaustible ocean of his perfections;
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are so many scanty and imperfect emanations from his infinite fulness ; and that what is here most glorious, beautiful, and excellent, is but a faint shadow, a very defective copy and representation of his eternal goodness, glory, and blessedness : When we have such apprehensions of his nature, as to believe there is nothing frightful or unlovely in God ; that he is perfect light, and such a being, as all reasonable creatures, who have any knowledge of him, must for ever love ; a being, which was it possible to suppose there is not, yet all wise and good men would heartily wish there was : lastly, when we have such an idea of God, as to conceive that the enjoyment of him, is our supreme happiness ; that in possessing him we shall participate of every thing that is good and desirable : all pleasure, riches, and honour, being to be had by obtaining his favour ; I say, when we have such just and right notions and apprehensions of God as these, then, and not before, do we begin to love him ; then will our souls cleave to him ; then shall we cry out with David, “ whom have I in heaven
“ but thee, and there is none upon earth, that I can
“ desire in comparison with thee.” So that the first expression of love to God, is a just apprehension of, and esteem for him. But sincerely to love God also implies an earnest desire of being made partakers of his perfections. It is an inseparable property of love, to excite a strong desire and inclination in others, to be like in temper, and to imitate the virtue of the person beloved. It is ridiculous to talk of loving, and admiring a person, for any excellent accomplishment, when we at the same time behave directly contrary to what we see in him. If therefore we will sincerely love God, we should endeavour to be like him in all his imitable perfections. We should so admire his wisdom and purity, justice and mercy, faithfulness and truth, as to think it
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our greatest interest, to become righteous and merciful, wise and pure, faithful and true, as we find him to be. We should look upon sin, wickedness, and impurity, as the greatest blemishes, the worst evils in the world. We should not suffer in ourselves any humour, habit, or custom, that is opposite to his rectitude and goodness. But we should breathe after a participation of his nature; hunger and thirst after righteousness; and endeavour to bring our minds and spirits to a conformity in all things, with those ideas we have of him: so as to be heartily in love with virtue, goodness, and all other qualities that can accomplish our souls, and render us like our maker. And from hence will follow, a serious care to approve and recommend ourselves to God, in all our actions. As love naturally inclines us to imitate, and be like in temper to the person we love; so our carriage, behaviour, and conversation, should be made pleasing and acceptable to the beloved object. For, can we, with any justice, pretend we love our friend, when we constantly make it our business, in his sight and presence, to do what we know he hates? And this is our case with God. He is not indeed properly injured, or receives any damage by what we do; our best services neither giving any addition to his glory and infinite happiness, nor our worst actions detracting therefrom; but only, that as some of our actions are highly pleasing and acceptable to him, so others are the quite contrary; and which he regards as an affront and dishonour done him. And that we might without difficulty be able to distinguish between these, he hath given us his laws and commandments, as a rule whereby to govern our actions and conversations; which laws are partly imprinted on our hearts, and partly revealed to us, in his holy word. If therefore we
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love God, we must sincerely endeavour in all our actions to observe these laws ; for if we allow ourselves in the open transgression of them, we cannot pretend to love God, since we plainly affront him. Here then let us fix, and by this try our love to God. Do we sincerely strive to keep his commandments ? Is it the study and design of our lives, to frame our actions agreeably to the rule God hath given us ? and do we constantly avoid, to the best of our power, the doing what we know is plainly repugnant to God's laws ? This is declared in scripture to be the most proper expression, and surest argument of our love to God. Thus in the second commandment, " I will shew mercy unto thousands
" of them that love me, and keep my command-
" ments." And our Saviour saith, " He that hath
" my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is
" that loveth me." And the apostle, " Who so
" keepeth his word, in him is the love of God
" perfected."

And as every man may know, whether in his life and conversation, he sincerely endeavours to observe God's laws, to perform what he hath commanded, and avoid what he forbids ; so from hence may all be satisfied, whether or no they truly love God. It is not a warmth and fervour, which we sometimes feel towards God, a great joy and delight in our spiritual exercises, earnest and devout affections in our contemplations and prayers, that should make us conclude, we sincerely love God ; for all this zeal and heat of affection, without an uniform obedience to all his commands, will avail nothing. On the other hand, if we are dull and flat in our prayers, and feel none of those raptures, spiritual consolations, and lively communion with God, that other men speak of ; let us not be troubled and think we have not the true love of God : for notwithstanding the want of these things, if we
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live honestly, virtuously, and godly, the love of God abideth in us. In a word, let all sorts of men, however lively or dull their passions and affections may be towards God, judge of their state and condition by this; do they heartily and steadily endeavour to approve themselves to God by an innocent, virtuous, and religious course of life? do they make a conscience of keeping all God's commandments, to the utmost of their knowledge and ability? do they knowingly and willingly indulge themselves, in no action or course of life, that their conscience tells them, is displeasing to God? If they can satisfy themselves in all this, such persons have the greatest reason in the world, to be assured they love God, in the degree he will accept; and if they enjoy not the comfort of it here, they will not fail of receiving a reward for it hereafter.—I now proceed to shew in what respect, and upon what grounds, the loving of God is the first and greatest commandment; and this appears from the following reasons.

That it is in the order of nature, prior to and before the other commandments; the very foundation of them, and from whence the other duties of the law derive their obligation. For instance; the duty we owe to our neighbour, in being just and faithful, merciful and charitable, quiet and peaceable; the duty we owe ourselves, in being chaste, modest and temperate: all these are necessary, indispensable duties. But how come they so? is it because they are things reasonable in themselves, agreeable to our nature, and that the practice of them, is a probable means to make our lives more easy and comfortable? Now admitting this true, and that they are considerable motives to engage us to practise them; yet, strictly speaking, neither of them is sufficient to lay a direct obligation on us, without the authority of the great God; who hath
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made these things to be our duty, who hath prescribed it as a law to us, to be just and charitable, chaste and temperate, and the like. So that we are not bound in conscience to serve and love God, neither should we be obliged to practise those other duties. The truth is, was there no God, whom we ought to love and serve, there would be no such thing as love and conscience in the world. It is the consideration of God in any action, that makes it good or bad; and it is the influence of God's authority, that in point of conscience makes any thing a sin or duty: and therefore since to love God is our first duty, as what gives the stamp of conscience and religion to all the rest, it must needs be the first and greatest commandment. Again,

The loving God with all our hearts and souls, is the greatest law, in regard of its excellency and dignity, as it employs and exercises the powers of our souls, on the highest and noblest object. To love God is certainly the greatest perfection and accomplishment of human nature; by it we become like unto God, and are made partakers of his divine nature.—In a word, the blessedness of mankind consists in the divine life, and the root of that is the sincere love of God. Whoever truly loves God cannot but be happy; and whoever doth not, must be miserable, because he is at a distance from the greatest good. To love God is to be put in possession of all that God can bestow; for it engages his wisdom and power, his care and providence in our favour; our security and happiness, rest and peace, joy and delight, do attend upon it. And therefore since the love of God is the sum of our felicity, it must in reason also be the sum of our religion; the first and greatest of all the commandments. Because our hearty love of God gives worth and value to all our other religious per-

performances. Love doth of itself recommend us to our heavenly father. Our prayers and fasting, our attendance on his worship, our moral honesty, our acts of mercy and charity, will never recommend us to God, and be acceptable to him, if at the same time we have no true love to him, nor any real affection for his commandments, but do these things out of vain-glory, to be seen of men; or to procure a reputation of sanctity, to please others, or to serve our private interest, and designs. But whoever heartily loves God, and endeavours in all his actions to approve himself to him; such a one never fails of God's acceptance, in every instance of duty he applies himself to; every service he offers is kindly taken, and the more his sincere love is expressed, the more value God puts upon it. Since therefore the love of God is of such universal influence, and so necessarily productive of obedience to all God's laws, there is great reason for its being called, the first and great commandment. I now proceed to draw some inferences, and apply what has been said.

The first thing I would take occasion to observe, is this: that religion, as it signifies that universal duty we owe to God, and by which we are to recommend ourselves to his favour, is not so variable, uncertain, and arbitrary a thing as some men do suppose; but it is constant, fixed, permanent, and immutable: the same now that it was in the days of the old law; the same then that it was in the days before the law was given; and the same both then and now, and as it will be a thousand years hence, if the world so long continues. True religion that is from God, was, is, and ever will be, the same as to substance and essentials, in all countries and nations, and among all sorts and conditions of men whatsoever. The sum of it is, to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with
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all our minds, and with all our strength ; and next to that, to love our neighbour as ourselves. This was the religion that the patriarchs, and all the pious men of old lived in, and by which they obtained God's favour and acceptance, even when there was no revealed instituted religion in the world. And this, our Saviour tells us, was the substance of that religion, which God, when he thought fit to discover his will by revelation, gave to the Israelites by Moses, and which he continued by a perpetual succession of prophets to press upon them. This also is the sum of that religion, which hath Jesus Christ for its author, who was the last and the greatest prophet, that came to declare God's will to mankind ; and whose religion is to continue in force for ever. And that this is the substance of the christian religion, no man can in the least doubt, who ever read the new testament. For if our Saviour could truly affirm, that the sum of the Jewish religion, as delivered by Moses, and the prophets, did consist in those two things, " the love of God, and our neighbour ;" I am sure we have much greater reason to say, that the religion which he taught, may be summed up in these two duties : because in the Jewish law, there were a great many precepts about matters of an indifferent nature, that seemed wholly foreign, and unlike to that of loving God and our neighbour ; but in our institution, there is hardly any one thing recommended to us, that doth not directly relate to this matter ; that is not either an instance, wherein we are to express our love to God and our neighbours ; or a means to help us in the practice of those duties ; or an argument, motive, or encouragement, to excite us to perform them. It is the design of all his doctrines to give us right notions of God and our neighbour ; to teach us how excellent, how good God is in himself, and how kind

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and gracious to us. And therefore, what infinite reason have we to love and serve him; and to love and serve all mankind, who are our neighbours, for his sake? It is the design of his precepts, to give us rules in what manner and degree we are to express our love to God, and our neighbour, and to oblige us, under the highest penalty, not to fail of our duty in these matters. It is also the design of his promises, to encourage us in the constant and sincere performance of these duties, notwithstanding any temptations we may meet with to the contrary, by offering to us greater assistance to perform them, and proposing greater rewards for doing it, than mankind had ever before. And lastly, it was the design of his whole life and conversation on earth, to give us a true pattern and example of love to God and man, in the several instances required from us. Love therefore, as it was the sum of the old law, so is it of the new. The end, the perfection, the utmost design of the evangelical dispensation, is to teach us to love God first, and then our neighbour, out of a pure heart and good conscience, and faith unfeigned. So that religion is not a thing to be altered at pleasure; and the law of nature, and the law of God, the natural dispensation, under which all men are born, and the revealed dispensation in the old and new testament, do sufficiently instruct us in the main heads of it. And so long as mankind retain their nature, and continue as God made them at first, it is impossible there should be any true religion, but what may be summed up in these two things; to love God and our neighbour.

Indeed, there is this difference between the three dispensations, that of nature, that of Moses, and that of Christ, as to this matter; namely, that the first teacheth these duties very imperfectly. Mankind, thro' the universal corruption and degeneracy
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of the world, had lost the true notions of God, and of the way wherein he would be loved and served. And therefore the design of the second dispensation, that of Moses, was to restore and revive these notions among the Jews, and to oblige them more strictly to the performance of those duties, by more explicit promises and threatenings. But yet this dispensation of Moses was very imperfect, and insufficient, for the bringing all mankind to that pure love of God and man, that was required to the perfection of human nature. And therefore when the fulness of time was come, God sent his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, not to alter the principles of mankind, or set up a religion, that was never heard of in the world; but to perfect what was deficient in the law of nature, or of Moses, to build upon and improve the old foundation of loving God and our neighbour; that so all mankind might be put into a capacity, of performing acceptable services to God, and arriving to that perfection and happiness, which in their creation, they were designed for. This work our Saviour undertook, and which he did effectually perform and execute; 1. by instructing mankind more plainly and perfectly than ever they were before, how, and in what instances, they ought to express their love to God and man; and by requiring from them, a greater measure, degree, and intenseness of love, both to God and man, than the world before did think themselves obliged to. 2. By offering a great number of new arguments, motives and inducements, to the practice of those duties, which they scarce ever thought on before; and by procuring greater aids, helps, and assistances, for the performance of their duty, than was ever afforded, under either of the other dispensations. 3. By setting a plain and easy, but withal a perfect example, in his own life, of the

produce of these duties, in all the several instances of them ; and by proposing greater rewards to all good men, who sincerely endeavour to recommend themselves by universal love to God and man, than either the light of nature, or the law of Moses did ever make. And lastly, by purchasing remission of sins by his death and passion, for the encouragement of all mankind, seriously to practise this true religion, how negligent soever they had before been in these matters.

This to me seems a true scheme, and genuine representation of the Christian religion. And as to the main duties required by the religion of Christ, it seems to be the same in substance, with the religion of nature, and that of the Jews ; and the sum of them both lies in this, to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. But as to the instances of expressing these duties, the strictness it requires, the arguments used to engage us to them, the assistance offered for performing them, and the inestimable promises made to all who observe them ; in all these respects there is no comparison to be made, between Christ's religion and the others : Christianity having abundantly the advantage, upon every one of these accounts, both of the heathen and Jewish religion. All that I intend from what has been observed, is to evince that religion is not a fictitious, arbitrary thing ; this day one thing, and another to-morrow ; in this kingdom different from what it is elsewhere ; but that the true religion, the religion that is of God, is eternally the same, and consists in this, " That we love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our mind, and with all our soul ; " and that we love our neighbour as ourselves."

Discourse XLIII. Bp. Burnet.

Of the LOVE of our NEIGHBOUR.

Mat. xxii. 39, 40.

And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

AS the first and main principles of arts and sciences are chiefly to be valued, because when we are masters of them, they lead unto many things that are readily drawn from them; and these render the other parts of those arts and sciences easy in practice; so it is also with relation to our duty to God. If we have such a sense of his attributes and perfections, more particularly of his goodness and mercy, and of those blessings we continually receive from him, as to make us "love him with all our soul, and with all our strength;" then every act that terminates on him; as our trust; hope, resignation and submission; and every part of the worship and service that we owe to him, will rise easily, and come from us with joy and delight. And therefore this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, both in its importance, and happy effects. If our natures are brought to a temper that is all love and goodness; then we become like God, who is love; and if our souls dwell in love, then we dwell in God, and God in us. This principle will be also fruitful of every good work. It will make us readily perform the

duties of all the relations, in which we stand. And because love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore it is the “fulfilling of the law, for, it is “comprehended and fulfilled in this one word, “Love ;” which will prompt us to a chearful and ready performance of every office, whether, of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbour. All the best things we do, if without this inward principle, are either done hypocritically, to be seen of men, or at best, some other considerations force them from us ; but they cannot arise naturally, and with joy, but as they flow from love. Without love a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others, only as a sort of merchandize, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts, to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather for the sake of God, who is love.

This precept was part of the law of Moses ; “thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not “suffer sin upon him.” If we see any person in a state of sin, to whom we have such access, that we may reprove him for it, but are willing to let him continue in it, that he may be thereby lessened in the esteem of the world ; we shew a high degree of hatred, if we let him go on in an ill course, and the sin will in some sort lie upon us ; and so the words may be rendered, thou shalt not bear sin for him. To this is added, “thou shalt not avenge, nor bear “any grudge against the children of thy people ;” the one relates to the desire, the other to acts of revenge ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ; this gives a particular weight to the precept. The word neighbour, the Jews explained, by the children of thy people. So they who were commanded to avoid all intimacy or society with idolaters, thought, that by neighbour, none but an Israelite could

could be meant ; all others were counted by them, strangers and enemies. Our Saviour, as he carried the moral obligations much higher, and gave them a greater extent than the Jews did ; so by the parable of the Samaritan, he shewed that the word neighbour, did not mean only the men of one nation or one religion ; but that a proper object, of what nation or religion soever, being brought in our way, it ought to make us pay this debt of love to him. So that neighbourhood does now comprehend all mankind.

And our Saviour does not only raise the value of such love, both by calling it a new commandment, which he gave his disciples, and by making it such a badge and cognizance, “ that all men might know “ whether they were his disciples or not, if they had “ love one to another ;” but he has also raised the obligation yet higher, by the standard he has given of our love to the brethren ; “ as I have loved you, “ so love one another.” When we consider the extent of that expression, as I have loved you ; both in respect to the infinite dignity of him who so loved us, and the unworthiness of us, whom he has so loved ; and as to the wonderful instances and endearing effects of his love, in that he gave himself for us, and bore our sins on his own body, that he might thereby redeem and deliver us from the punishment of sin, by reconciling us to his father : We must acknowledge that here is love indeed, and a perfect pattern proposed to our imitation. He has made all mankind our neighbours, and all Christians our brethren, whom we ought to love with a pure heart fervently. But tho’ we should exclude none from our love, yet some have a right to a higher measure of it ; for such, in whom we see the likeness of God, are intitled to the largest share of it, in proportion to the degrees of that goodness we see in them.

The only difficulty to be cleared, is, the meaning and importance of the words, as ourselves. It seems hard and almost above the power of man, if not contrary to the law of nature, to love any other person, much more to love all our neighbours, as ourselves. Nature seems to have stamp'd such a principle of love in us, that it looks like a stretch beyond our force, to love another as ourselves. But as does not here import an equality; an imitation or resemblance will fully answer its signification. We are required to be holy, "as he who called us is holy, in all manner of conversation; and to purify ourselves even as he is pure." And our Saviour said, "be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." But since we cannot rise up in holiness and purity, to an equality with Christ, much less can we be perfect, as God is perfect; we see that as in those places means only a conformity or similitude; or the proposing of God and Christ to our imitation, as the pattern after which we ought to frame our thoughts and actions: So here, the meaning of loving our neighbour as ourselves, is, that as we feel nature teaches us to love ourselves with much tenderness and care, industry and zeal; to have a quick sense of all our concerns, and great solicitude about every thing that relates to us; so we ought to love our neighbour with a sincere and hearty affection, bearing a share of all his burthens, and employing ourselves with an active diligence to procure his real good and happiness; with a love of the same sort as that we bear to ourselves, tho' not to the same degree; in a word, the doing to others what we would that others should do to us. This is what we owe at all times, to all men, as God in his providence puts them in our way, to become our neighbours. But on some occasions we are required to love them in a stricter sense, as ourselves, nay,

even

even with a preference. We are commanded to be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another. We ought to esteem others better than ourselves, and to be ready when the circumstances of providence call us to it, to lay down our lives for the good of others. For tho' it is an extravagant stretch of love, now indeed seldom required, and not often in our power, willingly to suffer death for the sake of others, or for promoting the glory of God; yet as some generous minds, out of love to their country, or friends, have sacrificed their own lives for their good; so this brotherly love, when raised to some higher degrees than is now common among us, did often in the first ages of Christianity, make Christians expose themselves to the most exquisite torments for the sake of others. But as it is not the lot of Christians now, to suffer much for the faith, so there are not many instances of it, even in times of persecution. Thus we see what is meant by loving our neighbour as ourselves.

In the next place it is necessary to examine the several acts and instances, in which this love of ours ought to consist. And to animate our zeal in each of these, we ought to consider what obligations we are under of mutual love to one another. Among men, those of the same kindred, household and family, reckon themselves strictly bound to love one another. But we are all brethren, derived from one common original; our bodies are all of the same mould, our souls all come from one father of spirits and fountain of life. We all partake of one nature, and however distinguished by our birth, yet we are all upon a level as to every thing that is essential. We ought therefore to despise none, tho' below us, because of the depression of their fortune; since those accidental things come and go by such secret springs, and often so very unaccountably, that we ought never to

measure or value ourselves by any thing, but what is inseparable from, or belonging to us. We are neither better nor worse for having them or not, only so far as we make good or bad use of them. We ought therefore to consider ourselves as partakers of the same being with others, and therefore to bear a share with them, in their common concerns, and to love them as parts of ourselves. It is usual and frequent in profane authors, as well as the scriptures, to compare the societies of men, to a body; and every individual to a member of that body. And as every member that is not possessed with a concern for, and ready inclinations to serve the whole body, is esteemed a dead member; so every man who is not endued with humanity and bowels of compassion towards others, has lost one of the best ingredients of his composition, and will soon grow stupid or savage.

Another reason for this mutual tenderness, is the common interest of mankind, that it should universally prevail; and which may not improperly be called, the voice and law of nature. Man is a necessitous and helpless creature, wanting the aid and assistance of different sorts of persons. God has also given to men different talents, capacities, and inclinations, that they might be useful to one another. No man is of such an exalted station, who does not or may not want the assistance of those who are far below him. There must be a circulation of mutual advices and assistances, and nothing so much promotes it, as love. It both commands, and by a happy infection, spreads and insinuates itself into others, and engagingly melts them, to make such returns as are in their power. A man that is governed by love, feels, that as it subdues himself, so it does others. For generally speaking, men are so made, that they who can resist

sift fear and force, cannot stand before love. And a person so influenced may depend not only on the providence of God, but even on the equity and good nature of mankind. But that which most particularly recommends this love, is, that God, who by all this goodness to us, has a just right and title to our love, requires from us the love of our brethren and neighbours, as the most suitable expression of our love to him. For tho' we can add nothing to his glory, nor offer him any thing but what we receive from his beneficence; yet it will engage every grateful mind to express a just sense of those favours, that can never be repaid. And the acknowledgements of them will be considered as a repayment. David under the tenderest impressions of the goodness of God, and of the insufficiency of the returns he could make, that they could never extend to God, yet knew where to apply his gratitude, "even to the excellent ones, to the "faints, in whom was all his delight." For he both delighted in, and did them good. The peculiar excellency of our nature, as well as a main part of God's image on us, is our having a capacity to love. And as we feel a noble enlargement and extent of soul, when we diffuse our love to others, so we insensibly become perfecter and happier, the more entirely we love others, and are beloved by them. Nor do the extravagant follies, that are owing to the excesses and irregularities of love, contradict or destroy this great truth; that man by nature was made to love, and to be happy by loving, and in being loved.

In the last place, let us consider the obligation, that the Christian religion lays us under, to love our neighbours. We have already observed in how effectual a manner our Saviour has recommended it to us, and what an inimitable pattern he has set us; with what patience he bore the sense of injuries

juries and all resentments. He has taught us to ask forgiveness, only as we forgive others ; he enlarges in repeated expressions on that clause of the short prayer he taught his disciples, to make the sense of it go the deeper into them. His apostles enforce none of the Christian duties more frequently, and in expressions more sublime and tender, than when they treat of this. St. Paul copiously does this, in the XIIth and XIIIth chapter to the Romans ; and as it were in a transport, in the XIIIth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. Where after a long discourse on the different gifts, and powers, which were more commonly bestowed at that time, and which had so far prevailed on human infirmity, that some were thereby greatly lifted up ; and after he had shewed how unreasonable such an abuse of those gifts was ; he leads them to a more excellent way, and shews them that charity, which is to continue always in the church militant below, as well as in the church triumphant above, is preferable to the gifts of tongues, the healing of miracles, and the understanding all myteries : nay, even to the giving our bodies to be burnt, and all our goods to the poor. Charity is not only preferred to all these, but also to faith and hope, as being the highest state of perfection, to which our souls can possibly be advanced. St. John had the peculiar honour to be called the beloved disciple, and one reason of his having that character, seems to be, on account of that melting and tender strain of eloquence, in which he recommends love and charity to others. And it is recorded of him, that when his strength failed, as to other things, and his nature was decayed, he continued still to exhort his disciples, as little children to love one another. These are motives so prevalent, that it is impossible for any seriously to re-
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flect on them, but he must feel their power and efficacy.

It will be proper now to examine, what are the acts and instances, in which love ought to exert itself; for we must not love in word, but in deed. And this lies in having an inward concern and tenderness for other persons, and by shewing bowels of compassion towards them. This will appear, when we rejoice at their prosperity, and are touched with the miseries they feel; when we are grieved at the sins they commit, and can mourn for them. Love in the heart checks every secret repining at happy instances of providence towards others; and will move us to rejoice in their happiness, and to wish that their blessings may be sanctified. In a word, a charitable man will think the best he can of all persons; he will not believe rashly, nor aggravate things severely, but will make reasonable allowances, and admit of just excuses. In this extent of our kindness, tho' some have a right to larger measures of it than others, yet none ought to be entirely excluded from having a part. Wedlock makes two of one, so in that state there ought to be the tenderest union. Children are as part of their parents. Kindred and friends are in the closer ties of neighbourhood. And tho' we are not capable of an universal stretch of love to all, and that we owe a larger share of affection to some, yet we ought to diffuse our love to all, in as comprehensive a manner as we can; and if we cannot shew mercy to all, yet we ought to love mercy on all occasions, and towards all men.

Another instance of love, which is also secret and known only to God, and our own consciences, is the praying for others, both friends and enemies. We ought to be common intercessors for one another, particularly for those who desire our prayers, or have done us good. We are not bound to think
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well of those, who we see are bad, nor to believe such are not our enemies, that evidently appear to be so ; but we ought to carry a temper disposed to forgive, and to be reconciled to them ; to wish them such a measure of good things, as may be a real blessing to them. We ought to pray for a good mind to be in them, that we may live together on better terms. Prayer, as it is the easiest act of charity, being only the hearty wish of a good mind, directed towards God ; so it is the perfectest and most valuable act : and therefore by our temper in prayer, as by feeling the pulse, we shall be able to judge, how true and fervent our love to others is.

Another sort of acts, by which we should express our charity, is the doing all good offices, to such as are near us, and within our reach. We ought chiefly to apply this, to the souls of men, and endeavour to make them better and wiser. We should be ready on all occasions to do what good we can, with chearful and affectionate zeal and industry. The modest and humble, the condescending and tender way of shewing favour, does much add to the value it. In our private conversation we should endeavour to do good to all who are related to us ; to our families, children, and servants. We ought to seek out for proper opportunities, and consult the best methods to make the good we do most effectual and universal.

It is also necessary that we should be very careful in our behaviour to those, whom we have reason to believe are our enemies. Tho' we cannot help thinking them to be what they really appear, yet we ought to be slow in believing and judging ill of them : and to have ever in our minds a disposition to forgive, as soon as we see just cause. But if we are obliged on account of their offences to demand reparation or punishment in a legal way, we
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are not bound to make an end, only upon submission. Sometimes we owe the contrary to nature and to law ; as in pursuit for bloodshed. However then it ought to appear, that we act by a spirit of justice and duty, and not of revenge. In that case our proceedings should be fair and calm, and things not strained or aggravated. And even when we may be obliged to prosecute a man for his life, we should shew charity and forgiveness in doing then what we can towards saving his soul. There may be instances in which we ought to end lawsuits, and even suffer wrong ; in such cases, we are to consider what will tend most to the honour of religion, and the gaining another's soul, and to be thereby determined. Being always ready to entertain propositions for reconciliations, especially if the injury relates to ourselves, and the matter is within our own power.

The last sort of acts by which we may express our charity, are the relieving, assisting, and supporting the poor and afflicted, and doing all we can to make the miseries of others easier to them ; by visiting and comforting them in their afflictions ; expressing such a just care of, and concern for them, in protecting their persons, or supplying their wants, as may be a real relief to them. The poor are to be considered as the chief objects of this branch of our charity, whom God takes immediately under his own protection ; and charges them upon his bounty to us, as on a rent reserved for their support. This is a debt we pay to God, as well as a charity due to them. In this God considers chiefly our hearts, and accepts the will for the deed ; when the will is real and sincere, and the deed is not in our power. No general rule can be given of the proportion, that our charities ought to bear to our income ; because of the variety of mens necessities and circumstances. In ordinary cases, it is sufficient

ent to give out of the abundance, that is, the overplus which can well be spared : but in extraordinary cases, such as persecution, famine, or any other general calamity, we ought to give out of our poverty or necessity, straining ourselves the more liberally to supply others. And our charity should flow from us freely and cheerfully, not despising or reproaching those to whom we give. Indeed to admonish them of their faults, in particular such, as may have reduced themselves to a low condition, if done with a good spirit ; is a charity to their souls, as well as what we give is a relief to their bodies. There are charities, that even the poor can give. Such as visiting, serving, and watching about the sick, and making their necessities known to such as will or may relieve them. In a word, what good soever we can do to another, is a part of the debt of love, we owe to all our neighbours. And every man who examines his own capacities, as well as the necessities of others, and exerts himself on the occasion, will soon find what he can do and to whom. Having thus gone over the offices and acts of this love that we owe our neighbours, it is proper in the last place to recommend this temper of mind to ourselves and others ; and this may be the more effectually done, by considering the happiness of those who are so influenced and governed.

And all such will be like God, inwardly inflamed with a tender and diffusive love, and expressing it as often as any opportunity presents itself. Of all the attributes of God, his love and goodness are the most pleasing to us, and of which we form the clearest apprehensions. What joy then must it be to a good man, to perceive this fairest character of the image of God upon his mind ? He knows he is beloved of God, because he is all love, and therein resembles the author of his being. By this he
perceives

perceives he grows perfect, as his heavenly father is perfect ; and which gives him confidence in God. This affection opens his nature, and makes him a fountain of many blessings to others. His sphere may be narrow, his hands and compass short, but he feels a sort of infiniteness in his heart and inclinations ; and he would be somewhat like it in his actions, if his fortune was equal to his mind. He is assured, he deceives not himself when he thinks he loves God, because he feels and knows he loves his neighbour. He is sure religion has a root within him, when it so copiously is displayed to the relief of others. Besides, what a blessing is this temper to mankind, and what honour does it bring to religion? All the world experience the happy influence of it ; as it is a sweet temper that seasons friendship, and all conversation ; and enables men of plentiful fortunes, largely to distribute, and do good. The roughness of passion, the swellings of pride and vanity, and the base narrowness of interest, never take place, where this prevails. A soft deportment, an air of humility, with a generous freedom of heart, do ever accompany it. And the effects of it are as many and various, as occasions can give. Such persons are both the salt of the earth, and the light of the world ; and in them men perceive somewhat so real and noble, as to force them to acknowledge, that all the flights of wit, in representing an exaltation of friendship, or sublimity of generosity, are but vain airy dreams of an imaginary perfection ; in comparison to what such a conformity as this to the divine nature, has, in the mind of a good man, where the motions are as strong, as the effects are real. Instead of the very few, tho' much celebrated instances of men who have died for their friends, or their country ; how many heroical instances has this spirit of love produced in men, who have suffered

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ed more intolerable miseries, for the sake and good of others, than one would think was possible for the human nature to bear. And such a spirit again revived, would very much raise the honour and influence of our holy religion; which is to express our love towards our neighbour, as well as towards God.

Another consideration that recommends this excellent temper, is the happy effect it has on those who are possessed of it. They have a blessed calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature. They observe and rejoice in the happiness of others. They are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity; not fretting or complaining tho' they enjoy not so much as their neighbours: It is true, this sometimes has a very different effect, for the same temper will make many so far consider the misfortunes of others, as to sympathize therewith, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as they cannot assist. But there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us to the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians; and the more we are thus affected, the more certain evidence we have, of our being in a good state.—And this still heightens the inward peace, that a good man feels in the overflowings of his love, by being sure God loves him, because he loves his neighbour. His soul therefore dwells at ease; there is a sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes. This make him clear in his view of things; no vapours or clouds darken him, but there is an inward serenity in his mind and liveliness in his thoughts, that spreads a cheerfulness in his looks, grateful to all about him.

In the last place, this charitable temper maintains in him a constant disposition for prayer. A calm mind is easily recollected, but nothing more
dissipates

dissipates the thoughts, and makes it less fixed and attentive than passion. A charitable man that has had much occasion given to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares lay claim to mercy and pardon with much humble assurance; for tho' he is ready to acknowledge he is many talents indebted to God, yet being of a forgiving temper, he has an argument to plead for mercy and forgiveness, and to conclude that much "will be forgiven him, because he loves much." There is such a likeness and sympathy between the spirit of love and the spirit of true devotion, that they have a sensible influence upon each other; as the one rises or abates, so will the other.—Thus it appears, how happy this temper is, that makes us so like God, and so beneficial to our neighbours: that puts our minds into such a right situation, and keeps us in a continual disposition to offer up prayers to him, who will ever hear them, when proceeding from hearts enflamed with love, and melting in true devotion. To the God of love, be all honour and glory, for evermore.

Discourse XLIV. Dr. *Ibbot.*

The way to life is to keep God's commandments.

Mat. xix. 17.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

OUR blessed Saviour has very fully described to us the way to eternal happiness in these words ; and which are the terms and conditions of our salvation. By the commandments are meant the laws God has given to govern and direct our lives and actions ; and which are expressly revealed to us by the prophets, his Son our Saviour, and the apostles. There is indeed a law of nature, to which had men carefully attended, that would have been sufficient ; but they neglecting and defacing this law, it pleased God to make a new discovery of his will, by an express revelation, wherein are revealed those commands, which, if we would enter life, must be observed by us.

Tho' our Saviour sent the person who inquired of him what these commands were, to the law of Moses, as being a Jew ; yet if a Christian would be resolved therein, he must have recourse to that revelation, wherein God has in these " last days, " spoken to us by his Son ;" who hath the words of eternal life. From his preaching, and the writings of the apostles, it is, that Christians must learn what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, by obeying whereof they shall be saved. 'Tis there,

there, and not in the traditions and doctrines of men, that these commandments are to be found, the observance of which will give us an entrance into life. And these are so plainly delivered, that no sincere, honest enquirer can miss finding them: For this enquiry concerning only matter of fact, the solution thereof requires neither logic, metaphysics, or scholastic arts; nor yet subtilty of judgment, nice disputes, nor any other qualification of mind, than due care and honesty. We are only referred to our bible, "what is written in the law? how readest thou? There alone we have a faithful record of whatever is necessary to salvation. The great duty of sobriety; righteousness, and goodness; the prohibition of all wickedness and unrighteousness, of intemperance and uncleanness, pride and covetousness, fraud and injustice, perjury, lying, and dissimulation; of uncharitableness and hatred; cruelty and oppression; and the strict injunction of sobriety and chastity, humility and contentment, truth and honesty, justice and fidelity, love and charity; I say, all these commands are so plainly laid down in the New Testament, that persons of the meanest capacities may know their duty. And such as these our Saviour tells us, are the standing rules of life, which will bring us to heaven. The strict observance and constant performance of these, is universally and indispensably necessary; and it is a vain thing for him who lives in the breach and transgressing of them, to think of ever entering into life. We may as well imagine to obtain the end without the means, or to come to a place by going the quite contrary way, as to expect heaven and happiness, when we neglect the commandments of God. For the observance of these is constantly made the express terms and conditions of our admission into heaven.

This condition, in the nature and reason of the thing, is as necessary now under the gospel, as it was under the law of Moses, or in a state of nature, when men had nothing but the light of reason and natural conscience to direct them. The pleasing God, and obeying his commandments, ever was and will be the way to recommend ourselves to his favour and acceptance. "This is the will of God, even our sanctification. The commandment is holy, just, and good;" and relates to the conducting our lives and actions in the ways of righteousness. This eternal law of universal right is so agreeable to the purity of God's nature, and the condition of man, as a reasonable creature; that the duties arising from it are of perpetual obligation; nor can any rule, or precept thereto belonging, be taken away or disannulled, without changing the measures of right and wrong, and thereby introducing and authorizing irregularity, confusion, and disorder in the world. And we may be assured, that Christ's coming in the flesh, was not for such an end as this; but, on the contrary, to reform the corrupt state of degenerate men, and out of those who would mend their lives, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, to erect a new kingdom, and to "purify unto himself a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Hence it is that we find such an admirable harmony and agreement in these points, between the gospel of our Saviour, the law of Moses, and the dictates of uncorrupted reason. Those virtues, which were always had in great esteem, by the wiser and more sober part of the heathen world, are the very points whereon the greatest stress is laid by Moses, and the prophets. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee; only, to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." On these also the greatest

greatest weight is laid by our Saviour in his gospel, and the Apostles in their writings.

The laws given us by our Saviour, and which he requires us to obey, if we will be partakers with him in his kingdom of glory; do chiefly and principally relate to such duties as these, and which, by reason of their importance, he frequently repeats in different places and by various expressions. He began his preaching with a command to repent, bids his disciples to be exemplary in good works; and in his sermon on the mount, he confirms and re-inforces all the moral precepts in the old testament. He tells his hearers, that "except their righteousness, their observing the eternal law of right, " shall exceed the righteousness of " the scribes and pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and then says, that he was come to fulfil the law, by giving all the commands and precepts of it their full and clear sense, free from the corrupt glosses of the scribes and pharisees. And to shew he in earnest expects obedience to these commands, he tells them, that if " they obey, great shall be their reward; they shall be called the sons of the most high." And to what he had before said, adds this solemn sanction; " why call ye me Lord, " Lord, and do not the things which I say?" That is, it is in vain for you to receive me as the Messiah your king, unless you obey me; for " not every " one, that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter " into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth " the will of my father, which is in heaven." To such as are disobedient, tho' they " have prophesied," and done miracles in my name, I shall say, at the judgment-day, " depart from me, ye " workers of iniquity, I know you not." And when he was told, that his mother and brethren sought to speak with him, stretching out his hands

to his disciples, he said, " behold my mother and
 " my brethren ; for whosoever shall do the will of
 " my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my bro-
 " ther, my sister, and mother." By which he
 means, that they could not be children of the adop-
 tion, fellow-heirs with him of eternal life, who did
 not the will of his heavenly father, by keeping his
 commandments.

The love of Christ is certainly necessary to our
 entrance into happiness, which out of love to us,
 he purchased for us with his own blood. But this
 we cannot suppose he will bestow on any, who will
 not make a suitable return of their love. " If ye
 " love me, says he, keep my commandments. He
 " that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,
 " he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me,
 " shall be loved of my father, and I will love him,
 " and manifest myself to him. If a man loveth
 " me, he will keep my words : He that loveth me
 " not, keepeth not my sayings." This is the tenor
 of our Saviour's preaching ; so that our future hap-
 piness or misery depends on our obedience or dis-
 obedience to his laws, on the keeping or transgres-
 sing his commandment. " The wicked (or disobe-
 " dient) shall go away into everlasting punishment,
 " but the righteous (or obedient) into life eternal."

If we proceed in this enquiry, and examine the
 apostle's answer to this important question, " what
 " shall we do that we may inherit eternal life ?" We
 shall find an answer returned much to the same pur-
 pose with our Saviour's. This appears from the
 apostles frequently pressing repentance on their hear-
 ers, in order to their embracing the gospel ; for so
 says St. Peter, " repent and be baptized every one
 " of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the re-
 " mission of sins ;" that is, repent of your transgres-
 sing God's commands, and keep them better for
 the future ; this is that on which your salvation de-
 pends.

pends. Again, when Felix sent for Paul, to hear him concerning faith in Christ, the apostle reasoned of righteousness (or justice) and temperance, (the great duties which we owe to others and ourselves) and of the judgment to come, till he made Felix tremble. So that temperance and justice, which are plain moral duties, were fundamental parts of the faith and religion St. Paul professed. Thus it is evident, that our Saviour and his apostles required all those who believed him to be the Messiah, and received him for their lord and master to live by his laws ; and that he will admit no one into the inheritance of eternal life, who has not lived in a sincere obedience to his commandments. The workers of iniquity, those who have done evil and transgressed the laws of God, shall be judged and condemned to death ; but the workers of righteousness, those who have done good, and kept the commandments of God, shall be received into life eternal, when Christ comes at the end of the world, "to render to every one, according to what he hath done in the flesh." From what has been said, we may learn,

First, The great folly and danger of trusting to external performances, and the instrumental parts of religion, for our salvation. This is an error too prevalent in the world, and which, it is to be feared, many live and die in. Men are apt to think, that the bare belief and outward profession of religion, a constant compliance with the forms and modes of divine worship, and an exact observance of the rites and ceremonies of the church, whereof they are members, especially if zealous therein, will effectually secure their salvation. But tho' these things are good, yet they are only so in order to a further end ; and if, by the use of them, we attain not that end, they are

insignificant. We therefore never find the promise of eternal life annexed to any of these performances. It is constantly made the reward of virtue or good life ; such as by “ patient continuance in well-doing “ seek for glory, honour, and immortality,” are the only persons to whom God will give eternal life. For “ tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, “ shall be on every soul that doth evil, whether “ Jew, Gentile, or Christian ; whatever sect, persuasion, or denomination he is of. Indeed men will be differently dealt with, according to the several dispensations, different means and opportunities, they have had of improvement. But there will be no dispensing with voluntary sins and wickedness: No church or religion, no profession or persuasion whatever, can exempt us from keeping God’s commandments. The rule is general and without exception, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments : ’Tis no where said, if thou wilt enter into life, make profession of such particular belief, join in such assemblies, observe such forms and modes of worship ; no, but keep the commandments of God : Not that men are to be indifferent as to what they believe, because a right belief is most likely to produce a suitable practice. Nor should we be careless in the public worship and service of God, and not mind what sacrifice we offer to him ; since such a behaviour, when duly and regularly performed, will have a good influence on our lives and actions ; and the duties we carefully discharge in God’s house, will tend to regulate our future conduct at other times and places. And if these things have this effect, if we add to our faith virtue, and that our zeal for God’s honour and glory, and the purity of his worship, expresseth itself in an uniform obedience to his commands ; our religion is then such as it should be, and will not fail of recommending us to God. There is nothing easier than to make an outward profession

profession of religion in words, and to comply with all the externals of it; nothing harder than to subdue the heart, to bring our thoughts and actions to obey the truth. The latter is indispensably necessary to true religion, the former may be practised by those who have no religion at all.

Secondly, Hence therefore we may offer a probable reason, why our Saviour in his answer to this question of the young man's, "what he must do, "that he might have eternal life," repeats the whole second table, and omits the first. Namely, because the Jews in his time were, and as he foresaw christians afterwards would be, more negligent of the second than the first table. They were exact and scrupulous in the outward performance of their duty to God, but very little regarded their duty to men. They openly professed to observe the first commandment, of having but one God; they were strict observers of the second, and had idols in great abhorrence; they were very cautious of the letter of the third command, and would not apply the name of God to a falsehood, tho' they swore by other things which had such a relation to God, as amounted to swearing by his name. And as to the sabbath, they kept it more strictly than God himself ever intended, insomuch that they accused our Saviour of breaking the sabbath, because on that day he wrought several miracles of love and mercy. Thus far these hypocrites went, and so may others with as little religion as they had. The great difficulty lies in keeping the commands of the second table, because they thwart our corrupt passions and affections, and oppose us in our worldly designs and sensual satisfactions. In this the Jews were exceedingly defective: They made void the fifth commandment by their own traditions:

traditions : They were full of rancour, spite, and bloody malice, as appears by their carriage towards our Saviour, from whence we may observe how little they valued the sixth commandment, or the ninth, when they set up false witnesses against our blessed Lord.

Nay, they kept the first table, that they might the better break the second ; and made their devotions and worship of God instruments of fraud and oppression. They made long prayers, were very exact in all those religious duties, which had most of noise and shew, that by an appearance of great sanctity, they might get a fairer opportunity of compassing their bye ends, selfish and worldly designs ; and therefore our Saviour wisely ordered his discourses according to the temper of that people, and the state of those times wherein he lived. And if there are among christians any of this temper, who would willingly and gladly observe the commands of the first table, if they might be dispensed with in those of the second ; who would be well content to give God his due, if they might deal as they pleased with their neighbour ; who would be constant in attending the public worship and outward ordinances of religion, if they might live at pleasure in private, and indulge themselves in secret sins : All such persons should therefore be reminded of the duties of the second table, as being absolutely necessary to be performed by those who would enter into life.

It ought to be observed, that moral duties make a great part of true religion. Our Saviour here gives us the sum and substance of what God requires at our hands, and the duties we owe to our neighbour, all which are certainly of a moral nature. Piety towards God is here supposed, tho' not

not expressly mentioned; and no doubt we serve God as much and as faithfully, when we are honest and just in our dealings, kind and compassionate, helpful and beneficial to others, as by our immediate worship of him. In all those places where we have a short and summary account of the whole body of religion, these duties are never omitted, but always absolutely insisted on. They are principal ingredients of religion, and tho' slighted and neglected by some men, as very low attainments and beggarly things, in comparison of some pretended spiritualities; yet we see the scripture makes no small account of them, nor can any man be truly religious without them. They are the conditions of entering into life, the chief ingredients of that holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." I come now to apply what has been offered. And,

It was the glory of primitive christianity, that a clear and uniform virtue shone bright in the lives of its disciples, and distinguished them from the rest of mankind. It was a strict observance of every precept of their religion, an exemplary conquest over passion and appetite, a resolute zeal for the honour, and an unwearied devotion in the service of God, that recommended the gospel to the world. Men saw their works, and glorified their father which was in heaven. But alas! with what shame and regret must we observe the reverse of this character, in the present lives and morality of christians. When we see piety and holiness ridiculed as morose singularities, and those vices not only owned but gloried in, at the mention of which christians ought to tremble; when even the best of us appear contented with an imperfect virtue, and the greatest part of our examples are so abandoned to vice, that, instead

stead of offending in one point, there is scarce the appearance of obeying in any one!

Let us then, by a bright and uniform example of piety revive the declining spirit of religion, and retrieve the antient honour of christianity. Let us not amuse ourselves with vain projects of reconciling sin and duty, but be contented to tread the old, tho' strait narrow paths, of faith and obedience; the paths in which prophets, apostles and martyrs are gone before us; and let us not fondly imagine, that the way to happiness is made plainer to us than it was to them. Let us remember, that our religion has taught us, that there is no communion of light with darkness; that we cannot serve two interests so perfectly irreconcilable as God and Mammon. Let us then give a general discharge to all our lusts and irregular desires; and let none be so secret as to be concealed, or so beloved as to be spared. Let no sin appear small or inconsiderable, by which an almighty God is offended, and our eternal salvation endangered: And if our obedience be like the young man's in the gospel, so near to perfection, that but one thing is wanting; let us not suffer a single vice to rob us of eternal happiness, and make it in vain for us, that a Jesus, a Saviour is come into the world. Let us not delude ourselves with vain hopes, that God will reverse one of his laws, or depart from the established rules of his justice in our favour. He hath said, this do and thou shalt live; and shall man dispute the conditions? Shall dust and ashes prescribe the terms on which it will be saved?

Lastly, let no pretence of difficulty weaken our resolutions in the pursuit of our duty, since God has not only allotted the burden to our abilities, with all the compassion of a merciful father; but has also assured us of the support of his Holy Spirit,

Disc. XLIV. *to keep God's commandments.* 157

rit, who will supply vigour to the weary, and strength to the weak, and make us more than conquerors. Let us not therefore faint, or be weary in our journey, much less turn back and sit down in despair, but cheerfully press toward the high mark of our calling; and as far as our own ability, and the divine assistance will carry us, endeavour to be pure as our creator is pure, and perfect as our father in heaven is perfect.

Discourse

Discourse XLV. Dr. Clarke.

Of the GRACE of GOD, and the POWER
of MAN, in the work of SALVA-
TION.

Philippians 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.

THERE is no question in divinity hath raised greater contention and disputes, than what concerns the extent of the grace of God, and the power of man. Some, in order to vindicate God from being the author of sin, have so far maintained the perfect freedom of mens faculties, and their liberty of chusing good or evil, that they have been thought to diminish from the efficacy of God's grace. Others, on the contrary, ascribing too much to the efficacy of the divine grace, have supposed men to have no natural powers, of acting, or willing ; no use of the original faculties, given them at their creation ; no liberty of will or freedom of choice, in matters of morality and religion ; by which doctrine they have consequently introduced an absolute necessity or fatality upon mens actions ; from whence it unavoidably follows, that God, and not man, is the author of sin.

Another question not unlike this, has happened, concerning the liberty of the will of man, and the preience, or foreknowledge of God. Some, con-
sidering

sidering that without liberty of the will, there can be no religion, no virtue or vice, no just punishment or reasonable reward, have denied God's foreknowledge of future and free events. Others, on the contrary, intent upon magnifying the glory of the divine attributes, and the including all future events within the compass of God's foreknowledge, have affirmed, that all the actions of men are absolutely determined by a chain of certain and unalterable causes. The natural consequence of which is, that man in reality is no more capable of morality or religion, than a machine, or a beast that perishes.

The truth in both these controversies is, that something in each part of the question is true; and which ought to be so understood, as not to establish one truth, at the expence of another. For instance; the freedom of mens will, whatever that be, must not be inconsistent with any of God's perfections; because the attributes of the divine nature, are unalterably necessary in themselves, antecedent to the production of all created beings. On the other side, no attribute of the divine nature, in particular his foreknowledge, can possibly be such as to take away the liberty of the will of man; because this would destroy some other perfections of God equally necessary; I mean his justice and goodness. Since then, neither the foreknowledge of God, nor the liberty of man, can, without a contradiction be denied, it unavoidably follows, that God's foreknowledge must be such as not to be inconsistent with the liberty of man. For as a man who has no influence over other persons actions, can yet often perceive beforehand, what another, whose disposition he is well acquainted with, will in certain circumstances do; so it is very reasonable to apprehend, that God's without influencing mens wills by his power, may have a much

more certain knowledge of future free events, as the perfection of his nature is greater than any man's. But whatever men may have in the use of their natural faculties, yet the sense of this, must not diminish our continual dependance upon God; because these powers and faculties are not of our own procuring, but are the gift of God. And therefore whatever the power and efficacy of God's grace may be, yet it cannot be such, as to over-rule the liberty of mens will and choice, and render their actions necessary; because this would destroy the morality of men's actions, and the very nature of virtue and vice. Since then, the influence of divine grace, and the power of men, in the use of their faculties, are not to be denied; therefore by the grace of God, must only be understood, a moral assistance; and this is what perfectly agrees with the free use of mens faculties. "We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." We cannot do this without the grace of God; but if we will use our own endeavours, he will give us power to do it. Moral agents must be influenced only by moral motives; by reason and argument, by persuasion and conviction, by hopes and fears: and the efficacy of God's grace can only consist in laying before men proper arguments for conviction, and sufficient helps and assistances to act according thereto. But any influence that amounts to force, not to be resisted, would be so far from making men good and virtuous, that it would tend to destroy all virtue and goodness in them.

The sum of all is this: in order to give God his due honour and glory, and to preserve in men a just sense of their dependance upon him, we ought to acknowledge, that all our powers and natural faculties are entirely derived from God's free
good-

goodness, and continued to us by his good pleasure ; and that neither of these is in any wise owing to ourselves : and much more is every supernatural sufficiency, and extraordinary assistance, every revealed means of knowledge and motive to virtue, every direction or guidance in the way to life, which we receive from the kind influence of the divine spirit, wholly owing to the free gift or grace of God. And the promise of eternal happiness, as the reward of our best endeavours, is also God's free bounty and undeserved gift to unprofitable servants. All these must be acknowledged by us, to proceed from God ; that due honour and just glory may be given to him. But then, that the nature of virtue and vice may not be taken away, it is also necessary to acknowledge, that as the natural faculties, with which God hath endowed men, are in their power to use or neglect them ; so the supernatural assistances afforded men by the gospel, and by the influence of divine grace, are still only assistances, that may be complied with, or rejected : and eternal life, as it is the free gift of God, which men could not claim, by virtue of any work or duty they could perform ; so it is not a gift, forced or imposed upon them, but such a free gift, as requires the concurrence of their own endeavours, in making use of the divine assistance to obtain it. For this reason, we are exhorted to grow in grace, as a duty depending on our own endeavours ; and not to quench or grieve the holy spirit of God, who will not forcibly strive with those, who resist his good motions. And thus some are blamed, for receiving the grace of God, in vain ; for resisting the Holy Ghost, and rejecting the counsel of God, against themselves.

The cause of many erroneous opinions and controversies is generally this ; that men attending to one point only, in opposing some particular error,

have been apt to be carried beyond the truth of the argument, and so by exposing one error, have fell into some other of a contrary extreme. Thus in disputing against the church of Rome, some have incautiously used such arguments, as might at the same time be alledged by others with the same force against themselves. On the contrary, others, in the heat of controversy with some of their brethren, have drawn such arguments from church authority, and general councils; as may on another occasion be turned against themselves by the church of Rome, with at least equal force. And thus, in the present case; some, solicitous to maintain the liberty of man's will, may have asserted such a power in mens use of their natural faculties, as to make them not dependent upon God; and others, may think to claim, as of right, the reward of heaven, and not as of free grace: but such as these, going to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God, do indeed frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness comes by this way, then Christ is dead in vain. On the contrary, others, solicitous to magnify God's absolute sovereignty, and the efficacy of divine grace, and to humble the vanity of those, who assume any thing as of themselves, have generally urged such arguments against their adversaries, as that the asserters of necessity and fate, who are enemies to all religion, may equally alledge the same against themselves. And by exalting God's grace into an irresistible efficacy, they have in truth made it of no efficacy at all. For in matters of morality and religion, men are only morally better, when by moral motives, by conviction of truth and reason, by well grounded hopes, and just fears, they are prevailed upon to love, and chuse freely what is right and good. But to be compelled to do even the best action that is, can have no goodness in it.

The truth is, if we will frame right notions of religion, such as truly tend to promote the glory of God, and virtue and obedience in men ; we must, on the one side, not ascribe to men such power, as that they can merit any thing of themselves ; nor on the other side, we must not imagine the power or grace of God, will so influence men, as to render their own endeavours vain and needless. But the grace of God, manifested in the gospel, by the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, will effectually enable men to perform their duty ; and the power and will of man, making use of that assistance to improve in virtue, will produce those fruits of the spirit, which wicked men are condemned for not bringing forth ; because tho' the means of grace were offered and proposed to them, yet they wilfully refused to be amended thereby. God of his free grace, hath given them power to will and to do ; but yet thro' their own obstinate disobedience, they will not work out their own salvation.

When therefore the scripture says, by grace we are saved, and yet that we work out our own salvation, these phrases are different representations of one and the same thing. We are saved by grace, because without God's gracious assistance and acceptance of our endeavours, we of ourselves could not obtain salvation ; and yet it is also true, that we work out our own salvation, because without a life of virtue and obedience, and a diligent use of those means which the grace of God affords, his grace alone will not force us to be saved. Thus God's working in or with us, and our working together with him, are used in scripture, as causes concurring and producing the same effect. And wicked men being hardened of God, or hardening themselves, in like manner, signify the same thing under different respects. They harden themselves, by their becoming obdurate, thro' obstinacy and perverseness :

ness: they are hardened of God, not by any act of his; but as the scripture says, “by letting them follow their own imaginations,” and giving them over to a “reprobate mind, to work all unrighteousness with greediness.”

I shall now proceed to consider more distinctly, what is meant by working out our salvation, with fear and trembling; and why we are to do it in that manner: also what is meant by God’s working in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure: and how this is a motive to us, for endeavouring after it.

Salvation in general signifies deliverance from any imminent danger. Hence in scripture it is applied by way of eminence to signify the final deliverance of virtuous and good men, from that general destruction, which will at last overwhelm a wicked and incorrigible world. For the bulk of mankind, being, in the nature of things, thro’ their own wickedness, incapable of inheriting the kingdom of heaven, must, in point of wisdom, and good government, but not by any cruel decree of God, be excluded heaven; and by the righteous and unerring judge, be sent according to their respective demerits into destruction; and from which misery, only such shall be saved, as are worthy to obtain eternal life. The deliverance therefore of all just and good men, by the mercy of God in Christ, from that final destruction, which must of necessity fall on a wicked, corrupt world, is what the scripture calls salvation: and in consequence whereof, only those shall be admitted into that incorruptible inheritance, which is the free gift of God thro’ Christ, whom he shall think fit to make joint-heirs with him, in his eternal kingdom of glory. So that the duty of working out this salvation, which we are exhorted to in the text, signifies the making use of those means, which are proper to obtain this end; that is, to be delivered by a life of virtue and
true

true religion, from the power and tyranny of the devil, from the dominion of sin, and the punishment of eternal death.

Men, in the state of heathen wickedness, being habitually subject to a spirit of delusion, impiety and debauchery, are in scripture represented as slaves to Satan, the prince of this world, who worketh in the children of disobedience. From this tyranny of the devil, men are saved, by forsaking this idolatry, and returning to the worship of the true God, as taught in the gospel of Christ, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son. And those also who having embraced the gospel, do by any habit of sin, live unworthy of their holy profession, are in scripture said to be servants and slaves to sin, and in the snare of the devil. So that whoever lives in sin, tho' he professes himself a disciple of Christ, is in reality the servant of Satan. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." The design of Christ's coming into the world was, to destroy the works of the devil; to save men from their sins; to persuade, and enable them to save themselves amongst a wicked and corrupt generation; to deliver them from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Working out our own salvation therefore, considered as an exhortation to those who are christians, signifies making a diligent use of the means and encouragements afforded in the gospel, to enable us to reform every evil habit, and to improve in the practice of every virtue, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And this salvation shall not be only from the punishment of sin, but moreover eternal life and happiness shall, by God's free gift, be conferred upon all them, who shall be thought worthy

to stand before the son of man. To work out our own salvation then, is of the same import with these words of St. Peter; “Brethren, give diligence to
 “make your calling and election sure, for if ye do
 “these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance
 “shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the
 “everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour
 “Jesus Christ.” If we compare this with the text, it undeniably follows, that men, by God’s assistance, have a power, as well as an obligation, to work out their salvation; and that their election, or their being approved of God, depends on that diligence and sincere endeavour of their own, which they are exhorted to make use of, that they may thereby secure their being elected of God. As to the words fear and trembling, they do not here mean any passion, but only due care and diligence in our actions, in opposition to presumption or negligence; as, be not high minded but fear; and, let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall. Thus, happy is the man that feareth, or is cautious; but he that hardeneth his heart, or is careless and negligent, shall fall into mischief.

The reasons why we are exhorted to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, with caution, diligence and application, are, 1st, because it is of the greatest importance to us: it is the one thing necessary, for the preservation of ourselves, of our souls, and future eternal happiness. If a man will give all that he has, for the preservation of this short transitory life, what will he not give in exchange for his soul, and for a portion in eternity? How does it behove therefore every reasonable man, to be well assured in his own mind, which is the way of salvation; and that he be diligent to walk therein?—Another reason why we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling is, because of the difficulties attending this work; not in the nature of the thing, for “Christ’s yoke is easy, and his burden is light;”
 and

and virtue of all things is the most natural and reasonable; nor are the commandments of God any way grievous. But great difficulties often arise by means of wicked men, and the corrupt inclination of our ungoverned appetites. So that even the righteous are scarcely saved; or so as by fire, that is with great difficulty. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, warring against the reason and law of our minds; so that we cannot easily do what is most reasonable. And if we can conquer ourselves, yet by the difficulties we meet with, from the prophane persecutor, or the superstitious bigot; from the blenders of human authority with divine; from those who confound the powers of this world, with the doctrines of men, and the commands of God: by means of these, the gate is made strait, and the way narrow; so that we cannot without tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, we are directed to work out our salvation with fear, because it is a work, that can be done but once; which if neglected, we are lost for ever. "It is appointed for men once to die, and after that the judgment; and if the door be shut, there is no admission. And as we are continually in danger of new temptations, we ought perpetually to be upon our guard. We are admonished to watch, and to be ready always; to stand fast in the faith, to acquit ourselves like men; to be sober and vigilant; and to take heed, lest there be in any of us, an evil heart of unbelief. For only to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, is made the promise of eternal life.

I proceed to consider, what is meant by God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure: and the meaning is, that God is the author of all those powers and faculties we have,

which some call natural. For in him we live, we move, and have our being. He has endued us with reason and understanding, with the faculty of discerning between good and evil, with the power of willing and chusing what is right: and yet we are not of ourselves sufficient to think any thing, but our sufficiency is of God. Weak therefore is that distinction of some divines, between nature and grace; as if both were not equally the gift of God. And by God's giving us both to will and to do, signifies also his affording us supernatural helps, such as the gospel, which is frequently called, the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, and hath appeared to all men. And this general grace of God, includes the following supernatural helps. A more clear and distinct knowledge of our duty, than could be discovered by the light of nature: A more plain and express bringing of life and immortality to light, by the particular revelation of a judgment to come. Exceeding great and precious promises, by the expectation of which we are enabled to overcome the world, to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and to become perfect in righteousness and true holiness: An assurance of the forgiveness of past sins upon repentance, which the scripture calls grace. The assistance of the divine spirit, in the constant practice of our duty; by which we are renewed, justified, sanctified, and have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Not that the spirit of God acts by compulsion, forcibly and irresistibly, the contrary of which evidently appears, from our being exhorted not to quench, grieve and drive him from us; but he helps our infirmities, in the way of moral assistance, persuasion, direction and concurrence; but then he will not always strive with those who obstinately resist his motions. And under extraordinary trials, the gospel promises more particular support; "God will never leave nor forsake
 "fake

“fake us, but will with the temptation make a way
“to escape, that we may be able to bear it.”

These supernatural helps and assistances are afforded us by the gospel.

The last words in the text, of his good pleasure, do not signify, that God works these things arbitrarily ; but the meaning is, that he does them thro’ his goodness. It is God’s goodness, which moves him to work in us to will and to do ; he gives us both the faculties of nature, and the supernatural assistance of the gospel, to lead us unto life and happiness.

The last thing proposed is, to shew, how God’s working in us to will and to do, is an argument or motive for us, to work out our own salvation. The meaning is, not that God doth all for us ; but as God of his goodness gives us power, therefore we may and ought to act ; and if we are sincere in the use of the powers given us, our endeavours shall not be in vain. For, “greater is he that is in us, “than he that is in the world ; and if God be for “us, who can be against us?”

From what has been said, we may observe, the little foundation there is in scripture, for any such notion, as that wicked men have now power to do any thing towards their own conversion, but their impenitency proceeds from God’s not giving them grace to repent ; which is a great abuse of a scripture expression. For God’s giving or granting men repentance, signifies in scripture, his accepting of their repentance, for the forgiveness of past sins, instead of innocence ; and not his conferring repentance upon them as a gift, which is altogether unintelligible.—And from the explication given of the text, we should learn to be diligent in working out our salvation, by the use of those means, which God has worked or implanted in us. I shall conclude all in the words of the book of wisdom,

“ Seek

“ Seek not death in the error of your life ; and
“ pull not upon yourselves destruction with the
“ works of your own hands. For God made not
“ death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction
“ of the wicked ; but ungodly men, with their
“ words and works called it unto them.—Say not
“ thou, the Lord has caused me to err ; for he hath
“ no need of the sinful man. The Lord hateth all
“ abomination ; and they that fear God, love it
“ not. He himself made men from the beginning,
“ and left them in the hands of his counsel ; if thou
“ wilt, to keep the commandments, and to per-
“ form acceptable faithfulness. He hath set fire and
“ water before thee ; stretch forth thy hand unto
“ whether thou wilt. Before man is life and death,
“ and whether him liketh shall be given. For the
“ wisdom of the Lord is great ; and he is mighty
“ in power, and beholdeth all things. And his
“ eyes are upon them that fear him ; and he know-
“ eth every work of man. He hath commanded
“ no man to do wickedly, neither has he given any
“ man licence to sin ?”

Discourse XLVI. Abp. *Tillotson*.

The reasonableness and advantage of a
religious LIFE.

Mat. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his
righteousness, and all these things shall be
added unto you.

BY the “ Kingdom of God and his righteousness ”
is here meant, the whole business of religion ;
our last end, which is eternal life and happiness :
The way and means to this end, which is righte-
ousness, or universal goodness. By seeking first the
kingdom of God and his righteousness, is meant,
the greatest intention of mind, and earnestness of
endeavours so to mind the concerns of religion, as
thereby to attain eternal happiness ; to be as serious
and intent therein, as earthly minded men are after
the things of this world. This in general ; but a
sincere and earnest “ seeking after the kingdom of
“ God and his righteousness,” doth also imply
these several particulars. It implies a fixed design
and resolution to obtain the eternal happiness and
salvation of our souls, as being our chief end ; to
have it always in view, to be firmly resolved to do
our utmost to attain it. Not that we are obliged
continually to think of it, but to have it frequently
in our minds, habitually to intend and design it, so
as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and
actions, and all other things subservient thereto.
Like a traveller, who tho’ he is not always thinking
of

of every step he takes, nor continually in motion, but baits and lodges by the way, yet all he does is subservient to, and in prosecution of his journey. And thus while we sojourn in this world, our fixed aim and design should be to get to heaven, all our desires and endeavours should tend that way. And if our minds are once resolved, that will determine and govern all our motions, and inspire us with diligence and zeal to prosecute our end. Again,

It implies incessant care and diligence as to the means; that we make religion our business, practise the duties of it, both in public and private, with the same seriousness and application of mind as men use to procure wealth and honour; especially on the Lord's day, which God hath set apart for the duties of his worship and service. Not that we are excused from minding religion at other times, for God expects that we should always live in an habitual sense of him, "to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" and to improve all opportunities for the exercise of piety and devotion. But this day he peremptorily challengeth to himself, and requires us to employ it in his service, and dedicate it to religion; to the contemplation of God and heavenly things, and the care of our immortal souls, with the same seriousness and diligence, as we "other days labour for the bread that perisheth. And the less leisure we have on other days, for the duties of religion, the more intirely should we devote and consecrate this day, to those purposes. Our whole life should be under the government, and directed by the laws of religion; it should be our continual care and endeavour to please God in all things, to take as much or more pains to be good men, as any can do to be rich and great in this world; it being a more noble design to improve in grace and virtue, than to prosper in our temporal estate.

estate. And we do not “seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness” in good earnest, unless we studiously endeavour to subdue our lusts, govern our passions, and reform whatever is amiss in our lives and conversation. Indeed, it requires diligence, care and attention, to be truly good ; to be meek and humble, patient, contented, and resigned to the will of God in every condition ; to be peaceable, charitable, willing and ready to forgive ; these are difficult things, and whatever we may think, it is not a wish, a sudden resolution before receiving the Sacrament, nor even frequent, fervent prayers, without the hearty concurrence of our own care and endeavours, that will render our lives such, as we pray God by his grace, to enable us to be.

Lastly, It implies patience and perseverance in our endeavours, “to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; we must never cease pursuing them till we have obtained them, and this notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements we meet with, for that must be expected ; our Lord tells us, “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life,” and we must expect to pass thro’ many tribulations, before we shall enter into the kingdom of God. We should therefore be armed with much patience, and firm resolutions, that we may be enabled to bear up, and hold out, against all the difficulties we are to encounter. Since only “he that endureth to the end shall be saved. And if we hope to receive the crown of life, we must be faithful to the death.” Thus much as to seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

I shall now explain what is more particularly meant, by “seeking these first ; seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness :” our Saviour’s meaning is, that religion, the concern of

our souls, and eternal happiness, should be our first and principal care ; that all other things should be made subservient to this great design, and be no further minded by us, than as they tend to promote it. If Heaven be our utmost aim, and that we study and endeavour to be righteous and holy, in order to obtain it ; such resolutions sincerely entertained, will over-rule all other considerations, and make the things of this world give way to what is our chief end, the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. Having thus explained the meaning of the words, the next thing shall be to give some plain rules for our direction, how to “ seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And, First,

Let us always live under a powerful sense of another world ; and remember we are placed here only for a little while, and that wholly to prepare for a better and more happy life. Let this thought be often in our minds ; that eternity is the most considerable duration, and the next world the place of our everlasting abode ; that the present state is of small moment and consideration, and only in order to our future, eternal condition. We may please ourselves here for a little time, with trifles and shadows of pleasure and happiness ; we may be exercised with troubles and afflictions for a short space, for a moment, if compared with eternity ; but substantial, durable happiness, or misery, remains for men in the other world, and will certainly be their portion, according to their behaviour in this life. The serious consideration of this should put us on vigorous preparations of another world, make us wholly intent on our eternal state, and to resolve, whatever becomes of us here, to take effectual care, that we are happy for ever. He who firmly believes the soul’s immortality, and a life after death that will never end, will be very solicitous,

licitous, and bend all his care and thoughts, how to avoid everlasting misery, and secure to himself immortal bliss and happiness. Let us then be fully convinced, of the absolute, indispensable necessity of holiness and righteousness, as the only means to attain the kingdom of God; that holiness and happiness are inseparable, the one being a necessary condition and qualification for the other; that it is a vain thing to hope for admittance into the kingdom of God, without endeavouring after his righteousness, there being a strong connexion between them; for a man may as reasonably expect to be well and at ease without health, as happy without holiness. This is what renders us like God, and can alone make us capable of enjoying him for ever, since “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Let us also remember, that righteousness is of great extent; it comprehends all goodness, all the duties and practice of religion; it is a complication of all the graces, virtues, duties and offices of a good man. To denominate a man righteous, all parts of religion and goodness must concur; knowledge and practice, faith and good works, right opinions and real virtues, an orthodox profession and a holy life, purity of heart and unspotted manners, godliness and honesty, the bridling our tongue and the governing our passions; and above all things, charity, the bond of perfection. Righteousness is our conformity to the law of God, which if it be real and sincere, will be uniform and universal, equally respecting all God’s commands, and every known duty; not observing one or two precepts, and neglecting the rest; keeping the duties of the one table, and omitting the other: but we must be holy in all manner of conversation, in the tenor of our actions, and the whole course of our lives; since any one reigning sin and vice, any gross notorious defect in the virtues of a good life, will spoil our
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righteousness, and exclude us the kingdom of heaven.

Again, let us wisely estimate every part and duty of religion, according to its true nature and importance. Knowledge and faith without a good life, signify nothing. The means of religion, as prayer, fasting, reading and hearing God's word, and devoutly receiving the blessed sacrament, are of less value, than what is the end of all these, to be "fruitful in all the works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." So likewise the circumstances of religion, are less considerable than the substantial means and instruments of it. And therefore all rites and ceremonies are of less estimation, and subordinate to the substance of God's worship. For the same reason, the moral duties of religion, comprehended under the two great commandments, "the love of God and our neighbour," are to be preferred to matters of mere positive institution, because they are eternal and of indispensable obligation; and where both cannot be performed, what is positive ought to give place to what is moral and good in its own nature. The law of the sabbath ought to give place to works of mercy; peace and charity are more valuable, than doubtful disputes and controversy. These things carefully considered, are of great moment to make men sincerely and wisely religious. For men may make a great stir about some parts of religion, be very careful and diligent, zealous and earnest about the means of religion, in the exercises of piety and devotion, yet be destitute of the power and life of it, and fall short of that inward, real and substantial righteousness, which alone can qualify us for the kingdom of God.

The last direction I would give, is to have a particular regard to the great duty of charity, or almsgiving, this being an eminent part of religion,

a great evidence of the truth and certainty of our piety; for by giving alms we shall “provide for ourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, and lay up for ourselves a good foundation.” Therefore this part of religion ought in a more especial manner to be regarded by us, because on the performance or neglect of this duty, our eternal happiness so much depends.

I shall now represent to you some proper arguments; and powerful encouragements, whereby to engage us to mind, and carefully regard, this our great interest and concern. The worth and excellency of the things we are to seek, namely, “the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” which are the greatest and best things we can desire, are very considerable motives to excite our endeavours: The kingdom of God imports the eternal salvation of our souls, and their being everlastingly happy in another world. The soul of man is of so excellent a nature, of so immortal a duration, and so infinitely valuable, as ought to be much dearer to us, than any of the perishing objects of this world. Other things neither constitute our being, nor are essential to our happiness; but our souls are ourselves, and their loss is our ruin and destruction. So that nothing is to be regarded by us, with so much care and concern, as the salvation of our immortal souls; and how to rescue them from everlasting misery; and make us eternally happy. And can we be at too much pains to escape so dismal a condition, so dreadful a ruin, as that of body and soul to all eternity? can any man be concerned enough to bring about so great a good for himself, or purchase too dear, a blessing so desirable, and so durable as being happy for ever? Of such value then is the kingdom of God; and next to it righteousness, which is the only way and means whereby this kingdom is to be attained, and therefore to be

fought by us with the greatest earnestness. So that the things I am pressing you to seek after, are most effectually recommended, by reminding you of what they are. The kingdom of God is eternal life and happiness, and his righteousness is universal holiness and goodness, without which no man is qualified for this blessed state.

Another powerful argument to our care and diligence herein, is, the fatal danger of miscarrying, in a matter of so great concern. We may do many things in religion, and take some pains to get to heaven, and yet fall short of it. The rich young man in the gospel, was not far from the kingdom of God, he failed only in one point, he was too much addicted to the world, unwilling to part with his great possessions, and distribute them in charity to the poor, and therefore left our Saviour. If the world govern and bear sway in our hearts, if we mind earthly things, and make these our principal care and design, the kingdom of God and his righteousness shall not be added unto us; these latter we must not expect, unless we mind them in the first place. And who would not place his industry and endeavour upon a design in which he is sure not to miscarry, if he do but heartily and in good earnest pursue it? If a man may be certainly happy for ever, upon the same or easier terms than he can accomplish any thing in this world; who would not seek that which is most worthy the having, and most sure to be obtained?

The encouragement given us in the text, is itself very considerable, “all these things shall be added unto us;” that is, all temporal good things, if we “first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This certainly is a very tempting consideration; for who would not be glad to reconcile the enjoyments of this world with the hopes of heaven and eternal happiness? But men do not
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generally like our Saviour's method, they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and get to heaven at last. And yet our Saviour has gone as far as in reason can be desired; he hath promised, that if we make religion, and the salvation of our souls, our first and great care "all these things shall be added unto us." So that the design of going to heaven, and being happy for ever, is no ways inconsistent with a competent portion of the things of this life. "Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that is to come." The business of religion, the practice of a holy and virtuous life, is no hindrance to a man's prospering in his temporal estate; nay, in many respects it tends to promote and advance it: by engaging us to diligence in our calling, whereby to procure the blessing of God on our honest and lawful endeavours; by obliging us to the strict and constant practice of truth, justice and fidelity, in all our dealings and commerce; which is the best way to establish a clear and solid reputation and good esteem among men: An unspeakable advantage this in business, one of the best and most lasting instruments of prosperity and success.

Besides, religion frees a man from those passions and vices, which naturally tend to ruin mens estates; as intemperance and lewdness; which are chargeable vices, and not only take men off from business, but waste their estates, and bring many inconveniencies on themselves and family. Religion makes men meek, peaceable and inoffensive, in word and deed, which is a great security against law-suits and contentions, injuries and affronts from others. They who provoke and offend none, may expect not to be disturbed by others in their possessions and enjoyments; "who will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?" Most men, if not all, have a kindness and veneration for true goodness:

Thus religion naturally tends to the temporal prosperity of men, to the promoting their welfare and happiness even in this world; the providence of God is also concerned for good men, and a special blessing attends them in all their undertakings. So that we see how reasonable it is, to make religion and the concerns of another life, our great care and business: And yet, alas! how are these things neglected by the greatest part of mankind! Even the best of us mind it not as we ought. Indeed, there are two or three things which men commonly urge, if not to justify, yet to mitigate and excuse this great neglect. First, they pretend great difficulties and discouragements in the ways of religion. This must be acknowledged to be true, so far as to awaken our care and excite our industry; but by no means to make us despond, and resolve to neglect so great a concern, because attended with some difficulties. Men who have no mind to a thing, are apt to say, there is a lion in the way; that is, they fancy to themselves dangers and terrors that are not. Thus men who have no mind to take pains to get to heaven, are apt to complain of the insuperable difficulties of religion; how hard it is for a man to mortify his lusts, subdue his appetites, govern his passions, and perform what is necessary to bring him to heaven? Now admitting all these things true; but is it not also difficult to get an estate, and to rise high in this world? Is religion difficult; and what is not so, that is of any estimation? Is not the law a difficult and crabbed study? Does it not require great labour and perpetual application to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be master of any art or profession? In a word, what is there valuable in the world, that can be got without pains? And is eternal life and glory so inconsiderable a thing, as not to be worth our care and industry? Should so great a good
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be exposed to the faint and idle wishes, the cheap and lazy endeavours of slothful men? With what conscience can we bid less for heaven and eternal life, than for the things of this world; things of no value in comparison; things which perish in the using, and when we have them, may be taken from us by a thousand accidents? A fever may deprive us of our understanding, confound all our knowledge, and turn us into fools and idiots. An inundation, or a fire, may sweep away and devour our estates. A succession of calamities, may, in a few hours, make the greatest and richest man as poor as Job.

But let the difficulty of attaining the kingdom of God and his righteousness be as great as possible, still it is absolutely necessary for us to seek after it, since otherwise we are miserable and undone for ever. And therefore not to dissemble in the matter, the difficulties of religion are considerable; but then they are much greater at first; they will every day abate and grow less, and by degrees become easy and pleasant. A pleasure so great, as none knows, but he that hath it, nor would such exchange it, for all the sensual enjoyments of this world.

There are others who pretend want of time, to mind so great a work; 'tis very true that all have not equal leisure for this purpose, some are much more taken up than others, with the necessary cares of this life: But God forces no man to neglect his body and his health, his family and estate, to save his soul. There is a considerable part of religion which does not require time, but only resolution and care; not to commit sin, not to break the laws of God, not to be intemperate, to make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, does not spend time, but saves it for better purposes: So that every man hath time not to do, what he ought not. And as for the positive parts of religion, whether

it consists in the exercise of our minds, or in the external acts of religion ; no man is so distressed, but hath time to think of heaven and eternity ; to love God, to esteem and delight in him above all things. This a man may do very frequently and acceptably, while labouring and travelling about his worldly affairs ; his hand may be on the plough and his heart with God ; he may converse here on earth, while his thoughts and affections are in heaven. All men have time to pray to God every day, for his mercy and forgiveness, for his grace and assistance, for a preservation and support, and to thank him heartily for all his blessings and benefits. And a little time seriously employed in this kind, will have the same acceptance with God, as the longer and more solemn devotions of those, who have greater leisure and opportunities for them. At least we have all of us time to serve God on the Lord's day, to employ it wholly in the exercises of piety, and the care of our immortal souls.

But when all is done, this is the case of very few, for most of us may say with Seneca, " We are not thrifty, but prodigal of time, and profusely lavish it away on folly and vanity." Our vices and lusts, our pleasures and diversions, divert and consume those precious hours, which should be employed to these better purposes ; nay, it often happens that time is a burthen to us, lies on our hands, and we know not how to get rid of it ; and yet we chuse rather to let it run waste, than to bestow it on religion, and the care of our souls, to prepare and provide for eternity.

But others pretend it will be time enough hereafter to mind these things. This directly contradicts the former pretence, that supposeth religion required more time than many have to spare ; for this would make us believe a little time is sufficient, even just when we are going out of the world.

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But of all others, this is the strangest interpretation of seeking "the kingdom of God and his righteousness," to put it off to the very last. To think that religion, the great work of our lives, can so quickly be dispatched; that the time of sickness, and old age, nay, the hour of death, if well employed, will be sufficient for the purpose; is a very great error, and will prove a fatal mistake. For alas! what can we then do, that in reason will be thought acceptable to God, or available to ourselves? Perhaps we shall not then have sense enough, to make a will, and dispose of our temporal concerns; and can we think that a fit time to repent of the sins and miscarriages of our whole life, and make our peace with God? Our Saviour hath sufficiently cautioned us against this desperate folly, by the parable of the foolish virgins, who having trifled away their time till the bridegroom was coming, and neglected to get oil into their lamps, that is, to be prepared and qualified for the kingdom of heaven, found, when too late, that the door was shut against them. It was then endless to supply themselves by borrowing of others.

Many indeed deceive themselves, hoping when they have no grace and goodness of their own, to be supplied like these foolish virgins, out of another's store, from the treasure of the church, from the redundant super-abounding works and merits of the saints; but these hopes are without any foundation of truth and reason. The wise virgins knew not of any merits they had to spare, it was the foolish virgins only, that entertained this senseless conceit. "The foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out; but the wise answered, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you." It plainly appears they had no notion of any works of merit or supererogation. There are also those among ourselves, who having been careless and re-

miss in seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hope to be supplied out of the infinite treasure of Christ's merits; but this is likewise a vain hope. For tho' there is merit enough in the death and sufferings of Christ to save all mankind, yet no one can lay claim thereto, without performing the conditions of the gospel.

Others think by sending for the minister, when the physician hath given them over, to receive in a few hours such advice and direction as they can give, that this will do their business as effectually, as if they had minded religion all their lives long; and that a few prayers said over them, when they are just embarking for another world, will, like a magical wind, immediately waft them into the regions of bliss and immortality. But let us not deceive ourselves, God will not be mocked; we may defer our repentance so long, that a late application to God, and crying to him, Lord, Lord, open to us, will not be regarded, but we shall be answered, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." And if we would not have this sentence to pass on us, "let us first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness," that having our fruit unto holiness, the end may be everlasting life.

To conclude, religion is most reasonable in itself, it directly tends to the happiness of men, and is really calculated for our benefit; but an irreligious vicious course of life is hurtful and injurious to every man. Let the sinner himself declare, whether he hath found by experience, that lewdness and intemperance hath been more for his health, than if he had lived chaste and soberly; hath falsehood and injustice in the end, proved more for his interest, than truth and honesty? Hath any habitual vice raised him truer friends and a better reputation, than the
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practice of holiness and virtue would have done? Hath he found that peace and satisfaction of mind, that quiet and enjoyment of himself, that comfortable assurance of God's favour, and good hopes of his future condition, in an evil course, as a religious and virtuous life would have afforded? Nay, have not some of his vices weakened his body, impaired his health, ruined his estate, and reduced himself to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemish a man's reputation, and make him hated and despised, not only by the wise and virtuous, but even by the generality of men? Besides, a wicked man is seldom free from the stings of a guilty conscience, the torments of a restless uneasy mind, the secret dread of God's displeasure, and the vengeance of another world. This the sinner, would he deal fairly and impartially, must acknowledge to be true, from his own sad experience. Religion then is apparently for the benefit of every person. And the interests of this world may in general be as effectually promoted and pursued, nay even to a greater advantage, by living soberly, righteously and godly in this world, than by a contrary course of life. And did men truly and wisely love themselves, they would become religious, for no man can serve his own interest better, than by serving God.

Discourse XLVII. Bp. *Hickman*.

An early PIETY a necessary DUTY.

Ecclef. xi. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

IN this book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon calls himself the preacher, thinking it no disparagement to his royal dignity, to descend from government to instruct his people. God had blessed him with the greatest wisdom, and the circumstance of his reign, afforded him sufficient experience in the world; so that having observed and tried the several courses of human life, in this book he sums up all his observations, for the honour of God, and the benefit of succeeding ages. Here he has shewed us the true bounds of wisdom and folly, what is either profitable or hurtful to the sons of men; the powerful inclinations which we have to vice, and the more powerful motives to allure us to virtue. Here the ways of God are faithfully related, the nature of man is perfectly described, and the necessary connexion between folly and repentance, sin and judgment, is exactly shewn. Here he recounts all the follies of his youth, and the excursions of his riper years; his fond pursuits after pleasure and mirth, women and wine, and all things which

which vain and inconsiderate men are apt to set their hearts upon; and he sums up all in this short sentence, “vanity of vanity, all is vanity.” Tho’ the words of my text are principally directed to the young, yet they comprehend the whole compass of our lives, and may serve for instruction to every age; they shew us how naturally youth begins in folly and sin, which necessarily leads us to repentance in our riper years, and if continued in, brings us to judgment, at our latter end. In the following discourse, I shall consider,

The inclinations of youth, and the vanity of them; which cannot be more elegantly expressed, than in the former parts of the text, wherein Solomon artificially exposes the humour of that age, by shewing how it indulges its own fancy, and affects nothing more than a boundless, uninterrupted flow of pleasures. He knew the natural heat and giddiness of youth; how want of experience renders them incapable of advice, and impatient of contradiction or restraint; and who even take a pride in rejecting all prudence, and consideration. All this the preacher knew, and therefore did not attempt to stop the young man in his course, by crossing the current of his pleasures; but he allows him the full scope and swing of his lusts, and lets him follow his own inclinations, to see what will be the end. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.” And tho’ this at first sight seems very pleasing; yet if we view it nearer, we shall find the passage so full of danger, as rather to discourage a wise man’s attempt, than invite his curiosity.

As first; Rejoice, O young man. And what is joy, but folly and want of consideration? It is to give ourselves up to a heedless intemperate life, to discard

discard our reason least it should reprove our vanity ; it is acquiring such a habit of mind, as not only endangers our souls, but is unsuitable to our nature. The providence of God has dispensed to every man a mixture of good and evil in this world ; and every wise man will be contented with that allay. But if we separate the bitter from the sweet, what shall we do when we come to the bottom of the portion, where the dregs will be all bitterness, and that God besides puts trembling into our cup ? A wise heathen observed, that true joy is a serious thing ; and a wiser than he, said of laughter, that it is madness ; and of mirth, what does it ? It only deludes us with false appearances of happiness, brings us into a pleasant vale, where is a snake lurking in the grass, which at last proves to be the valley of the shadow of death. Thus our pleasure leads us into a fool's paradise, and there leaves us to lament our loss of it. It seduces us from the paths of virtue and honour, into a smooth way, and then draws a mist before our eyes, that we may not see the precipice to which it leads. It gives a loose to our passions, and banishes that wisdom which is our best guard and defence. Rejoice, O young man ; but know, that whilst thou invitest the tempter into thy bosom, instead of filling thy heart with joy, thou emptyest it of all thy virtue. Again.

Rejoice, O young man in thy youth : But what is there in youth to occasion such rejoicing ? Youth is a time of weakness and inexperience, and is generally so ill-managed as to prove a reproach to our age ; and is this matter of joy ? Is this a proper season to rejoice, when we are sowing the seeds of a long repentance ? Is this a time to trust our virtue without a guard, when our reason is weak, and our passions strong ? From whence proceeds this confidence, or what can we find in our youth to create
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in us this assurance? Is want of understanding a happiness, or want of experience a commendation? How powerful a thing is ignorance in so perverse a thing as man? But as youth is a time of strength and vigour, for then our spirits are active and our humour gay; therefore the young man regards pleasure as his portion, and so resolves to go on, rejoicing in his lot.

“And let thy heart cheer thee, in the days of thy youth:” That is, improve all opportunities of joy and take thy pleasure, for nature is now in its prime, and therefore enjoy the blessings of life whilst it is fresh and fragrant. It is true, that youth, like the spring, is a time of hopes; and yet 'tis only the hopes of a joyful harvest; for then is the proper time for joy: But why should we flatter ourselves with the hopes of a glorious harvest, which perhaps we may never reap? Again, youth is a time of strength and vigour. But, alas! how short, how uncertain is that time and strength? How liable is youth to be supplanted by a disease, or untimely death? All this the young man, ignorant as he is, cannot but know. But tho' his understanding informs him better, yet as prudence and forecast are the things he hates, he will persist to walk in the ways of his heart, whatever happens; and will not depart from the sight of his eyes, for all the good morals in the world; and therefore resolves to allow himself the full scope of his inclinations, and to run desperately on, wheresoever his fancy will lead, or his passions drive him. But is a young man so wise as to be trusted without a guide, when age itself, with all his experience, stands in need of good advice? 'Tis a dangerous thing for the wisest man to lean unto his own understanding; with what confidence then can the young man presume to walk in the ways of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, when his eyes and his heart are so
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blind and deceitful? And yet tell him of his danger, and he will despise the information, disdain all advice, and pursue his own course, tho' the ways of his heart, and the folly of his eyes, lead him directly to the chambers of death.

These are the follies and dangers of youth. But if the rashness and ignorance of that age be no excuse for such a weak course of life; how much more inexcusable are they, who continue the same practice in their riper years, and carry their youthful vices with them to the grave? When experience and years have improved our reason and understanding, and given us a judgment of discretion, what a shame is it that we should deliver ourselves up to the government of our passions and lusts, and, forgetting the gravity of our age, be captivated like children with every trifling pleasure? How can we hear the voice of God, upbraiding our folly and denouncing judgment against us and not be afraid? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thine eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." Which leads me to consider the restraint that religion puts upon us, and the great reason we have to comply with the apprehensions of a future judgment.

The consideration of a future judgment is enough to confound our lusts, baffle all our enjoyments, and allay the extravagant follies and heats of youth; for what comfort will he receive from all the rejoicings of his youth, or what profit will it be to him to have walked in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes; when that indecent liberty he so unreasonably used, will tend only to make his death, and the sense of his never dying pains, the more intolerable? How dismal will be the remembrance

brance of his sins, when he shall consider that they brought him into this place of torment, and lost him those pleasures, “ which eye hath not seen, nor “ the heart of man conceived ? ” When the irreversible decree is once passed upon him, what would he not give to reverse the sentence ? What lusts of the flesh, what pleasures of the body, what sin of the soul, would he not give up to redeem himself ? Such reflections as these will aggravate our punishment, and increase the torments of hell. This is a worm in our conscience that never dies, that never goes out. A wounded spirit is the most exquisite pain ; the wrath of God in judgment is what no mortal can bear : ’Tis such a burden as the young man with all his spirit cannot remove, nor can the old hardy sinner be proof against it. For tho’ we have hardened our hearts like the nether millstone, yet God can soften them again, and by putting fears and terrors into our souls, prepare them for the impressions of his wrath.—Consider these things, and then rejoice, O young man, if thou darest, and let thy heart cheer thee if it can ; for to what purpose shouldst thou trust to the sight of thine eyes, or follow the ways of thine heart, when thou knowest that God will shortly bring thee to judgment ; and then this heart of thine, which now flatters and betrays thee, will accuse, condemn, and torment thee ?

Since then we have just reasons from our sins, to apprehend the dreadfulnes of this judgment, what remains, but that we in time provide for our security, and immediately begin a wiser course of life ? Surely, we will no longer trifle with God’s judgments, but offer up to him our darling vices ; now while we have some pleasure in them : So lively, so early a sacrifice will be accepted. But to do this when the decays of age shall come, and our pleasure abandon us, is a forced virtue, and deserves no thanks. Let us then, before it be too late, check
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the intemperance of our lusts, abate our immoderate desire of any pleasure, and possess our souls with more serious reflections. Let us consider, that we are the offspring of heaven, of a divine extraction, and sent by God into this world to govern and subdue our sinful appetites. Let us correct the extravagance of our ways, and make God's law our only rule. Let us so rejoice in our youth, that in our riper years, and when old age comes, we may long for that time, when God shall bring us into judgment, and then receive our doom with comfort. And that we may the more effectually proceed herein, it may be proper to consider this kind memento of Solomon; "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." And a plain interpretation of these words, will lead us to a practical application of what has been said. And;

First, The remembrance of our Creator obliges us to pay him that love and obedience, which is the natural tribute of his mercy. Whatsoever we enjoy is the bountiful gift of his goodness, the product of his creation, and therefore it should remind us of our great benefactor. The world is a register or catalogue of his noble acts; in the volume of this book we may read in beautiful characters the name of God; and that infinite is his mercy, and wonderful his works. With what admirable order and convenience has he created this world, making it fit for our entertainment, and every creature therein, to serve for our nourishment, ornament, or defence. So that if we do not forget ourselves, we must needs remember our creator, and acknowledge his just title to our obedience. And who so deserving to command, as he that created man? Who so proper to give us laws, as he who knows the secrets of our hearts? And therefore, with a
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fruitful harvests. This is the most proper time to frame and model our minds, according to the will of God ; for now our faculties are fresh and vigorous, our wills compliant, and our understandings free from prejudice. At these tender years we shall receive impressions with ease, and by use retain them. But if we suffer our vices to grow into habits, they will soon triumph over our virtue, and sin and death will quickly get dominion over us. 'Tis therefore for our ease, as well as security, to apply ourselves betimes to that work, which by delay gets advantage over us every moment. Therefore let us speedily correct and reform our errors; and turn from all our evil ways, for they lead to the chambers of death.

There are others who think, that as death commonly gives warning, before he strikes, by some diseases or natural decays, to admonish us of our approaching end, that it will be then time enough to redeem our time, when the days are evil; directly contrary this to the advice of Solomon, who bids us remember our creator, before those evil days come. For what commendation is it, to grow virtuous by force, to be frightened into our duty, and never leave our sins till they have forsaken us? What merit is there in a rebel's laying down his arms; when he can hold them no longer? Therefore let us remember our creator before we are driven to the last extremity; lest our forgetfulness of God should force him to strike us with a sudden destruction, and not give us time to pray, that we may die the death of the righteous.

Lastly, the sensual man has yet one more pretence; that as there is a time for all things, therefore old age is the most proper season for such a melancholy, mortifying work. Indeed, had we nothing else to do than only to repent, a sick or death-bed might serve our turn: But it is not repentance only, but

amendment that is required ; not only a death unto sin, but a life unto righteousness ; and to this duty we must come with vigour, and chearfully undertake the work. We must “ remember our creator “ before those years draw nigh, when a man shall “ say, I have no pleasure in them.” We must not make our devotion an act of necessity, but of choice. God expects a free-will offering, the prime of our stocks, the richest of our treasures. But if we consume these upon our lusts, and assign him the refuse of our years, we may expect him to send us for our reward, to those “ Gods whom we have chosen in “ our prosperity, and let them deliver us out of “ our distress,” if they can.

But it is a great mistake to think, that pleasure is inconsistent with religion ; and that there is no difference between a sour and a sober life : Nay, 'tis a great disparagement to God, and a discouragement to all good men, to pretend that there is no piety but in a gloomy soul, and a dejected countenance. In our repentance we mourn, and with just reason ; but in the acts of obedience, why reserved and grave ? In the exercises of devotion, “ why so heavy, O my soul, why so disquieted “ within me.” Surely, to live always as in a state of penance, is no good symptom in any man, no great sign of religion ; for it can be no commendation of his piety, to be always grieving, but yet never to repent.

True religion was, no doubt, designed to improve our nature, to complete our happiness, and to shew man in his true perfection : To fill us with exalted thoughts, to entertain us with lively notions and generous desires ; that we should “ serve “ the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.” It is not so much the formality of the tribute, as the willing mind, and the chearful giver that God respects ; but what pleasure

ready compliance to his commands, and a resigned submission to his will, we should remember our creator, and confess, that as it is our happiness to be created, so 'tis our honour to be commanded by him.

Secondly, We should remember our creator with fear and reverence. There is so much majesty in the name of creator, as should strike an awful dread into our hearts, and create a reverence within us ; we should fall down and kneel before him, when we remember the Lord our maker. No submission can be too low ; if we humble ourselves to the dust, it is but from whence he raised us up ; and if he has exalted us to a higher station, we should therefore pay him the honour due unto his name. And if God has given us beauty and strength, the vigour of youth, and opportunities of pleasure ; let us not in the enjoyment of these good things, forget that God who created both them and us ; lest we should provoke his wrath, whose power is mighty to destroy, as well as to create.

Thirdly, When we remember our creator we should also pay him a religious and holy worship, which is the natural result of his power and mercy, the genuine composition of our love and fear ; and what can we his creatures do less, than fall down and worship him for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life ? This is what we properly call the service of God, and which all nations in the world have acknowledged to be his due ; even a very heathen has observed, " That no nation was
 " ever so barbarous, as to live without religion ; or
 " so foolish, as to hope for the goods of the earth,
 " without paying their devotion to the gods in hea-
 " ven." Thus we see, that an obedient, devout, religious life, is what Solomon advises us to, in these words, remember thy creator. But tho' this is a matter of very weighty importance, and of the

utmost concern to us ; yet our giddy minds are apt to adjourn the consideration of it till old age, or that some kind affliction has brought us to a better way of thinking. I shall therefore consider the time when this duty is to be performed.

And the wise man's direction is, remember now thy creator, this very instant, delay not so necessary a duty, since we can call no day our own but the present ; and if we do not remember our creator now, it may be feared we never shall. The time past is already dead, the time to come is yet unborn, but the present is our life, and the living they shall praise God. If a religious life be ever a duty, it is so now, this very moment ; and therefore, without the greatest presumption, we cannot defer it till to-morrow. The very first grounds and principles of religion, teach us to worship and serve God, all the days of our lives. And God knows the service of every day requires our most serious endeavour, and all that the morrow can do, is to take care of the things of itself. Therefore, remember thy creator now, and trifle not away the present time, but make every day a pattern of thy whole life ; perform thy duty, and make up thy accounts every night, so wilt thou be always ready to appear before God.

But some will say, that perhaps now is an unreasonable time, it may be the prime of our youth, and what need we be so early called to our duty. No, says the preacher, you must remember thy creator now, in the days of thy youth ; to defer it may be too late, therefore obey the first summons. And the more early thou attendest thy duty, the better it will be accepted, and the easier performed. Dedicate unto God the first fruits of thy life, and that will make all thy succeeding years holy and happy ; offer up to him devout sacrifices in the spring of thy age, and he will bless thee with many fruit-

in what sense the commands of God are easy to be observed; and how we may render them so.

It must be acknowledged, that there will be a continual opposition to a religious course of life, from the frequent assaults and temptations of the world and the devil. But these are difficulties we may easily conquer, by an earnest and diligent endeavour. Our Saviour bids us strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. By the strait gate is here meant religion; which we cannot enter into and practise, without using our best endeavours. To the lazy and indolent, religion is difficult; but if we apply ourselves with earnestness and patience to be religious, we shall find it easy to keep the commands of God, by his assistance, which he will afford to all them who come "boldly to the throne of grace, that they
" may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time
" of need." And whoever will seriously endeavour to perform their duty, God will be ever ready to assist them, and enable them to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Religion being most suitable to the frame and constitution of our nature, is abundantly more easy than vice and wickedness; because religion is the rectitude of our nature, but vice is the deformity and corruption of it. All vehement passions and unlawful lusts are departures from true and right nature; and therefore wickedness must be most difficult and troublesome. For as virtue is most natural, it must be most easy. Hence it is, that violent and furious passions disorder the mind, confound our thoughts, dissipate and spend the spirits. And is not an excessive, inordinate motion of the mind more troublesome to a man, than when it is calm, serene and quiet? Is it not much more easy and pleasant to use with moderation and temperance the pleasures of sense, than to abuse them by excess? For the one soothes and cherishes nature,

when the other weakens and impairs it. Nor indeed can any man arrive at a great degree of wickedness, without taking much pains; and there is scarce one reigning sin, but what requires more to gratify and serve it, than is necessary to answer all the obligations of religion. Many vices cost men a great deal more, than religion demands in acts of charity. How often do we see covetousness wearying the body with labour, racking the mind with care, depriving men of their necessary rest, and denying them the due enjoyment of what they have, in a much larger degree than religion ever required? Inordinate lusts demand such hard things as these; when the practice of religion is easily satisfied, without hazarding or impairing our health, estate, or strength. And there are many thousands more martyrs to sin and wickedness in the world at all times, than ever there were to religion, under the most cruel persecutions. For the servants of sin are slaves to many masters, whose commands are always peremptory, and frequently contrary to each other; so that they must put off the demands of one lust to satisfy another. There is generally more self-denial used in the service of one darling lust, than is required by all the laws of religion; and would people take as much pains to be religious, as to accomplish their worldly designs, the number of good men would be very considerable among us: But the misfortune is, men will submit to labour and take pains to be vicious, and yet, in affairs of religion, they will be remiss, careless, and negligent. Having thus shewn in what sense religion is easy; I shall next propose such methods as will considerably lessen the difficulty that sometimes attends the practice of it.

Besides the diligent use of the appointed means of grace, such as prayer, hearing God's holy word, and the sacraments, without the due observance of
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sure can he possibly have in those services of ours, which we ourselves have no pleasure in? If therefore we find ourselves in health and strength, plentiful in our fortunes, and vigorous in our minds, let us not prostitute these noble gifts of God, to profane, ungodly uses; and think they were given us only to make provision for our flesh, and to fulfil our lusts; and when all is gone, that then 'tis time enough to return unto God. But when we enjoy our heart's desire, then let us deem it the properest season to pay him our devotion; for when we are most fit for pleasure, then are we fittest for religion; then is our heart a noble sacrifice indeed, and worthy of our creator; a present fit to be made to the great God of heaven and earth, because with such sacrifices he is well pleased. But if it is unfortunately broken with age, and bruised with iniquity, yet even then it is the best we have to give, and a "bruised broken heart, is a sacrifice that God will not despise." Therefore, whatever our circumstances are, whether we are in health, or lie under any affliction, calamity, or decay, let us take care to hasten our repentance, and redeem the time, because the days are evil.

Discourse XLVIII. Mr. *Dor-* *rington.*

RELIGION EASY and PLEASANT.

Mat. xi. 30.

My yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.

THE great degeneracy of human nature appears, from that averſeneſs which moſt men ſeem to have to a religious, virtuous life. Religion is the beſt ornament and glory, the true and compleat perfection of human nature. And yet one of the chief prejudices againſt an holy life, is the imagination that religion is a taſk too hard for our nature, if not impoſſible to be performed. Our Saviour therefore, to caution and encourage us againſt this fatal prejudice, ſays, “ take my yoke
“ upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and
“ lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your
“ ſouls; for my yoke is eaſy, and my burden
“ light.” That is, be careful to obſerve my commands, and ſubmit to my government. I do not require things impoſſible to be performed, nor will the difficulties you meet with be invincible. Only take up the yoke that I have borne, for I am of a meek and ſubmiſſive mind, and diſdain not to be ſubject to the laws of religion. I command no more than what I have practiſed, and by your imitating my obedience to theſe laws, you will find reſt to your ſouls. This ſhall produce peace and happineſs to you. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew from theſe words,

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requires us to take up, as being the same that he endured. He bids us to learn submission and obedience by his example. He spent his whole life in a ready conformity to God's will, and tho' himself God, he became subject to his laws. And all this he did for our sakes, to satisfy the demands which we could not answer, and to purchase for us the glorious reward of perfect obedience. And shall we refuse to take a little pains to please him, who denied himself so much, and condescended so far to save us from eternal misery? Or can we think, that to follow him in obedience to God, is not a necessary condition of our finding favour with him, and of obtaining his intercession for us, at the great day of judgment?

And as religion is thus easy, so also is it pleasant in practice; "her ways are ways of pleasantness." Solomon here by wisdom, means religion, or a good and virtuous life. He who lives a religious life, has joy and pleasure in abundance. This I will endeavour to make appear, by shewing, that the performance of religious exercises is very pleasant, and also exceedingly grateful and pleasing to a man, on a reflection and review thereof. These two points, I hope to prove, to the conviction of every serious considerate person.

That the performance of good and religious actions is very pleasant, appears from hence, that the principle from whence all true and sincere religion proceeds and springs, is love; and which therefore cannot but render the practice of it very delightful. All the duties we perform towards God and man, must proceed from love to both. He that truly loves God, cannot but endeavour to do whatever will please him; and he will strive to avoid what is offensive to him. He will delight to contemplate the divine perfections, to adore and worship the God he loves, and to give him honour and glory.

glory. And he that loves his neighbour sincerely, will delight in, and desire the welfare and happiness of men; he will endeavour to promote it all he can. A religious life is only the exercise of love, and which proves the pleasantness of it. He who is forced to his duty by fears and terrors, performs it with reluctancy and sorrow; but he whom love inspires, proceeds with joy. He is not weary nor discouraged with any difficulties. This renders the labours of religion easy, and even sufferings delightful. This made the primitive Christians to encounter with, and submit to the most cruel and tormenting deaths, with pleasure and joy unspeakable. For love is strong as death. I now proceed to shew, that religion is exceeding grateful and pleasant to a man, on a serious review and reflection upon it. This will appear from the following particulars.

The good actions of men are in some measure to be imputed to themselves: We are not governed by destiny and fate, to do good or evil, but we act with judgment, choice and free-will. As the good we do may be ascribed to the influence of divine grace, so may it be in part to ourselves; for God has not made man like beasts or trees, incapable to judge or chuse, but endued him with a power to do doth; or otherwise, there would be no virtue or vice in the world. God hath set life and death before us; which supposes a freedom and liberty of will in us, to chuse the one or the other. And since rewards and punishments, are proposed to men according to their good and evil actions, these must in some degree be imputed to them, because within their own power of acting. From hence it is natural for good actions, to give a man just cause to applaud and commend himself for doing them; and this must convince any one, that the ways of wisdom, or religion, are ways of pleasantness; that

which we cannot expect to be good and religious, we must also resolve faithfully to keep the commands of God ; but faint wishes and instable purposes will never effect this. He who halts between two opinions, one while intending to be religious, and soon after returning to his sins, will find it always difficult to do well. An unresolved mind magnifies the difficulty of religion, but good resolutions encrease our strength, and enables us to perform our duty. Thus in other matters ; if a man be fully resolved to prosecute any design, no difficulty shall discourage him ; desire and resolution will make him strive till he overcomes — Let us then duly consider, that a religious life is absolutely necessary to our tranquillity and happiness, both in this and a future state ; and that we must be religious, to save our souls from everlasting torments. Necessity and power dwell near together ; and when we perceive the absolute necessity of our being religious, in order to the salvation of our souls, this will so animate our endeavours and resolutions, that no difficulties will be able to withstand them. And that we may make religion as easy as possible, we must soon begin to be religious. We take all impressions the best in our younger years. Vices are then like tender plants, easily rooted up and destroyed ; and virtues, by being early inured to them, will grow familiar and easy. But if we do not when young begin to be religious, evil inclination will grow into habits, which will encrease the difficulty of religion to the highest degree. Again,

In order to make religion easy to us, we must be stedfast and diligent in the practice of it. The constant repetition of the same act begets an habit, which at last renders such actions familiar and easy. Practice will overcome the greatest difficulties.

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“Chuse you the best course of life, and custom will render it the pleasantest,” was the advice of Pythagoras to his scholars. The more we exercise ourselves in the duties of religion, the more easy they will be to us. If we are unsteady, we shall be always weak; if constant, we shall encrease in strength. “The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall grow stronger and stronger.” Spiritual strength, like what is natural, encreases by diligent exercises; and the more that encreases, the more easy will our duty be. Lastly, we must carefully avoid all temptations to sin. For a man to be careless in this matter, and yet complain of the difficulty of religion, is a meer absurdity; because it is his own folly that encreases the difficulty. Whoever entertains any temptations to sin, can never easily abstain from it, nor live a virtuous, good life. Temptation and opportunity are to our evil inclinations, like oyl to a fire, which will encrease its strength and force. We must therefore weaken the fire of concupiscence, by avoiding those temptations, which are apt to draw us into sin. If we use these methods, such our endeavours will render religion very easy to us, and we shall then find what our Saviour says to be true, “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

And let us consider, that we have the example of our Saviour, to encourage us in this duty; who tho’ he had not those inward hindrances that we are incumbered with, yet he was not free from many external discouragements and temptations. He suffered many indignities and persecutions from men, and even died for the testimony he bore to truth. He was obedient unto death, even the most ignominious and miserable, that of the cross. Nothing could divert him from doing his father’s will, and perfecting the work he came into the world about. And it greatly recommends the yoke, he
requires

have dignified and exalted our nature ; but it is an additional pleasure, that we have also pleased God ; the wisest Being, the judge of all, whom to please will be our greatest advantage ; a master so good and bountiful, as will amply reward all our performances of duty. The consideration of those glorious and immortal joys, which a virtuous and religious life must naturally raise an expectation of, in the minds of good men, will enable them to approve and commend themselves, for having followed a life of piety. How much happiness and felicity may be expected, from infinite goodness and love, by that man, who is assured of his having pleased God, and of obtaining his favour ? A Being most liberal in his promises, and most faithful in his performance of them. The good man then cannot but rejoice in hope, when he knows, that in a short time he shall be removed from this wicked, miserable world, to a place, where only holiness, goodness, and happiness dwell. And whoever considers, that these are the advantages attending a good life, will be inwardly pleased that he has pursued a constant course of piety, from whence he may reap such great and inestimable benefits, and derive to himself so much honour and felicity. How will he then find it worth his time and care, to have performed the greatest labours in religion, to have exercised the severest self-denials, to have endured the greatest sufferings, when he considers, that by these means, he will be entitled to endless rest and peace, to unmixed pleasure and full satisfaction, to the eternal glory and felicity of heaven ? Thus have I sufficiently proved, what the wise man says, that the ways of “ wisdom or religion, are “ ways of pleasantness.”

To conclude ; the design of religion is not to make us refuse and abstain from all the pleasing things of this world. We are allowed to take and use

use soberly and thankfully whatever we can lawfully obtain of God's blessings. But we are not to give ourselves up entirely to the pursuit and enjoyment of worldly and sensual pleasures. He that governs himself wisely will be careful to enjoy the pleasures of this life, so as not to lose those of the next world. And indeed, the pleasures of religion are the strongest and sweetest. They possess more of a man, and sink deeper into his mind, than those that only affect the body and senses. The mind of man has the greatest desire and capacity, and is much more sensible of pleasure and pain, than the body. The psalmist, speaking of the excellency of religious pleasure, or the practice of religion and virtue, says of God's law, "It is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb." Since then there is so much pleasure in doing well, this should dissuade men from the guilty pursuits and enjoyments of the vanities of this world. Guilt vastly allays the greatest sensual pleasures. "In the midst of guilty laughter the heart is sad." Whoever uses these regularly and soberly, according to the rules of religion, will always find them most pleasing and delightful. By this method he will not hurt his body, nor his soul, neither his estate nor neighbour, while he thus pleases his appetites and gratifies his senses; and will also escape a troubled conscience. But the irregular and intemperate man becomes a slave to the pleasures of this world, and utterly deprives himself of those of religion. In a virtuous and religious life, a man may enjoy both; but in that which is wicked and impious, he enjoys neither. Let all men then be persuaded to the practice of a religious good life. It was said by the spirit of God, that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, with design to recommend them to the sons of men. This should much rather induce men to be wise and virtuous, and pursue their true happiness, than

to review and reflect on religious actions must afford an exceeding great pleasure. Again,

Religion requires nothing of us, but what every man upon serious consideration, must be perfectly satisfied in; nothing that he needs be ashamed of, or condemn himself for doing. How just and reasonable are the duties of piety towards God? That we reverence and adore an infinitely glorious and excellent being: That we trust in, and heartily love the source and foundation of all good: That we obey the commands of the supreme sovereign of the world; resign and submit ourselves entirely to his providence, who is the all-wise disposer and governor of all things: That we praise and acknowledge his glorious perfections, and sincerely thank him, for all the good things we enjoy by means of his free bounty? What can be more equitable, and consonant to right reason, than these things? How highly reasonable and just are the two fundamental rules of our duty, that we do unto others, as we would they should do unto us, and love our neighbours as ourselves? How fit is it for us to shew mercy, who need mercy: to be ready to perform all kind of offices to our neighbour, when we should desire the same from others? How reasonable is it for us to be honest and faithful to others, when we always want them to act so by us? Hence then it appears, that every instance of duty towards our neighbour, is most just and reasonable. And what satisfaction and pleasure must it afford that man, who has acted suitably to his reason, and performed his duty to God and his neighbours?

The dignity and nobleness of good actions will naturally make a man applaud himself for doing them, and to reflect upon and review them with delight and pleasure. A man who is actuated by the principles of religion, lives up to the highest and
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most sublime capacities of his nature. For to be truly religious is to lead the life of angels on earth. "They perform the commandments of God and hearken to his voice." The pious man, by carefully performing his duty to God, joins himself to that noble company, is a "fellow citizen of the saints, and of the household of God;" when we worship and praise God, we join with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. When we endeavour to promote God's glory, to resist the temptations that assault us, then we are taking part with them, against the devil and his angels; and this surely will afford us delight and pleasure, and redound greatly to our honour.

There is a farther excellency and dignity in a good and virtuous life, namely, its conformity to the ever blessed God. When any persons become righteous and holy, such are said to be renewed after his images and likenesses. So that when we rightly perform our duties to men, then do we imitate and resemble the most excellent and perfect Being. When we return good for evil, are sincere and true, just and righteous, bear with the infirmities of others, forgive those who injure us, are beneficial to mankind according to our circumstances, and do all the kind offices we can, this is a noble imitation of God's abundant goodness; and such a good and virtuous life is truly great and excellent. This renders the man highly deserving the respect and esteem both of God and men. And whoever is possessed of such valuable accomplishments, and has an humble thankful sense thereof, without pride or vain-glory, the thoughts of it must needs afford him much delight and pleasure.

Another reason for a man to take pleasure in reflecting on his good actions, is the thoughts of having thereby pleased God. It is grateful and pleasant to consider, that by discharging our duty, we
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to make them guilty of folly and sin, of what is shameful and hurtful, and which will incur their everlasting misery. And how great an obligation to obedience is it, that the laws of religion are thus contrived by almighty God, as to make the instances of our duty so reasonable, just and good, that we may take delight therein, and the performance of which will reward itself? But it must exceedingly aggravate our wickedness, shew our love to sin and enmity to God, if we will rather refuse all this happiness and pleasure, than submit ourselves to the laws of righteousness and religion.

Discourse XLIX. Abp. *Sharpe*.

The difficulties attending a religious
LIFE considered.

I John v. 3.

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.

IT is the latter part of this text, on which at present I propose to treat, his commandments are not grievous. And I would to God we all thought so, for then more of us would endeavour to keep them ; but too many have embraced such frightful notions of religion, that they have not courage to engage in it. They imagine it was contrived only for the melancholy or miserable, such whose tempers or unhappy circumstances incapacitate them for the enjoyments of life. Some, thinking the precepts of religion impossible to be observed, will not trouble their heads about them ; others, of not more consideration, think them very hard and severe, tho' not impossible to be kept : they imagine them to be very rigorous impositions, and unreasonable restraints on human nature, requiring so much trouble and pains, that was a person scrupulously to govern himself by them, he must deny himself those common gratifications, which the frame and constitution of things seem to allow mankind.—By such prejudices as these, numbers are mightily discouraged from any serious attention to God and goodness, and think themselves excused from making any profession
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of religion at all ; or if they do, it is such as is very inconsistent with it. Nothing then can tend more to recommend the serious practice of religion than to vindicate it from these objections. Therefore I shall endeavour fully to prove, that those who entertain such dismal apprehensions of a strictly pious and virtuous life, do labour under a great mistake ; and that the duty which God requires of us, so far from being an intolerable or grievous burden on mankind, is, on the contrary, very light and easy. For our Saviour in express terms, hath told us, “ that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.” And the apostle assures us, “ that his commandments are not grievous.”

I do not deny there are difficulties in religion ; it would be against the sense and experience of mankind to assert there are none ; nay, considering man’s corrupt nature, it must be confessed, that it is more difficult, and will require more care and labour to be virtuous than vicious. Every one must acknowledge, that the paths of virtue is like going up hill, which requires some pains to be taken ; but to live viciously is such a descent, as the degeneracy of mankind, by the help of bad examples, makes very natural and easy. And yet we may affirm, that when all things are considered, it will be found, that as the way of God and virtue is much plainer and easier than that of vice and wickedness, so a man may take less pains to be very good, than very bad ; and will more consult his own ease, pleasure and satisfaction, by living a religious, than an irreligious life. For let the greatest difficulties be supposed in religion that possibly can be, yet it is no severe or grievous imposition, but an obligation upon us, that is very natural, easy and delightful. “ His commandments are not grievous.” This is the point I am to maintain, and my method shall be to lay down several propositions as so many gradual

steps, whereby to confirm the truth we have advanced, and either to obviate or answer all objections to the contrary. And, I shall prove first,

That religion is a thing not impracticable, but very possible for us to practise. There is not any thing commanded by the laws of Jesus Christ, which is the whole of our religion, but every man may perform if he endeavour it. Take the hardest part of the Christian yoke, namely, to forgive and do good to our enemies, to deny our worldly interests and renounce all we have, when God requires it, for the sake of Jesus Christ; yet these things are not impossible, however severe they may be esteemed. Impossible they cannot be, many having actually done these things, and upon far lighter motives and considerations than what are offered and proposed to us, by the religion of Christ. And if these things are practicable, why should we not think so of all the other Christian precepts; such as owning God for our creator and continual benefactor; paying him our constant tribute of worship, prayer, and praise, both in publick and private; living in an humble sense of his Almighty Majesty and our own unworthiness; using with temperance and moderation the good things which he affords us; being honest, just and faithful in all our dealings; kind, good-natured, and charitable to all our fellow-creatures; in a word, living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world? And are these things so formidable, as to be hard and impossible for men to live up to them? Surely there can be no rules more easy for the government of our actions, than these are. But perhaps some will say, I have not fairly represented the case; that the impossibility of keeping God's commands doth not lie in any particular instance of duty; for to observe any one precept of the gospel might be practicable enough; but the objection is, that our duty

is impracticable in the whole, the laws being so many and strict, extending at all times to our thoughts and words, as well as actions, whereby it is impossible for any man so to order his conversation, but that in some instance or other, he must transgress, perhaps ever day, and consequently the duty required is too hard for us.

To this I can answer, that when I speak of the possibility of keeping God's commandments, I ever suppose, and would be understood to include the gracious allowances that God hath promised by Christ Jesus to make, for the infirmities of human nature; it being always to be understood in that sense. And if we remember but two things further, this objection will perfectly vanish. The first is, that God, in the laws he gave us by Christ, never intended to require an exact and unfinning obedience to them; but in the gospel sense we are said to obey God's laws, when we use our sincere endeavours to obey them; when in the main of our lives we live up to them; when we do not indulge ourselves in any known wilful course of sin; but as far as the weakness of our nature, and the circumstances of our lives will permit, we do as much as we can to mortify our corrupt affections, and live holy and virtuous lives. And secondly, tho' we have not done this, yet if we do but truly repent of our past sins, so as to forsake them, however great, heinous, and long continued in they have been; even in this case, such a man keeps the commandments of God, and doth all he requires of him. For he performs as much as God, under the gospel covenant, hath promised to accept and reward in the next world. This being the case, to urge the impossibility of keeping God's commandments, as an exception against religion, is both impertinent and unfair, for God expects no man to do more than he can; and whoever uses his honest endeavours

truly to serve God, such an one keeps God's laws, notwithstanding any frailties and infirmities of his life. I now proceed a step farther, and lay down this, as my second proposition ;

That as God's commands are not grievous, on account of their being impossible, so neither are they unnatural, or a force on the constitution of men, as some pretend. Indeed, we allow they are restraints to the licentious practices of men, but not such restraints as to be called invasions or intrenchments on human liberty ; because they only mark out the true bounds of that liberty, which is the perfection of human nature : and whoever transgresseth these bounds, so far from being the more easy or happy, will find himself the more certainly miserable. So long as human nature continues what it is, man's happiness only consists in using his liberty according to the best rules of reason ; which is religion. And to transgress such rules, tho' God had annexed no penalty thereto, would have been of itself a sufficient punishment. This every man is sensible of, who lives in a course of vice and irreligion. He knows and feels that things are not right with him, that his mind is not at ease, in the way he has engaged, because every day he is acting contrary to his reason. Which is an evident proof, that virtue is suitable to our nature, but vice and sin are not. And in truth, it would be as absurd, for any to ask which is most natural and agreeable to man's constitution, sickness or health, as to enquire whether virtue or vice is so. But it will be said, that men are born with strong inclinations and propensities to pleasure, wealth, power and greatness : That religion puts a dreadful check and restraint on those appetites and passions ; and how then can it be agreeable to nature ? To this I answer ; that religion, as taught in the gospel, doth not hinder the satisfaction of any appetites and passions, which
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men are born with. I know no inclination truly natural, but what is allowed to be gratified, if done in proper instances and due measure ; if it be fit, just and reasonable ; and that it really tends to the true pleasure and happiness of the person concerned. All that our religion forbids, is the irregularity and exorbitancy of our passions and appetites, not so to indulge them, as either to hurt ourselves, or injure our neighbour. These are all the restraints that God's laws lay on us ; and judge then, wherein they are so terrible. But to put it out of all doubt, whether virtue or vice is most agreeable to the frame of man's nature, let any one run over the instances of his duty, and the sins opposite thereto, as mentioned in the scripture, and compare them in his own mind one with another, and then honestly declare which of the two will procure him most ease and quiet, and require the least labour, trouble and disturbance ; and I doubt not but upon such an examination, every one will readily pronounce, that in all instances, wherein our morals are concerned, those we call virtues, are much more easy, more natural, more delightful, and require abundantly less trouble and pains, than the contrary vices. This every one will find, who runs a parallel between them.

For instance ; between meekness and patience on the one hand, fretfulness and discontent on the other : Between love, charity, and doing good ; and that of hatred, malice, and desire of revenge : Between chaste and lawful love, and that of unlawful adulterous lusts : Between temperance and using God's blessings with sobriety ; and that of gluttony, drunkenness and revellings : Between faith in God, trust in his providence, and contentedness with a competence ; and that of a boundless, unsatiated desire of riches. It will be found the same as to all other particular virtues recommended to us by religion,

ligion, and their opposite vices. So that it plainly appears, the commandments of God are neither impossible to be kept, hard or severe in themselves, nor yet grievous on those accounts. But perhaps it will be urged, the state of man is so corrupt, that we have neither will nor power to keep God's laws; our depravity, and the devil's temptation, being too hard for us. And if so, what signifies their being reasonable in their own nature? In order to remove this objection, I must lay down my third proposition; which is,

That let our natural inabilities and aversions to what is good, be as great as possible, yet the supernatural assistance we may expect from God, will be sufficient for us; and notwithstanding those disadvantages, it will be as much in our power and inclination to obey God's commands, as to live contrary thereto. It must be confessed after all that is said, as to the possibility and reasonableness of obeying the gospel precepts, and their agreeableness to our nature, yet that alone is not sufficient to counterbalance the great propensity we have, in our corrupt degenerate state, to pursue the ways of vice and sensuality. For we are not only weak and impotent, but a strong bias there is in our nature, to render us averse to spiritual things, and too prone to act what we should not, besides the temptations from without us. But if we consider on the other hand, that God is never wanting to supply by his immediate grace, what is defective in our nature; that Christ hath purchased for us the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which all may easily perform whatever God requires of them, in order to their future happiness; that every man, baptized into Christ's religion, who means honestly, hath God's promise to be continually assisted from above with his divine power and grace, to enable him to do, what by nature he could not; that the holy spirit

is lodged within us, as a principle to tempt and invite us to be good, and to deter us from what is evil; to guard us against the suggestions of the devil, and our own corrupt hearts; and is as powerful and ready to do good, as our adversary can be to hurt us: These things considered, it should convince us, that the work of religion is not so difficult, so hopeless an undertaking as some would pretend; since they that are with us are more than they that are against us. Tho' the devil and our corrupt natures may strongly tempt us to sin, yet the spirit of Christ and his invisible attendants, will as powerfully incline us to what is good. That divine spirit which dwells with all Christians, or is desirous of doing so, will by his gracious influences and assistances so subdue the force of the devil's temptations; so smooth our way, and assist our weak natures; that we may find ourselves as powerfully carried on to the practice of virtue and holiness, as a wicked man can be, to live a dissolute, careless, and vicious life.

But it must be further acknowledged, that tho' there are great difficulties in religion, and it requires some pains to serve God, and live in obedience to his commands; yet this is chiefly occasioned by our prejudices, and in being used by evil habits to a contrary course of life. In a little time, these difficulties will wear off, and then we shall find, that a life of sincere religion and devotion, will be far more natural, and delightful, than a course of sin ever was. The truth is, if we consider the reason of most men's aversion to virtue and goodness, we shall find it proceeds from their former vicious habits; having been so long used to a contrary course, that they cannot bear the strictness of religion. On this account religion is indeed troublesome and difficult, and more or less so, in proportion as those customs and habits have prevailed or
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not. From hence proceeds all those hardships complained of in religion: When vice gets possession of us, sin grows customary, and becomes as it were a second nature, and then it is no easy matter to expel it; and to acquire virtuous habits instead thereof, requires labour, pains and time, much struggling and self-denial. But then this is only for a short time, at our first entrance into a religious life, from a course of sin; for when we are a little inured to the ways of virtue, and have made some tolerable progress therein, it will become easy and pleasant. If custom has such an effect, as to make vice, so contrary to our nature, pleasing and agreeable, surely much more will custom make virtue so; than which nothing, as I have shewn, can be more suitable and natural to the minds of men. When the strength of evil habits is once broken, and we have made the exercise of religion familiar to us, we shall find as much pleasure and delight in the ways of virtue and piety, as in those of vice and sin. Our aversions to them will then cease, and we shall wonder how we could be so long imposed on by the false appearances of vice. We shall then confess we enjoy true liberty, and shall never be persuaded to return to that hard state of bondage, of serving sin and Satan. In a word, all the difficulties we meet with at first in a religious course, will soon vanish, and then our way will be plain and smooth, or as Solomon says, full of peace and pleasure.

As to what is objected against a religious life, that it requires much pains and watchfulness, we have seen, that this, so far from being a real difficulty or inconvenience, is in truth the natural effect of our make and constitution. For we cannot possibly be happy but in motion; and if religion exercises our diligence, it is very unreasonable to charge this as a hardship on religion. We admit that the way of piety demands great care, watchfulness and applica-

application. A good christian must not think to be idle, but ought to be very attentive to his work, and much on his guard, especially at the beginning. Nay, after he has made some considerable attainments in virtue, he will find enough to employ him ; and therefore we cannot deny, but the gate to life is very strait, and they who would enter therein, must not only seek but strive. “ They must
 “ work out their own salvation, and give all dili-
 “ gence to make their calling and election sure.” But then this is no real difficulty : All this is nothing but a due and natural exercise of our powers. It is agreeable to man’s nature to be intent on something or other : The chief pleasure of this life consists in constantly pursuing some design ; for to live sluggishly is the way to dull and decay our natural powers, and to make our lives very uneasy. There is no man but will find much more pleasure in being employed, than in sitting still and doing nothing. Action is so essential to our natures, as to be one of the main ingredients of our happiness, both in this life and the next. The state of heaven will chiefly consist in having our natural powers exalted to the utmost pitch of vigour and activity of which they are capable ; and being always employed in the contemplation and pursuit of the best and noblest objects.

What makes a man uneasy in labour, is not his being busy and intent upon any thing, but in being employed in such exercises, as either exhaust his animal spirits, or that agrees not with his humour, temper, and genius ; or in transacting such business as gives him no prospect of bringing it to good effect. Now the diligence and application requisite in a course of virtue and religion, are attended with none of these inconveniencies ; since it puts us to little bodily pain, brings no great weariness or consumption of spirits on us, is not contrary to,
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but exceedingly well agrees with the constitution and frame of our nature ; and is besides, such a design, that whoever undertakes it, may assuredly promise to himself success. And this being the case of a virtuous life, none ought to think the diligence used therein uneasy or troublesome, but rather as the natural exercise of that heat and vigour, which is implanted in every man : And he who is not thus employed, must let his faculties lie idle ; or if he otherwise stirs and busies himself, it must be in a way more troublesome and disagreeable to his nature. It is the great advantage and excellency of a religious life, that it will always find something for us to do, so that we shall never be dull in our souls, nor complain that time lies on our hands. It will quicken our diligence and industry, even as to the prosecution of our secular affairs. It will make us solicitous to spend our lives usefully and profitably, and mightily enlarge our powers and designs. It will employ our will, our love and desires, after that which is good, and make us daily more active and vigorous in the prosecution of it, till at last we shall be translated into a state of everlasting, never-ceasing activity. Indeed the scripture calls it a state of rest ; and in respect to our resting from all our griefs, troubles, and sufferings, it is so ; but yet it is most truly a state of everlasting motion and activity ; for our souls being then disengaged from the clogs and incumbrances of these earthly bodies, will spend the whole eternity in exerting their powers and faculties to the noblest purposes ; namely, in loving God, in admiring and being delighted with all his wise and wonderful works ; in continually singing praises to our gracious creator and redeemer, and in doing all kind and good-natured offices to our fellow-creatures ; and this with perpetual alacrity, pleasure and joy, without weariness or decay of spirits ; which indeed I take to be the greatest gem

in that crown of righteousness, that shall be conferred on believers at the last day. It then evidently appears, that all the care, industry, and watchfulness, which religion requires from us in this life, ought not to be esteemed as matter of objection to it, since it tends so much to increase our happiness, and to make us enjoy ourselves the better. But,

Lastly, Let all the hardships and difficulties of religion be magnified as much as possible, yet the mighty motives and encouragements we have from the gospel of Christ, to engage therein, will very much outweigh them. We have already acknowledged that there are difficulties in a christian life; such as arise both from the strictness of the rule we are obliged to walk by, and our averseness to it, as being engaged in contrary practices. But let us also suppose greater difficulties; that to enter on a religious life, is the only way to frustrate our temporal designs, and all our hopes in this world; and that nothing but reproach, ignominy, and persecution will attend us: I say, admitting all this, yet a life of virtue and religion will, to a considerate man, be far more easy and eligible, than the contrary way of living. For, if all things are considered, what God requires of us, is no hard, no grievous imposition, and this will appear for the following reasons. That let the difficulties of religion be never so great, yet God hath promised, to support us under and enable us to overcome them, if we ourselves are but honest. No temptations shall ever happen to us, but such as are common to men; and whatever they are, God will provide us a way to escape from, or enable us to bear them; for "God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted, above what we are able." And if we are fortified and enabled to vanquish the temptation, it is more than if we had not been tempted; since by overcoming the temptation, we may expect

pect a more ample reward in the other world. Again, tho' our religion should be attended with many difficulties, yet the inward comfort, satisfaction, and joy, that a good man enjoys from a good conscience, and the sense of doing his duty, even when persecuted for it, are of great weight to alleviate all the outward pressures and afflictions he undergoes on that account. For suppose a man that lives in all outward prosperity, and enjoys all his heart can wish, but yet is a knave or hypocrite, and hath the stings of a guilty conscience perpetually pursuing him; and that another, who is an innocent virtuous person, suffers very severely in this world, yet as his mind cannot reproach him for doing ill, he has a good conscience, which is a continual feast to him; and will not all agree, that the outwardly happy man, is much the more miserable and most to be pitied of the two?

And if to all this we add the mighty, unspeakable rewards that are promised to all persevering christians in the next life, and the sad portion which awaits all wicked ungodly men; let the difficulties of religion be never so great, the cross and persecution they suffer for it be never so severe, yet there can be no comparison, as to which is the easiest, and most recommends itself to mankind, either sin or virtue. For let our condition in this world be never so happy and prosperous, yet it is no easy matter to think of dwelling in everlasting burnings. Can we, for a little bravery and splendor, a little pleasure and gratification of our brutish appetites, which we are not certain will last for a year, a month, or even one day; can we for this venture, or rather sell our souls and bodies to the devil, to be forever tormented? Is this a bargain, that we can please ourselves with the thoughts of? On the other side, if we are sincere lovers of God, and disciples of our Lord Jesus, in what miserable cir-

circumstances soever we are in this world, will it not be a cordial sufficient to revive our drooping spirits, in the midst of all our afflictions and tribulations, to think that we are the sons of the most high God ; that we shall be glorified with our Saviour when he comes to appear triumphantly in the view of angels and men, to distribute his rewards to all his faithful servants ; and that, for our light affliction, which endureth but for a moment, we shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ? Sure I am, these things will not bear a comparison. But every considerate man, from the evidence of truth, must be forced to acknowledge, that, all things considered, it is more easy, safe, desirable, and delightful to be good, to serve God, to live in obedience to his laws, and discharge a good conscience, than to enjoy all the pleasures of sin, which are but for a short season.

Discourse L. Bp. *Moore.*

GODLINESS, OR TRUE RELIGION, the
design of Christianity.

1 Tim. vi. 3.

— If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

WHEN we consider there never was any religion in the world, which did so earnestly recommend and strictly enjoin the practice of virtue and piety, as the christian, and yet that so little of it appears in the lives of christians; we must either suppose some defect in the religion, or great fault in its professors; either christianity does not prescribe and afford sufficient means, for the attainment of true holiness, or else they who profess it do neglect the means it recommends, to make us holy here, and happy hereafter. But certain it is, that God and religion have not been wanting to men, tho' they are to themselves: there being nothing required in our religion, as a duty and necessary condition of our happiness, but what every man may perform by God's grace, and which if he sincerely prays for, he may obtain. "Therefore if
"men will not make use of that grace, which God
"so plentifully gives to all, it is but fit and equal
"(saith Chrysostom) that they impute their defects
"to themselves." Indeed few have had the boldness directly to charge their vices upon God, as if he denied them power and opportunities to act better
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But the common way is, for men to frame such a model of religion, as may suit with a vicious life, and quiet the complaints of an uneasy conscience.

Thus some will justify a wicked life, by denying the difference between good and evil; and others excuse it, by pretending all their actions are under a fatal decree, and come necessarily to pass. Some make obedience to God's laws needless, by disowning his providence and care of the world; others would exempt themselves from the practice of piety and virtue, by fancying their religion to consist only in true believing; whilst others place it in outward shew and ceremony. Some again hope they may enjoy the brutish pleasures of this life, and the pure ones of the next, and carry their sins with them to heaven, by so exalting and extending God's mercy, unto obstinate and impenitent sinners, as to deny both his justice and truth; whilst others call in question the resurrection of the dead, and the rewards of another life.

Since then, there are so many dangerous rocks on which we may split, the great question will be, by what compass we are to steer? And the best way to solve this doubt, will be to propose and recommend to our serious consideration, St. Paul's rule, by which we may effectually discover useful christian doctrines, from false and hurtful ones; namely, they must be according to godliness. What gave occasion for St. Paul to lay down this rule, was the several errors contrary to the doctrine of Christ, which in his days had crept into the church; all which he reproveth, because they were not according to godliness. "If any man (says he) teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about ques-

“ tions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh en-
 “ vy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse dis-
 “ putings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of
 “ the truth, supposing that gain is godliness ; from
 “ such withdraw thyself:” So dangerous a thing
 it is for a christian, to busy himself more about con-
 tentious disputes, than the practice of an holy life ;
 to study questions that may betray him into wrath
 and envy, which will shut men out of the kingdom
 of heaven ; a place that cannot be obtained, but by
 the continual exercise of godliness.

The design of this discourse will be to prove,
 that true religion or godliness, is a fixed, certain
 thing, not variable, according to places, times,
 or mens humours ; but the reasons of it are eternal
 and unchangeable.—That the end of the gospel
 doctrines is to advance and recommend the practice
 of piety and virtue, to mankind.—That it is an ar-
 gument of the truth and excellency of the christian
 religion, that all its doctrines are conformable to
 godliness.—That whatever doctrines are not accord-
 ing to godliness, so far from being necessary, they
 cannot be true.

St. Paul requires, that every man should consent
 to the doctrine which is according to godliness. His
 meaning is, that godliness must be the standard and
 measure, by which we must judge of doctrines. If
 a doctrine is according to godliness, we are to as-
 sent to it ; if not, to dissent from it. Therefore all
 men must have one certain, invariable notion of
 godliness, in order to know what doctrine to em-
 brace, or reject. This is also evident, from the
 notion of godliness itself ; which signifies our being
 like God, and copying out in our minds and man-
 ners all the perfections of the divine nature, so far
 as we are capable. And since those qualities and
 perfections in God, are eternal and unchangeable,
 so

so must our notions of God be. Indeed godliness, in a strict sense, imports no more than the worship of God : but as it is here used by the apostle, it comprehends all moral virtues ; and includes, not only acts of religion towards God, but of righteousness towards our neighbour, and of sobriety with respect to ourselves. In a word, it is behaving suitably to that nature and reason, which God has given us, and for his sake. So that godliness or religion, is no arbitrary thing ; but must be as eternal and immutable, as the nature of mankind, or rather as God is, who contrived that nature.

We may talk what we please, of the indifference of good and evil ; but the more we think, the more we shall be convinced, that there is an eternal goodness and evil in things, morally considered. Some actions perfectly agree with God's holy nature, others do not ; and if his nature is eternal and unchangeable, then will those things which agree with it, be eternally good ; and those which vary from it, be eternally evil. Thus, for instance ; as to love and honour God, are acts most agreeable to his perfect nature, so it will eternally be the duty of his creatures to perform this to him : It being absurd to suppose God would command his creatures to hate him, or to act contrary to the rectitude of his nature. Besides, there are such eternal respects and relations between things, that some actions will be ever good, and others evil. We cannot suppose a benefactor, but we must acknowledge that gratitude and thanks are his due ; we cannot but allow, that an innocent person ought to receive no injury or hurt. How unreasonable then is that opinion, which makes the civil law of the magistrate, the only measure of good and evil ? For should the magistrate inhibit our addresses to almighty God, would therefore the service of God be evil ? Or, should he command me to kill my father, would

that make parricide lawful? So that it is evident, there are actions antecedently good to the laws of the magistrate, and duties which are not alterable by him. They (says Justin Martyr) are very acceptable to God, who do those things, which are in their own nature universally and eternally good.

As to the gospel doctrines, the design of them is to advance and recommend godliness, or true religion, to the practice of mankind. What was said of the Lacedemonian laws, might with much greater truth be applied to Christ's doctrines; That it is the property of them all, to inflame men's minds with the love of virtue, and to create a contempt of empty, sensual pleasures. To this end, all the precepts of our Lord, his great actions, and grievous sufferings, were directed. But the better to illustrate and prove this point, let us duly regard the following considerations. That none of our Saviour's sermons or discourses were on subjects purely speculative. By his sermons he taught men to be humble, meek, pure and peaceable; to bear reviling language patiently, and to submit willingly to persecution for righteousness sake; to put hypocrisy out of countenance, and to reform such notions in religion, as were impediments to real piety, and tended to encourage a wicked life. This method was also carefully observed, by his apostles and those who were joined with them, to plant his religion.---Thus the revelation which God has made of himself in scripture is such, as most conduces to promote godliness, to excite our endeavours to attain those qualifications, which commonly fit us for the kingdom of heaven, and are the necessary terms of our salvation. For God is there represented, as just and righteous in all his works, pure and holy in all his ways; as the rewarder only of them, who love and fear him, and keep his commandments. He is there pleased to ascribe unto himself, the pas-

sions

sions of men ; such as love, hatred, anger, revenge, hope, grief and repentance ; not that these passions are properly in God, who is wholly free from the imperfections which cause them in us, but meerly in condescension to the weakness of our nature, and to help our slow understandings ; to the intent, that what is there declared to be the object of God's love and hatred, his grief or anger, might be the proper object of ours, and more strongly affect us. These passions are in scripture attributed to God, is to encourage virtue, and discountenance vice. So that the description which revelation gives us of God, is accommodated and tends to the promotion and advancement of godliness. As this seems to be the only reason why God has revealed so much of his divine nature, and requires that we should profoundly reverence, sincerely love him, religiously conform to his righteous will ; so if we neglect to answer the ends of this revelation, God will declare at the day of judgment, that he knows us not, because we kept not his commandments.

Knowledge and practice, in a christian sense, are but two terms importing the same thing. For as they who keep not the commandments, cannot, in scripture sense, pretend to know God ; so neither at the day of judgment will Christ know them, who lived in disobedience to the great laws of his religion, and neglected the chief instances of their duty. Whoever searches after knowledge, only to gratify a vain curiosity, or qualify himself to be an able disputant in religion, does but deceive himself ; for all our knowledge will avail us nothing, unless it influences our practice, and tends to reform our manners. In this state then of imperfection and tryal of our obedience, we need enquire no further after God's essence, and the mysteries of his incomprehensive nature, than may

serve to instruct us, in such instances and cases, as we ought to imitate him in. Indeed hereafter we shall see God as he is, and all the glories of his divinity. Then we shall stand in the company of the whole church triumphant, of all the saints and angels, round the throne, and forever behold, admire and adore, the infinite wisdom, goodness and power of God ; and with the highest transports of love and joy, shall, to all eternity, bless, praise and magnify the son of God, and our redeemer, by whose powerful mediation, we are admitted into God's presence.

In truth there is no fundamental doctrine of Christianity, but what in some instance or other, naturally tends to promote a good life. If the doctrine be, that God is the maker of heaven and earth, are not his creatures from thence obliged to gratitude and praise? If it be, that God is the great sovereign of the world ; does not a duty hence plainly follow, that we his subjects are to obey his laws? does not the doctrine of his infinite goodness, make it our duty to love and imitate him ; and that of his irresistible power, to submit ourselves to his pleasure, and dread to offend him? Does not his truth, which is one of his essential attributes, make it our duty to believe in him, and depend on his promises; And his unsearchable wisdom oblige us to surrender our wills to his, and leave the events of things to his wise disposal? Does not the belief of his omnipresence, and all-seeing eye, engage us to have a constant, awful regard of him, and to walk circumspectly in all our ways? The doctrine of God's providence, which is extended to the smallest, as well as most weighty affairs ; what powerful motives does it afford us against dejection, and immoderate care? The doctrine, that all things work together for good to the faithful servants of God ; what a mighty obligation does it lay on us, to be
contented

contented and easy in our present condition, however attended with adversity and afflictions ; and to take no indirect, unlawful methods, to get out of it ? The doctrine, that God has an absolute power over our souls, to save or destroy them ; plainly implies, we are to dread God more than man, and to disobey man rather than God ? The doctrine of the necessity of Christ's sufferings and passion ; does it not make it our indispensable duty, to mortify the flesh, and crucify the lusts thereof ; and " rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, " than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ? " And should not the doctrine of his resurrection and ascension, carry our thoughts and designs into the other world, and fix our hearts and affections on the treasure which is in heaven ? Lastly, does not the doctrine of a day of judgment, in which sentence shall pass on all men, for every thought, word, and deed ; oblige us, if we love ourselves, and desire our eternal welfare, to put our accounts in exact order, and break off our sins by a timely, sincere repentance. " Seeing all these things shall " be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we " to be, in all holy conversation and godliness ? " If we believe these christian doctrines, our lives must agree with our principles, and our faith be rendered effectual, by the holiness of our conversation. " Every man that hath this hope, will purify himself, " even as God is pure." That is, if we hope to see God, we must endeavour to imitate his purity ; if we receive the doctrine of Christ Jesus, let not our behaviour be unsuitable thereto, but be mindful to observe whatever he hath commanded.

But perhaps some will object, that one great doctrine of our religion, the mystery of the holy trinity, does not at all concern a holy life. Indeed, this may seem so, to them who slightly examine things ;

but whoever with exactness considers this doctrine will be otherwise persuaded. For when we reflect that God so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, to save those who believe in him; does not this the most strictly oblige us to make him all possible returns of praise and love, gratitude and obedience? When we consider that God would not pardon sin, without an ample satisfaction, even the blood and life of his own son; can there be any arguments more effectual, to deter us from sin, and make an ingenuous mind abhor the thoughts of it? When we consider, that this Son of God, who was the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person; is now entered into the holy of holies, as our high priest, daily to offer up prayers to God, and intercede with him on our behalf; will not this create in us a mighty confidence to address ourselves to the throne of heaven in all our wants, and give us strong hopes, that God will not forsake us in our greatest distress? When we consider, that the holy spirit vouchsafes to dwell in the temples of our bodies; does not this deeply engage us, to prepare our bodies for his reception, by purity and temperance, lest we grieve this guest, and cause him to desert us? Thus have I clearly demonstrated, that the design of the gospel is to promote godliness or true religion, and that there is a direct tendency in all its doctrines, to enforce the practice of it upon Christians.

And it is an argument of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, that its doctrines are according to religion and godliness; which also imports the great duties of natural religion. For what duty is there in natural religion, but, in the Christian law, is more clearly propounded, more fully explained, more strongly confirmed? And what argument so cogent, in favour of any religious truths, as their being consonant and agreeable to the
common

common sentiments of mankind? or what more manifest proof of the excellency of the gospel precepts, than their harmony with the laws of nature? The most material objections that can be made against any instituted religion, are, that its principles contradict clear reason, or its duties are repugnant to natural laws; since what contradicts right reason, and is contrary to the law of nature, cannot be true. And it must be granted, that natural religion is the foundation on which all revealed religion stands; because from natural light the existence of God is proved, it being what revealed religion always supposes. But in the Christian religion, there is nothing commanded, but what becomes the perfection of the divine nature, agrees with those eternal laws which flow from it, and suits the native principles of our own souls, and our truest interests. It propounds no point of faith, but what we have sufficient reason to believe; exacts no duty but we have exceeding strong motives to perform it. We may find the great duties of our religion all writ on our own nature; nor will any thing contribute so much towards the perfecting our natural capacities, as a life conformable to the laws of religion. For as religion was designed to advance our nature, and make us more nearly resemble God; so profaneness and irreligion set us at the greatest distance from him. And was the contrary of every Christian law enacted; for instance, instead of forgiving enemies, and shewing mercy to the distressed, we were commanded to revenge every little injury, to be implacably malicious, and even to extremity cruel; mankind would be changed into a race of wolves and tigers, or become a new order of devils incarnate? or, suppose we were enjoined to be false to our words, unjust in our dealing, treacherous to our trust; would it not dissolve all civil society, and destroy all commerce? nay, it would make the world

a great den of thieves and robbers. Again, was it required of us, to eat always to gluttony, and drink to excess; would not our obedience thereto, ruin our health, destroy our rational faculties, and transform the children of men into a herd of swine? So little reason then have we to complain, that the commandments of God are either difficult or grievous; but much cause to bless him, for ruling the world by such righteous laws; for giving us a religion, which our own faculties assure us, (and in all other cases we can trust and rely on them) is most reasonable and excellent; as being perfective of our nature, and worthy the wisdom of God who revealed it; as being framed with great condescension to the infirmities of man, and every way suitable to the attributes of God.

Lastly, whatever doctrines are not according to godliness, are so far from being necessary, that they cannot be true. This is evident from what has been already observed. I shall briefly reflect on some few of the many opinions, which, on examination, will appear not to be according to godliness, or true religion. As first, that God is the author of sin. But this cannot possibly be true, it being inconsistent with the reason of mankind, and manifestly repugnant to the attributes of God. That God should be the author of sin, of what offends and dishonours him, is absurd and most unreasonable; it being what he has so often and solemnly declared he abhors and detests: it contradicts the attribute of his truth; he having most severely threatened to punish it, and is contrary both to infinite goodness and justice; such oppositions depriving God of the holiness essential to his nature. Again, The doctrine of irreversable decrees cannot be according to godliness, because it takes away the strongest motives to a religious life. For if a man is included within the decree of election, the greatest

est sins will not damn him ; and if he is excluded, the most holy life cannot possibly save him. Besides, if God decrees to save or destroy reprobate men, without regard had to their good or evil lives, then they may be saved, without respect to either ; for what God has decreed will certainly come to pass : But sentence men to heaven or hell, without any consideration of their faith and obedience, or infidelity and impenitence, is to make a day of judgment unnecessary, and directly contrary to that justice, by which God has declared, he will then proceed. “ 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.” Lastly, another doctrine to be condemned, is that which recommends the use of such means for promoting the Christian religion, as are destructive of the ends of it. The end of the Christian religion, is to make men sincere, true to their word, and upright in their dealing ; therefore they, who by lying, and equivocation, endeavour to propagate the religion of Christ, do by such means subvert the end they pretend to serve. The design of christianity is to render men harmless, kind and charitable one to another ; therefore they who condemn men’s bodies to the stake, in order to refine their minds, and cut their throats to save their souls, instead of serving Christ’s religion, they bring upon it the utmost slander and disgrace. For we must not do evil that good may come of it ; we may not use unlawful means, to obtain an honest end.

But if so many errors in faith, so many vices in practice prevail, contrary to the doctrine of godliness, what guide shall we take, what method use, to rectify our judgments and recover our virtue ; to remove and avert the evils and calamities we need to fear and dread ? To this it may be answered, that

we must search in our own breasts for the causes and cures of our miseries, where they are and may be found. When a long custom of sinning takes from men the sense of guilt; when they are so deeply enslaved to their lusts, as to love the fetters that confine them; when the distemper has so far prevailed, that the patient no longer desires a recovery; then all hopes will cease unless a speedy remedy be applied. This remedy every man, by the grace of God, has in his own power; I mean by repentance to turn from his evil ways, and without delay make haste to keep God's commandments: This is the only course he can take to save himself. Let us then zealously endeavour to approve ourselves to God, by a conscientious performance of those conditions, which are plainly required to make a man a true christian. If instead of censuring or misrepresenting the designs and actions of our governors, which we seldom fully know, and often mistake; whereby their affections are estranged from the people, and the just reverence which is due to them is lost or abated, every man would do his part to promote peace and virtue: If instead of inventing names to distinguish men by parties, narrowly observing the faults of others, and representing them in the worst light; we would strive to correct our own failings, and live strict to our professions: If instead of vilifying and abusing one another, by which, infinite scandal is cast on the Christian religion, we would take a true and faithful survey of our condition; heartily beg pardon of God and our neighbour, for all the injuries we have done to both; humbly implore God's grace, that for the future, our faith may be sound, and our manners pure: These changes would prove the best expedients for us to live in peace and love, respect and good will, with mutual trust and confidence;

and

and will be the only method to live happy and prosperous.

How often has God in a fatherly way admonished us, that he might not smite us? slightly wounded us, that we might avoid the fatal strokes of his justice? how often gently chastised us, that we might escape his terrible judgments? And shall none of the various methods God uses, produce in us a real change and amendment? If neither his clemency will invite us to consider, nor his severity awaken us out of our ungrounded security, it must at last prove fatal to us. Let then the danger of offending God persuade us; the multitude of the divine mercies allure us; the secret motions of his Holy Spirit excite us, to seek the Lord while he may be found, before the acceptable time passeth away, and his injured, long abused patience is changed into implacable fury. May the care of our souls, which will everlastingly perish, if we do not truly repent, prevail on us to return unto God and our duty; to take up speedy, firm and steady resolutions to conform our wills in all things unto God's; to govern our thoughts and actions by the laws and example of our blessed Saviour; to subdue every lust and unruly passion; and to make us sincerely resolve and purpose, never more to offend and dishonour the great God that made us. Then shall we live according to godliness and true religion, and perfectly answer the end and design of Christianity.

Discourse LI. Abp. *Synge*.

Eternal SALVATION the end and design of RELIGION.

Mat. xix. 16.

What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life.

AS the only end and design that every man ought to propose to himself in his religion, is the attainment of everlasting life, or eternal salvation; the young man in the gospel is therefore highly to be commended for his enquiry, who said unto our Saviour, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" At the time of our Saviour's being upon earth, the Jewish church was divided into two grand parties, the Pharisees and Sadduces; and from the circumstances of the history, it seems probable, that this young man was a Pharisee. However he does not desire to be instructed how he might dispute with learning and subtilty, on the several controversies that were then very commonly debated; or how he might convince or refute the opposite party, was he to engage in disputation with them; but his salvation was what he only regarded, nor did he seem to value any thing that did not conduce thereto. And therefore coming to our blessed Lord, as to a guide in religion, he thought every necessary question was comprehended in this one, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And thus the jaylor at Philippi, who being fully convinced by the miraculous

miraculous earthquake, which shook the foundations, and opened the doors of the prison, that Paul and Silas were the true servants and messengers of God ; was satisfied with putting only one such question as this, “ Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? ” For the better confirmation of this point, that the end of all religion is man’s eternal salvation, it may be necessary to have recourse to the following consideration.

That this is the main end and grand motive which God himself proposes to us. What he is pleased to recommend as the end and design of our embracing religion, we ought to receive and entertain as such. Let us then examine the holy scriptures, and there enquire with what view and intention our Saviour came to teach religion, and for what reason we are required to embrace it. And since mankind, partly by their original corruption, and more especially by their actual transgressions, were become children of wrath, and unqualified to obtain that eternal salvation for which they were at first created ; therefore the very business of our Saviour’s coming into the world, was to save those that were lost, to reclaim and shew them the way of salvation. When he sent his apostles abroad to preach the gospel, this was the only motive he used to induce men to receive it : “ He that believeth and “ is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth “ not shall be damned.” And to the same purpose he tells us, “ that God so loved the world, “ that he gave his only begotten Son ; that whoso- “ ever believeth in him should not perish, but have “ everlasting life.” And in the prayer which he made to his heavenly father, he has left it on record for our support and comfort, that he had “ power to give eternal life to as many as God had “ given him.” Again,

The

The prospect of eternal salvation, is the only thing that can sufficiently encourage and support a good man, under all the difficulties, to which a religious course of life does often expose him in this world. In every work which a prudent man undertakes, the end he proposes to himself ought always to counterbalance whatever trouble or difficulty may reasonably be expected therein. And certain it is, that in the strict profession and practice of religion, there are many difficulties and hardships very often to be encountered. We must strive and struggle with our unruly lusts and passions, arm ourselves against all the alluring temptations of the world and wicked men ; we must despise threatened dangers, and with patience bear the evils that will sometimes attend us, in doing our duty ; we must continually watch and be upon our guard against the assaults and devices of Satan, and be ready to lay down even life itself, should God call us to it, for the sake of our duty and a good conscience. And what view, prospect, or consideration is there to support a man's mind, to bear him up with courage against things so uneasy, and some of them even terrible to nature ? Honour and credit, wealth and prosperity, are indeed sometimes in this world a part of the reward of virtue and piety ; but these are very uncertain on this side the grave ; or were they otherwise, yet how can any temporal thing be a sufficient motive for any man to lay down his life, even in the best cause, when he knows that death will wholly deprive him of his offered reward ? but if once we are strongly possessed with the truth, that there really is such a thing as eternal happiness, to obtain which, religion is the only sure way ; this will make us despise all difficulties in our passage to it. Let troubles and persecutions fall ever so heavy, yet if it be for the sake of God and a good conscience, we may be comforted

comforted with this, “ that our light affliction, “ which is but for a moment, worketh for us a “ far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And if we keep close to our duty, even under the greatest hardships and trials that can befall us, we may reckon with St. Paul, “ That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be “ compared with the glory, which shall be revealed “ in us.”

From these two considerations it fully appears, that eternal salvation is the only end and design, that a man ought to propose to himself in religion ; because this is the very end God recommends to us and the only consideration, that can effectually support us, under all the hardships and difficulties, which our duty requires us to bear and encounter. And indeed, the truth of this observation is so very certain and evident, that no man who has any sense of religion, will dare to deny it. For ask a protestant, papist, or any man who professes to serve and fear God, for what ends he so does ; and he will answer, because he hopes to be thereby everlastingly saved. Again, ask him whether he would continue in the profession he is of, did he not believe he shall be saved in and by it ; and he will readily say, he would not : both which are plain acknowledgments, that the only end every man proposes in his religion, is his everlasting salvation ; which was the observation I first made, and from whence several inferences of great moment and importance may be drawn. And

In the first place we may learn from hence, what is the design of all religious actions that are to be performed by us, either to God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Those which immediately respect God, are prayers, praise, and receiving the holy communion ; those which relate to our neighbour, are justice, truth, mercy and charity ; and

such as concern ourselves, are temperance; patience, mortification and self-denial. For every thing done on a principle of obedience to God's command, may be truly called a religious action; and the only reason or motive to the performing such action is, that the same is pleasing to God, and which he will reward in the next life. And therefore, as the whole of religion consists in the performance of religious actions, and that the end and design of all religion, is to obtain mens eternal salvation; it necessarily follows, that this is what ought to be the end and design of every particular religious action. But some may object, that God proposes to us the welfare and prosperity of this world, as a certain, or at least probable reward of true piety; agreeably to what the wise man says, "length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And St. Paul also tells us, "that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In answer to this I admit, that whatever God has thought fit to propose or promise, as a reward for our good actions, so far, but no farther, we may have a view or respect thereunto. But tho' he sometimes sets before us the good things of this world, as a reward of virtue, yet not with a design to make any of them the end of a virtuous action; but only a means, the more effectually to pursue that great end of our salvation, which should be ever present to us. For however good an action may be in itself, yet if we only consider the temporal reward attending it, and not refer to a farther and better end, such action can never be pleasing and acceptable unto God. For example; honour or praise in the sight of men, is part of temporal encouragement, which God has been pleased

pleased to propose to religion ; Thus “ our light “ should so shine before men, that they seeing our “ good works may glorify God,” and promote the salvation of ourselves and others : and yet our blessed Saviour calls the Pharisees hypocrites, for making this the end of their good actions, namely, to be seen of men, and assures them, they are to expect no farther reward from God. Indeed to encourage our weakness, God is pleased to allure us with a prospect, even of temporal things ; but that we should not set our hearts on such trifles, we are often reminded, how little we ought to regard them, in comparison of things eternal. “ The kingdom of God and his righteousness are first to be sought.” We must not “ labour for “ the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.” This is the “ one “ thing needful, that treasure, and godly pearl,” for the purchase of which a man should be ready to part with all he hath. Again,

From what has been said, it will follow, that when any one attempts to bring another over to the true religion, his only design should be, to promote and set forward his neighbour’s salvation. The Pharisees “ compassed sea and land to make one “ profelyte” to their religion, but so far from helping him in the way to heaven, they make him “ twofold more the child of hell than themselves.” And the method many have taken to make converts, or rather hypocrites, evidently proves, that their design has been more to advance and encrease a party in this world, than to save the souls of men in the next. But if we are in conscience obliged to love our neighbour with the same sincerity, tho’ not degree of affection, that we love ourselves ; then as our everlasting happiness is, or ought to be the only great end and design of our religion, so should we have the same in view, when we en-

deavour to “convert another from the error of his ways.” And this truth being once admitted, the consequence will be, that whoever argues or disputes in defence of religion, ought to do it with all possible calmness and gentleness. Sharpness, anger, heat and violence, generally raise mens passions, obstruct their reason, and render them less capable to receive clear and solid conviction: But a meek and calm management of religious disputes, as it is a great argument of charity, and of a true christian concern for the souls of men, so it very much tends to make an adversary patient and attentive to what is offered; and rightly disposes him to receive every truth, that appears necessary or useful to promote his salvation. And therefore all persons, on such occasions, should have St. Paul’s words deeply impressed on their hearts, “that the servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.” Thus did Christ Jesus, the Son of God, both teach and preach the gospel when on earth. Tho’ he sometimes rebuked with sharpness the abominable wickedness and hypocrisy of the hard-hearted Pharisees, yet he always did it with the greatest gravity and seriousness. But in all other his public sermons and private discourses, we find his most rational and holy doctrine delivered with all imaginable temper and sweetness. And indeed the mighty progress that Christianity soon after made in the world, was in a great measure owing to the same way of teaching, which the apostles and first preachers used. But in process of time, when men began to intermix their passions with religion, and this weakness of nature too powerfully prevailed on many, who defended the truth; the consequence

was, that men took delight to oppose one another, and often mistook each other's meaning ; whereby the Christian church came to be so rent and divided into sects and parties, as without an extraordinary interposition of Almighty God, we have little hopes of seeing it ever restored to that union, it once so happily enjoyed.

And from what has been said, it also clearly follows, that nothing ought to be received as part of religion, but what is necessary to salvation. This inference will better appear true, by distinguishing between a part, and circumstance of religion. Whatever is taken into the body of religion, as of a perpetual and unchangeable nature, may be called part of it ; but a thing that by law or custom, is only joined with any religious performance, and which may, by any authority less than God's, be changed and separated ; such thing, whatever it be, is no part but only a circumstance of religion.—I would illustrate this, by a similitude taken from a man and his garments. The vitals, and every limb of a man's body, are part of him ; take away his vitals, and you destroy his being, or lop a limb, and you lame or maim him ; or was it possible to add a limb, you make him a monster : But as for his clothes, they may be altered and changed, without injury to him. And thus, to love and fear, worship and serve God ; to be just, true, peaceable, humble, charitable, sober and temperate ; to be received into the church by baptism, and after that frequently to partake of the holy communion of Christ's body and blood ; such things as these, which the law of God requires, are always to be considered, as parts of religion, perpetual and unalterable. But the particular hour when a congregation should meet to worship God ; the place where they should assemble ; the particular form of words, in which they should offer

up their devotions ; and the posture of body, to be observed on that occasion : such like things as these, being appointed and settled for the sake of decency and order, are subject to change and alteration by the same human authority that appointed them, when just reason offers ; and therefore are to be regarded in themselves, not as parts, but modes and circumstances of religion, or as the dress and garb of it.

This distinction being premised, the truth of my inference will not require much proof. For since the end and design of every part of a thing, ought to be the same with the whole ; and the true intent of religion being, or should be, eternal salvation ; it follows, that whatever is unnecessary, or does not tend to this end, ought not to be received as a part of religion. On this principle so established, we may very justly reject a great many of those inventions which the church of Rome has introduced and would impose on others. That church has adopted into the very body of religion, and as parts of it, fundry things, that were never delivered by Christ or his apostles ; such as praying to saints, worshipping of images, transubstantiation, worshipping of the host, the sacrifice of the mass, purgatory, prayers and masses for the dead, the pope's supremacy, and their church's infallibility. These particulars they teach and practice, as being perpetual, and to be ever kept up in the Christian church ; and are with them parts of religion. Tho' we can by many convincing arguments prove many of these things false, others unlawful and wicked ; yet it is sufficient for us to reject them, had we no other reason for it than because they would impose them on us, as parts of the Christian religion. For as nothing is to be received as part of religion, but what is necessary to salvation ; so all these things, even supposing them

them lawful, which are not, are manifestly unnecessary in order to this end: Since nothing can be necessary to salvation, but what God has commanded; whose commands are either expressly, or by consequence, contained in the holy scriptures. And if we search them from the beginning to the end, so far from suggesting any the least of these things, as commanded by God; we shall find that on the contrary, they are wholly silent therein, except as to some of them, which are particularly forbidden. So that had we no more to say against these innovations of the Roman church, as in truth we have a great deal, yet this would be enough for us to reject them; namely, that they would force them on us, as parts of religion, when they manifestly are not necessary to salvation.

And it should be observed, that those who dissent from our church, endeavour to turn this argument against us; alledging, that they have the same reason to refuse the cross at baptism, kneeling at the holy communion, wearing the surplice, using the ring in matrimony, and the rest of our ceremonies; because it is confessed on both sides, that these things are in their nature indifferent, and tho' not forbidden by God, yet are no way made necessary, by any command or appointment of his. But the insufficiency of this argument will easily appear, when we consider, that our church does not impose her ceremonies, as part, but only as circumstances of religion; and who declares, that they are in their nature alterable, by the same authority that impose them. And tho' it is certainly true, that we ought not to receive any thing as part of religion, if it be not necessary to salvation, yet it does not follow from thence, but that lawful authority may in many cases, for the sake of order, and to avoid confusion, prescribe and determine the modes and circumstances; which are things very different from the

parts of religion, and that we ought to obey and conform to such determination.

The last inference I shall make, is, that all questions and disputes concerning such things, as are not necessary to salvation, ought as much as possible to be avoided, and excluded from religion. Alas ! what vast and numberless volumes of religious controversies, have been published, to disturb and distract the world ? But did such writers seriously enquire, previous thereto, whether every point they handled was necessary to salvation, both the number and bulk of such books, would have been reduced to a very narrow compass. Indeed would learned men, soberly and peaceably debate, even such points as are not perhaps of any great necessity, without giving disturbance to others, they are not at all to be blamed ; but if the only design of religion and every part of it, be nothing else but the salvation of man, whatever questions or disputations tend not to this end, ought not to be intermixed therewith. Let us then remember the advice of St. Paul, “ to avoid foolish questions, genealogies, contentions and strivings, because they are unprofitable and vain.” That is, they no way promote our salvation, which is the only true end of religion : Also, “ to flee youthful lusts ; to follow righteousness, faith, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they gender to strife.” The devil, in order to hinder us in our Christian course, not only lays the temptations of pleasure and profit in our way ; but also endeavours to raise our vain curiosity, by starting a number of subtil, useless questions : and whilst our minds are too much busied about these trifles, we neglect true faith, piety, charity, and other things, that are of absolute necessity, to the making of our calling and election sure. I shall

shall conclude in the words of the same apostle, with a little variation. “ Forgetting those things
“ which are unnecessary, and reaching forth unto
“ those things which are necessary, let us press
“ toward the mark for the prize of the high
“ calling of God in Christ Jesus.” To which
prize, God of his infinite mercy bring us all;
&c.

Discourse

Discourse LII. Bp. *Clagget.*

Of SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

John iv. 24.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him,
must worship him in spirit and truth.

THESE words are part of our Saviour's discourse to a woman of Samaria. There had been not only a great schism, but a mortal hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans; the former insisted that the temple of Jerusalem was the place where God would have sacrifice offered; but this being denied by the Samaritans, who pretended the temple of mount Gerizim was the place, the woman of Samaria therefore, perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, put this question to him, "our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." But what is thy opinion as to this? To which our Saviour answers two ways. 1. By shewing that there was no occasion for any dispute about it. "Woman, believe me that the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." That is, in a little time, the sacrifices which are offered at Jerusalem or mount Gerezim shall cease, and even the temples be destroyed, and the privilege you contend for, be taken from both. 2. Our Saviour determines the question positively; "ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." That is, tho' you worship the Father of all things, yet you neither

ther know him, nor his will: But the Jews know God's will, and particularly observe it in this, that they offer sacrifices at Jerusalem, the place where God hath recorded his name. This is the place which God hath honoured, and will further honour, by the public preaching of the doctrine of salvation. For in Jerusalem is the word of salvation first to be preached, by the Messiah and his ministers.

Our Saviour, having thus answered the woman's question, proceeds to inform her of things, much more momentous, than the controversy about Gerizim and Jerusalem. "The hour cometh, and now" is, when the true worshippers shall worship the "Father in spirit and in truth; the Father seeketh such to worship him." That is, there is a service, and worship, which both Samaritans and Jews are meer strangers to; of a very different nature from that of sacrificing birds and beasts in a temple; and which consists in offering prayers and thanksgivings to God, from a mind full of piety, purity and charity; and with this worship God is abundantly more delighted, than with whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And the reason why this worship is most pleasing to God, is, because, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him, in spirit and truth."---In discoursing upon these words, I shall endeavour to shew, what we are to understand by, "God is a spirit?" What it is to "worship God in spirit and truth:" And for what reason, we must "worship God in spirit and truth."

The word spirit is here used, to express the nature and essence of God; for God hath nothing of body or matter in his nature, but is purely a mind or spirit. When we say God is a spirit, we mean that he is a free agent, a wise and good, a pure and spiritual Being; that freedom and wisdom, knowledge and goodness is his nature, without body or matter.

matter. And our likeness to the divine nature, in which we are created, does only respect our immaterial and spiritual part. What our Saviour here affirms of the spirituality of the divine nature, was never before delivered as a doctrine of religion; for tho' the spirit of God is frequently mentioned in the old testament, yet our blessed Saviour was the first who informed mankind, that God is a spirit, not concealing so sublime a truth from a woman. A proper foundation this, to remove all superstition and idolatry out of the world; and therefore most fit for him to reveal, who came with full authority from God, universally to reform the mistakes of men, in things relating to God, and to introduce the most perfect way of worshipping him.

And we are to conceive of God, not only as a spirit, which is the most perfect kind of beings, but a spirit infinitely perfect. The spirits of men and angels, have a finite, limited perfection; but God is infinite in all the perfections of a spiritual being. The natural perfections of a spirit, are reason, wisdom, freedom, choice, goodness and virtue; these are its moral perfections; and its divine ones are immense power, omnipresence and eternity; all which are infinite in God; who is the most free agent, of most perfect wisdom and goodness; of irresistible power, of immense presence, and of eternal duration. And tho' it be not expressly said in the old testament, that God is a spirit, yet divine perfections are there frequently attributed to him in a figurative manner, condescending to the capacities of the people. Hence his power is expressed by his arm; his knowledge by eyes; his goodness by bowels; and the like metaphors, taken from human bodies. But these are not used in the new testament, which intends to raise in us higher apprehensions of God, than the Israelites had. That God is a spirit, was discovered by natural reason; but

but it requiring much labour of mind and thought, to prove this by philosophy, therefore our Saviour, who came to instruct men of all capacities in divine truths, delivered this doctrine in a plain proposition, to be believed upon his authority, and the testimonies of divine revelation.—I proceed to enquire, what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth. The answer is, we worship God thus, when we do it with our spirits or minds. We are capable of honouring and worshipping God, two ways; with our bodies, and with our souls. The former is performed by bowing our knees to him, by vocal prayer and thanksgiving, by frequenting places appointed for religious worship, and by all outward professions of serving and honouring God. The worship of our spirits is done by spiritual actions, which only God and ourselves can know: these are reverent and honourable thoughts of him, love of his infinite goodness, fear of his holy justice, faith in his word, reliance upon his wisdom, power and providence, and an humble resignation to his divine will; these are the immediate actions of our minds and reasonable natures. And when we are thus affected towards God, and make a real acknowledgement of his perfections, by a suitable temper and disposition of mind, then do we worship God with our souls. But there is yet something more included in worshipping God in spirit; I mean charity and purity, which being added to piety, or the direct acknowledgments of God's perfections, by love, faith, and good works, do compleat that worship of God in spirit, which our Saviour here speaks of and enjoins.

Goodness, one of the moral perfections of a spirit, consists chiefly in the two virtues of purity and charity, which include all others. To worship God in purity, is to worship him with a mind free from sensuality and worldly lusts, disengaged
from

from luxury and voluptuousness, from ambition and covetousness, from fleshly and carnal desires; and endowed with a spirit of sobriety and temperance, contentedness and chastity, without which virtues a man cannot worship God, as he ought; because the contrary dispositions will hold his spirit in bondage to worldly appetites and affections. To worship God in charity, is to worship him with a mind free from hatred, envy and revenge, and averse to the doing hurt or damage to any one: it is to have an inclination to do good to all men; to assist the needy, to forgive injuries, to love enemies, to pray for persecutors, and promote the welfare of others, in whatever relates to their present and future happiness. Thus to worship God, with a pure and charitable mind, is to worship him not only in spirit, but with the proper and most excellent perfections of a spiritual and reasonable nature, in which we imitate the father of spirits.—The sum of what has been said, is, that God is worshipped in spirit, when we acknowledge his goodness, love him above all things, and adore his spiritual excellencies by suitable affections: when we purify ourselves from worldly and sensual lusts, and are disposed by sincere charity, and good will, to perform all christian offices to every man.

But to make the worship of God in spirit complete, this piety and virtue must be constant and habitual. An irreligious man may sometimes have a fit of piety; a lustful man may by chance reflect on his impure life, with shame and abhorrence; a malicious or uncharitable man, may now and then relent, and be touched with compassion: but the temper of our minds will appear to be good or bad, according to that disposition which chiefly prevails, and is most natural. Therefore to worship God in spirit, is to be habitually pious in the disposition of our minds towards God; and to serve
him

him with that purity and charity, which is constant, and as it were the nature and genius of our minds. This is to worship God in spirit; and which brings me to shew how we are to worship God in truth. Truth is not here opposed to falsehood, but either to that which is less perfect; or to types and figures.

When opposed to what is less perfect, it means all external and bodily worship; which is of much less value and acceptance to God, than the sacrifice of a pious mind, accompanied with purity and charity: and yet too bodily worship is necessary and acceptable. Thus he who loves God with all his heart, does more truly acknowledge his goodness, than all the good words he can give him. He who obeys the will of God, doth more effectually confess his authority, than by bowing his knee; which, without the other, is but flattery. The true worship here is also meant in opposition to the types and figures of Moses's law: because this is that solid, substantial way of serving God, which was prefigured by several rules of outward worship, given to the children of Israel; such as sacrifices, and temples, which were to continue until a reformation was made by Christ. The mind of a good man, is the true temple where God's glory is indeed spoken of; here his great name is honoured, his excellent perfections adored, his immense presence, his infinite power, wisdom and goodness, are effectually acknowledged, by affections suitable to the divine attributes. And his goodness being thus loved, his justice feared, his fidelity and truth relied on, his sovereign dominion owned, by a spirit of obedience and submission, and his purity and charity praised, by our imitation: this is a more effectual acknowledgment of the divine perfections, than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. This is to worship God in truth, or is the substance of divine worship; which was only shadowed

dowed out by some laws to the Jews. to hold no longer than till the gospel was published to the world. I proceed to consider the reason, why we must worship God in spirit and truth.

The force of this reason is, because this is the only worship suitable to the nature of God. As God is a spirit, a being of infinite understanding and reason, he does not think himself served and honoured by us, unless we perform this with our reason and will; that is our minds. The reasonable part of our nature is the best, and comes nearest to the image of God, who is a spirit of infinite goodness and purity; and therefore no worship, no pretence of honouring him, can be acceptable to him, if our minds are impure and uncharitable. "The sacrifice of the wicked, is an abomination to the Lord." As a good man is not pleased with a child's outward likeness to him, if he degenerates from his father's virtues, and does not resemble his moral perfections, which is the best part of his nature; so neither can God, who is the father of spirits, a pure and infinitely perfect being, be pleased with external professions of worship, when that inward goodness and spiritual virtue is wanting, by which only we can resemble the purity and holiness of the divine nature. God being a spirit, we must worship him in spirit and truth; because it is by our minds and spirits, that we bear any resemblance to his perfections.

But it may here be proper to observe, that some have greatly perverted and abused the meaning of these words, and drawn from them very wrong inferences; to wit, that no outward worship is pleasing to God. But this is a great mistake; for our Saviour's reasoning in this place, does no way exclude the duty of giving bodily worship and external honour to God. Here is indeed the spiritual worship I have been describing, opposed principally

cially to the legal sacrifices and the temple service of the Jews, which were to be abolished ; but not to all kind of external worship. For tho' God is a pure spirit, yet as we have bodies, as well as spirits, we are to "glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's." Because God is a spirit, therefore a spiritual worship is most valuable ; but as we have bodies too, we must not neglect bodily worship. We have the example of our Saviour for this ; who shewed external reverence when he prayed ; such as kneeling, lifting up his eyes, and falling prostrate on the ground ; nay, he instituted outward services of religion ; baptism, the Lord's supper, and religious assemblies for divine worship, which could not be performed without external and bodily worship : so that it is very evident, that the words in the text, do not mean to destroy outward religion and bodily worship. But then, on the other hand, we are not from hence to run the service of God into formalities and ceremonies, without bounds or limits, which can no more be justified from these words, than the other.

For instance ; we are not to worship God, by any visible, corporeal representations, as the Israelites did of old, and the church of Rome at present. We are not to worship God by pictures or images, because he is a pure and perfect spirit, the living and true God ; but an image is a senseless, inanimate thing. There cannot be a greater reproach to God, and our Saviour, than to worship him by an image of wood or stone ; because it tends to corrupt the notions people have of God, and to make them think meanly and dishonourably of him. Therefore hath God expressly forbidden the worshipping of any pictures, or images whatsoever. Nor is the outward worship of God, to be clogged with a great number of ceremonies ; as if he delighted more in the outward grandeur and

majesty of service, than in the simplicity of a good mind, and the integrity of faith and obedience. These things are not to be done, lest men be diverted from the most excellent service of God, in spirit and in truth, and be lost in the amusement of pomp and ceremony, things which the common people are most delighted with. Our Saviour therefore thought fit to institute only two positive rites, baptism, and the supper of the Lord; by which it is plain, he never intended to gain people to his service, by the charms of a ceremonious and pompous religion. The external parts of divine service should indeed be adorned with gravity, and all the marks of reverence and decency, which the nature of so holy a service requires; but not with such infinite superstitions and observances, as cannot but hinder a man from being affected with those spiritual considerations and instructions, which are for the edifying and bettering the mind. All things in the christian worship should be done to edification, and with a constant regard to the rule in the text, that God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Indeed,

What concerns outward worship, is with us reduced to a few rules, and these highly serviceable in themselves, and plainly leading to inward purity and real virtue. The admission into the church of Christ by baptism, signifies that purity of heart and life, to which a christian is obliged. The holy communion is the proper means of mortifying our carnal and worldly lusts, and of crucifying the world to us, and ourselves to the world, by the cross of Christ, in hope of everlasting life. Our prayers and praises should be offered up in order to obtain spiritual and eternal blessings. Our religion represents God to us, as a pure and perfect spirit, most holy, wise and good; and it is framed solely to cleanse our minds and reform our lives, by rules of the
most

most perfect piety and virtue.---And yet we may make this pure religion only a form of godliness. We may place our confidence in the outward baptism, without the regeneration of the spirit; in the holy communion, without the love of God, and charity towards men; in an outward profession, without a suitable temper of mind and practice of life. In our prayers, thanksgivings, and religious assemblies, we may draw near to God “with our lips, while our hearts are far from him.” But then in thus doing, we are more inexcusable than the Jews; and it shall be more tolerable for them at the day of judgment, than for us, who have turned the gospel, the grace of God, into wantonness; who have held the christian, the most holy truth in unrighteousness; and have not profited by the most divine dispensations of knowledge and religion.

It is an ill and fatal thing to trust in a form of godliness, without the power of it. If we knowing, and approving the things that are more excellent, make only a shew of religion, when yet our hearts are full of iniquity, and we are in our minds enemies to God by wicked works, we shall in the great day of accounts incur the greater condemnation. But in order to prevent this fatal judgment, as we know that God expects from us a life of piety and charity, of virtue and good works, for our more effectually answering these expectations of God; when we have conversed with his word, and been affected with his service in prayer or praise, let us often reflect in this manner: “Is my nature and
 “temper any way reformed by my worship, and
 “conversing with holy things? am I better able to
 “resist temptations, to deny the pleasures of sin;
 “and more ready to do good, and abound in
 “works of charity? do I more partake of the di-
 “vine nature by God’s service, and live above the

“common principles of worldly wisdom?” And if we find no such effects and alteration wrought in us by our religious worship, all that we have to recommend us to God, is a form of godliness, which tho’ it may deceive ourselves, yet God will not be imposed upon. “God is not mocked, for he is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.” I shall conclude with making a few inferences.

And if God is a spirit, then ought we not to make any visible representations of him. For since his nature is spiritual, and not the object of our sight, our imaginations cannot frame any thing like him, much less can he be represented by any bodily shape. How ridiculous would that limner appear, who endeavours to paint a sound, or to carve the image of an echo? what colours would he make use of to represent the soul of man? And if this would be foolish and impossible, it must be much more so, to delineate that being, whose excellencies and perfections are infinite. To make any image of God derogates from the dignity of his nature; and the impiety of it appears by the light of natural reason; for even Pythagoras, a heathen, forbid his scholars to engrave any shape of God. Again, if God is a spirit, this should teach us to have suitable notions of him. Tho’ the divine nature be incomprehensible, and that we cannot frame a full and adequate notion of a spirit, yet we must conceive the best ideas of him, we possibly can; and whenever we contemplate his infinite essence, to do it with the utmost adoration and veneration.---Hence we may also infer, that the perfection of our nature, chiefly consists in the moral endowments of our soul, for we can only resemble God, in that part of us, which is spiritual. And since wisdom, holiness, power and goodness, are those attributes of God, which render the divine nature

nature so infinitely excellent ; therefore the more our souls partake of the moral perfections of God, the more shall we resemble our heavenly father. We may likewise from hence with confidence expect all those spiritual gifts, which he has promised in his holy word ; that he will protect and support us in times of danger, affliction and distress ; strengthen us in all trials and temptations, and that his grace will be sufficient for us, in all our needs and calamities. And if in this life, we only behold him, as thro' a glass darkly, yet in the next world we shall behold and see him face to face ; he will then enlighten our understandings, give us clearer notions of his being and essence, his glorious attributes and divine perfections. Lastly,

If God is a spirit, then we must worship him, in spirit and truth. Our worship must be spiritual ; and not chiefly to consist in outward ceremonies, or external solemnities, but in suitable dispositions and affections of the soul. Worship is the giving God his due honour, adoring his infinite perfections, and acknowledging him for the great creator and benefactor of mankind. And tho' the best of our services are infinitely below the dignity of that God, to whom we perform them ; yet we must endeavour to make such an offering, as is most suitable to his nature. And since God is a spiritual being, who is every where present and knows all our thoughts, we ought therefore to have a reverential fear of his majesty, awful thoughts of his perfections, and to conform our wills to his divine will. The worship of our bodies is also required of us, as tending to raise devout thoughts in our souls, to remind us of the duty we are about, and to fix our affections upon God ; and since he created our bodies as well as souls, it is but reasonable, that we should yield him the homage of both. But the worship of our souls, is what he chiefly regards ;

out which all external solemnities of religion, will be of no avail. For God is an infinitely perfect spirit, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent; all which perfections require, that we should worship him in spirit and truth. So that our most solemn worship will not be acceptable to God, unless the spirit and soul join with it. We therefore deceive ourselves, if we pretend to worship him, whilst our hearts go after covetousness, and our thoughts are employed about worldly affairs. But as he knows our hearts, can hear our prayers, and supply all our wants, this should induce us to approach the throne of grace with confidence and assurance, in hopes that he will make good all his promises. Let us therefore not only “present our bodies, but our souls also, “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, “which is our reasonable sacrifice. For God is a “spirit; and those who worship him, must worship him in spirit and truth.”

Discourse

Discourse LIII. Dean *Mofs.*

Of the EFFICACY, NECESSITY, and
DUTY of PRAYER.

Mat. vii. 7, 8.

Ask, and it shall be given you :—for every
one that asketh, receiveth, &c.

IT is an enquiry of the first importance, to know upon what the efficacy of prayer is founded, and how derived. One great cause then of the efficacy of prayer, is the benignity of the divine nature, which we call the goodness of God, whereof the whole earth is full. Whatever is needful, or convenient ; comfortable or desirable ; whatever we either want, do enjoy, or may expect ; is always plentifully flowing from that inexhaustible source. To this fountain, we more especially owe all those blessings that we receive in answer to our prayers ; which is sufficiently evident from the illustrations which our Saviour makes use of on the occasion. “ For what man is there of you, says he, whom “ if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? or “ if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? ” that is, will he give him what is useless and hurtful, instead of what is necessary, fit and proper ? “ If ye “ then, being evil, know how to give good gifts “ unto your children, how much more shall your “ heavenly father, which is in heaven, give good “ things to them that ask him ? ”

The argument carries with it a strong conclusion. For if a parent’s affection powerfully inclines

him, however covetous he may be, to supply the necessities of his children, and provide for their welfare; much more will the infinite goodness and liberality of God, extend itself to those who make their supplications to him. For he bears to us the relation of a father, and has a tender care for us, infinitely beyond that of the most indulgent, earthly parent. He is ever ready to hear our prayers, and will liberally give whatever he knows to be really good and fit for us; and unless we render ourselves incapable of it, he will not withhold from us the best of his gifts; for he will give the aid and comfort of his holy spirit, to them that ask him. And as the efficacy of prayer is chiefly founded on God's goodness and beneficence, so it depends upon his wisdom, veracity and power. The wisdom of divine providence appoints prayer, as the necessary means of obtaining what we want; the truth of his sacred promises assures us that those means will be effectual; and by his power it is accomplished. O God, "the eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." This dependance on God, is both reasonable and necessary, to preserve in our minds that submission, duty and gratitude, which we owe to the bountiful creator, for the use and enjoyment of his manifold gifts. And for our encouragement herein, the word of truth declares on God's part, the acceptance of this our homage and service; and his power assures us of a return answerable to our prayers. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth: He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." And in the words of the text, "ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, &c."

So that God's veracity is expressly engaged to perform, what his providence has wisely ordered, and his power is able to effect. If we ask, we shall obtain.

But what adds much to the force and efficacy of prayer, is the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ. For however the goodness of God inclines him to be gracious to us, yet he will not hear sinners: their prayers are an abomination to him. His wrath must first be appeased, and his justice satisfied for sin, before his mercy will shew favour to the sinner. Therefore did Christ "appear once in
" the flesh, to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-
" self. And since God has delivered up his own
" son for us all, how shall he not with him freely
" give us all things? For he is able to save us to
" the utmost, if we come unto God by him, since
" he ever liveth to make intercession for us." The power with which Christ is invested shall never cease, and the merit upon which he pleads, can never be exhausted. On this we may raise and fix our hopes, that whatsoever we ask the father, in the son's name, he will give it us. For all the promises of God in Christ, are sure to be performed, which is the great confirmation of our faith, and a pledge of security, that our prayers shall be heard and answered. So that when we pray for pardon, grace and salvation, we have the claim to these, as having the earnest of the spirit already in our hearts, which entitles us to all that is necessary, to compleat our happiness. For the same blessed spirit, that is the author of those gifts and graces, the first fruits of which all christians do partake, is the helper of our weakness, the sanctifier and furtherer of our prayers, and a secret but powerful intercessor for us. "The spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh
" intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be
" uttered."---I proceed to shew how great the efficacy of prayer is. And

And doubtless it is vastly great and extensive. Mighty things are said of it in scripture. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But tho' the delegation of the power of prayer, by our Saviour to his disciples, extended to natural impossibilities, and was perhaps accompanied with miracles, and a divine faith; yet the faith which we now exercise in prayer, is I apprehend of the same kind, tho' not in degree, with those who were extraordinarily gifted and enabled to work miracles; at least the common measure which is now dealt to all, by the operation of the same spirit, must be sufficient to procure all ordinary blessing, necessary to our real happiness and everlasting salvation; and even capable of farther increase, as the greater glory of God, and the good of his church may require. Upon the whole then, the efficacy of prayer is universal and unlimited, and all things with God are possible by prayer; but yet there are some necessary conditions required, upon which the success of it is suspended, and without which prayer cannot be effectual. For we are not to imagine, that God ordained prayer, merely as an instrument, to enable us to force his blessings from him, or to subject himself to the necessity of giving without discretion, what we may ask without reason. No; but it is requisite in the general, that our prayers should be in all points agreeable to the will of God. For this "is the confidence that we have in him, the Son of God, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

The particular conditions arising out of this general one, may respect the matter of the petition, the state of the person, and manner of the address. The matter of the petition, if we would hope for success, ought to be lawful and good, fit and expedient, and not interfering with God's wise counsels and

and decrees. The state of the person, if he expects to be answered, should be that of a righteous man, or one who sincerely desires and endeavours to be truly penitent for all his sins. The manner of his address, ought to be with all humility and reverence, as in the sight of God; relying with stedfast faith, upon the goodness and truth of God's promises; referring the accomplishment to his wisdom and power, in his own time; persevering therein with earnestness, in proportion to what he prays for; asking for the best things first, with the greatest ardour and affection, and praying moderately for what is of an indifferent nature; expecting the event with patience, receiving it with contentment, and entirely resigning himself into the hands of infinite wisdom and goodness. Such as these are the necessary conditions of prayer, and when thus qualified, "every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." And when these conditions are neglected, let not any man wonder, if his prayer returns empty and without a blessing.

The matter of our petitions ought to be lawful and consonant to God's laws, or they cannot be agreeable to his will; and whoever offends herein, knowingly, is a presumptuous wretch, and his prayers are an abomination: if he does it ignorantly, he is guilty of rashness, in hastily uttering any thing before God, that is not fit and proper: nor is it enough that our petitions are lawful, unless they are also consistent with God's mind and will, such as he requires, and will accept. But we may be assured, that if we pray for spiritual blessings, we shall constantly be heard. God will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." These are good things, perfectly free from all mixture of evil, are entirely well pleasing to God, and which we can
never

never too immoderately desire, or too much solicit their continuance and encrease. And if we “seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,” all things necessary and convenient for this life, shall be added unto us. It is also requisite, that the matter of our petitions should be fit and expedient ; fit for God to grant, as not interfering with his wise and just decrees, or obstructing his glory ; and expedient for us to receive, as likely to prove beneficial to us. And it is but reasonable to intrust all our affairs in the hands of infinite wisdom and goodness, and to suffer God to dispose of his own, as he sees most conducive to his glory, and our real benefit. It would be unreasonable and absurd to expect any thing from him, upon other terms. Nay, his wisdom and goodness is such, as not to grant his creatures what they ask, unless it be really expedient for them. And perhaps this is not the least of God’s mercies. For was he to give whatever some men desired, it would be the greatest curse that God could inflict.

Happy therefore for us, that we are in the disposal of the great creator and preserver of men, who knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust ; who wisely suits his gifts in proportion to our wants and capacities ; of which we are very incompetent judges, being too often misled by blind and ungoverned appetites. But the goodness of God is still more conspicuous in denying us some things really good, and yet making an abundant compensation by giving some other thing, that is far better. Such denial or disappointments are great and most certain proofs of the tender care God has of the righteous, and of his watchful providence over them. Thus when David so earnestly prayed for the life of his child, which might have been a blessing to him, God denied him that request, and yet pardoned his sin, which
was

was by much the greater favour. Thus St. Paul prayed thrice, that the thorn in his flesh might depart from him ; but tho' his prayer was not granted, yet he received more than equivalent for it, even the promise of God's grace by an immediate revelation. " My grace is sufficient for thee ;
" for my strength is made perfect in weakness." From what has been said, it is evident, that our petitions ought to be lawful, and not contrary to God's will ; good and desirable, such as God will accept, and also which he can grant consistently with his own glory ; and both needful and expedient with respect to men.

It is also required that the state of the person who prays, should be that of a righteous man, for 'tis the " effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous
" man only that availeth with God." By a righteous man we are not to understand, one who is without sin, and perfectly innocent ; for there is " not a
" just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth
" not." But such as comply with the terms of the gospel, in forsaking their sins and amending their lives, is here meant. All such persons will be graciously accepted and esteemed as righteous in the sight of God. This evangelical righteousness implies a well grounded faith in the merits and mediation of Christ, an unfeigned repentance for our past sins, and a steadfast purpose of amendment ; without which no man ought to present himself before God, for he heareth not sinners ; but only those who believe in him and our Saviour, and endeavour to do his will with sincerity of heart. As to the conditions which respect the manner of our addressing the Almighty in prayer, they are these following.

Humility and reverence. A sinner however penitent, will find sufficient reason to be humbled, as having acted against his truest interest, his clear-
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est reason, and many obligations of duty and gratitude ; so that when he comes to confess his sins in prayer, he ought to abase himself before God, to revere his dread majesty whom he hath offended, and to adore his infinite mercy, who is still ready to accept his repentance. — Another condition is a steadfast faith. I mean, a perfect reliance on the goodness, truth, and all-sufficiency of God, thro' the merits of Jesus Christ, without any diffidence about the event : Not that this faith implies a confident belief that we shall infallibly obtain whatever we pray for, there being not always just grounds for this ; but only a general assiance in God, waiting with all modest assurance for an answer to our prayers, but referring the time and method to his all-wise providence, who careth for us ; and relying without fear or doubt on God's blessing upon our lawful endeavours. — Earnestness and perseverance, is also necessary in prayer ; “ men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Not that God is to be wearied out by our pressing importunities, or that his blessing should be extorted from him ; but our importunities is the best testimony we can give of an affectionate obedient heart : Especially, when we pray as his words direct, for spiritual things with the greatest vehemency and fervour, and for temporal with more indifference and moderation ; for those that are absolutely good with an earnest desire, and for others with an entire resignation to God's wisdom and goodness. And if God delays his answer and keeps our hopes in suspense, we must still daily reinforce our petitions ; we must not doubt nor distrust his truth and goodness, but persist in our prayers without wavering or fainting ; this is acceptable in his sight, and will recommend us to his favour. Lastly, we must pray with such a degree of purity and innocence in our thoughts and actions, as to render us sincere and upright to-

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wards God. If we would approach his presence with hopes of acceptance, we must cleanse our hands, purify our hearts, and study to be holy, as he is holy. If we draw nigh unto God with an humble reverence, an obedient faith, a persevering trust, and a sincere heart, still labouring after greater perfection ; then will he draw nigh to us, and bestow upon us his favour and protection, his blessing and assistance, the full pardon of our sins, and the free gift of other good things. And this brings me to shew the necessity of prayer.

By prayer is meant that act of devotion, wherein we more immediately address God ; humbly confessing our sins, unfeignedly begging his pardon, imploring his grace and bounty to supply our spiritual and temporal wants, interceding for others, and giving him thanks and praise for all the blessings he has mercifully bestowed upon us. And this is a duty absolutely necessary, whether we respect God or ourselves. With regard to God, it is our bounden duty and service ; and as to ourselves, we can neither live comfortably, nor be happy without it.

Prayer is evidently a duty to God, it being a dictate of nature, and engraven on our hearts. Man by his own reason is sensible of the dependency and impotency of his condition ; of the corruption and pollution of his nature ; which makes him seek for succour to the first, supreme, independent, cause of all things, the fountain of his being and happiness : and the most natural way of addressing God, is for us humbly to prostrate ourselves in prayer, deprecating the divine displeasure, imploring pardon and acceptance, with the continuance of his manifold, tender mercies. And this has been the universal practice of mankind : even the heathens, who were wretchedly mistaken in the object of their worship, and deified almost every

every thing animate and inanimate, yet still they prayed, when there was no ear to hear, nor voice to answer. Again, prayer is a necessary duty we owe to God, because its the highest act of adoration ; implying an awful sense and due apprehension of God's attributes and perfections, and suitable affections and behaviour towards him. In prayer we own his infinite knowledge, presence and power ; and this begets faith and reverence. In confessing our sins and imploring his pardon, we own his holiness, justice and mercy ; and this produces godly fear, tempered with love. In applying to him for help in all our necessities, we testify our belief of his good providence ; and this raises our trust and dependance upon him. In making intercession for others, we acknowledge his all-sufficiency ; and this tends to encrease our faith, love and confidence. In rendering him thanks for all his benefits, we glorify his great name, and give testimony of our own gratitude ; this preserves a sense of our reliance on him, and makes our religious affections warm and vigorous. So that prayer is a most essential part of the worship of God, and therefore a necessary duty. A duty commanded both in the old and new testament. " Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay the vows unto the most high. " Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Our Saviour and his apostles inculcates the same duty. " Watch unto prayer. Pray without ceasing." So that we may be convinced of the necessity of this duty, by the light of nature, and the authority of scripture ; and incited to the practice of it, by the example of our blessed Lord himself.

And yet there are some men, who confine all religion to good, honest morality, as they call it, and regard the outward acts of religious worship as mere formalities, in particular this of prayer ;
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which they think not necessary, because God is infinitely wise, and knows all our wants and desires, without our information ; and that his infinite goodness will incline him to do us good, without our importunate solicitations. But tho' our prayers cannot inform God, nor our importunities properly move him, yet he wisely and justly requires both at our hands, as well for his own honour, as it is a homage due to the Lord of heaven and earth from us his creatures, and also for our benefit, as it tends to exercise our faith, inflame our zeal, and to make us humble and thankful. Again,

Prayer is likewise necessary, with respect to ourselves, as a means without which we cannot expect to be happy, either in this life, or the next. For man is frail and feeble in his constitution, his life is a tender thing, often lost by the very air that gives it being. We are exposed to many wants and dangers, which of ourselves we cannot supply nor prevent. We naturally desire happiness, and eagerly pursue it in various shapes, but in vain : for there is no stability, no satisfaction in earthly things. So that the providence of God, and the light of his countenance, must be our only stay and comfort, and heaven our last resort. And it is prayer alone by which we may present ourselves before the throne of grace, and make our requests known unto God, in hopes that he who " heareth prayer, " will not hide his face from those who diligently " seek him." And this indeed would be a reasonable hope, did not our sins interpose, to set us at an infinite distance from God. For we are all transgressors of his law, debtors to his justice, liable to his wrath and vengeance. This added to our natural infirmities, must needs amaze us, with the terrors of a guilty mind, and a " certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. And the only remedy we have, is heartily to repent of our

sins, to pray that God will pardon them, and by a well grounded faith, rely on the merits of Jesus Christ, who is our propitiation. For if we confess our sins, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But we must also "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; for tho' the spirit indeed be willing, yet the flesh is weak;" its lusts and frailties will entice us to sin: and therefore we must always earnestly pray, that the grace of God may be sufficient for us, and our strength made perfect in weakness. So great, so indispensable a duty is prayer: whether we consider ourselves as men and sinners, or as sojourners on earth, and probationers for eternity: since without prayer, we can have no hopes or assurance of God's protection or pardon, but must live without comfort here, and in endless misery hereafter.

And because we are ignorant of the will of God, and know not how to offer up our prayers, so as to be acceptable to him, it is absolutely necessary, that we should be instructed in this our duty. And therefore our blessed Saviour hath not left us without a remedy for our natural ignorance and blindness, but hath taught us how to pray. For the form he has given us is so perfect, that it comprehends all things necessary or fit for us to ask; and is a model so plain and easy, as that we may from hence frame the matter and manner of all our devotions.

We are directed in this divine form to begin, as becomes us, with the glory of God, which should be our first aim and ultimate end; desiring it may be effectually promoted by the practice of true religion, by its real influence on our hearts, and by an entire obedience to God's will, in the whole course of our lives. We are then to ask for such things

things as are necessary for the support of life, that we may live happily; we proceed to implore God's mercy in the pardon of our sins, without which we must be miserable; and for our better security, we beseech God not to withdraw his grace from us, lest we be overcome by temptation, and fall into great sins. And in the conclusion, we acknowledge God's glory, dominion, and power, and consequently our own dependance, and the just title he has to the homage of our prayers, and the tribute of our praises. Thus divine has our Lord taught us to pray, and happy we, if we come to God in prayer, with suitable affections and dispositions.

And tho' prayer be an immediate address to the throne of God, and that we ought to approach him, with all that awe and reverence, which becomes poor creatures in the presence of their great creator, and vile offenders at the tribunal of their just judge; yet this should not prevent our loving him, as an indulgent father, nor shake our faith in him as a merciful redeemer; but the whole performance should be animated with such a fervent zeal, as becomes those who are sensible of their own frailties and sins, and who earnestly desire the comfortable assurance of finding rest to their souls, thro' the merits and mercies of Christ. And that we may attain this heavenly frame of mind, these devout affections, we must apply for the special aids of divine grace; and then the spirit of God will help our infirmities. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered." The Spirit interceeds for us, as it excites and instructs us to pray, and inspires us with suitable affections; it helps our infirmities, as it aids our weak endeavours, and assists our natural impotence and deadness of affection. And this

gracious assistance of the spirit, may safely and truly be called the gift of prayer. I have only time to make a short application from what has been said.

And if prayer be thus absolutely necessary, as being a principal part of divine worship, a duty not only suggested by the light of nature, but expressly commanded in scripture, taught and recommended both by the doctrine and example of the holy Jesus; if we are also encouraged to the practice of it, by many general promises recorded in holy writ, and assured "that whatever we ask the father, in the son's name, he will give it us:" if we have these great encouragements added to our many obligations, let us not neglect so important a duty. A duty incumbent on us; and which will procure us the blessings of heaven and earth. It is God's singular grace and favour to admit us into his presence, and our great privilege and honour, that we can approach him, to make our wants known. But if we slight his favours, and deny him his just homage; if he calls, but we refuse, and regard not; then will he hide his face from us in time of need; then will he laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh. Again,

If prayer be such a necessary means, that without it, we can neither live comfortably here, nor be happy hereafter; than ought we to be constant and fervent in our devotions, as we tender the blessings of this world and the next. For if our blessed Saviour, who knew no sin, prayed 'till he sweat drops of blood; if he who was ministered to by angels, yet frequently had recourse to prayer, and sometimes continued all night in it; what shall dust and ashes do? we whose weakness is so much, whose wants are so many, whose dangers are infinite, whose sins are so odious in the sight of God? why, let us not be deterred or discouraged from addressing ourselves to the throne of grace; for those

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things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, God will vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of his son Jesus Christ our Lord. And to help our natural ignorance and spiritual darkness, he has left us a most absolute divine form of prayer. Let us use this to our own comfort, and in obedience to him, who taught us, being assured, that nothing can be more acceptable to God, than the words of his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and not doubting, but what we compose after this perfect pattern, is also according to God's will. But should we find in us, a lifeless indisposition or secret aversion to prayer, and think our ourselves unable to withdraw our affections from the world, to raise and fix them where they ought to be; yet let not this tempt us to imagine the thing impossible; but let us continue to pray, that we may learn to pray. For prayer is a gift attainable by exercise, assisted by God's grace. "And the spirit also helpeth our infirmities;" not by sudden infusion, but by working together with our endeavours, gradually enlightening our minds, cleansing our hearts, spiritualizing our affections, and at last sanctifying us wholly to the service of God.

Discourse LIV. Dr. *Littleton*.

Our FATHER which art in HEAVEN.

Mat. 6. ix.

Our father which art in heaven.

THE duty of making our requests to God with a proper sense of our dependance on him, is a matter of such infinite moment and concern to us, that it can never be too frequently considered and inculcated: and these words being well known to be the preface or introduction to that excellent form of prayer, which our Saviour composed at first for the use of his disciples, and after them for the whole Christian church, may be supposed to convey to us such an idea of the supreme being, as it is fit we should entertain, when we approach the throne of grace, to make our prayers and supplications to him.

And whatever conceptions we ought to have, either of the nature and attributes of God, or of the relation which he bears to us, when we are actually employed, by the direction of our Lord, in paying worship and adoration to him; the same should we preserve in our minds, as much as possible, in all times and places: not only to keep us constantly and habitually prepared for the exercise of this necessary duty, but also to dispose us to the performance of all duties; to promote which, a right knowledge of God's nature and our own, is of the greatest and most likely to conduce. Since therefore our Father and preserver of our being, is

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represented to us, under the character of a father, and particularly distinguished from our earthly parents, by his residence or abode in heaven ; it may be worth our time and patience, to consider the true import of the words, and what we are to understand, when we address ourselves to God in this form, which our Lord has taught us.

And by the title or character of father, is here represented the relation between God and us, as he gave us our life and being. It was He that formed our first parent Adam, “ and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul.” And it was he who established that wonderful order, by which a successive race of men is perpetually arising, and shall so continue to the end of the world, when life shall be swallowed up in immortality ; for our parents according to the flesh were but instruments or means in the hands of his providence, to accomplish his most gracious purposes. It was his goodness that designed, and his wisdom that contrived it ; and it is by virtue of his absolute and supreme dominion, that the whole race is not utterly extinct. In this sense then, as he gave being to the species at first, and continues incessantly to give life to every individual, not only we Christians, but mankind in general, may very properly call God their father. But,

There is another sense wherein Christians are entitled, thro’ the wonderful goodness and condescension of God, more peculiarly to call him their father ; for having forfeited their relation to him as children, by their wickedness and disobedience, they were called again, on condition of amendment, to be his children by adoption and grace ; whereby they are assured, thro’ God’s special promise, of many privileges they had before lost ; and are admitted to a nearer and more intimate relation, to the great fountain of their life and being. This indeed, is

the only scripture sense, in which Christians are called the sons of God ; the natural relation between God and us, being supposed to be quite cancelled and destroyed, and a new one introduced, not grafted on the old, but independent and exclusive of it. The natural man is supposed to be dead, and a new creature substituted in his room ; the change which is wrought on his heart by baptism, is called a new birth unto righteousness. And the person thus entering into covenant with God, is understood to be regenerate, or born again ; not converted, reformed, or altered. And from hence came that notion, which once obtained among Christians, that persons baptized were so divested of themselves, that they lost all distinctions of blood and family, and afterwards had no other relation to each other, than as being knit together and united in Christ.

But it is very evident from scripture, that by virtue of this mystical or figurative death, whereby “ the old man is crucified with his affections and
“ lusts, and the new man is put on, which after
“ God is created in righteousness and holiness,” we received a new right to call God our Father, which we could not have by nature : and that in such a sense, as carries with it an assurance of great favour and affection to us, and gives us reason to expect, that as we are sons, we shall be heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ.—This is the true and most considerable kind of relation between God and us, arising from “ that spirit of adoption in our hearts,
“ whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” But there is another sense in which God may be called our Father, arising from the experience of his goodness to us, in every circumstance and occurrence of our lives. How often should we perish by our own wisest projects, did not he in his mercy, either frustrate, disappoint, or turn them to our advantage by such means and
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methods, as we should have thought almost impossible to succeed? How often should we sink under the weight of evils, brought on us by our own faults and follies, were we not rescued by his fatherly care? nay, how should we subsist or preserve our beings, did not his bounty constantly relieve our wants, “giving us rain from heaven, and “fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and “gladness.” The lines and marks of God’s general providence are very visible in the great book of nature, from which it appears, that he is loving unto all, and that his mercy is over all his works. Besides these, there are many instances of a more immediate providence aiding and assisting us in every action of our lives, which we must be very inattentive, not to have observed; and very unthankful, if we forget. He therefore who thus governs and directs our actions, who protects our persons, supplies our wants, preserves our being, and promotes our happiness by ways and means unknown to us, may very properly be stiled a Father; in like manner as we give the same title to men, who in compliance with the dictates of humanity and compassion, are ready and willing to promote the happiness of others. Such men we are apt to say, have been Fathers to us, as having treated us with the same tenderness and affection, that any dutiful, obedient and deserving child might expect from an indulgent parent. When such generous, beneficent actions are not limited and confined to the advantage of any single person, but are of a general and public nature, extending to the benefit of a whole community, and calculated for the relief of multitudes; the person thus acting in an elevated station, distributing liberally God’s blessing among his fellow creatures, is by the concurring testimony of all grateful for the same reason, called the Father of his country. But much more may we call him, who is the giver
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of these gifts, who first bestows the power, and then the will and inclination to do good, on such his representatives on earth; I say, for a much greater reason, may we call him our Father. Therefore,

When in obedience to our Lord's commands, we offer up our petitions to Almighty God, in this excellent and divine form of prayer, it will be a duty incumbent on us, (especially in our private devotions, when we may take our own time, and are at liberty to meditate as long as we please, on all or any part of the prayer) as often as we address ourselves to Almighty God by the title and character of Father, to consider him in these several views. First, As he created us. Secondly, As he preserves us. And thirdly, As he has adopted us for sons. With these considerations the very use of the word will become an act of praise and thanksgiving: not only a title to denote and signify that being to whom we offer up our prayers, but it will be also the testimony or acknowledgment of grateful hearts, that are sensible of God's mercy, in giving us our being, in protecting us from danger, and in calling us to the adoption of sons. And indeed it is impossible in our privacy and retirement, to think on these things with any great attention, but the heart will melt and overflow with gratitude to so amiable and kind a being; who called us out of nothing to the exercise of reason, to the enjoyment of those blessings, which he plentifully bestows on us, and above all to the contemplation of his own nature and attributes, on which we may perpetually be employed, in new acts of delight and wonder; who preserves us in this state thro' the greatness of his mercy, notwithstanding our endeavours to provoke his vengeance; by our wilful disobedience to him; and who rescues us from this state of disobedience, by that spirit of adoption and grace, by which we
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are renewed and made like unto him, and prepared by a conformity to his nature here, for the enjoyment of his presence hereafter. These surely are such inestimable benefits, such instances of goodness and mercy, that we must have very cold and frozen hearts, if we are not affected with the highest sense of gratitude to God, when we consider for what reasons, and in what sense, we are allowed to call him our Father.

But it is not by the character of a father only, that we are taught to offer up our requests to God, by the direction of our blessed Saviour, but of a father, who resides in heaven. The place of his residence is represented to our view, to remind us of his infinite perfections, and to inform us, “that as
“the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his
“thoughts higher than our thoughts, and his ways
“than our ways.” There is scarce any excellence or perfection of his nature, that will not force itself to our notice, when we consider him in full majesty, thus seated and enthroned in heaven; or, rather when we contemplate the immensity of his nature, circumscribed by no bounds or limits, but filling the heavens as well as the earth, and providing for the support of both. What notion may we conceive of that being’s greatness, whom even the heaven of heavens is not able to contain? What notion must we have of his wisdom and power, when we consider him ever present in all parts of his creation, surveying at one view the most distant places; and tho’ “he is in his holy temple, tho’ his throne is in
“heaven, yet with his eyes beholding, and with his
“eyelids trying the children of men!” Again, what an idea of his goodness to us men ought we to have, “who tho’ he hath his dwelling so high, yet hum-
“bleth himself to behold the things that are in hea-
“ven and earth!” As therefore the appellation or name of father may be used as a proper expression
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of our gratitude to God, for the mercies we have received ; so the epithet of heavenly, or which art in heaven, is a very fit introduction to that worship and adoration which is paid him in the following words, “ hallowed be thy name ;” and both together thus opened and explained, afford us two useful lessons.

One is, that this and all other prayers which we present to God, should be offered with a religious awe, suitable to the greatness and majesty of God, and our own meanness and unworthiness to approach him. As God said to the conceited Jew who trusted in his vain oblations, “ thinkest thou that I will eat bulls flesh, and drink the blood of goats ? “ offer unto God thanksgiving :” so might he say to any christian, who relies on the performance of this better sacrifice ; thinkest thou, that I am pleased with thy proud submission, thy presumptuous tribute of praise and thanksgiving, as a suitable return, just equivalent, or full requital of my favours to thee ? no : offer unto God an humble spirit. Thus may our Father which is in heaven expostulate with us poor sinners on earth, if we presume to depend on our praises and thanksgivings, tho’ of all offerings we can make, they are most disinterested ; much less should we set a value on our prayers and supplications, our repentance for past sins, our desire of forgiveness, or any thing which implies that we are indigent, needy, and afflicted beings. Such things as these, are all intended for our own benefit and advantage, nor can we ever assume any merit to ourselves, for having only been so wise and true to our own interest, as to apply to God for relief under want, for the removal of any evil, or the attainment of some future blessing. In this case therefore, if we come before the Lord with thousands of prayers, and ten thousand rivers of tears ; however serviceable thro’ his mercy this may be to ourselves, yet still we are unprofitable servants. His

happinefs can neither be promoted or difturbed, diminished or encreafed, by any act of ours. It redounds not to his profit, that we are dutiful and obedient ; nor to his honour that we afcribe glory to him. The beft we can do no otherwife pleafes him, than as being conformable to the law of nature and reason, or to fome other command, which, for our fakes, he has prefcribed.

Since therefore 'tis neither profit nor pleasure to the Almighty, that we pay him worfhip and adoration ; fince it is only for our good, that he requires us to perform it, and that we fhall have a reward for fo doing ; let us then, when we offer up our prayers to him, ferioufly confider in whole prefence we are going to appear. Let us remember he is our Father ; a moft endearing title, expreffive of reverence and refpect ; a title which fhould deter us from making any difrefpectful, indecent, or unpremeditated request. Let us alfo confider, that he is no earthly parent, fubject to the prejudices and errors of an ignorant and partial fondnefs ; but whatever artifices we may ufe, whatever colours and difguifes we may affume, he ftill obferves and knows what we really are. That as he is too wife, not to fee our guilt, fo he is of purer eyes, than to behold it with impunity ; and will have no regard to the requests of thofe, who endeavour not to approve themfelves his genuine offspring, by refembling him in the purity of his nature. Let it be further remembered, that tho' of his goodnefs, he is pleafed to admit us unworthy as we are, to the privileges and names of fons, yet we are no more than his creatures ; for the fame diftance of nature ftill remains between us. We are the works of his hands, and infinitely more inferior to him, than any the moft defpicable part of the brute or inanimate creation, is, to the higheft of thofe exalted fpirits, that continually encompass the throne of God ; whole excellence
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and happiness it is, for ever to enjoy the blessed vision of their great creator, to be perpetually employed in the highest offices of devotion, and the most sublime extasies of love and admiration. "Let the potsherd therefore strive with the potsherds of the earth;" let us vie with each other in those acts of virtue, which tend to raise and refine our nature; but let us all when we come into the presence of God, approach him with the most submissive reverence. Let us remember how vastly great the distance is between us; let us always esteem and be perfectly well satisfied, with the high privilege and honour of being allowed to offer up our supplications to the throne of grace, and rejoice at his declaring, that he is well pleased with our praise and thanksgiving, and will not reject our prayers.

And therefore, notwithstanding our vileness and unworthiness to receive favours from him, let us approach his presence with the confidence of sons, in full assurance that our prayers will be heard, and our requests granted, if expedient for us. What "man is there of you," says our blessed Saviour, "who if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or, if he ask fish, will give him a serpent?" There is something in the very name and relation of father, that implies a proneness and readiness to give; a desire to administer to the want of his children, and to gratify them in all reasonable requests; and much more may we expect this from "our Father which is in heaven," than from any earthly parent; because one reason why we call him father, is the experience of his bounty to us, who unasked, relieves us in all difficulties and wants. This therefore we should remember with gratitude and respect, as an earnest of his future favours, who has encouraged us with a promise, that if we ask, we shall receive. But from the epithet heavenly, which distinguishes

tinguishes him from our earthly parents, we may further observe, that we can with safety rely on his wisdom to discern, and his power to supply our wants. An earthly parent may be fully acquainted with the needs and necessities of his child, but perhaps has not power or ability to supply them; or, should he be able to assist him therein, he may be at a loss how to do it, for the child's greatest interest and advantage. But "our Father which is in heaven," not only sees our present wants and distresses, but is perfectly acquainted with the tendencies and effects of all we do and suffer; and if we submit to his will and pleasure, and leave the issue of things to his unerring wisdom, he will not fail of so ordering and disposing them to our benefit and advantage, that in the end we shall have cause to admire his wisdom, and praise him for his goodness to us; displayed, either by gratifying our desires, by disappointing our hopes, by averting those evils we ignorantly asked, or correcting us with such salutary discipline, as however irksome and afflicting it may appear for the present, will at last prove most beneficial for us.

Lastly, in all our requests and supplications to God, we must have a due regard to the good of other men. We must not be so narrow and contracted in our views, as to aim at nothing but our own private benefit; but must enlarge our requests with a truly Christian charity for the good of mankind in general; who, as having one common parent, one creator and preserver, should love as brethren, and endeavour to promote the good of others by all services and kind office within their power; of which there can be none greater, than by our prayers to procure God's blessing for them. And this is the reason the Lord's prayer is composed in the plural stile, teaching us thereby that what we think reasonable for ourselves, we should endeavour
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also to procure for our brethren.—When therefore we use this excellent prayer, and which should never be omitted whenever we pray, let us always prepare our hearts for it, by reflecting on God's awful majesty, and our own unworthiness to ask any thing of so pure a being ; and let us also remember, how great his mercy is, that he bears with our frailties, and relieves our necessities with the kindness and compassion of a father ; that he admits us to the title and privileges of sons, and allows us, thro' the merits and intercession of our Redeemer, “ to come boldly to the throne of grace. For these and all other mercies, let our hearts be filled with gratitude, and a great sense of his excellencies and perfections. This is the best way of ascribing glory to God, and to kindle such love towards him, as will display itself in the most diffusive benevolence to mankind ; such a love will qualify us to ask any thing of God, and by his grace dispose us to pray for others, with as much zeal as for ourselves. And this seems to be the frame and disposition of mind, which we all ought to endeavour after, when we direct our prayers to almighty God, in that short, but comprehensive and affectionate address, “ Our Father which art in heaven.”

To conclude ; God hath not only taught us to ask him in this prayer, what is necessary for us, because he is our heavenly Father, but thro' every petition he hath instructed us what duty we owe to him, as our Father. In the first petition, “ hallowed be thy name ;” we express our reverence to his majesty. In the second, “ thy kingdom come ;” our love of his goodness, and our desire to live with him for ever. In the third, “ thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ;” our subjection to his authority, and our obedience to his commands. In the fourth, “ give us this day our daily bread ;” our dependance upon his providence, care and bounty.

bounty. In the fifth, “forgive us our trespasses, “as we forgive them that trespass against us;” our hope in his mercy, and belief of his word. In the last, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us “from evil;” we express our trust in his power, wisdom, and goodness, and in the grace of his good providence. And all these are duties that we owe to our heavenly Father. So that this prayer of our Lord, not only teaches us what we are to request of God, but what we are to be ourselves. And there is that fulness of sense, that plainness and simplicity of expression, those edifying instructions, so easy to be understood by all, and not unworthy the consideration of any; in short, there is that excellency in this form of prayer, that none but its divine author could have dictated so admirable a composition. It is a prayer that may be said by the angels in heaven, except such passages as respect our sinful, frail, and mortal nature. And while we live in houses of clay, and are encompassed with temptations and infirmities, there is no prayer which can better express our sense of God’s goodness towards us, to whom we are to apply, as children to our Father; nor our emulation to imitate the purity and perfection of the blessed spirits above, while we desire, that God’s “will may be “done on earth, as it is in heaven;” nor can more effectually excite in us all those good affections that are necessary to a devout addressing ourselves to almighty God, than what this divine prayer supplies us with.

Discourse LV. Dean *Moss*.

HALLOWED be thy NAME.

Mat. vi. 9.

Hallowed be thy name.

BESIDES the weight and worth of the subject matter, the fulness and fitness of the expressions, the whole composition of this excellent form of prayer is so admirably framed, and its several parts so wisely ordered, as serves at once to direct and assist us in our devotions, and also to beget in us such affections and dispositions of soul, as may best correspond with the solemnity of the duty in general, and with every single petition in particular. This will appear very evident by a distinct examination of the several parts thereof. For how could we more becomingly and acceptably approach God, than in the endearing and yet awful name of Father, which equally influences our fear and love, and reminds us of that obedience, which should be the natural effect of both ; and yet to animate us with such a degree of confidence, as is consistent with filial piety, and sufficient also to encourage us constantly to pray and not to faint ? And to consider God as the common father of us all, how does it enlarge our thoughts in the contemplation of his unlimited mercy and loving-kindness ; excite in us a god-like spirit of universal love and good-will ; remind us of our great obligations to our heavenly Father, as being his adopted sons, and our near alliance to one another, as brethren and fellow Christians ?

stians? Lastly, when we pray, “our father which art in heaven,” how lowly and humbly should it make us in his sight, and how fearful of offending him, since “God is in heaven, and we upon earth?” How should it take us off from this world, to fix our meditations and affections on things above, where “Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father, of his and our Father?” And having thus presented ourselves before God, with an introduction the most effectual to recommend us and all our services to his favourable acceptance, we may then presume to offer him up such petitions, as our great mediator and intercessor has taught us to use in his name. The first of these in order is, “hallowed be thy name.”

And this has justly the precedence of all the rest. For as the glory of God is, or should be the last aim and end of all our actions, especially such as are religious; so it worthily deserves to be our first care, and the most earnest expressions of our zeal. Indeed, this and the two following petitions, are but so many devout aspirations tending to display the honour of God, and make his praise glorious, without any regard to our own good, which in reason ought to be postponed. And that we may the better understand the sense and meaning of this petition, I shall shew what is meant by the name of God; what by “hallowing his name,” and how it may be “hallowed by us.”

By the name of God, we are primarily to understand his incomprehensible majesty, ever blessed nature, and most glorious attributes; all that we know essentially to belong to him, however manifested in his works or word. As names are imposed on things to distinguish one from another, so the transcendent perfection to the divine nature, being such as eminently distinguish, and infinitely exalt him above all other beings, his name is there-

fore put for his all-perfect nature, by which he stands thus distinguished. And because God's superlative excellence is such, as no creature is able to describe or conceive; for this reason it is, that the holy scripture speaks of him under several titles, some of which denote his eternal, necessary existence, others his almighty power, sovereign dominion, and the rest of his attributes; all which being inseparable from his nature, constitute him a being absolutely perfect. And 'tis these his infinite perfections, which we are here to understand by his name; because such would be the proper name of a being so incomparably great, wonderful, and holy, as God is, could we possibly find a word sufficient to express, and fit to convey it to our understanding. But by the name of God the Lord, we may reasonably suppose is also meant, not only what signifies his essence as God, but likewise all that bears an immediate relation to him; as the times and places set apart for the solemn performance of his worship, the persons ordained to minister therein, and the revenues allotted for their maintenance. Such things as these, are in scripture called by his name, as being properly and peculiarly his, and by which his "name may be hallowed." For as the supereminent dignity of his nature, is the worthy object of our adoration; so is his outward worship, and whatever is necessary to the due celebration thereof, the proper testimony of our outward esteem and veneration for him, and a public declaration of it to the world.

I now proceed to consider, what is meant by "hallowing his name," and how it may be hallowed by us. To hallow, or sanctify the name of God, whether applied to the Godhead itself, or to the things appropriated to its use and service, cannot signify to make it holy. For as there is no
 occasion

occasion to confer any holiness, so neither is it in our power to do it, in either respect; God being in his own nature originally and essentially holy, and so perfect in every degree, that 'tis impossible for him to receive any the least accession thereto, by any act of ours. All that we can do, is to "bless his glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise;" to extol and laud his greatness, with whom none may be compared. And when we thus give honour and glory to him, then do we, in the scripture sense, sanctify and glorify his name; that is, esteem and testify a regard for him, in some measure suitable to the pre-eminence of his divine nature. As to the things dedicated to holy uses, they have no intrinsic, but only a relative sort of sanctity; and all that is incumbent upon us, is to apply them to those purposes for which they are set apart, to hold them sacred by virtue of that relation wherewith they are honoured, and to use them with marks of distinction and respect, above other common things. For such a peculiar regard paid to the things that are God's, will redound to his honour and praise. That the sanctifying and glorifying of God's name, consist partly in that adoration and honour which is alone due to him, and partly in that reverent usage and treatment of things appertaining to him, is very evident from holy scripture. "I will (says God) be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people will I be glorified." That is, God, will be worshipped by those that approach his altar, after the manner which he has commanded. Nor will he suffer others to be worshipped or sanctified as himself. For he thus solemnly declares; "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another, neither my promise to graven images." Having thus in general stated the true notion of hallowing, or sanctifying the

name of God, as it signifies either his most excellent nature, or whatever has a peculiar relation to him, it may be useful to enquire how, and in what instances, he is to be sanctified in both these respects : And this may be done, by framing to ourselves due apprehensions of his excellencies and perfections : by devoutly worshipping him, and reverently demeaning ourselves towards him ; by a suitable respect to whatever belongs to religion, and is any way employed in his service.

We must sanctify and glorify the name of God, by framing to ourselves due apprehensions of his excellencies and perfections. This is the real foundation of that singular esteem and veneration, which we profess to have for him. And that we may sanctify him after a proper manner, it will be necessary for us to have just and worthy conceptions of him, at least so far as our understandings will permit. And we may easily conceive him to be a being infinitely removed from all imperfection, and eminently endued with all possible perfections ; some of which are absolutely incommunicable to any creature, such as his simplicity, unity, immutability, omnipotence, and eternity. Others are in some degree communicable to us, such as his knowledge, goodness, truth, justice, power, and dominion, which in him are all infinite. But tho' we cannot rightly estimate his unlimited perfections, yet 'tis we remember that his nature is incomprehensible, and his ways past finding out : If we are ready to own and adore all his perfections, and to lay the foundation of our religious duty in such wo thy apprehensions of him, as are discoverable by the light of reason and revelation ; then shall we worthily sanctify his holy name, and render him the glory that is his due. Again,

We must devoutly worship, and reverently demean ourselves towards God in our whole conversation.

fation. The worship of God is both internal and external. The former consists in the profoundest admiration and veneration of God's incomparable majesty, in such pious acts and habits of the soul as naturally flow from the consideration of the divine excellencies ; namely, faith, hope, trust, love, fear, resignation and obedience. For no being can be the object of these, but who is infinitely and eternally wise and faithful, just, good, and powerful. When therefore we perform these religious acts to God, the eternal and sole object of them ; we then sanctify and glorify his name, as we distinguish him from, and prefer him before, all other beings. And when the love of God, and sense of our duty, do so influence our conversation, as to make us just and charitable, sober and chaste, patient and contented, humble and meek, inoffensive and blameless ; then also do we sanctify God, as the lustre of a life so exemplary occasions others to glorify our heavenly Father, the giver of such grace, and highly to esteem that religion, which is able to produce effects so apparently good, and conducive to our present welfare and future happiness. As to external worship, that consists in vocal prayer, praises and thanksgivings, with such other religious rites and ceremonies as Christ himself instituted, or the church has thought decent and " fit to be appointed for the use of edifying." All which are designed to testify our inward esteem and veneration for God, and tend to acknowledge some of his most glorious attributes. For in praying to him on all emergencies we own his infinite presence, wisdom, power and providence ; in confessing our sins, and imploring his pardon, we acknowledge his holiness, justice and dominion over us, and also thereby extol his mercy ; in rendering him thanks and praise for all his benefits, we " declare the loving kindness of

“the Lord,” the riches of his goodness, and our necessary dependance on him ; in strictly observing such religious rites as Christ instituted, or his church have appointed in matters indifferent, we submit to his wisdom and authority ; and in all these we sanctify his great name.

We also hallow God’s name, by paying respect to whatever belongs to religion, or relates to his worship. The service of God cannot be performed without several necessary circumstances, such as certain times and places, proper instruments, or agents, to be employed therein. For which reason God has been pleased to delegate a power to the pastors of his church, to separate a certain order of men, to minister in holy things ; who he has appointed should be provided for, by inclining the hearts of religious and pious persons to devote a certain portion of their substance to such uses, it being the care of his providence, that the “Ministers of the gospel should live of the gospel.” So that in the times and places appointed for divine worship, in the ministers who attend upon it, and the maintenance provided for them, we may and ought to sanctify the name of God. These things more immediately appertaining to his worship and service, the least we can do is to appropriate them wholly to his use, and esteem them sacred on that account. The respect which is due to things sacred, for the sake of him by whose name they are called, consists in these particulars.

That we are most religiously to observe, and devoutly employ the times set apart for divine worship, in prayer, thanksgiving, spiritual songs, hearing and reading God’s word, and other pious meditations. This God expects, and will accept as an honour done him. “If thou turn away thy foot
“from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my
“holy

“ holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy
“ of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him,
“ not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own
“ pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then
“ shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I
“ will cause thee to ride upon the high places of
“ the earth.” And as God thus strictly required
the Jews to keep the sabbath, and thereby sanctify
his name, so will he, and with good reason, still
be honoured by the religious observation of the
Lord’s day, and such other holy days, as are con-
secrated to the same purpose.—As for those places
wherein God is to be worshipped, they are to be
esteemed venerable, in regard God is there more
especially present ; and therefore they should not
be profaned by common use, or any indecent, irre-
verent thoughts and actions. But if we would
rightly sanctify the name of God, in his holy place,
we should approach it with all humility and godly
fear, saying and thinking with the patriarch Jacob,
“ how dreadful is this place ! This is none other
“ but the house of God, and this is the gate of
“ heaven.” We should endeavour to raise our
thoughts and desires towards heaven, to set our
affections on things above, to signify the intentions
and devotions of our hearts, by such humble ge-
stures and other expressions of zeal and reverence, as
becomes the awful presence of him, before whom
we are. This, God of old required, “ thou shalt
“ keep my sabbath, and reverence my sanctuary ;”
and the reason of that precept is perpetual, it
being necessary to have certain times and places
set apart for God’s worship, under the gospel, as
well as the law.—There is also a particular re-
gard due to the ministers of God, both from them-
selves and others. They of all men are obliged
to reverence themselves, that is, to consider the
character they bear, and act suitably thereto ; they
should

should remember they are the ambassadors of God, and ought to do nothing unworthy that honour and trust ; that they are separated for the work to which they are called, and therefore ought not to “ be conformed to this world,” nor to live as do other men ; they should “ take heed to themselves “ and their doctrines,” make their own conversation the proof of its truth and power, that they may sanctify the name of God in themselves, and turn many to righteousness. On this foundation they have a just title to be honourably treated by others, as the “ ministers of Christ, and stewards of the “ mysteries of God.” They ought to be highly esteemed for their work’s sake, which is to love and take care of the immortal souls of men. And this esteem will be best expressed by duly regarding their admonitions and exhortations, their reproofs and censures, by transcribing their doctrine and example into practice, and by rewarding their labours with an honourable maintenance and respect, that so they may properly attend their office, without the avocation or distraction of worldly cares. And this will also redound to God’s honour, who has wisely ordained, “ that those who sow spiritual “ things, should reap carnal.” And whatever portion men do cheerfully allot, as a provision for his servants, he graciously accepts as a tribute of praise, and gratitude to himself.

In short then, the name of God, signifying his incomprehensible nature, is sanctified, when we glorify him as God, by acknowledging his infinite and incommunicable perfections, celebrating his praise, making his glory the great aim and end of all our actions. If we take it as meaning such things as bear his name and inscription, then it is sanctified by regarding and using them as God’s peculiar property, and as the dignity of that relation deserves. And if we would rightly discharge our duty

duty in both these respects, we must frame to ourselves due apprehensions of the divine excellencies and perfections; we must esteem and revere him, as a Being worthy to receive all power, honour, glory, and blessing; no less homage being due to his most excellent majesty: we must constantly worship him with a holy worship, and demean ourselves in our whole conversation, as best becomes the worthy apprehensions we have of him. For divine worship very significantly expresses our high esteem and veneration of God; and an exemplary, unblameable life, is a sure testimony that we desire to give glory to God, by endeavouring to be "holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect." And that God's name may be every where sanctified, we should pay a proportionable respect to whatever appertains to religion, or that relates to, or is employed in his service; such as the times and places for public worship, and the persons ordained to minister in holy things. And when we express a conscientious care, and prudent zeal in all these things, then is God's name sanctified in the most acceptable manner.

This petition, if well weighed and considered, has also a great tendency to excite in us such holy affections and dispositions, as are suitable to the nature of that duty in which we are employed; as namely, profound reverence, fervency of spirit, and heavenly-mindedness. For when we sanctify the name of God, we cannot but reflect on his peerless majesty, and absolute perfections; his wonderful works, the beauty of his providence, the harmony and wisdom of all his dispensations, and the mighty power that created all things; and these must needs strike us with admiration, and fill our thoughts with awe and reverence: Especially if we consider, which we cannot well avoid, when addressing God in prayer, that we are in the more
immediate

immediate presence of the dreadful majesty of heaven and earth, who is solemnly giving audience to us, accepting our homage, and ready to admit us, if we are in any degree worthy, into his grace and favour. Were we allowed the privilege to approach the presence, and lay our petitions before an earthly prince we should certainly appear in the most submissive, dutiful manner, and express all the tokens of an humble, grateful heart. How much more then should we possess our minds with a holy dread, and behave with the most reverent deportment, when we come before the king of kings, the lord and governor of the world? And if we preserve in our minds the sense of this petition, it will excite in us that fervency of spirit, which is necessary to animate and enliven our devotions. For if we are seriously affected with the awful apprehensions of God's adorable perfections; if we earnestly desire that his name should be esteemed by all, as it is in its own nature great, wonderful and holy; if we would have it truly sanctified in ourselves and all mankind, by the purest, most refined worship, and an unspotted conversation; if these are our serious thoughts and earnest wishes, it is impossible we should be lukewarm and indifferent, in offering up this, or any other our request unto God. For all God's attributes, even tho' we view them thro' a glass darkly, are so amiable and beautiful, and himself so full of grace and truth, that when we seriously contemplate him and them, they must needs ravish us with love, inflame our zeal, invigorate our devotion, and make it more fervent, effectual and available with God. Lastly, this petition, if rightly considered, will beget in us that purity of heart, elevation of soul, and heavenly mindedness, which is necessary to make our prayer a holy oblation, and acceptable in the sight of God. For since God's name is incommunicable,

and

and that therefore he is worthy of all adoration and honour ; since he is glorious in holiness, “ and of purer eyes than to behold ” a sinner in his guilt ; whoever presumes to approach him, must “ purify his heart even as he is pure,” to whom he pretends to lift it up. And if any one suffers his carnal desires, and wicked imaginations to mingle with the prayers he sends up to heaven, that person is guilty of a double profanation. For first he gives a share of his affections to the world, that ought to center in God alone, which is a sort of idolatry ; and then he offers to God an unholy and unclean thing, a double heart, which is certainly an abomination in his sight. But the belief and contemplation of God’s infinite holiness and purity, will teach and enable us to “ cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,” to take off our thoughts and affections from worldly objects, and direct them to that holy place, where God dwells in majesty on high, from whence he will look down, and regard our prayers if thus qualified. It then evidently appears, that the consideration of this petition tends to beget and cherish in us those holy dispositions, which are necessary to recommend us and our prayers to God, namely, a profound reverence, fervency of spirit, purity of heart, and heavenly mindedness. I shall now only add a few useful reflections, and then conclude.

And if it be the glory of God to be superlative in all perfections, and his just prerogative to have a peculiar worship appropriated to him, such as no creature is worthy of ; if his name ought thus to be sanctified, then how abominable are the practices of the church of Rome, which openly allows image-worship, and the invocation of saints. For is it not an intolerable affront to the majesty of that God, who is infinite in wisdom, power and goodness, that “ men who live, move and have their
“ being

“ being in him ; for health, should call upon that
 “ which is weak ; for life, pray to that which is
 “ dead ; for aid, humbly beseech that which has
 “ no means to help ; and for a good journey ask
 “ of that, which cannot set a foot forward ?” A
 crime this, that no subtle distinction can palliate ;
 it being in vain to say, that at last it terminates in
 the honour of God, and is so intended ; since he
 has solemnly declared, without restriction or limi-
 tation, “ I am the Lord, and will not give my
 “ praise to graven images, nor my glory to any
 “ other.” It is therefore very unjustifiable to in-
 voke any departed saint, either to help us, or in-
 terceed to God for us. To attribute infinite know-
 ledge or power, to any the most perfect creature,
 is to equal them with God, which is a sacrilegious
 presumption ; and to pray unto them is an aliena-
 tion of the honour due to God’s holy name, and a
 derogation to the merit and mediation of Jesus
 Christ. Again, if the name of God is sanctified
 by the acknolwgdgment and celebration of God’s
 excellencies and perfections, then to deny, or call
 any of them in question, is profaneness, and blas-
 phemy. And yet I fear we of the reformed reli-
 gion are too guilty in this particular. For not to
 insist on the consequences of some opinions main-
 tained among us, there is an insolent practice that
 deserves condemnation ; I mean, that shameless
 liberty daily taken by men of all ranks and degrees,
 to question the truth and authority of divine re-
 velation. Such call God’s veracity, wisdom, and
 goodness to the test, and make it matter of dis-
 pute, whether Moses, the Prophets, and Apostles,
 were sent from God, or were only a pack of wick-
 ed impostors. This is such a crying provocation,
 that surely God will at last, have “ pity for his
 “ name, and sanctify it before their eyes, that they
 “ may know, and be convinced, that God is true,
 “ and

“and every man a liar.” Lastly, if it be an honour redounding to God’s holy name, that his worship should be devoutly performed, and all things appertaining to religion properly respected; then must the wilful neglect of God’s worship; the misspending in idleness, vanity, and sin, the time allotted for it; that irreverence and indevotion which are too often seen in our solemn assemblies, to deface the beauty of holiness; that horrid abuse of an oath, by vain swearing, which being a religious act, ought to be exempt from common use; I say, then must all these things be such grievous profanations, as to make it wonderful, that any who retain the least sense of religion, should be guilty of them. Can any reasonable account be given, why the serious believer should not be a constant worshipper? for the man who is firmly persuaded, that there is a God, a Being in perfection infinite, absolute, independant, on whom all things depend; must in consequence also believe, that he, as one of his creatures and dependants, is bound to aggrandize the excellencies and perfections of the supreme Being, and to make this acknowledgment public in the congregation of the faithful, by offering up the humble tribute of his prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, according to divine appointment. Therefore whoever estranges himself from the communion of saints, and totally absents himself from God’s worship, if he is not a downright unbeliever, he is however in the number of those careless, desperate ones, whose actions proclaim, that he lives without God in the world, without so much as the form of godliness; just as if he had nothing to hope or fear, from the maker and judge of all men, either in this life, or the next. And how such shall be able to stand before God’s high tribunal, who seldom, or never appear in his sanctuary, nor approach his altar, is a terrible

ble consideration. Nor are those less concerned, who sometimes, tho' seldom, come into the house of God, but without any suitable disposition of mind, any regard to the business or place, or reverential awe of him, in whose presence they stand; nay, the table of the Lord hath been rudely broke in upon, without the least appearance of any preparation. Indeed they who come into the house of God, with an entire absence of mind, or in an unbecoming, irreverent manner, are guilty of a greater profanation, than those who totally absent themselves. The one neglects God's public worship, the other openly affronts it. The last profanation I shall mention, is the derision and contempt with which the ministers of God are generally treated. This is a direct affront to our great lord and master, to whose service they are peculiarly devoted.

To conclude; if it be incumbent on us to sanctify the name of God, by worthy apprehensions of his divine excellencies, and by a suitable demeanor towards him, not only in the solemn acts of religion, and the things pertaining thereto, but in the whole tenor of our lives and conversations; then, wicked as we are, how have we vilified, provoked, and defiled the most high and holy one? For certainly that manifest decay of virtue and goodness, that vast inundation of vice and debauchery, that general corruption in morals and principles, that avowed indifference towards all religions, and that profane contempt of the very best; all these, the prevailing practices of the present age, are provocations so daring, so insolent in the sight of God, and so dishonourable to his holy name, that it may be justly feared, they are sad prognostics of vengeance, the forerunners of sudden destruction. To prevent therefore our final ruin, let us all, from the highest to the lowest, with haste turn unto
the

the Lord, and remove those abominations out of his sight ; let us sanctify his name as we ought, by a free and willing obedience to his blessed will; lest he should magnify and sanctify himself before all people, by some just, exemplary punishment on us ; and demonstrate the justice and holiness of his nature, by the terrible effects of his power and vengeance. Which God avert for the sake and merits of his dearly beloved son Jesus Christ.

Discourse LVI. Bp. *Clagget.*

THY KINGDOM COME.

Mat. 6. x.

Thy kingdom come.

THE kingdom of God sometimes signifies in scripture, God's dominion over all the world. Thus the psalmist ; " the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." This kingdom of God is administered, by giving laws unto all things, and governing them according to their nature ; intellectual beings, men, and angels, by moral laws, by rewards and punishments ; and all other things by laws of necessity. " He commanded, and they were created." This we call the natural kingdom of God, in consideration of the perfections of his nature ; on whom all other things depend. This kingdom always was, and will be the same, not being capable of increase or dominion, for God doth what " he pleaseth in heaven and in earth ;" so that this kingdom of God is no part of this petition. But there are two other notions of God's kingdom in scripture here meant : the one, that kingdom which Christ came to plant in the world ; the other, that which his true followers shall be admitted to, after the resurrection.

The society of the church, founded upon the laws of the gospel, is called the kingdom of God ; because it is a society or communion of believers, established by God himself, upon the profession of that truth, which he revealed to mankind. By this

this we may understand our Saviour's meaning "my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." that is, the church, or kingdom of God, which Christ set up in the world, was not endowed by him with any secular force to maintain itself: for he left them no other power, whereby to govern themselves, than that of spiritual censures and inflictions.

And the reason why the church submitted to the persecution of the empire was, that believers by virtue of their Christianity were bound openly to profess Christ; they were baptized, they celebrated the eucharist, assembled for the service of God, and constantly communicated with their spiritual governors; all which made their religion to be taken notice of. But some may ask, how could this be justified, when the law of the empire was against them? To which I answer, that they were made a society for the service of God, and the profession of the true faith, by an higher authority than the emperor's, even that of God himself. And they were not only to believe the truth in their hearts, and to live a moral life, but they were also in obedience to God's authority, to make profession of the truth, and not to "forsake the assembling themselves together," for the service of God. And that the liberty they took was not prejudicial to the state, they had this to urge for themselves; that tho' they met in religious assemblies, for God's service, and the profession of faith in Christ, wherein they acted by a divine command; yet God had not invested the church with any temporal power, nor exempted it from subjection to secular law and authority. And this evidently appeared both by their religion and practice; for they meekly submitted to all the rigours and cruelties that were inflicted upon them, without making any resistance. Thus was the church founded and became a so-

ciety, in order to maintain and propagate the Christian faith.

But we are to consider, in what sense we pray, this kingdom may come, since it has been come above one thousand seven hundred years, and that we have a sure promise, it shall never fail; “The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, but stand for ever. Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” And upon enquiry, we shall find it is our duty to pray, that Christ’s kingdom may come, both with respect to the extent of it; and the principal end for which it was established. With respect to the extent thereof, it was foretold that it should be universal, that the Heathen should “be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession;” but this prediction is not yet fulfilled. “The kingdoms of the world are not become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ. Therefore when we pray, that God’s kingdom may come, is meant, that the gospel may be propagated, till all nations are subdued, to the obedience of the faith. So that we here pray for the conversion of all Jews, Turks, Heathens and Infidels; that God would send the light of his truth, into the dark corners of the earth, that all mankind may become one sheepfold, under the great shepherd of souls, Jesus Christ our Lord. And with respect to the principal end for which this kingdom was established, we still ought to pray, that it may come. For the great end of establishing the external kingdom of Christ upon earth, is the renovation of our natures, the subduing of our hearts and souls, to the obedience of God. “The kingdom of God is within us, and is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

And

And this is the true ground of the difference between the visible and invisible church.

The visible church consists of those, who are Christ's subjects by outward profession, and live in visible communion with one another; having by baptism been admitted to all the outward privileges and rights of the Christian profession. These make up that one society or body, which Christ will always have upon earth, to maintain and propagate his holy religion. But the invisible church consists not only of such as have gained an outward relation to him, by being of the number of those who are admitted to baptism; but of them also, who have given up their hearts and souls to Jesus, and are inwardly conformed to his doctrine by the regeneration of the spirit, doing his blessed will in all things, and "holding the faith in a pure conscience." And the design of our Lord, in erecting a visible society for professing the Christian faith, and serving God according to the rules of the gospel, was not so much to give men new names as new natures; it was to reclaim them from sin and wickedness, and train them up to all virtue and goodness. And therefore he sends his holy spirit, that by the secret influences of his grace, concurring with the outward administration of his ordinances, they may prove effectual to reform mens hearts, and to subdue every thought to the obedience of the gospel. Thus did he establish his outward kingdom, or visible society of the church, that he might rule in our hearts. And as to Christ's internal kingdom, that extends no farther, than to the truly righteous and sincere members of his body. So that in this petition we pray, that infidels may be converted, and that all who "name the name of Christ, may depart from "iniquity;" we also pray, that the external polity of Christ's kingdom may be propagated, that all

its members may be sincere in their profession, and live according to it.

When therefore we use these words, thy kingdom come, and are sincere in this petition, we must resolve to persist in the pure profession of the true "faith, which was once delivered to the saints;" free from those corruptions with which it is blended by some who profess Christianity. For if we pray that the truth of Christ may be propagated all over the world, we must be great hypocrites, if we do not ourselves persist in the purity of it, and be very careful, not to profess doctrines, or admit of practices directly contrary to it. With what sincerity then can they pray that God's kingdom may be thus effectually planted in the world, who obscure the truth with palpable errors, teach for doctrines of Christianity the inventions of men, and make the gospel a very different doctrine from what Christ at first revealed to his Church. And therefore if we in good earnest pray, that God's kingdom may come, this will strictly oblige us, to renounce all those corruptions, with which the Roman church have defaced the beauty of truth; and all other heresies: And to profess nothing for the Christian faith, but those plain, undoubted articles, which the church at first received from the apostles, and are clearly to be found in the scriptures. Nor can we be sincere in using this petition, if we do not also keep the "Unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." We here pray for nothing less, than that the society of Christian believers may be enlarged all over the world. So that all those must be great hypocrites, who make this prayer, when they are all the while promoting animosities and divisions.

But we cannot be sincere in making this petition, unless we submit our hearts and souls, our lives and conversations, to be governed by the law of Christ. For he that indulges himself in carnal and worldly
lusts,

lusts, whose affections are set upon things on earth, and not on things above, and lives contrary to the rules of the Christian faith, cannot in good earnest desire God to assist him in mortifying his lusts; because, he does not himself endeavour to do it, but resists the grace of God, and hates to be reformed. And since the kingdom which Christ came to plant in the world was a spiritual society, appointed on purpose for doing offices of charity to the souls of men; as well for ministers to watch over their flock, as they over one another; and to reprove and admonish each other upon all just occasions: therefore if this was more practised, and not so shamefully neglected, as it is, it would mightily tend, to the promoting of Christian piety and virtue amongst us. And since we read in the old testament, that the church of Christ shall enjoy an universal peace, free from all molestations; that there shall be no hurting nor destroying in all God's holy mountain, we cannot with sincerity use this prayer, 'thy kingdom come', as heartily wishing for those good days, if we are deficient in those virtues, which tend to hasten its coming. This leads me to consider, who are fit to use this petition, *thy kingdom come.*

I must here observe as before, that the Lord's prayer teaches us, what we should be, and if we are not good Christians, we are not fit to use it. For he that offers this prayer to God, in good earnest and with integrity, must be one who impartially loves God's truth, is careful to be instructed in it, and resolve to retain it, in opposition to persecution, or any worldly interests: He must have a deep sense, of the sin, scandal and fatal consequences of causing divisions in the church of God; he must be endued with a strong faith and great charity; not one that only talks of religion, but that applies it to his actions, thoughts, and inclinations. He must make it his business, to conform himself to the holy

Christian doctrine he hath received ; and endeavour also to promote true religion and piety, amongst others, who are members of the same body. He must likewise be of a peaceable and charitable disposition, live by the rules and precepts of Christian love, expecting and longing for a time of universal concord and good-will amongst men. Only such a one is truly qualified to say this prayer, ‘ thy kingdom come.’

But I cannot better express the meaning of this petition, as it regards the kingdom of God and Christ in this world, than in the prayers of our church ; ‘ that God would have mercy upon all
 “ Jews, Turks, Infidels and hereticks, and take
 “ from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and
 “ contempt of his word, and so fetch them home to
 “ his flock, that they may be saved amongst the
 “ remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one
 “ fold, under one shepherd.’ This concerns the propagation of God’s external kingdom. And with respect to the internal, we pray, ‘ that God would
 “ keep his household, the church, in continual god-
 “ liness, that it may be devoutly given to serve him
 “ in good works, to the glory of his name.’ And in both these respects, we beseech God, ‘ for all
 “ sorts and conditions of men, that he would
 “ make his ways known unto them, and his saving
 “ health unto all nations.’ And we also pray, ‘ that
 “ the catholic church may agree in the truth of
 “ God’s holy word, live in unity and godly love,
 “ and hold the faith, in unity of the spirit, in
 “ the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.’ And thus, O Lord, let thy kingdom come. Let it be as universal as the prophets foretold, and extend to every corner of the earth, to reach every man’s heart and soul. And may the days come, when no persecution, division, or schism, no sort of evil or trouble, be known in it. May none, who
 are

are called by the name of Christ, hinder the coming of this kingdom by any vice or scandal, nor resist the power and efficacy of it.

I proceed to consider this petition, as it means that kingdom, into which the true followers of Christ shall be admitted, at the end of all things, after the resurrection and the last judgment. This notion of God's kingdom, is grounded upon several places in the new testament, where the state of good men after the resurrection is called the kingdom of God, and of heaven; the kingdom prepared from the beginning of the world, and an everlasting kingdom. This we usually call the kingdom of glory, as Christ's church on earth is called the kingdom of grace. And here it will be proper to shew, in what respects this kingdom agrees with, or differs from the kingdom of Christ on earth. And how fit it is, that we should pray for the coming of this kingdom. Concerning the former;

As the kingdom of Christ upon earth is a society governed by divine laws, so will the kingdom of God be in heaven, and his subjects there will be no less obliged to service and obedience, than they are here; this is evident, because the nature of a kingdom necessarily implies government on the one side, and subjection on the other. And as the kingdom of Christ upon earth is a kingdom of grace, so will the kingdom of glory be; for God will then manifest more of his goodness and grace towards his servants, than they are capable of here. There they shall be finally and absolutely, here they are but conditionally forgiven and justified; there they shall be free from all dangers and enemies; here they are to encounter and conflict with both; so that the kingdom of glory will be a kingdom of greater grace than this. And as this kingdom of Christ was planted in the world by the first coming of Christ, so shall the kingdom of God in heaven, be
opened

opened at Christ's second coming to judge the world, to accomplish the salvation of his people from all their enemies; that to him we may owe the beginning, continuance and perfection of our redemption. But it must be observed, that these two kingdoms differ, in respect of their subjects, and the degrees of divine communication to them. As also in respect of the manner of their administration, and of their duration.

As to the subjects of them; the kingdom of God in heaven will consist of such only, as he loves, esteems, and delights in; for no wicked person, no unclean thing, can come there: Whereas the society of the church in this life, is promiscuously made up of good and bad, like a field, where the tares and the wheat grow together. Our Lord's design in planting a church on earth, was to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; to prepare and fit them for the kingdom of glory, when all these things shall have an end; and therefore gave his church power to exclude all persons from its communion, that should visibly depart from their baptismal promise and vow.—This power is committed to men, who are not always careful of their duty, or if they were, they can only distinguish between those who walk honestly and inoffensively on the one hand, and between notorious, scandalous sinners on the other: But they cannot always distinguish between the sincere and hypocrites; the latter of whom may behave so discreetly, as to conceal their vices and not openly expose them. But when Christ shall come to judge the world, he will impartially distinguish between good and bad; sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous; hypocrites shall no longer slide into the company of the sincere; the angels shall sever the good from the bad; the wheat being sifted from the chaff, shall be gathered into the garner by itself, and the chaff

chaff shall be burnt with unquenchable fire. And we read, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but that they only shall see the kingdom of God, that are born again; from whence it is evident, that God will have his kingdom of glory to consist only of those, who are objects of his mercy and love; and that he would have his government admired for its goodness and clemency, and the delight he takes in his creatures happiness. In this kingdom, the glory of God's attributes shall fill every mansion in heaven, the sense of which shall ravish the hearts of men and angels; who with unspeakable delight shall worship him for ever and ever, and with the utmost thankfulness and joy, give him the glory due to his infinite perfections. Again,

As the kingdom of God shall consist only of true saints, so will God communicate himself more fully to them, than when in their moral bodies. God has gradually discovered himself to mankind. The world at first knew God only by natural light. It pleased him to reveal himself more fully by Moses and the prophets. But in the last days he yet more publicly manifested himself, by sending his own Son into the world for the good of all mankind, that all might be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. But tho' the discovery of God's perfections, and of his counsels to save us by the gospel, was a bright revelation to what he before afforded; yet even this, when compared with that which is to come, is but an obscure, faint representation of God's infinite perfections and most wise counsels. For, "now we see thro' a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face."

And it is further to be observed, that the administration of this kingdom will differ much from the kingdom of the gospel. Here God governs us by laws suitable to our nature. By faith we believe what we do not see; by hope we expect what we do

do not enjoy; and by the Christian sacrifice we commemorate our absent Lord. But when we see him, in whom we believe, there will be an end of our faith; when we enjoy what we expect, hope will cease; when we see and ever live with Jesus, the Christian sacrifice will forever end: And instead of these, all which are adapted to our present state, God will govern us by the eternal laws of righteousness and goodness. The Mosaic dispensation was imperfect; the Jews were incumbered with many positive laws, which eclipsed the rules of intrinsic goodness; the Christian dispensation is more perfect, having few positive laws, and abounding with plain rules of moral piety and virtue: But the kingdom of heaven will be the most perfect administration of all; for then all temporal institutions shall cease, and the eternal laws of goodness and righteousness shall take place. And as charity, which contains all these laws, shall never fail; it hath therefore the pre-eminence above faith and hope; which will be useless, when we once arrive to the heavenly kingdom. Faith, baptism, and all the positive ordinances of Christ will be of no use, when they have brought us to heaven; when that which is "perfect is come, and that which is in part shall be done away." Then, "whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease; as also all such instruction, as is now conveyed by the ministry of the gospel, shall then determine, and we shall be immediately taught of God, and more directly influenced by his divine Spirit, to understand things, as they really are in themselves. Again,

The kingdom of grace is established upon the sacrifice of Christ's death, and all our prayers, worship, and thanksgivings are accepted by God, thro' the intercession of our mediator Jesus Christ; and there-

therefore is the kingdom of the gospel called the kingdom of Christ. But when the kingdom of God hereafter shall appear, it will be administered another way. For when the end is come, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; that is, he shall deliver up his mediatory kingdom, which will be then fully accomplished, in the perfect redemption and salvation of all his sincere children and followers; when he shall conduct them to his Father's house, cleansed and purified from all sin, shining with innocence and righteousness, without spot or blemish, with glorified bodies, fit for the habitation of immortal souls. And then he will need no further to intercede for them, nor to interpose in their behalf; as their high-priest to atone for their sins, or to gain acceptance of their persons by his merits. But all the power to which he was exalted, he will lay down at the feet of his Father, having fully accomplished the end for which it was given; and then will all obedience, praise, and thanksgiving be immediately rendered to God, without need of sacrifice, mediation, or high-priest; and God will be all in all. He will then fill the hearts of all good men, with divine grace, goodness and joy, and receive from them all possible testimonies of love, thankfulness and obedience.

And as to the duration of this kingdom, it will be eternal in that state, where Christ will establish it, at the last judgment. For Christ is not to deliver up the kingdom to the Father, till he hath saved to the uttermost all who come to God by him; till he hath set them out of all danger of their enemies. So that the reward of our perseverance in this life, will be an everlasting "kingdom that shall not be shaken, a crown of glory that will never fade."

I proceed lastly to shew, that this petition is a fit matter for our prayers; for since we are certain that this kingdom will come, and that God hath appointed the time when it shall begin; we therefore surely ought to express our most vehement expectation and desire that this kingdom may come, when the goodness of God will be most illustriously displayed; when his mercy will be extended to all his subjects, and God may be known and seen as he is; when the end of our blessed Lord's mediation will be fully attained, and the eternal laws of goodness and righteousness be perfectly understood and obeyed, without danger of sin and misery, and that for ever. How then should we long and pray for the coming of that kingdom, when all these blessings will flow in their utmost perfection, and continue without interruption, without end?

But then, let us consider, what manner of persons we ought to be, who use this petition? For to what end did our Lord enjoin this prayer, but to admonish us, that we have no continuing city, but seek for one, whose maker and builder is God; and that as strangers and pilgrims, we should abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and that will hinder us of this heavenly kingdom, unless we abandon and forsake them? How then can that man pray, for the coming of God's kingdom, whose heart is set upon the wealth and greatness of this world, whose portion is in this life, who is habituated to lust and pleasure, and therefore at enmity with God? If heaven was like the Turks paradise, a scene of sensual pleasures; if it was a court for flattery and ambition; a place of merchandise for buying, selling, and cheating; or affording opportunities for lust, vain-glory, revenge, ambition, and covetousness; then with great truth might the worldling, the oppressor, the sensual man, the drunkard, the adulterer,

terer, and all such, be glad to see the day when this kingdom should come, and to pray for it; they would be religious and devout in appearance, and yet continue the same persons in reality. But let all be assured, that none is fit to use this petition, unless he lives in charity, purity, and holiness; unless he contemns the world, and hath “cleansed himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;” such only have reason to wish for, and love the Lord’s appearing at the last dreadful day, as being in a condition to stand before the judge of quick and dead; as having gone thro’ the exercises of repentance, and with a pure conscience compleated the duties of an holy life.

So that when we pray, thy kingdom come, if we will be consistent with ourselves, we must make it our sincere study and care, to be fit to enter therein, when it does come; we must raise our thoughts above the vanities and follies of this life; and we “must set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right-hand of God.” For if we have not some good hope of entering into that kingdom, we cannot with sincerity pray, it may come; but our hearts must give our tongues the lye, whenever we say this prayer. When therefore we use this petition, let us remember to pray, that God’s kingdom may come into our hearts, even that kingdom “which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;” and then, O Lord, let thy kingdom of glory come.

Discourse LVII. Mr. *Jackson*.

Thy WILL be done in EARTH, as it is
in HEAVEN.

Mat. vi. 10.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

THIS is the third petition of the Lord's prayer, and the last of those which immediately relate to God, and to the advancement of his honour ; and is founded on, and inferred from the preceding petition, the coming of God's kingdom. And as that kingdom is not meant of God's providential government of the world, so the will which we here pray may be done, is not to be understood of God's providential will and purposes, which are unalterable, and must be effected upon all his creatures. In respect of God's providential will, " whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doth he, " in heaven and in earth ; for who can resist his " will ? His counsel shall stand, he will do all his " pleasure." Nothing can obstruct the purposes of divine providence, nor prevent the dispensations of God from being accomplished. God's providential will cannot be defeated by any thing man can do, and is as much fulfilled by the commission of vice, as the practice of virtue. It being the original, unalterable will of God, who made free agents, that all their actions should proceed from voluntary principles and unrestrained choice ; that it should be in their power to do evil as well as good. So that whether they are godly or wicked, just or dishonest, their behaviour is the result of that freedom, with which their natures are endued by God. This, therefore, is not the will, meant in the petition, which

we are directed to pray may be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

But the will of God in this place, signifies the laws and precepts of the gospel, which are the declarations of the divine will; the observance whereof, is the token of our being true members and subjects of God's spiritual kingdom on earth, and the condition of obtaining the future happiness of his kingdom in heaven. The wisdom of the composition of this divine prayer evidently appears from the agreeable and natural connection of the several petitions, and their dependance on each other. The order of them is placed, according to the nature and reason of things: for God's kingdom cannot come to us, nor we be admitted into the gospel state, without first hallowing his name, by a right and just sense of his being and perfections in our minds, and a suitable reverence towards him in our actions. Neither can we know or perform the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, without receiving the faith of Christ, and becoming subject to the laws of the gospel, in which this will of God is fully and perfectly revealed to us. And as performing God's will, in the sense of this prayer, presupposes the two preceding petitions to be fulfilled, namely, that God's name is sanctified, and his kingdom come in us; so it is the natural effect, end, and accomplishment of them. For if we have the knowledge of God and true religion formed in us, and are sincerely persuaded of the truth and obligation of christianity, we shall delight in performing a ready and chearful obedience to God's will and commandments, and contentedly submit to all his appointments. And as an entire subjection and conformity of our wills to God's most perfect will, is the best and surest means of bringing us to the true knowledge of the doctrine of the gospel, for if we do his will, we shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God; so without performing God's

will, the profession of the Christian faith will avail us nothing, and we shall never obtain the promised blessing; for “not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he that doth the will of our father which is in heaven.” The will of God then, which we pray may be done, signifies, the laws and precepts of the everlasting gospel, which Christ was sent from heaven to publish unto mankind; the reasonableness whereof, and the motives to perform it, will evidently appear from the following considerations. That the manifestations of God’s will, declared in the scriptures, is not the effect of an absolute arbitrary dominion over us, nor are his commandments founded in mere will and pleasure, to shew his sovereignty, and exact a servile submission from us, tho’ we are his creatures, and the work of his hands; but they proceed from essential wisdom, and most perfect holiness, are agreeable to the eternal and immutable truth and reason of things, and to those rational faculties with which our natures are endued; and were they not expressly enjoined in his revealed word, we should lie under an obligation to perform them, from the principles of nature, and the dictates of our own reason and conscience. To do the will of God, is most excellent and eligible in itself, and all his commandments are holy, just and good. There is nothing in them contrary to what a reasonable man, who hath a just sense of things, but would chuse himself to perform; nor do they restrain us in any satisfactions or enjoyments, that are fit for, or worthy of our attainment. They tend to make us wise, by the most useful and real knowledge; and to make us good, by imitating the example of goodness itself.

And as the doing God’s will, or keeping his laws, is good in itself, and suitable to the reason of our faculties; so it is highly beneficial to us, and promotes our highest interest. The precepts of the
gosp^{le}

gospel are the injunctions of God's infinite love and kindness to us; and as they in their own nature, tend to advance us to all that happiness, and perfection we are capable of; so this happiness, which is the proper, genuine effect of living according to God's will, is by his positive and gracious appointment made to be eternal. For he that doth the will of God abideth for ever: and our Lord himself says, "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." The will of God, therefore, is the salvation of men; and so we are commanded to pray, that it may be done, not so much for God's sake, as our own, that we and all the members of Christ's church, walking worthy of our holy profession, and conformity to the rules of the gospel, may obtain the promise of future and eternal bliss.

We have also the example of Christ, as the greatest motive and encouragement to perform the will of God. Our Saviour declares, "that he came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. That it was his meat and drink, (or greatest delight) to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. And that they who do the will of his father, which is in heaven, are nearer and dearer to him, than his mother and brethren." Our blessed Lord, who possessed the fulness of glory in heaven, yet thought it his greatest happiness to descend from thence, and humble himself in our nature, that he might perform the will of his father; and that we following the steps of his obedience, in doing God's will, might with him ascend to the same place, there to partake of those endless pleasures, which he for ever enjoys at God's right hand. This consideration should mightily affect and move us, to do God's will with the greatest readiness and cheerfulness, that so we may attain the heavenly promises an-

nexed to the performance of it. And to render our good endeavours effectual, we have the assurance given, of divine aid and assistance to conquer our rebellious lusts and passions; to curb and subdue the exorbitancy of our self-wills, which oppose the will of God; and to enable us to divest ourselves of all unreasonable appetites and desires, and to subject both our souls and bodies, to a constant compliance, and hearty obedience to his divine will.

What those duties are, either active or passive, which God requires of us, to perform his will after an acceptable manner, are fully declared in the scriptures: wherein we are instructed, not by human philosophy, but by the wisdom and authority of divine revelation, in all the duties of piety respecting the worshipping of God; and all the virtues of sobriety, justice and chastity, which relate to ourselves or others. We are there taught, “to love the
“ Lord our God, with all our heart,” to serve him with the spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, with holiness and purity of life and conversation; and to prefer the knowledge and love of God, in and thro’ Christ Jesus, above all the attainments, interests; and considerations of the world; to hold fast, and contend for the faith and profession of the gospel; and to suffer no temptations, or temporal afflictions to shake our constancy, and reliance on the divine promises, or deprive our hopes of a future blessed immortality. With respect to our neighbours, Christ hath taught us meekness and humility in our conversation and demeanour, decency and modesty in our words, righteousness and equity in our actions and dealings, and to be exercised in charity and good works; to injure no one, to bear patiently, and readily to forgive those who offend us; to follow peace with all men, and to express an universal benevolence and love towards one
another.

another. This is the principal characteristic of a true christian, the ground and life of all social virtue ; for if we “ have love one to another, by “ this shall all men know, that we are the disciples “ of Christ.” Lastly, with relation to the conduct of ourselves, it is God’s will and commandment, that we should deny the gratifications of our passions and vicious inclinations, be lowly minded and temperate ; and in all the difficulties and evils of life, submit to the divine providence with an intire resignation. These are the virtues to which we are obliged by our christian profession ; and when they are so deeply impressed on our minds, as to influence us to all holy living ; when we not only profess the faith of Christ, but act suitably to the rules contained in the gospel, and imitate the example of its blessed author ; then has this petition its proper effect in us, and we fully perform the will of God.

I shall next consider the manner in which we are instructed to pray, that God’s “ will may be “ done in earth, as it is in heaven.” This expression does not imply, that our obedience to God’s will on earth, ought to be equally perfect with that of the angels in heaven, but only to have it bear some similitude and likeness thereto. It being impossible, (and therefore not required by God) that such imperfect creatures as we, who are continually tempted, and liable to sin, (from the sollicitations of a wicked world, and the lusts of our own corrupted nature) should pay such an unerring obedience to God’s laws, as do those blessed spirits, who are free from all these temptations, and have neither sensitive objects, or temporal interests, to take off their attendance from the service of God, or interrupt their performing his will. Thus, when we are commanded to be perfect, as our heavenly father is perfect, it does not mean an equality with the perfections of God, (of which no creature is capable)

but only a resemblance and imitation of them, by a godly sincerity, and unblamable conversation, so far as is consistent with the frailty of our present condition. Thus also when we are taught to love our neighbours, as ourselves, it is not required, that we should love them in the same or equal degree with ourselves; but only to shew our affection and kindness to them, in all the instances we can, according to the several relations and circumstances, in which they stand to us. Thus again, they who shall attain the resurrection to life and salvation, are said to be as the angels, and yet are not supposed to be hereafter equal in glory and happiness to the angelic spirits; but only to partake in some measure of that heavenly felicity which the angels enjoy. So in like manner, when, according to our Lord's direction, we pray, that God's "will may be done in earth, as it is in heaven," it means not, that an equal perfection of obedience is required from us, as is performed by the angels, who are placed in a far higher and purer state, and possessed of much greater spiritual gifts, than the best of men have; but only, that our obedience ought to have the same qualities and dispositions with the angels, who continually serve and execute the will of God.

As the fall and punishment of the evil angels are set forth to us, in order to express the severity of the divine justice against wilful disobedience, and to deter us from it, lest we by our sins incur the same condemnation; so the fidelity of the good angels, and their blessed reward, was designed for our example, to engage us to steadfastness and perseverance in doing our duty, and who are also promised the recompence of eternal bliss. If then we would do the will of God in earth, as it is done by the angels in heaven, we must perform it with the like readiness, cheerfulness and constancy, that they do. They are represented as "standing always in
"the

“the presence of God,” and ever ready to receive his commands, and execute his will. And to shew with what readines and alacrity they perform their ministerial service, they are described with wings, and as flying swiftly from heaven to earth with God’s messages unto men; always attending to “do his pleasure, to obey his commandments, and hearken to the words of his mouth.” They regard not the meanness of our condition, but the honour only of being employed in the service of their creator. And tho’ from the purity and goodness of their natures, they may be supposed more willing to be sent on commissions of mercy than judgment; yet when they are appointed ministers of wrath, and to execute vengeance on guilty men, they perform the office with no more reluctance, than if it was an embassy of peace and salvation.

The constancy and perseverance of the good angels obedience, is inferred from the fall of the wicked spirits, who kept not their first station, but were cast out from God’s presence, and are “re-served in chains of darkness, for the judgment of the last day;” whilst those who continued in their obedience and subjection to God, were exalted to a more heavenly condition, even to become the faithful ministers of the divine majesty unto mankind, from the beginning of the world; and will to the end of it, minister to all those, who shall be heirs of salvation. The ready and constant obedience of these blessed spirits, is what we pray may be imitated by us; and we petition for it, to shew that we need the assistance of God’s holy spirit, to enable us to perform his will, in this good, perfect, and acceptable manner; and that thro’ his aid, we cannot fail of doing whatever he requires of us. And when we are thoroughly convinced of our obligations to perform God’s will, and clearly perceive the excellency of the divine laws, and seriously consider the happiness of obeying

them, the practice of our duty will become easy and delightful, and we shall be fully satisfied, that God is no hard, unreasonable master, but that his service is perfect freedom; and that the ways of sin, and the indulging our inordinate lusts, is really a state of bondage and misery. A rational mind must be greatly pleased, on reflecting that it is closely and intimately united to God, by a conformity of will and desire, and acts suitably to the laws, and according to the pattern of infinite wisdom; that it loves and chuses what is right and good in itself, and being divested of all earthly and sensual affections, lives a spiritual and divine life. As a mind thus disposed, is little inferior to the purity of an angelic spirit; so it will serve God with almost the same readiness and alacrity of devotion.

It is the life and soul of all true religion, to pay a willing and chearful obedience to God, without hesitation or delay; to honour him as a father, with the duty and free subjection of sons, without fear or uneasiness, which are tokens of a base and servile mind, and marks of superstition, and false worship. God, as he hath revealed himself in the gospel, hath nothing terrible about him. He hath laid aside the thunder and lightning, with which he delivered the law, and speaks to us by the son of his love, in the most affectionate terms of mercy and kindness. He sent not his son to execute judgment, and punish our sins, as they deserved; but with a message of peace and reconciliation, to pardon our transgressions, and assure us of salvation, upon the reasonable, easy conditions of repentance, and reformation of life. The manifestation of so much goodness towards us, who were so unworthy of it, are most powerful motives to engage our hearts to worship God with zeal, to perform his will with delight, and not to cease running the way of his commandments, or grow weary in well doing:

Hence

Hence is the difference between temporal and spiritual enjoyments ; that tho' the former strongly excite the bodily appetites, and are for a while very ravishing to the senses, yet the pleasure of them soon decays, and we presently grow weary of them ; but the pleasures of religion encrease by repeated fruition : and as the reason and obligation of virtue and piety are unchangeable, so the practice of them affords a never-ceasing satisfaction. The one has a finite, limited period, and depends on things that are of an inconstant, frail, and perishing nature ; but the other has no bounds, and is continually looking forward beyond this earthly and temporal state, to one that is heavenly and eternal.

Another principal consideration, to make us persevere in doing the will of God, is, that the reward of our obedience is annexed to it. Hence our Lord tells us, that he " who endureth to the end shall be saved : " and the apostle says, that we " are made partakers of Christ," and of the happiness procured by him " if we hold the beginning " of our confidence, (or faith in him) stedfast unto " the end." And we are exhorted to patience, from this motive, that " after we have done the will of " God, we may receive the promise" of future happiness. And,

That we may do " the will of God in earth, as " it is in heaven" let us diligently read the holy scriptures, study, and meditate upon them, lay up the precepts of them in our minds, and obey them in our lives. These are the only rules and laws of God's will. And that our obedience to them, may be acceptable and perfect, (as far as our frail condition will permit) and resemble the service of the angels in heaven ; let us adore the majesty of God, with the most fervent and sincere devotion ; acquiesce in whatever his providence allots us with a ready submission ; cheerfully perform his will

will, whatsoever he commands ; persevere in our duty, and the observance of his statutes to the end of our lives : and so having finished our christian course with joy and steadfastness, we shall receive the reward of our faith, and holy conversation on earth, amongst the society of angels, and the spirit of just men made perfect, in the glory and happiness of heaven. And if we be sincerely desirous, that the kingdom of God should come among us, that it should be established in its full power and extent ; and that God's will should be done in earth, as it is in heaven ; such a desire must imply a ready disposition, an hearty resolution to submit to his authority, to observe his precepts, to obey his will, and to be entirely under his government. And whenever we use this petition, we should remember to make a tender of this our duty and service. It would be inconsistent and absurd to desire God to take us under his government, when we never intend to obey his laws, nor to behave as his subjects. If then we have any just regard to God's awful dominion, any due sense of our own subjection, the use of this petition will beget in us the most resolved obedience.

There is a great affinity between the two petitions, " thy kingdom come, and thy will be done : " and if we acknowledge God for our sovereign Lord and ruler, if we unfeignedly desire to be governed by him ; this will infer a willingness to commit ourselves and all our affairs into his hands, leaving them to his disposal. And if we sincerely pray, that the kingdom of Christ may prevail, and conquer every rebel lust ; that his grace may govern our hearts, and fit us for his heavenly glory ; this will incline us quietly to submit to his will, and dispose us not only to bear the yoke of obedience, but also patiently to endure any affliction he shall lay upon us. And if it be our zealous desire, that the will

will of God should be fulfilled after the pattern of his blessed angels, this will inspire us with an emulation of being like them ; this will kindle the fire of devotion in our hearts, wing our prayers, and send up our affections to heaven ; where our prayers, praises and hallelujahs shall be the never ceasing language of our exalted joy and love. This will invigorate all the active powers of our souls, make us “stedfast, immoveable, always unwearied, and “abounding in the work of the Lord ;” that so proceeding from grace to grace, we may at length arrive to the enjoyment of glory, in God’s blissful presence to eternal ages.

Discourse LVIII. Mr. *Jackson*.

Give us this DAY our daily BREAD.

Mat. vi. 11.

Give us this day our daily bread.

THIS is the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer, and the first of those which are offered up immediately for the supply of what is necessary to our preservation in this life. Many of the antients were of opinion, that all the petitions in this prayer related only to spiritual, and not to earthly and temporal things; and supposed that the bread here mentioned, respected the holy eucharistical bread in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, on which was founded the custom of receiving that sacrament every day. But this notion, tho' embraced by many primitive churches, was no doubt an error; for as no such sense is implied in the words, so neither was the sacrament of the Lord's supper instituted, when this prayer was composed and prescribed. And therefore the apostles must understand the petition for daily bread, to regard only the temporal food and sustenance of the body. And since our bodies are part of our natures, and derived from God as well as our souls, and that both stand in need of his good providence to preserve them; since also it is our duty to pay a bodily, as well as spiritual worship unto God, which without a moderate share of this world's goods, cannot so easily be performed; it is therefore very proper to pray for the supply of our bodily necessities. But then as the soul is our superior, better part, and that

that spiritual blessings and attainments are more valuable, than those of a temporal nature; it was fit we should first ask those things which tend to the happiness and salvation of our souls, to the advancement of God's name and honour, and the promotion of true religion, before we petition God for the body, and the comforts of this life.

Our Saviour therefore, never forbid his disciples to pray for bodily sustenance; but only commanded them, not to be anxious or over-sollicitous about it, as the Gentiles were; whose thoughts and desires were chiefly employed about temporal things, being ever ready to distrust the divine providence, when their wants were not supplied. He indeed taught them first and principally, "to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and then assured them that all things needful for the body should be added unto them. Our greatest concern is to obtain the true knowledge of God, as revealed by his Son, and obediently to observe the laws of the gospel. This is to "seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof;" but then we may also, with hopes of success, pray unto God, who has promised not to leave or forsake us, for such a portion of temporal blessings, as his providence shall think fit to bestow on us; and beseech him to "give us this day, or day by day, our daily bread." — In discoursing on these words; I shall consider, the meaning of the expression, daily bread. The reasonableness and benefits of praying for it. And then draw some practical observations.

By bread here we are to understand all manner of provision, all that meat and drink which is necessary to the sustenance of human life, and whatever is required to the support of our frail nature. And because many things are needful to that end, as food, raiment, habitation, and the like, they
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are all comprized under the name of bread. This being the principal thing necessary to the preserving of life, is by a figure put to signify all other necessaries. As a famine of bread is used in scripture, to express the want of all provisions, so by giving of bread is meant the supply of all outward and bodily wants, or the bestowing of all those temporal and earthly blessings, that are requisite to the being, comfort and welfare of this present life; such as health, safety, success, wealth, friends, and the like; all which we are permitted to pray for, as far as we need them, and God sees fitting for us. The full import of the expression daily bread, most probably is, that which is sufficient for the remaining part of our lives, or the future and succeeding space of the present state. For the word daily in the Hebrew signifies, the time that is coming on, approaching, or future; and the word to-day being joined with it, denotes not precisely a day only, but every day, or the whole time of our present state, according to St. Luke, who has it not this day, but day by day, or every day. And so we pray, that God, by his providence, will afford us all that is needful for the support and comfort of our bodies, during the time of this present life. I proceed to consider the reasonableness and benefits of praying to God, for this daily bread.

By this petition we acknowledge the divine providence, and our continual dependance thereon; and confess with David, that "riches and honour come from God,--that all our store is from his hand, and "is all his own." As we derive our being and existence from God, so his providential power preserves and supports us every moment. And as he alone gives us life and breath, so he likewise affords whatever is necessary to sustain them. It is solely by his power that the clouds drop rain, and the earth

earth brings forth her fruits in due season ; nor can one grain of corn, or blade of grass grow, without his appointment. This universal sustaining providence of God hath been ever acknowledged by wise and religious men in all ages ; and it is very elegantly and emphatically described by the psalmist, “ He
“ watereth the hills from his chambers, (the clouds ;)
“ the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He
“ causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb
“ for the service of man ; that he may bring forth
“ food out of the earth.—The eyes of all look un-
“ to God, and he giveth them their meat in due
“ season. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the
“ desire of every living thing.” Since therefore we immediately depend upon God for the necessaries and comforts of this life, it is highly reasonable, we should apply to him for them, and acknowledge that all we have flows from the bounty of his goodness. Again,

As all the means of life are derived from the providence of God, so all our success in the use and enjoyment of them, depends on his blessing ; and therefore we have great reason to petition God, to secure and prosper to us what we already possess, as well as to enable us to obtain what we want. Experience informs us, of the uncertainty of riches, how they make to themselves wings and fly away ; so that he who depends on the divine providence, to bless his diligent and honest endeavours, has a better security for the things of this life, than all the power and possessions that the world can afford. The rich man in the gospel thought himself very secure of the enjoyments of life, when he had “ built great barns
“ to bestow his fruit and goods in ; and said unto his
“ soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many
“ years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But what follows, shews the vanity of human projects, without the divine concurrence ; God calls him fool,
and

and immediately demands his life of him ; and this because he did not consider, that he owed all his worldly prosperity to the bountiful providence of God, the enjoyment whereof also depended on the continuance of the same divine blessing by which it was procured. God hath promised to those who trust upon him, and desire no more than is convenient, “ but are content with such things as they have ; that he will not leave nor forsake them.” And our Saviour assures us of God’s care and blessing, by the consideration “ of the fowls of the air, “ who sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather “ into barns ; yet our heavenly father feedeth them ; adding, that we are much better than they ; and so may more assuredly depend on God’s goodness to provide for us the necessaries of life, and of his blessing to enjoy the fruits of our labour ; and that he will give us not only bread, but whatever conduces to the well-being of our lives. This is implied in the word bread, which comprehends, as I before observed, all that we eat, drink, or are cloathed withal ; and also all that health, and those means and abilities which are required to procure them, in every state and condition of life. That the word bread has such a general and comprehensive signification, is evident from many places of scripture ; as when Abraham said, “ I will fetch a “ morsel of bread, and comfort your hearts ;” he brought with it, “ butter and milk, and the calf “ that he had dressed, and set before them.” Thus also Joseph said, “ set on bread ;” which implied all the plentiful variety of provisions, that he had made for the entertainment of his brethren. And so likewise here, whatever relates to the present subsistence of our lives, is comprehended under the general name of bread, because bread is the most useful and necessary part of our bodily sustenance.

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The reasonableness and duty of the petition for our daily bread, being thus stated; the usefulness and benefits of it will easily appear from that moderation and contentedness, with which we are here taught to pray for it; and from the engagement it lays on us, to make the best use of the good things of this life. What we are enjoined to pray for, is our daily bread; by which is not meant the abundance of riches and superfluities of life; but only such provision as is necessary and convenient for us, in the present state. We are not to expect that God should feed us with delicacies and luxurious diet, as he did the Jews in the wilderness, when he rained quails from heaven: and which were sent them in anger, at their unreasonable requests and distrusts of the divine providence. Indeed, if any of us are blessed with plenty and abundance, we may lawfully make use thereof, provided we do not abuse it by intemperance or sensuality; and that we are ready to distribute to the needs of others. But as we are not promised more than a comfortable and convenient support; so if no more is given us, we ought to be contented with, and thankful for it: in regard the real and true happiness of man's life, does not "consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth," but in being content with what he has. For so the apostle charges us, that having "food and raiment, we should be therewith content." And this he enforceth by two very powerful considerations; first, the frailty and short continuance of all earthly enjoyments. "We brought nothing, says he, into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." From hence appears the vanity and folly of all covetous and unreasonable cravings and desires after the things of this world. Secondly, from the danger of those temptations, to which riches expose men; for as he observes, "They who will be rich, fall into tempta-

tion and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." And the experience of the world hath always testified, that rich men have so generally employed their wealth in luxury and debauchery, in acts of oppression and violence, that, as our Saviour says, it is hard and even impossible, for such to enter into the kingdom of God. Therefore the condition which the prophet Agar prayed for, is most eligible; "Give me, says he, neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

A moderate fortune is certainly, of all others, the most happy, and attended with the least difficulties and danger, both in the attainment and enjoyment of it: being a state neither so great, as to cast off our dependance on God, and swell our hearts with pride and vanity; nor yet small enough to tempt us to enlarge it by fraud and injustice. And if our condition is ever so low, we have always this ground of satisfaction and content, that we enjoy as much as God, the all-wise and good governor of all things, has thought proper; and therefore, we ought to think it best for us, and as much as is necessary both for our present and future happiness. For tho' now we may be clothed in rags, and forced to eat the crumbs of others tables; yet probably we shall sooner go to heaven, than if we had been arrayed in purple and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day. This brings me to observe that

The consideration of petitioning God for our daily bread, lays on us the strongest obligations, to make a right and good use of what we possess and enjoy. We are told that some "asked and received not, because they asked amiss, that they might consume it on their lusts." Indeed it must be both
absurd

absurd and wicked to imagine, that the design of God's providence, in giving to any one an abundance of earthly things, was only that they should spend them in sensuality and intemperance, extravagancy and sinful pleasures, and to dishonour him who gave them. If God denies such men the means of gratifying their vicious desires, they have no cause to complain, but great reason to think their poverty a blessing. Since then the earth and the fulness of it, is only from God, who is the author of all the blessings of life, and to whom we must apply for them by humble prayer: from hence appears the great obligations we are under, of using them to those good purposes for which they were conferred and appointed by God. Such as, to make a comfortable provision with them, for ourselves and families, according to that rank and station in which his providence has placed us; to use moderately what we possess, with cheerfulness and thanksgiving; to promote the health and happiness of our bodies, that they may be pure, holy and fit to be offered up, as a living sacrifice acceptable to God; and to communicate according to our abilities, to the necessities of our poor brethren. For this petition naturally engages us to works of charity.

If all we have is the gift of God's bounty to us, certainly we ought in imitation of him, to extend our beneficence to those who are in want; "and as we have freely received, so we should also freely give." Did men seriously consider, that all they enjoy proceeds from God; that it is neither their personal merit, nor any human art, or industry, that makes them rich; but the providence and blessing of God, without which our best endeavours will be ineffectual; they would be more disposed, than they generally are, to works of charity, and be convinced that they are both reasonable in them-

selves, and what God hath required. For God no more gave riches to be hoarded up, and not to do good with them, than to be spent in prodigality and excess. Certainly one great cause of men's uncharitableness is, that they suppose themselves to have an absolute and independent right in what they possess, attributing all to human means, and no part to the free and bountiful providence of God ; and so become guilty of that infidelity and impiety, which God particularly warned the Jews against, as what was naturally incident to worldly prosperity ; namely, " when they have eaten and are full ; when their
 " herds and their flocks, their silver and gold, and
 " all that they have, is multiplied ; then their hearts
 " are lifted up, and they forget the Lord their God ;
 " and say in their heart, my power and the might
 " of my hand hath gotten me this wealth ; and they
 " remember not the Lord their God, that it is he
 " who giveth them power to get wealth." To keep up therefore in our minds a sense of our continual dependance upon God, for all the good things we enjoy, and to engage us to use them according to his will, was the design of our Lord and Saviour in commanding us to pray for our daily bread.

Another consideration naturally rising from this petition is, that the direction to pray for our daily bread, and the acknowledgment that the necessaries and comforts of this life are derived from him, is so far from being an encouragement to excuse men from industry and labour, (as if God would provide for them without using any means or endeavours of their own, and thereby countenance sloth and idleness) that on the contrary, it is an immediate, forceable engagement for them to use an honest diligence in their calling, as the best and only ground to expect God's blessing, and obtain success to their undertakings. Indeed, were the events of things disposed of either by blind, undirected chance ;

or

or an absolute, unavoidable necessity, then indeed all human labour and care would be ineffectual and vain; and men might sit still, and fold their arms in sloth and inactivity, hoping to be rich by some lucky hit of fortune or destined success. But we are well assured, that all things are under the direction and disposal of an infinite wise and good God, who made the earth and placed man in it, on purpose to work therein; who gave him strength and abilities to earn his bread by the sweat of his brows; and to encourage his labour, hath made the ground fruitful, and promised to bless it with increase. And therefore, when God hath been so liberal, if man will do nothing on his part, will not use those faculties which are given him, to obtain, thro' God's blessing, the comforts of this life; then, as he has no right to the bounty of divine providence, so he cannot expect it; God having nowhere promised daily bread to him, who will not stir and use his endeavours to procure it. "If the sluggard will not plow, by reason of the cold, he shall beg in harvest and have nothing." And the apostle declares, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat;" and exhorts all with "quietness to work, and eat their own bread."

The conditions, therefore, on which we may expect the blessings of divine providence, for obtaining a convenient and sufficient provision for the present state; are, not to be slothful in business, but to labour diligently, and keep a good conscience in all our dealings; and then we may hope that God will prosper the work of our hands, and give us that sufficiency, which was all good Jacob desired of God, namely, bread to eat, and raiment to put on, which comprehends all that is truly needful in this life. I proceed in the last place, to make a practical reflection or two, from the foregoing discourse.

And as we are directed by our Lord, in the first place to petition God for such things, as are needful for, and will promote the happiness of our souls; and then to beg his blessing on our endeavours, to procure a suitable provision for our bodies in the present state; so we may from thence learn, that spiritual things are of greater value and importance, than what concerns the body: And that our future interests, the salvation of our souls, ought to be our principal care, and preferred before all the considerations and advantages of this life. For tho' we may, and even should, use all prudent and honest means for the support of our body, and to attain temporal good things; yet we must also remember, that these are of a frail and perishing nature, and inferior to the concern of our souls. So that we should be most industrious and earnest to improve and advance our spiritual and better part, in the practice of virtue and holiness: and to procure for ourselves the "true riches, that treasure in heaven which fadeth not away." Again,

By praying to God for our daily bread, we are taught not to be too solicitous, or uneasy about the things of this world; not to be discontented with our condition, nor perplex and distract our minds with anxious and distrustful fears, of future necessity and want: Because we know that a continual providence watcheth over us; and God who is almighty, hath promised, that none shall be destitute of all necessary and convenient comforts, if they humbly depend on his goodness; and who to sincere piety, add diligence in their calling, and keep a conscience void of offence. So that if our present condition is low and mean, or our endeavours are not so successful as we could wish and desire, yet let us not be cast down, or think ourselves utterly undone, since we are assured, that our
 Father

Father who is in heaven, ruleth over all, and “raifeth up the poor out of the duft, and the “beggar from the dunghill ;” and who hath promifed in his gofpel, to give neceffary fuffenance to all fuch as ferve him in righteoufnefs and godly fear. And therefore fhould he not fend us that relief we pray for, we ought to trust he will do it hereafter. And if he does not afford us any large fhare of the good things of this life, or that we may endure many evil things ; yet if we place our confidence in God, and continue patient in doing our duty, we may have the comfortable affurance of his future favour, and the bleffed hope of obtaining a greater portion of happinefs in the life to come.

And this petition ought ever to be accompanied with a charitable concern for our needy brethren. As fome abound and others fuffer need, it is the defign of God’s providence, nay, his moft exprefs will, that thefe deficiencies fhould be made up out of the abundance of thofe, whom he hath entrusted with a greater number of his talents, and expects to find faithful ftewards in the diftribution of them. And whoever fhuts up his bowels towards the poor, withholdeth that portion of good things from them, which God vouchsafes to convey to them, thro’ his hands ; and that man thwarts the defign of providence ; he is unfaithful and ungrateful to his Lord, and unworthy of God’s more liberal favours, even his daily bread. We fhould not therefore prefume to pray for our daily bread, without opening our hearts to thofe who are in want. For with what confidence can we call on God our Father, when we difregard our indigent brethren, who with us are equally God’s children ? How can we expect God’s bleffing upon our daily bread, of which we have enough to fpare, when we

deny assistance to those who are in want? This petition therefore naturally excites our pity and charity to the poor, to make it available. “And
“blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when
“he cometh, shall find so doing.”

Discourse

Discourse LIX. Dr. *Littleton*.

And forgive us our DEBTS, as we forgive our DEBTORS.

Mat. vi. 12.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

IN these words are two things observable; the petition, “forgive us our debts:” and the condition on which we ask forgiveness; “as we forgive our debtors.” Both these are subjects that greatly deserve our consideration; the former, as it affords the highest instance of God’s goodness and compassion to the sons of men; the latter, as containing a motive to the forgiveness of our enemies, which is one of the hardest of all Christian duties. I shall therefore particularly consider them, and endeavour to prove, that the mercy and goodness of God is remarkably displayed by the permission here given us, to pray to him for the forgiveness of our sins.

The temporal blessings which his providence dispenses for the supply of our worldly wants, are arguments indeed of great goodness to us, and what deserves our highest gratitude and love. But these are concerns of small moment to us, in comparison of those which look beyond the grave, and yield a prospect of better things to come. For what would it avail us to be supplied by his bounty, with the necessaries of this present life, if our sins were to follow us in the next; and that the debts

we had contracted here were never cancelled, but placed to our account, when we are summoned to appear “at the judgment seat of Christ.” If the sins and offences of our youth and old age were registered and treasured up against us; if no act of oblivion was to pass on our actions, no pardon granted, no method of atonement appointed to blot out our sins, no assurance that our prayers and supplications will be heard, no direction to ask that our debts may be forgiven, as we forgive our debtors: We should, as the apostle says, all have been concluded under sin, and consequently punishment; our condemnation had been sure, our sentence irreversible; and the blessings and conveniences we at present enjoy, would only have served to make easy our passage to a state of everlasting misery. And who could be so fond of a short momentary life, as to value it upon such terms as these? It is the glorious prospect we have before us; the certainty, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, “we may work out our own salvation,” and obtain by the merits and satisfaction of our Lord, what we were not able to secure for ourselves; it is this prospect, this hope and confidence in which our true happiness consists. The means of forgiveness are placed in our own hands, and therefore it will be our own faults if we miscarry. If we will but confess and lament our past offences, and forsake them; if we will but rely on God’s mercy thro’ Christ, “and forgive those that have offended us,” in conformity to his example and command; no iniquity shall be imputed to us. With such thoughts and designs as these, we may boldly have recourse to the throne of grace, and there plead for “the forgiveness of our sins; being justified freely by God’s grace, thro’ the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation thro’ faith in his blood.”

And

And when we consider the wretched and miserable state we were in, before Christ undertook our ransom, the necessity of sinning, the certainty of our punishment, and how little reason there was for God to accept of a satisfaction, to reconcile such rebels to himself; we cannot but esteem it a wonderful instance of God's goodness, that he was pleased to provide a remedy, and to point out a method by which mercy might take place, and yet justice be fully satisfied; such a method as nothing but infinite wisdom could contrive; such as the holy angels were not able to discover, much less could man, by all the art that his own misery could suggest.

The use therefore that we ought to make of this amazing goodness, is, first to reflect with gratitude upon it, to acknowledge the sense we have of our unworthiness to receive it, and the utter impossibility of our obtaining mercy "without the free grace of God." As there was nothing in our power to influence and move God to shew us mercy; as there was no satisfaction, but the blood of our Redeemer, that could, consistently with God's justice, be accepted by him, our condition was quite desperate and hopeless. And no one could have expected, that God himself should submit to pay the ransom for us, or indeed that it was possible to unite the divine nature in such a manner to our sinful flesh, that as man had sinned, so man should suffer; and yet that his sufferings, by virtue of that union, should be a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, tho' impossible for mere man to make it. But thus it was ordered; thus was God satisfied, and man redeemed from misery; thus was he rescued from everlasting punishment, and entitled to eternal happiness. And he who is not affected by such benefits as these, that can reflect on them without love and gratitude, as he certainly will, so he
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well deserves to lose them; since notwithstanding Christ's sufferings, his portion will be no better for them.

And this leads me to observe another use we ought to make of God's goodness, thus manifested to us; which is, that we labour to secure the blessings, thus purchased for us, by the blood of Christ. It is true, there is now no other sacrifice necessary to be offered, no other satisfaction required by God, but the blood of our Redeemer. "Who was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes were we healed." But we are not so healed and recovered, as to be in no danger of relapsing; we are not so rescued from the bondage of sin and corruption, as to be perfectly secure of God's favour for the future. The Christian life is a state of trial and conflict. For he who bought us with a price, has a right to our obedience; and when he exempted us from the punishment of our sins, he required us to forsake them, to abstain from all wilful and premeditated offences, and to repent of those slips and miscarriages, which thro' the frailty and infirmity of our nature, are unavoidable; above all to pray to God for mercy and forgiveness, and in order to obtain it, to be ready to forgive others as Christ has taught us, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." So that to forgive those that trespass against us, is a necessary condition, without which we cannot pray for the forgiveness of our own trespasses and sins. Since then it is a matter of so much consequence to our happiness, and a duty, which, if we may judge from the practice of mankind, is one the most difficult of any our religion requires, it may be worth our time and pains to consider distinctly this our duty.

And

And therefore I shall enquire what is here expected from us. To which purpose it will be very proper to consider what we mean, when we ask forgiveness for our own trespasses and sins. For in whatever sense we ask it of God, in the same also we should exercise it to others; the forgiveness of our debtors, or enemies, being here made not only the condition, but the example of the forgiveness which we ask of God. Now it is certain, that when we ask God the forgiveness of our debts, that is of our sins and trespasses, our meaning is, that we beg of him not to punish us for them; and not only so, but that he will take us into favour, and afford us the same succour and protection from above, the same assistance of his grace, the same title to everlasting happiness, as if we had never sinned against him. In this manner the holy scripture describes to us, the forgiveness that we ask of God. The sacrifice of Christ's death is a propitiatory sacrifice, causing God to be propitious to us; "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." We are thereby admitted to many honourable titles and privileges, belonging to us. And from all which it appears, that "we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ." That we are not only pardoned our past offences, but also readmitted to God's special favour, expecting further benefits at his hands. From hence we may plainly perceive, in what sense we ought to forgive our enemies. Not only to abstain from all acts of violence, all instances of revenge, all hurtful and injurious treatment of their persons, fortunes, or characters, but also to embrace every opportunity to assist and do them what good we can.

This is what we ask when we pray to God for ourselves, and thus therefore we ought to act towards others. And he that does less, whatever he
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may think, or however he may abound in other virtues, may be assured he will never be forgiven. This indeed is a hard saying, but yet no more than our Lord has told us. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, says he, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." One would think, such a positive and express assertion, from the mouth of our blessed Saviour, so well known and understood, should discourage us from all methods of revenge, without other arguments to enforce it. And indeed, if the fear of God's vengeance on our sins, will not move us to be more charitable to others, we cannot expect that the reason of the thing can much influence and affect us. But I must not omit to observe, that the forgiveness of our enemies, as before explained, is in several views a very reasonable duty. A command, that for these following reasons, we ought readily to comply with. First,

Because it is the badge of our profession as Christians, the precept which distinguishes our religion from all others, that ever appeared in the world. That which was said by the Jews of old time "thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," was also said by all nations, and in all ages, and was never contradicted, till our Lord appeared, and commanded us to love our enemies. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." This was a new strain of benevolence to mankind, never taught by any other teacher. Morality was never raised to such a height as this, by the greatest masters of the most refined reason, that had ever before appeared to teach and instruct the world. This doctrine bears evident marks of its divine original, and which could never have been revealed

revealed and made known on earth, but “by the Son of man who came down from heaven.” A doctrine in all respects worthy its divine author. There is something in the notion, so excellent and sublime, and in the practice so great and generous, that none but a Christian hero can perform it. There is a greatness of mind in forgiving enemies, far surpassing the greatest and most renowned achievements of those, who have filled the world with the fame of their actions, their victories, exploits and triumphs. And therefore a great mind should be excited to the practice, if for no other reason, yet at least for this, that it is an excellent and praiseworthy virtue. As it is an argument of a little mind, to trample on and insult a conquered enemy; so to meditate revenge, to shew an enemy we can hurt him, is an ungenerous mean ambition. But to conquer ourselves, to subdue our anger, to master a malicious revengeful temper, is not only the duty of a Christian as such, but in truth is the greatest action, the most laudable ambition, the most excellent of all virtues.

And we may be further encouraged to this virtue, by the example of God and Christ; and our blessed Saviour being a man of like passions with ourselves, is a fit pattern for us to copy. Our redemption was accomplished, God signed the pardon, and Christ paid the ransom for us, at a time when we were rebels and enemies to God, and could therefore have no hopes of mercy. But enemies as we were, yet God loved us. It was love that moved him to have compassion on us, and to accept of a ransom for us. It was love that moved Christ to die for our redemption, when we had no reason to hope for favour from him, but rather the due “reward of our sins. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish,
“but

“but have everlasting life. And, herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And as to the love of Christ, he himself observes, “that greater love hath no man, than this; that a man lay down his life for his friend.” Thus was the love of God to us rebels and apostates, made manifest, by the redemption of the world. Upon every transgression, we again become enemies; but if we repent, as often as we transgress, so often will his mercy pardon. Such is the example we have to follow. And surely to imitate our great creator, in his darling attribute, is an ambition well deserving our study. We indeed, “cannot be pure, nor perfect as he is perfect.” But merciful we may be to all that offend us, without restriction or reserve. It is true, malicious people say they cannot forgive their enemies, that is, they will not; for that strictly speaking, we are not able to forgive, when we are both willing and desirous, is a plain contradiction, because nothing but the will is wanting. If I am willing to forgive, I have actually forgiven, and shall never, as long as that will continue, have any desire or inclination to revenge. This therefore is a pretence that has no foundation; and certainly there is no injury so great and grievous that we may not easily forgive if we please. It is but to think of our own trespasses, offences, and the multitude of provocations, that we have given God; “and then let us bear malice if we can.” But if notwithstanding we can retain in our hearts any malice or ill will, it plainly proves, that we are not possessed with a Christian spirit. We must either disbelieve what Christ has told us, or be deceived by false hopes of pardon, or be very indifferent what becomes of us; if we can ever consent to execute our revenge. A temper that is malicious, implacable, and unmerciful, we cannot think of without
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some kind of horror. A good Christian then, will not entertain it in his breast for all that this world can give.

Another motive to forgive our enemies, is the peace and quiet it affords. This is indeed but a worldly motive, but then it is such as the scripture offers, and that, one would think, should have great influence on us. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, (says the apostle) if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Coals of fire, not to waste and consume, but to melt him into tenderness and love. For who can withstand such gentle treatment, such kind and compassionate concern for those, who have deserved so little at our hands? "To return good for evil," is not only a most Christian, but also a most happy temper, as being the best means to preserve that intercourse of good offices, in which the happiness of society consists. While men are men, there will be complaints of slights and indignities, of injuries and ill offices, that are offered by one to another. And as long as they are resented and made matter of contention, there will be no such thing as good neighbourhood in the world. One injury begets another, till a war commence, which is frequently fatal to one party, and always troublesome to both. And yet when we come to trace the greatest quarrels and dissensions to the original cause, how often do they begin from a mistaken word, a misreported or misinterpreted behaviour, or something which at first might easily have been overlooked, and its fatal consequences prevented? But when once the seeds of discontent are sown, they will grow till they bring forth revenge. When the spark is kindled, new fuel is administered by every word and action of the offending party, till it breaks out into a flame too violent to be resisted, and sometimes not to be

quenched without blood. And should it stop short of this, if it goes no further than to blast the credit, wound the reputation and character, or hurt the fortune of our enemy, what a scene is here laid for mutual invectives, reciprocal acts of violence and wrong? Can any then be easy in such a state of enmity? Can we have any comfort in ourselves, while our minds are inflamed with unquiet passions, and conscious, that by our enmity to our fellow-creatures, we are at enmity also “with him that made us?” That we are exposed to God’s wrath and incapable of pardon, “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;” and that as often as we pray by our Lord’s command, we pray that vengeance may be executed on us, and that we may suffer the full punishment of our sins: But by resolving to forgive our enemies, by passing by the little injuries and slights of others, by shutting our ears against rumours and reports; and which are often invented by malicious tongues, to promote jealousies and discontents among us: by checking the first tendencies and inclinations to revenge, by doing good to all, even those who have injured us, we do all that we can to promote peace and quiet; or, however we may be disturbed by the insults and affronts of others, yet we shall preserve a perpetual tranquillity within, we shall be easy and at peace with ourselves, our neighbour and our God. Or, should the world disquiet and molest us here, we are sure of eternal rest and happiness hereafter.

I proceed, lastly, to remind you of those affections and dispositions, with which this petition ought always to be accompanied to the throne of grace; and we should offer it up with the deepest humility and debasement of mind. It is but reasonable the criminal should humble himself before his judge, when he is begging for pardon and forgiveness.

ness. We are all, even the best of us, criminals before God. “For if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Humility is the chief ingredient in all our devotions, more particularly in this petition. And when we pray for the remission of sins, we are especially obliged to exercise our faith; which is the only ground of a comfortable assurance.—Repentance and amendment of life is also a requisite condition, in order to obtain forgiveness; it being the greatest insolence, for a sinner to presume to beg God’s pardon for his sins, when he neither repents of, nor resolves to leave them.

But this petition in a most eminent degree recommends to us that Christian charity, which consists in forgiveness of injuries; this being the express condition of the petition, and what we are strictly obliged to, on many accounts; for common reason and equity require this. The son of Syrach justly expostulates; “One man beareth hatred to another, and doth he seek pardon? He sheweth no mercy to a man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?” It is most unreasonable to expect that from God, which we unjustly and cruelly deny to our brother. If we forgive our neighbour the injury he hath done us, then we may expect God to forgive us our sins, when we pray. And we are really obliged to this in point of gratitude; it being the least return we can make to our gracious God, for his mercy to us. This is plainly intimated in the parable. “O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou didst desire me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?” But if neither equity nor ingenuity will weigh with us, to be merciful to our brethren,

yet methinks the sense of our own danger, should oblige us to it. For the scripture declares, “that he shall have judgment without mercy, who sheweth no mercy.” This charitable, this forgiving temper, is highly reasonable, and most becoming a Christian; nay, it is absolutely necessary, as he regards his own welfare, and hopes to have his prayers heard and answered to his mind.

To conclude; let us endeavour so to forgive, that we may not be afraid to ask forgiveness. Let us take care so to pray for forgiveness, that our prayers may not justify, and encrease our condemnation. Let us remember the amazing condescension of the Son of God, in “taking upon him the form of a servant,” and thence learn humility. Let us represent to our minds the terms of our salvation, in order to excite us to repentance. Let us adore the infinite love of our dear redeemer, “who laid down his life for his very enemies,” and let this be the pattern of our charity; so shall we be fit to bear a part in that seraphical hymn, with which the prince of peace was at first ushered into the world; “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

Discourse LX. Bp. *Clagget*.

And lead us not into TEMPTATION,
but deliver us from EVIL.

Mat. 6. xiii.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from evil.

AS in the former petition, we beseech God to “forgive us our trespesses;” so in this we are to testify the sincerity of our asking forgiveness of our past sins, by expressing an earnest desire, that for the future we may be more careful to preserve innocence and a good conscience, than we have formerly been. And there seems to be these following reasons for our Lord’s directing us to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from “evil.” First,

To admonish all, even the best of us, that we are in danger of falling into the same sins we have been guilty of, by those several temptations to which in the course of our lives we are exposed; and therefore that we ought not to think ourselves secure, but to stand on our guard and be very careful, lest they overcome us.

Secondly, To instruct us, that those temptations are not so slight, inconsiderable, and easy to be avoided, as that we can withstand them, unless assisted, by God’s grace, or his providence keeps us out of their way; and if we encounter them, that they are not so easy to be resisted, but we have need of the grace of his holy spirit, to fortify our resolutions to oppose and conquer them. This is true

more or less of every Christian. Indeed some by reason of their temper, calling, and circumstances, are not in the way of so many temptations as others meet with; and some by their constant Christian care, diligence, watchfulness and good habits, are better prepared than others to resist them: yet every man hath need of God's grace, his providence without, and his internal operations, both to prevent him from meeting with great temptations, and to secure him from falling into them when tempted. Therefore to keep men in a modest opinion of themselves, a careful concern for their own safety, and a religious dependance on God; our Lord added this petition to the former, to be used by all his disciples. And since the principal design of this petition, is, for us to avoid those evils we have committed, and to perform all such duties as are required of us, let me therefore add,

That our praying to have our former sins forgiven, will be to no purpose, unless we actually amend our lives and become better; for the offering up these requests one after the other, plainly shews, that our prayers to God for pardon and forgiveness is only conditional, and depends on our future behaviour: since, was it absolute, and had no respect to what we should be afterwards, I see no reason to pray at all against falling into sin, or not to be "led into temptation, but only to be delivered from evil." I shall now proceed, to make a more particular enquiry, concerning the words and meaning of this petition. And then offer several considerations, that should excite us to pray in good earnest against temptations: and lastly, shew what qualifications are necessary to make a person sincere in praying to be delivered from temptations. And, it should be observed. That,

This petition consists of two parts, the one, "lead us not into temptation, the other, but deliver us
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“from evil.” For the more particular understanding the former part, it will be proper to remove such acceptations of the word temptation, as are not intended to be meant in the use of this petition. And since it is here supposed that God may lead a man into temptation, I will consider in what sense that must be understood in this place.

And a man may be said to lead another into temptation, when he entices him to sin, or by any argument, art, or violence, persuades or compels him to it. But we are not to understand any thing of this nature on God’s part. For in this sense God tempts no man. He neither designs, or lays any traps or snares to make men sin: he proposes nothing to their hopes or fears to deceive, allure, or affright them into sin; nor doth he by any impulse on their minds incline, or necessitate them to sin. To conceive such things of God as these would be the highest impiety. Therefore we must understand the petition, as if we desired God not to instigate, allure, persuade, or any way incline us to evil, for this would be to suppose it possible in him; whereas to do so, is as impossible as for him to lye, or to act contrary to his holy nature. Again,

To tempt a man may signify in general to prove and try him, whether he will faithfully discharge his duty, and answer another’s expectation towards him, or not. In this sense it is certain, God tempts every man; that is, he gives him occasions and opportunities of performing, or refusing to do his duty. Thus the laws of God to mankind in general, or to Christians in particular, the former by nature, the latter by revelation, are temptations, or trials of our obedience, whether we will observe them or not. And in regard the circumstances of men are very various, and that they have respective duties to be performed; therefore every man’s particular condition of life, his honour or meanness, his wealth

or poverty, his authority or subjection, his single or married state, his temper and constitution of body, his health or sickness, his calling and profession ; in a word, his condition in the world with respect to circumstances of this nature, and which are infinite, is a temptation or trial, whether he will live up to the general rules of his religion, and perform that duty which his place, relation, and peculiar interest in the world requires from him. In this sense then, every man is led into temptation ; that is, he has the general rules of religion to observe, and also the particular duties proper to his place and condition, to be performed by him : And God, who requires these duties, and by whose providence men are put into such circumstances, may so far be said to lead a man into temptation. But as every man in this sense is, and must be tempted, this cannot be the meaning of the words, when we pray not to be led into temptation.

By temptation we may here also understand those hazardous trials, with which God is pleased sometimes to prove good men, and to punish wicked men. So that God may be said to lead a man into temptation or tempt him, when he permits some extraordinary accidents to befall him, in order to try his sincerity, and whether he really is what he pretends to be. What makes me think the word temptation ought here to be thus interpreted, is, that I find when it is applied to God as tempting men, it always means some extraordinary trial of them, such as seldom befalls any, without the appearance of a special providence, easily seen, at least by the party concerned. Thus God was said to tempt Abraham when he required him to offer up his only son Isaac ; that is, by this trial, God proved, after an extraordinary manner, the strength of his obedience. Thus also he was said to tempt or to prove the Israelites forty years in the wilderness ;
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trying them by various and wonderful providences, whether they would acknowledge him in all their ways. And St. James calls the great afflictions which the christians suffered from their persecutors, temptations. And it is a great temptation which leaves a man to no other choice, than to lose his all in this world, or forfeit everlasting life. Thus great poverty is a temptation to theft, great wealth to luxury and forgetfulness of God; wherefore Agur prayed, “give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.” It is impossible to mention the various kinds of powerful temptations to which we are liable, and such as are sufficient to try the strength of our faith. Perhaps it would be very hard for any man to declare, what temptation he could most resist and oppose, or which would be most difficult to him; whether violent pain, or extreme poverty; great contempt on the one side, or vast wealth, power, uninterrupted ease and prosperity on the other; a sudden good or evil fortune; a strong temptation to lust and uncleanness; or to covetousness and revenge. We are so ignorant of ourselves, that we know not what trial we can best encounter in things of this nature; therefore we ought to leave the petition to God in general, as our Saviour has here taught us, namely, that God would not lead us into temptation, or, that he would keep those temptations from us, which he who best knows our make and frame, by his infinite wisdom sees will most tend to endanger us.

There are indeed some particular temptations of an extraordinary nature, which we are not absolutely to pray against, but only with submission to God’s pleasure and omniscience; of this kind are the temptations of persecution, and all other extraordinary distresses, and sore afflictions. We are not absolutely to pray against what may turn to our
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good ; but with submission to the divine will, we may pray against any trial that will endanger our constancy, or thro' our own weakness prove injurious and prejudicial to us. No doubt, the ancient christians prayed for deliverance from persecution, but then it was with a resolution also to be well content, if their pressures continued ; otherwise St. James would not have said, “ my brethren, count “ it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations ; ” or into diverse afflictions and tribulations, for the sake of the gospel ; for the trial of your faith worketh patience. That is, God by trying your faith this way, exerciseth you in the virtue of patience for your greater reward. And St. Paul did well in praying to be delivered from the messenger of Satan, tho' his grievance was continued to his advantage in the event, by the grace of God, that was sufficient for him. This branch of the petition seems to be founded on that modest opinion of one's self, which is almost natural to a wise and good man ; and on that concern for innocence and eternal life, which is inseparable from a true believer and good christian. Such an one cannot but think it very reasonable to beseech God, that neither the devil, nor the world, may be able to change his good resolutions ; that they may escape those temptations, which have overpowered very great and excellent persons ; that he may not be surprized, as were Lot, David, and Peter, whose faith and virtue were so strong and conspicuous ; that his condition in this world may be so ordered by divine providence, as to render his duty more easy, his state towards God more safe and secure, than great temptations will permit ; that in all his trials his strength, or rather weakness may be considered ; so as he may not be surprized with too great suddenness, nor wearied out by the long continuance and importunity of temptations ; whether to pride, voluptu-
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ousness and uncleanness ; or to impatience, discontent, revenge, or apostacy from God and the truth.

Having thus considered the first part of this petition, I proceed to the second, “ but deliver us “ from evil ; which signifies the same, and something more than the former. The same, as including deliverance from great and dangerous temptations ; but more, as the evil is greater to fall under temptations, than only to be tempted. If considered in the former sense, it implies God’s providence in allotting us such a portion in this life, as he sees is best for our spiritual state, and in removing from us whatever he knows to be inconsistent therewith. It is also to be understood of those innumerable methods of providence, by which God keeps good men from sundry temptations that would befall them, did he not interpose to prevent it. Take it in the latter sense, as keeping us from being overcome by temptations when they happen, then the petition means the good providence of God without us, and of the motions and operations of his holy Spirit within us ; whereby he supports and preserves those that in the time of their trials trust in him. God delivers us by his outward providences, and which are very considerable ; sometimes by the good examples of others labouring under the same circumstances ; sometimes by the faithful advice of a friend, the seasonable presence of a good man, a sudden change in our fortunes, and diverse unforeseen accidents ; casual indeed to us, but purposely ordered by the wise disposal of God, to prevent our being led away by temptations that assault us : therefore in this prayer we commit ourselves to the good providence of God, that he would still continue to preserve us by such ways and methods, as to his wisdom seems most requisite. By the operations of his holy Spirit within

us, he delivers us from evil under temptation, when he represents to us the reasons of our duty, and strongly impresses them on our minds; whereby good men have been often rescued from their passions, and kept from falling when on the brink of danger: therefore in this prayer we entreat God, “not to cast us away from his presence, nor to take “his holy Spirit from us;” that he would not forsake us, when we are in the greatest danger of forgetting him; but that his grace may prevent us from yielding to any temptation, whether sudden, violent, or long, that so we may never be tempted above what we are able to bear. I proceed now to offer some considerations, that should make us in good earnest pray against temptations, that neither great or small may overcome us, and draw us into sin.

Let us then consider the great consequence of being overcome by temptations. If we are prevailed on to act contrary to our duty, the best end we can make is a sorrowful repentance, and which if sincere, brings abundantly more trouble, than the transitory enjoyment and satisfaction of the most pleasing sin. The advantage gained by consenting to a temptation is gone, long before we come to repent; all the sensual pleasure fled as soon as enjoyed. Revenge is no longer sweet, than while the passion of malice lasts; and what a man acquires unjustly, must be restored the moment true repentance begins. So that it is evidently necessary for our own ease and quiet, not to enter into temptation, or fall by it, tho’ we should repent and reform, which is the best end we can promise ourselves. But if we suppose the worst, that a man grows more easy to his lusts, and more readily yields to the devil’s suggestions, so as to fill up the measure of his iniquity, what then follows is nothing less than fire unquenchable. Wicked men will

at the last day be sentenced to everlasting punishment for yielding to temptation. In every man's sin, there is the temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil; the allurements of gain or pleasure, the enticement of sinners, the vanity of complying with the worst examples: only in common swearing and profaneness, the devil can bait with no temptation. If then we are concerned for the end, and would avoid the dreadful sentence of "go ye cursed into everlasting burnings," we have great need to pray, Lord, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And

The great difficulty of resisting temptations, is another reason for our using this petition in good earnest. For, if we consider the variety and number of temptations, we shall find no age, calling, or condition of life; no constitution of body, or mind, totally free from all temptations. Youth is solicited by pleasure and wantonness; riper years, by the cares and pride of life; old age, by discontent and spitefulness, and, to the admiration of all considerate persons, by senseless covetousness. A calling gives an opportunity for dishonesty and hard dealing, griping and oppression, and administers temptations to falsehood and lying. A free sanguine temper is apt to run into excess; and good-nature into debauchery; a reserved disposition into fullness and discontent; so that every constitution has its incident danger. If we converse with our friends, we are in danger of being flattered; if with our enemies, of increasing malice and revenge. Commendation is apt to make us vain, reproof angry, reproach and contempt to fill us with hatred. If one has more wealth, honour, beauty, respect, or knowledge than another, he is ready to be elated with pride; or if he sees himself herein excelled by any, that is a temptation to envy. If we live in ease and plenty, we are in danger of falling into
sloth

loth and idleness; if we have much to do, then contention, peevishness, and all the vices incident to business, lie in wait to assault us. It is hard to bear sickness after long health, and to fall from wealth into poverty, or, take up the cross. As in a suffering condition, there are temptations that naturally arise, and the change itself is one; so when a man unexpectedly comes into prosperity, luxury and wantonness, pride and forgetfulness of God, will then more easily beset him. In a word, we are exposed to the danger of diverse sins and lusts, each of which has several temptations, and the one often makes the other stronger. And being thus beset with dangers, we should not only be very circumspect, but also pray, "Lord, save us, " or we perish.

The frequency of temptations, is also another argument to prove the necessity of constant prayer. The temptation may be changed, but is never quite removed. Whilst we are in the world, we are still on trial and duty. We have many enemies near at hand, always busy and urgent upon us, so that we had need "to watch and pray." A man's table is a snare to him; his wealth an occasion of falling. He is often betrayed into excess, when he suspects no danger. If full of business, he is exposed to irreligion, covetousness, and anger. If inclined to company, he is easily seduced to evil speaking; he has his tongue to bridle, his appetites and passions to manage, and to preserve himself from the temptations of foolish mirth, uncharitable censures, and all the vices of conversation. Lastly, we have our own depraved natures to struggle with. Our outward senses are ever ready to let in temptation, our imagination to entertain it, and our reason not strong enough to resist and oppose it. We are also beset with a subtle and malicious adversary, who goes about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he
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“ may devour.” His approaches are sly and imperceptible, and busy about us, when we think not of him. We are doing his work, and consenting to his suggestions, when we only suppose ourselves to be gratifying a lust, or an unreasonable appetite ; to please a companion, or false friend. On all these accounts it behoves us to pray in good earnest, that we may not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil. This brings me in the last place,

To observe what qualifications are necessary to make us sincere, in praying to be delivered from temptations. And these are, to have a modest and humble opinion of ourselves, to be sensible of the dangers, difficulties, and our own inability to prevail against them, without the special grace of God. And therefore to pray earnestly to God, to deliver us from temptation. We must also have a firm belief and trust in the grace and providence of God, acknowledging that he governs, and overrules all things ; that the course of this world is not merely conducted by natural causes, and the free will of man ; but that God always does, and will interpose, to alter the course of nature, and the inclinations of free agents, for the benefit of good men, and the punishment of the wicked. Lastly, we must be most willing and desirous to keep innocence, and do the thing that is right ; otherwise we do not in good earnest desire the concurrence of God’s providence and grace to this purpose. And this our sincerity, we should express by a general care of doing all we can, to contribute towards it : more particularly in not encouraging evil thoughts and imaginations, which tend to corrupt our wills and affections, and to make them break out into practice. He that plays with wanton, ambitious, or covetous fancies, is acting for the devil against himself. To be often thinking on the riches and advantages of others, is the beginning of envy. We
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are therefore to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. To watch is to be diligent in preventing temptation from rising in our minds, and he that doth not thus watch over himself, is not fit to pray, that God would watch over him.

We must also be careful to avoid all temptations to sin, as much as possible : as idleness, which is not only a general temptation, but a sin itself ; and all other particular temptations, which by reason, experience, or example, we find hard to be resisted. He who is too easy in complying with his companions, must run away from the drunkard : he who is soon angry, must have a care of being provoked, or of conversing with those who will exasperate him : an eye that is given to wander, must not be trusted in all places. We must avoid every thing, that will make our duty difficult ; and by this we shall know whether we are averse from sin, and love the temptation or not. If we do not, then we shall be careful to avoid it. But if we do, how can we desire God to keep us from temptation, when we voluntarily run upon it ? Again, we must consider in what instances we are most likely to be tempted. This every one who examines his past actions will soon find. For if we are ignorant of our own temper, yet we may easily know what our practice has been ; and from hence we may learn what those temptations and occasions of sin are, which we should principally avoid. To reflect on our past conversation, cannot indeed undo what has happened ; but it may prevent the like for the future, by making us more cautious and vigilant to escape our former temptations. And he who does not seriously endeavour to know his greatest danger, and how to avoid it, speaks words at random, when he desires God to deliver him from temptation. Lastly,

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We must, by particular resolutions, arm and fortify ourselves against those temptations, which we cannot reasonably avoid. If we are easily overtaken by liquor, we should, before we meet our drinking companions, be prepared by a firm purpose, not to exceed such a measure; and not venture on a general intention of being sober, until we have attained an habit of sobriety. We should take the same method to resist all other temptations, that we have reason to think dangerous. To conclude, we do not in earnest pray against temptations, unless we also watch against them. For in all the prayers we offer to God for any blessing or good thing in behalf of ourselves or others, it is thereby implied, that we promise God to contribute towards their being effected all we can; and therefore if we do not perform what we so promise, our prayer is no better than that of an hypocrite.

Discourse LXI. Bp. *Blackall*.

FOR THINE is the KINGDOM, and the
POWER, and the GLORY for ever.
AMEN.

Mat. vi. 13.

For thine is the kingdom and the power,
and the glory for ever. Amen.

HAVING finished what I intended on the former part of the Lord's prayer, am now to discourse on the conclusion: Which contains, first, a doxology, or solemn giving glory to God; "thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever." And secondly, an expression of our full approbation of, and hearty consent to the whole prayer, in the word, Amen. I shall therefore explain the meaning, and shew what sense we ought to have in our minds, when we express these words; and then observe what duties we may learn, and are instructed in by the use thereof.

These words may be understood as a simple doxology, or, as a recognition and acknowledgment of the greatness and majesty of God; and may be thus paraphrased. "We heartily acknowledge thy supreme dominion over us, and the whole world; we adore and worship thee as the great king, the sovereign Lord of all. We also humbly admire and praise that infinite power whereby thou governest the world, and orderest all the affairs of it, according to thine own pleasure; and we give thee the glory of thy greatness and power, for all
" the

“the good thou doſt to any, eſpecially for what
 “thou beſtoweſt on us. And laſtly, we hereby ac-
 “knowledge that God is unchangeable, that he ever-
 “was and will be, as great, powerful, and glorious,
 “as he now is ; being infinitely and eternally the
 “ſame y ſterday, to-day, and forever.” And
 thus interpreted, this doxology is the ſame in ſenſe
 with that larger form of praiſe and thankſgiving,
 which is recorded to be uſed by David. “Bleſſed
 “be thou, the Lord God of Iſrael, our father for
 “ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatneſs,
 “and the power, and the glory, and the victory,
 “and the majeſty ; for all that is in the heaven and
 “in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O
 “Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.
 “Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou
 “reigneſt over all, and in thine hand is power and
 “might, to make great and give ſtrength unto all ;
 “now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and
 “praiſe thy glorious name. Thine is the king-
 “dom, the power, and the glory for ever.” That
 is, “We humbly acknowledge and reverently a-
 “dore the greatneſs of thy kingdom, the mighti-
 “neſs of thy power, the gloriousneſs of thy ma-
 “jeſty, and the eternity of theſe, and all other thy
 “infinite and glorious perfections.”

We may alſo underſtand theſe words, as aſſign-
 ing ſome reaſons inducing us to aſk, and God to
 grant us our ſeveral requests ; and the connexion
 between theſe words and the foregoing petition by
 the word for ; “for thine is the kingdom, and the
 “power and the glory,” ſeems to favour this inter-
 pretation. And then the full ſenſe that we ought
 to have in our minds, when we ſay this concluſion
 of the Lord’s prayer will be thus. “And having
 “now offered up our petitions for what we want,
 “it is but fit we ſhould alſo render thee our praiſe
 “and thanks for what we have received. We there-

“fore acknowledge that thou art a great king
 “whom we ought to worship with the lowest reve-
 “rence ; and that thy power is infinite, to grant
 “what we have requested. We confess that thy
 “glory is above all, and humbly desire thou mayst
 “be glorified in all things. Lastly, we acknow-
 “ledge that thy kingdom, power and glory are
 “for ever, eternal and immutable, and therefore
 “we will at all times put our whole trust in thee,
 “because thou canst never fail us.”

The next thing I proposed, was to shew the good instructions we receive from this conclusion of the Lord's prayer ; and in general, from this doxology or form of praise being added by our Lord to that form of prayer which he has taught us to use, and as a pattern to compose all our prayers ; we may learn, that it is our duty always to join with our petitions for the mercies we want, praises and thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, and with joyful acknowledgments of his majesty, greatness, and bounty. That we “should
 “pray without ceasing, and in every thing give
 “thanks ; and by prayer and supplication with
 “thanksgiving, let our requests be made known
 “unto God.” And in particular, from the first clause of this doxology, for thine is the kingdom, we are reminded, that it is our duty in all things to submit to the will of God, and to resign ourselves to his disposal, he having sovereign dominion over all. From the second clause of it, thine is the power, we should learn that it is our duty in all straits and difficulties, to apply for his grace to help, direct, and support us, and in all our dangers and wants to rely on his almighty power to relieve and deliver us ; and to “be careful for nothing, but in every thing
 “by prayer and supplication, to let our requests be
 “made known unto God.” From the third clause of it, thine is the glory, we are further taught to

direct all our actions to his glory, to whom we here acknowledge that all glory is due ; according to the apostle, “ whether therefore ye eat or drink, “ or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Lastly, from that eternity which we here acknowledge in all the divine attributes and perfections, when we say, that his kingdom, power, and glory are for ever, we are taught to worship God continually, to praise him evermore, and to give divine honours to none besides him ; because he is God from everlasting to everlasting, the only God, and that he will not give his glory to another.

As to the word *amen*, it is taken from the Hebrew, and signifies truly, verily, or the like ; a phrase often used by our Saviour at the beginning of his speeches, to engage the attention and credit of his hearers to what he was going to say. Verily is *amen* in the original : Thus in St. John, “ verily, “ verily, I say unto you ;” or, of a truth I say unto you. So that the proper signification of *amen* is, indeed, truly, or of a truth, as appears from several places in the gospels. This therefore being the proper meaning of the word *amen*, it being an adverb of affirming, the design of adding it at the conclusion of any discourse, is to affirm what had been before said, thereby declaring our approbation and consent thereto. Thus when we repeat the creed we say *amen*, where it signifies, so it is, this is the true faith ; or, all this I stedfastly believe. And in like manner is the word used, in the commination ordered to be read on the first day of Lent. So St. Paul, after having told the heathens, that “ they “ worshipped and served the creature more than “ the creator, who is blessed for ever. *Amen.*” Thus again, he says, Christ is over all, God blessed for ever. *Amen* ; that is, Christ is indeed God blessed for ever. In both these texts the word *amen* has the force of a repetition, of what had been just before

said in other words ; and of the like use and force is the word, when added at the end of a creed or prayer.

When we say amen at the end of the creed, or any profession of our belief, it means the same as if we repeated over again, all that profession of our faith, which we had before made in several words and sentences, and is a fresh declaration of our consent to such articles of our belief. But when the word amen is joined to, or added at the end of a prayer, as here ; it then means to expose our wish or desire, that what we have requested may be granted. Thus when our Lord said, surely I come quickly ; the apostle immediately adds, amen, even so, come Lord Jesus ; that is, may it be as thou hast promised. And of the like use is this word, when added at the end of those benedictions, wherewith most of the epistles in the new testament are concluded. If therefore a prayer is said by one, and amen added to it, is said by another, as is common in our publick prayers, where the minister only speaks, and the people say amen ; then it signifies their consent to, and concurrence with, the whole prayer uttered by the minister, and is the same as when in the litany, we beseech God to hear us. But if amen is said by the same person that speaks the prayer ; as when we add it to our closet and private prayers, then amen is a repetition in one word of all that had been before said in the prayer ; 'tis a fresh breathing forth of all those pious desires or affections of the mind, that had been before more largely expressed. When therefore we say amen at the end of the Lord's prayer, or any other prayer where the matter is agreeable to God's will, whether spoken by ourselves or another ; the foregoing senses of the word, so it is, and so be it, may well be joined together ; as it not only signifies the concurrence of our own wishes, but also our assu-

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red hope, that the same will be granted us. Thus much for the meaning of the word amen.

And as we are here taught by our Lord himself to say amen at the end of prayer, to testify our consent thereto, it from hence plainly appears, that all public prayers ought to be expressed in such a language and stile, as that all may easily understand them; or otherwise they cannot say amen, as it means their approving of, and giving a rational consent thereto. It is therefore highly expedient, nay absolutely necessary for the edification of the church, that the public prayers, which are intended for the use of all, should be suited to the capacities of all, and be as plain, easy, and familiar as possible. Not only carefully avoiding all high flights, rhetorical figures and flourishes, but all such words as are not of very easy meaning and common use. In a word, the public prayers should be like those of our church, the words common, the stile easy, the sentences short, the whole phrase and composition suited to the meanest capacity. And this, in general, is a great advantage which premeditated prayers have over such as are conceived, or extempore, since he that makes a prayer for public use, takes time to study plainness and perspicuity, which he that prays extempore may not do. But above all, it is manifestly most absurd and ridiculous, that the public prayers, in which all are to join, should be in an unknown tongue, in a language not understood perhaps by one in twenty of the whole congregation, and yet this is practised in the church of Rome. The most ridiculous folly whereof is by St. Paul sufficiently exposed, and among other arguments by this, that no man can wisely and rationally say amen, to a prayer uttered in an unknown tongue; “ I will (says he) pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also; else when thou shalt

“ bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the
 “ room of the unlearned say amen, at the giving of
 “ thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou say-
 “ est? For thou verily who understandest the language
 “ thou speakest in, givest thanks well; but the other
 “ (he who understands it not) is not edified.” But,
 when we say amen to any prayer or address to God, it
 is supposed that we both understood and gave attention
 to what went before; since we thereby give our con-
 sent to, and declare our approbation of it. But how
 can we do that, unless we attend to what is said?
 By this word amen we are therefore instructed in an-
 other duty, namely, that when we are at prayer,
 to keep our mind to our business, diligently to at-
 tend to what we are about, to avoid if possible, all
 wandering thoughts; to be duly affected with every
 part of that prayer, we either speak ourselves, or
 hear pronounced by the minister in our names, and
 to have such thoughts and desires in our minds,
 throughout the whole office, as the words we then
 speak do import and signify. For unless we thus
 attend to what we say, our service will be only lip-
 worship, neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to
 ourselves. “ If we draw near to God with our mouths,
 “ and honour him with our lips, while our heart
 is far from him, our worship of God is vain.” But
 if in our minds we give such consent of approbation
 or desire, to every petition we offer up, as is fit
 and proper for us to give, then the word amen,
 at the end of all, uttered with fervency and true
 devotion, will fully comprehend the whole prayer,
 and we shall repeat in one devout breath, as much
 as we prayed for in the whole office. And such an
 effectual fervent prayer, will, no doubt, avail much
 with God; “ for if we ask any thing according to his
 “ will, he heareth us. Having thus gone thro’ every
 part of the Lord’s prayer, explaining the meaning
 thereof,

thereof, and declaring the duties we are thereby instructed in and obliged to perform, I shall only observe two things, concerning the fulness, perfection, and excellency of this prayer, and so conclude.

And from what has been said it plainly appears, that the Lord's prayer is a compleat pattern of prayer, and contains every thing that can be esteemed part of prayer. For in prayer we are to acknowledge and adore the divine excellencies and perfections; and this we do here in the preface, when invoking God we stile him our heavenly father, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and then in the conclusion of it, when we acknowledge that "his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever." Again, in prayer, we are humbly to thank our heavenly father, for all the expressions of his goodness to us; continue in prayer, says the apostle, "and watch in the same with thanksgiving." And this part of thanksgiving is included also in the preface, when we acknowledge that God is our father, who bears us a fatherly affection, and whose kindness we have experienced; and the same is again expressed in the first petition, "hallowed be thy name," which signifies as much, and is the same as to say, God be praised, or blessed be God. For tho' it is expressed in the form of a wish or petition, yet we thereby mean to give actual praise and thanks to God; and so "hallowed be thy name" is to be understood; namely, that we do hallow God's name, praise and bless him for his goodness. And as in prayer we are humbly to request of God the good things we want, this being the chief subject of prayer, and from whence its name is taken; (for prayer and petition, are words of the same signification) so the whole body of this prayer, all but the preface and conclusion, is in its primary meaning, a petition to God, for all such things

things as we need, both for our souls and bodies. But then, lastly, it is not fit that such vile and polluted sinners as we are, should dare to approach the presence of God, or presume to offer up any request to him, without an humble acknowledgment of our vileness and unworthiness; for it becomes not sinners to ask any thing of God, without confessing their faults, and sorrowfully owning that they are unworthy to receive the good things they ask; and this is confession, which therefore ought to make a part in all our addresses to God, and so it does in this prayer. For when we ask God's forgiveness, as we are taught to do, in the fifth petition, "give us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," such a request plainly implies an acknowledgment that we are sinners; since if we did not think ourselves sinners we should not have occasion to beg pardon.

But what may be further observed and inferred from the discourses made on this prayer, as to the admirable excellency and perfection of it, is, that the whole is so framed and contrived, as to serve both for an expression of our devotion to God, and an instruction to ourselves; that the same words which teach us what to request of God, also instructs us in our duty, and excites us to the performance of it; so that it's frequent use, must be of singular benefit and advantage to us. But then it is a certain truth, that as no wicked man, who continues in his wickedness, can say this prayer with good attention, and serious devotion; so every good person, who says it after that manner, must needs by natural efficacy, as well as by the divine grace and blessing, be rendered much better by the use thereof. For a wicked man continuing such, cannot have those inward affections of mind towards God, that the words of this prayer do express, nor yet any hearty desire to obtain

obtain what he requests of God ; because such devout affections and holy desires, are directly contrary to, and inconsistent with, the love and practice of sin. For how can he presume to call upon God in prayer, who in works denies him ? how can he with holy devotion call God his Father, who has sold himself to the devil to work wickedness, and continually exercises himself therein ? “ For
 “ whosoever is born of God, sinneth not ; but he
 “ that is begotten of God, keepeth himself pure,
 “ and that wicked one toucheth him not.” How can he say to God, with true devotion, “ hallowed
 “ be thy name,” who dishonours him in his whole life ? how can he be serious in desiring the holy name of God may be sanctified by all, who is himself continually profaning and blaspheming it, by wicked oaths and horrid blasphemies ? Again, how can he pray heartily, that the “ kingdom of God
 “ may come,” and be established in the world, who will not himself be ruled and governed by him ? must not his heart give his tongue the lye, while he says with his mouth, thy kingdom come, when in his heart, he can “ say unto God, depart from us,
 “ for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways ;
 “ what is the Almighty that we should serve him,
 “ and what profit should we have, if we pray unto
 “ him ?” how can a man say, with true and fervent devotion, “ thy will be done on earth, as it
 “ is in heaven ;” who continually opposes and resists the divine will, who neither submits to the providence of God, nor obeys his precepts, but is “ abominable and disobedient, and to every good
 “ work reprobate ?” Indeed, in the petition, “ give
 “ us this day our daily bread,” there is nothing as to the matter, but what a wicked man may agree to ; for he may, and often does, more earnestly desire the things of this life, than the good man. But then, as to the manner of desiring them, he can no
 more

more utter this petition with true devotion, than any of the former ; because he does not depend on God, nor expect these things from his blessing, but only from his wit and industry ; for if he regarded them as divine blessings, he would not acquire them by fraud and injustice, extortion and oppression.

Nor can he with true devotion say, “ forgive us “ our trespasses ;” for tho’ pardon of sins is what he wants, and ought earnestly to wish God would grant ; yet it is absurd to imagine he would offer up any petition to God, the matter of which he himself knows is highly unreasonable. And what can be more unreasonable or unfit for God to grant, or more profane and presuming in any to ask, than that he would pardon an unrepenting sinner ? To ask this of God, is the same as to desire him to abrogate all his holy laws, and to grant us a licence to transgress them. As little can any such sincerely pray “ lead us not into temptation, but deliver us “ from evil ; for as every man is tempted when he “ is drawn away of his own lust ; this is what the “ wicked men chuse,” he gives himself up to his own heart’s lusts, and delights to follow his wicked imaginations ; so that to pray against temptations is to pray against himself, and therefore he cannot be hearty in this petition, unless we suppose what is impossible, namely, that a man should at the same time love and hate, chuse and refuse, delight in and abhor the same things. Lastly, when such an one says, “ for thine is the kingdom, the power and “ the glory for ever ;” which is both an acknowledgment of the infinite and adorable perfections of the divine nature, and giving him the praise and glory due unto him ; how can it be supposed his heart should go along with his words, when at the same time it plainly appears by the whole course and tenor of his wicked life, that he neither owns the

the sovereign dominion of God, dreads his power, nor seeks his glory? Thus it is very evident that a wicked man continuing such, cannot say this prayer or any one petition of it, with good attention and fervent devotion; nor can he have such inward affections of mind towards God as the words express, nor any hearty desire to obtain those things which he seems to request of God; for if he had, he would soon become a better man. Again, every good man by using this prayer with due attention and fervent devotion, must needs by natural efficacy, as well as by the divine grace and blessing, be rendered much better thereby. Since when he calls on God as his father, he is at the same time reminded of that filial love and duty which he owes him; when he prays heartily that God's name may be hallowed, his own mind must then also be filled with an awful reverence towards him. When he devoutly says, "thy kingdom come," he is at the very time admonished, "to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." When he attentively and in earnest says, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," he is then taught his own duty; humbly to resign himself to God's pleasure, and with all readiness and cheerfulness to obey his commands. When he prays for his daily bread, he exercises an act of trust in God's providence, and is cautioned not to use any means to procure the good things of this life, but what he has reason to expect and hope for God's blessing upon. When he begs of God "forgiveness of his sins," this petition must be grounded on the testimony of his own conscience, that he is truly penitent, and doth actually exercise such mercy and charity towards those who have offended him, as God has made the condition of his being pardoned. When he desires of God not "to be led into temptation," if his request is sincere, he will carefully avoid those dangers,

gers, which he earnestly prays to be delivered from. Lastly, when he gives glory to God, by a solemn acknowledgment of the divine excellencies and perfections, saying, “thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever;” if he is really affected with what he expresses, every time he devoutly repeats these words, his love to God will be increased, his faith strengthened, and his obedience confirmed.

Such then being the excellency of this prayer, such the benefits and advantages of our using it with sincere and true devotion; what remains, but that as the blessed Jesus, in compassion to our infirmities, has taught us how to pray, so we should most earnestly implore his Holy Spirit to assist us in prayer, that by always pronouncing these holy words with attention and fervent devotion, we may thereby obtain his gracious promise, that “whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, he will give us, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

Discourse LXII. Dr. Barrow.

The great DUTY of PRAISE and THANKS-
GIVING.

Ephes. v. 20.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God.

TO give thanks, or be thankful, signifies in general, to entertain a grateful sense and remembrance of some favour received ; in which comprehensive notion, I intend now to consider it, as including the whole duty or virtue of gratitude due from us to Almighty God, for all his benefits and mercies. What this duty imports and requires will more fully appear from the following particulars.

Thankfulness implies a right apprehension of benefits conferred ; for he that is ignorant of his obligations, or slights them, can never be grateful. “ Men shall fear and declare the work of God ; for they shall wisely consider of his doings.” The method which the great master of thanksgiving prescribes, is, first, observation ; the consideration, and a grateful sense of benefits ; lastly, public acknowledgment for them. Thus we find ungrateful persons reprehended, “ for not regarding the work of the Lord, nor considering the operation of his hands.” Part therefore of this duty incumbent on us, is diligently to observe, and carefully to consider the divine benefits ; not to let them escape our notice and regard, as if we were totally unconcerned therein. 'Tis a general fault, that the most common favours

of God, are like the ordinary works of nature,

most admirable in themselves, and yet least regarded. The constant rising of the sun, the descent of fruitful showers, the return of temperate seasons, the continuance of our life, the enjoyment of health, the competent means of livelihood, the daily protection from incident dangers, the helps of improving knowledge, obtaining virtue, becoming happy, and such like most excellent benefits, are little minded and regarded by us; and we seldom return thanks for them. Possibly some wonderful instances of providence, some extraordinary judgment or miraculous deliverance, may rouse and awaken our attention; like the Israelites, who “when God slew them, then they remembered that he was their rock, and the high God their redeemer:” But this is not so much the effect of gratitude, as of curiosity, or necessity. The truly grateful, are studious to know their obligations, that they may render an answerable return.

This duty of thanksgiving also requires a faithful remembrance of benefits, and frequent reflection thereon. For he that is no longer affected with a benefit, than at the present instant, is far from being grateful.

When God, by his wonderful power, delivered the Israelites from the tyranny and oppression of their prevalent enemies; and caused streams to issue from a hard rock to refresh their thirst: When bread descended from heaven in showers, and the winds produced flesh to satisfy their greedy desires; then they were not insensible of the divine goodness, but could acknowledge his power, and engage themselves in promises of future obedience. But their folly appeared soon after; when they forgot his works, and the wonders he had shewed them: They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. They refused to obey, neither were they mindful of the wonders that

that God did among them. “Of the rock that begat them, they were unmindful, and forgot the God that formed them.” They disturbed his promises, repined at his dealings, disobeyed his laws, and apostatized from his covenant. Such were the effects of their ungrateful forgetfulness, and for which they were so often sharply reprov'd by the prophets. On the contrary, we find that great pattern of gratitude, the royal prophet David, continually resolving in his thoughts, meditating upon and retaining in his memory, the results of divine favour. “I will remember, says he, thy wonders of old, meditate on thy works, and talk of thy doings. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee on my bed.” David thought no place unfit, or time unseasonable, for the practice of this duty. And we should strive to imitate his gratitude, by devoting our solitary and retired hours, to the preserving in us those delightful ideas.

Not one blessing, or the least favourable passage of providence, should escape our remembrance. We must not forget who formed us in the womb, who brought us into light, assisted our infancy, educated our childhood, governed our youth, and conducted our riper years, thro' manifold hazards, troubles, and misfortunes. Nor in our prosperity, when we possess an affluence of good things, should we be unmindful of him, who relieved our necessities, supplied our wants, sustained our adversity, and delivered us out of our afflictions. A succession of new and fresh benefits should not obliterate old ones, but rather make them more dear and venerable to us. Time should not weaken or diminish, but confirm and establish in us, the remembrance of God's goodness. Our memory is tenacious enough of injuries received,

let us not then disgrace that noble faculty, by forgetting the favours of God, when we can so easily remember the unkindness of men. Again,

This duty of thankfulness implies a due value and estimation of benefits; or otherwise it will be a very defective gratitude. We find the devout David continually declaring how highly he esteemed the divine favours; admiring and displaying their transcendent perfections, wonderful greatness, endless duration; with the admirable goodness, wisdom, and power of the benefactor so conspicuous therein. Says he, "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people, I will sing unto thee, among the nations; for thy mercy is great unto the heaven, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Remember the marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, thou predestest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. The Lord is good to all, his tender mercy is over all his works. As for me, I will be talking of thy worship, thy glory, thy praise, and wonderful works. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits." In such manner should we diligently survey, and judiciously estimate, the effects of divine beneficence. There is not the least of the divine favours, if we duly consider them, but what requires our highest esteem and utmost thanks. Indeed we cannot put a true value on any of God's benefits, they being inestimable; however we should most highly esteem them, and confess that they surpass the strength of our

our imagination to conceive ; they being immense, innumerable, inconceivable, and inexpressible.

Giving thanks also imports our receiving benefits with a hearty sense and grateful affection. A cheerful and sincere acceptance of favours bestowed, is the soul and spirit, the principal and most essential ingredient of this duty. It is what constitutes gratitude. A true noble benefactor aims at no reward or advantage ; only the good and benefit of the person, on whom he confers his favours. Such a benefactor is almighty God ; and the tribute he requires of us, is only a joyful complacency in his kindness, and hearts inflamed with his goodness. He designs not only to fill our mouths with food, but also our hearts with gladness. Wherefore we should with David, “ Praise the Lord with our whole heart, be glad, and rejoice in him.” And surely the least homage we in gratitude owe, and can pay to almighty God, is to confess our dependance on, and obligation to him, for whatever we enjoy ; to acknowledge that his favours deserve thanks ; to declare to the world our experience of his goodness, and solemnly proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving his most deserved praise ; in imitation of him who said, “ I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, and make known his faithfulness to all generations. I will publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his wonderful works. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wonderful works.”

Gratitude is of a fruitful diffusive nature, of a free communicative disposition, of an open and sociable temper ; it will impart, discover, and propagate itself. Its best instrument therefore is speech, that most natural, proper, and easy method of expressing and conveying our thoughts and passions to

one another. And this glory of ours, this best organ our tongue, we should in reason devote to the honour, and consecrate to the praise of him who made it. The principal and most noble part of all religion, always did, and ever will consist, in acknowledging the divine goodness, and testifying our thankfulness thereof, by solemn immediate addresses to God.

This duty further requires our endeavours to make a satisfactory requital of benefits, so far as our ability permits, and opportunity offers. Indeed our righteousness or beneficence doth not extend unto God. His benefits exceed all possibility of any proportionate return. He needs not, nor can receive any advantage from us; for we cannot benefit him with our gifts, who as lord and master of all things, is possessed of whatever actually does, or possibly can exist; nor can we advance his glory, or in the least contribute to his compleat and perfect happiness, who already enjoys supreme glory and indefectible beatitude. But yet we may declare our readiness to serve and extol him; we may by a dutiful behaviour, highly please him; we may by our charity and benignity to those he loves, make an acceptable, tho' not an adequate return for his benefits. Almighty God, tho' he freely bestows his favours, yet seems to expect some small requital for them; such as our expressions and acknowledgments of his being the chief proprietor, from whom all our possessions are derived. "Thou shalt not appear empty before the Lord," was a law to the Jews; the first fruits of the lands, the first born of their cattle, and of themselves, the tenths of their annual encrease, and a certain allotment from the spoils acquired in war, God challenged to himself, as acknowledgements of his liberal goodness. Nor did the Gentiles think themselves exempted from the like obligations. For they consecrated
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the top of their corn heaps to him who had blessed their fields with encrease. And the first and best of what they took in war, were dedicated to adorn his temple, by whose favour they had obtained the victory. Nor would they begin their meal, and partake of necessary refreshment, before they had performed some homage to heaven for it. And yet these Gentiles were not so senseless as to imagine, that the gods, whom they thus worshipped, and to whom they offered those oblations, either wanted, or were benefited by them; but that they esteemed these things the most proper and significant, to express and declare their grateful sense of the divine goodness towards them.

And tho' we are excused from material, yet we are more strongly engaged to offer spiritual, sacrifices unto God. The incense of fervent devotion, the thank-offering of praise, we must still continually send up to heaven. We must consecrate our best thoughts and endeavours to God's service. We must for his sake, kill and destroy all impure desires, mortify all corrupt affections, and abandon all particular interests of our own. We must let our hearts and wills be entirely at his disposal. We must vow to him, and pay the daily oblation of sincere obedience. We must diligently labour to please him, by an innocent and unblemished conversation. Such things God approves of, and will accept, as real testimonies of our thankfulness, in return for his benefits. Especially by expressing our charity and beneficence, love and respect to good men, who are his faithful servants, and our help and relief to persons in distress; these things he esteems as a suitable retaliation of his kindness, he acknowledges to be an obligation laid on himself, and hath by indispensable promises, engaged to reward them. "For,

" he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the
 " Lord; and that which he hath given, he will pay

“ him again. God is not unrighteous, to forget
 “ your work and labour of love, which ye have
 “ shewed towards his name, in that ye have mini-
 “ stered to the saints, and do minister. To do
 “ good and communicate, forget not ; for with
 “ such sacrifices God is well pleased. In as much
 “ as ye have done it to the least of these my bre-
 “ thren, (that is, fed, cloathed, and comforted them)
 “ ye have done it unto me,” saith our Saviour ;
 meaning, that the kindness and respect we shew un-
 to good and necessitous persons, God esteems it, as
 done to himself.

True gratitude for benefits, is always attended
 with the esteem, veneration and love of the bene-
 factor. Beneficence is a royal and god-like thing,
 an argument of eminent goodness and power ; and
 therefore as it naturally tends to beget respect and
 reverence, in such as perceive and duly consider it ;
 so it produces love and affection in those that feel its
 benign influence. To those who are more immedi-
 ately concerned therein, it imports a particular re-
 gard and good will, and engages them to an extra-
 ordinary esteem and benevolence ; such as David
 professed towards God, and frequently excites others
 to. “ I will love thee, O Lord my strength, I will
 “ call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.
 “ I love the Lord, because he hath heard my
 “ voice, and my supplications.” And in the gospel,
 “ Because her sins being many, were forgiven,
 “ therefore she loved much.” So true is it, that
 the sense of favours conferred is naturally produc-
 tive of love.

I proceed now to consider the object, to whom
 our thanks are to be given ; and that is to God. To
 him whom we are obliged, for the most weighty and
 valuable benefits ; from whom we receive what-
 ever is necessary for our sustenance, convenient for
 our use, and pleasant for our enjoyment ; to whom

we owe whatever good we possess, or can hope for hereafter. Who is the author and preserver of our being, without whose goodness we had never been, nor could one moment subsist without his care and providence.—To him, who is the true Lord and owner of all things; whose air we breathe, whose ground we tread on, whose food sustains us, whose we are, both in body and soul, they being the work of his hands.—To him who created this beautiful, and stately world for us to inhabit; who hath subjected to our dominion, and appointed for our use, innumerable good creatures, to be managed, governed, and enjoyed by us. So that wherever we direct our eyes, we may behold his goodness, and perceive ourselves surrounded with his benefits. We find a body, by his curious artifice, fitly framed and proportioned, subservient to a soul endued with diverse senses, faculties, and powers, capable of perceiving, and pursuing various delights and pleasures: To the satisfaction of which, all outward things do afford variety of sufficient matter, “He fills our hearts with food and gladness,” supplies our manifold wants, and protects us from innumerable dangers.—To him, who inspired us with immortal spirits, impressed on them legible characters of his own divine essence, and hath made us to resemble and partake of his most excellent perfections; such as the knowledge of truth, an inclination to do good, and a capacity of being compleatly happy: Who hath revealed to us the way; exciting us to proceed therein, reclaiming us when we go astray, engaging us by his commands, encouraging us by gracious promises, instructing us by his word, and admonishing us by his holy spirit. To him, who vouchsafes to grant us free access unto, and a constant familiar intercourse with himself; to esteem and call us his friends and children; to invite and kindly entertain us, with pleasing delights

of spiritual repast ; indulging us with the enjoyment of that presence, wherein the life of all joy and comfort consist.

To him, are we to return thanksgiving, who to redeem us from misery, and advance us to happiness, did infinitely debase his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glorious majesty ; and who did not disdain to assume us into a perfect union with himself, to inhabit our frail and mortal nature, to converse, as it were on equal terms with us, and at last to taste the bitter cup, of a most painful ignominious death for us. To him, that is merciful, gracious, and liberal ; who bestows more gifts, pardons more debts, forgives more sins, than we live minutes. Who with infinite patience endures our manifold infirmities and imperfections, our silly follies and obstinate tempers ; who overlooks our careless and wilful neglects ; forgives the exceeding many affronts and injuries, continually offered to his supreme majesty by us base worms, whom he can crush to nothing at his pleasure. “ Who “ giveth freely, and upbraideth no man ;” who exacts of us no impossible, or difficult returns ; being satisfied with the cheerful acceptance of his favours, the hearty acknowledgments of his goodness, the sincere performance of such duties, to which our own interest and advantage incline and dispose us, would we rightly apprehend them. In a word, to him, whose benefits are immense, innumerable, inexpressibly good and valuable. “ For who can “ utter the mighty acts of the Lord ? who can shew “ forth all his praise ?” To this God, this great, only patron and benefactor of ours, we owe this most natural, easy, just, and pleasant duty of giving thanks. To whom, if we wilfully refuse, or carelessly neglect, to discharge in some measure our due debt of gratitude, for his inestimable benefits and mercies,

mercies, we shall be most ungrateful, and deplorably wretched and miserable.

As to the time allotted for this duty, there is no certain rule for that; but it should be very often, and whenever any proper occasion offers. We should frequently meditate on, confess, and celebrate the divine beneficence. As no moment of our life wants sufficient matter of praise to God, he being always doing us good; so should no day escape without signal expressions of our thankfulness to him. If God incessantly demonstrates himself gracious to us; we in all reason should frequently and daily declare ourselves grateful to him. Thus did David; says he, “every day I will bless thee; and praise thy name, for ever and ever.” Every day was a festival, consecrated by him to thanksgiving for God’s benefits. Says he, “my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise, all the day long. While I live, I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being. I will bless the Lord, at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” The consideration of so noble a pattern, added to the evident reasonableness of the duty, ought to engage us to the frequent practice thereof. Even “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.” And if the busy heavens are always at leisure, and the stupid earth is perpetually active in manifesting the wisdom, power, and goodness of their creator; how shameful is it, that we, the flower of his creation, the most obliged, and best capable of doing it, should be so busy, or idle, as seldom or never to contribute our endeavours, to advance his glory.

We should therefore appoint, and punctually observe proper times, to perform this duty of serious meditation, and affectionate acknowledgment of the divine bounty. If we do not depute some vacant seasons,

seasons, for this our main concern, and most excellent part of our duty, we shall be tempted to omit it; we shall be regardless of, and easily diverted from it, by the intervention of other less momentous affairs. God, to keep the Jews in the constant exercise of this duty, instituted a sacrifice, called the continual sacrifice; to which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews alludes, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." As this sacrifice, by being offered constantly at a set time, was thence denominated continual; so we by constantly observing some proper seasons and times, to return our praise and thanksgiving, may be said always to give thanks. And for our rule herein, I would propose, the general direction given by the royal prophet, rather than his example. Says he, "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O thou most high; to shew forth thy loving kindness every morning, and thy faithfulness every night." If we thus constantly begin and close our days, dedicating those remarkable periods of time, to bless God, "making the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise him;" we may be supposed to discharge this duty, and properly be said to give thanks always. Tho' no time is improper to be thankful, for every moment we receive favours, and therefore every minute owe thanks; yet there are some seasons, that more particularly require it. As when any remarkable benefit happens to us, when prosperous success attends our honest endeavours, or unexpected favours are bestowed; when we are delivered from straits and difficulties, which to us seemed inextricable, insuperable, and inevitable: then should we present and offer up the sacrifice of praise, to the God of mercy our helper and deliverer. Again,

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When we revolve in our minds the favourable instances of providence, that have befallen us ; how in the various circumstances of life he hath protected us from want and dangers, devouring diseases and infectious air, bloody thieves, and barbarous pirates ; from the rage of fire and fury of tempests, from sad casualties and accidents : then should we with all thankful exultation of mind, admire and celebrate “ our strength, and our deliverer, our faithful refuge in trouble, and the rock of our salvation.” When we contemplate the wonderful works of nature, and at our leisure observe this ample theatre of the world, the beauty, order, and sumptuous furniture thereof ; the glorious splendor, and uniform motion of the heavens ; the pleasant fertility of the earth ; the curious figure and fragrant sweetness of plants ; the exquisite frame of animals ; and all other amazing miracles of nature, wherein the glorious attributes of God, especially his transcendent goodness, are most conspicuously displayed : then should our hearts be affected with thanksgiving, and our lips break forth into praise. Indeed, from every object of sense, every event of providence, and every common occurrence, we may find sufficient occasion, thankfully to acknowledge God’s wise and gracious dispensations.

As to the matter, or particular instances, for which we are to thank God ; without minutely calculating the greatness and number of the divine benefits, I shall only observe, that no occurrence, great or small, common or particular, past or present, pleasant or sad, is excluded from being the subject of our thanksgiving : each may prove beneficial to us, and we are with a chearful contentedness, and grateful sense to receive them all from God’s hands. We are to give thanks, not only for the great and extraordinary benefits of God, but even for the least ; none of his favours being
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in themselves small and inconsiderable. Some works of God indeed excel in lustre, but all are to be esteemed, and thankfully received by us. The brightness of the one should not totally obscure the other. We are to render thanks, not only for present blessings, but for all we have, or may receive ; to praise God for common and daily benefits, as well as for extraordinary instances of his providence ; not only for private and particular, but also for public mercies. Thanksgivings must also be made for all men, as well as prayers, and intercessions. We are all citizens of the world, and concerned in its happiness ; and thence obliged thankfully to adore the mighty and wise governor thereof, praising him for all the general benefits so liberally bestowed on mankind. Again,

We are obliged to give thanks, not only for pleasant and prosperous occurrences of providence, but for those also which are adverse and disagreeable. For poverty, sickness, disgrace ; for all the sorrows, troubles, and disappointments that befall us ; for our physic, as well as food ; not only for good instruction, but for every seasonable correction, which usually proceeds from love and kindness ; for “ whom God loveth, he chasteneth. I know, O Lord, says David, that thy judgments are right, “ and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” In faithfulness, that is, with a sincere intention of doing him good. God best knows what is most fit for us, but we are greatly ignorant of what conduces to our real good ; and were the choice of our condition left to us, we should chuse what would seem most for our present advantage. No doubt we should all embrace a rich and plentiful estate ; when yet that might make us slothful and luxurious, swell us with pride, encumber us with anxious cares, expose us to dangerous temptations, render us forgetful of ourselves, and negligent of God. He therefore
often

often wisely dispenseth poverty to us ; which is the mother of sobriety, the nurse of industry, and the mistress of wisdom : which will teach us to know ourselves, to depend on God, and have recourse to him for help and assistance.

Lastly, we are obliged to thank God, not only for temporal, but principally for spiritual and eternal blessings. For as much as the reasonable soul, in dignity of nature and purity of substance, excels this lump of clay, our body ; as much as the blissful ravishments of spirit, surpass the dull satisfactions of sense ; as much as eternity exceeds that short space of time, which terminates this transitory life : so in proportion should our complacence in, and gratitude for, spiritual blessings, transcend our affections and thanksgivings for temporal accommodations. We are indeed greatly indebted to God for our creation, and excellent faculties of soul and body ; but we are much more so, for our redemption, and the wonderful circumstances of inexpressible love thereby declared. If for success in our worldly affairs, for escaping threatened dangers, for defeating the designs of our adversaries, we make our song for victory ; how much more ought we to do this, for the happy progress of our spiritual concerns, for avoiding the hazard of eternal torments, for conquering sin and hell, those irreconcilable enemies to our everlasting peace. For these we are obliged to sing triumphal anthems of joy and thankfulness. That our minds are illustrated with the knowledge of God, and his glorious attributes, of Christ, and his blessed gospel, and of the way which conducts us to true happiness ; that by divine assistance we are enabled to elude the allurements, withstand the violences of temptation, to bridle exorbitant passions, and correct vicious inclinations : these mercies much more require our hearty thanks, than that we are
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able by our natural wit to penetrate the most abstruse mysteries, or by our strength and power to subdue empires. The forgiveness of our sins more obliges us to a grateful acknowledgment of the divine goodness, than if God was to enrich us with all the treasures contained in the bowels of the earth, or bottom of the sea. One glimpse of his favourable countenance, should more inflame our affections, than to be invested with all the splendor of worldly glory:

To conclude: there is no disposition so deeply rooted in our souls, as the being sensible of benefits received; the being kindly affected with love and reverence towards our benefactors; the being ready to express, acknowledge and endeavour to recompense them. Nor is there any duty so pleasant and delightful. Praise the Lord, says the devout psalmist, "for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." Other duties of devotion have something in them laborious and disagreeable to our sense. Prayer minds us of our wants and imperfections; confession brings to remembrance our bad actions; but thanksgiving has nothing in it uneasy or displeasing; nothing but the memory and sense of God's exceeding goodness. And what thought can be more comfortable and delightful, than this, that the great master of all things, the most wise and mighty king of heaven and earth, entertains a gracious regard for, and expresses a real kindness towards us? that we are in a capacity to honour, please, and present an acceptable sacrifice to him, who can render us perfectly happy? that we are admitted to practise that, wherein the supreme joy of paradise, and the perfection of angelic bliss consists? for praise and thanksgiving are the most delightful business of heaven. Besides, this duty is most pleasing to God,
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and most beneficial to us. Gratitude for benefits, disposes God to bestow more, and qualifies us to receive them. A true sense of past and present mercies, confirms our faith, and encreases our hope of future ones. The divine beneficence mightily strengthens our obligation to this duty. Of these inestimable benefits, and all the advantageous circumstances thereof we ought to maintain in our hearts a constant remembrance, thereby to excite our thankfulness, enflame our love, and quicken our obedience, by the frequent contemplation of them.

Discourse LXIII. Abp. Tillotson.

The great DUTY of FAMILY RELIGION.

Joshua xxiv. 15.

But as for me, and my house, we will serve
 7- the Lord. 6 - *S: in*

JOSHUA, having brought the Israelites into the promised land, his great desire was to establish them in the worship of the one true God, who had brought them out of Egypt, and given them the possession of the good land of Canaan. And finding himself weak and declining, and fearing lest after his death, the people should fall from the true religion, to the worship of idols; he, like a wise and good governor, considers how he might keep them firm and stedfast in their religion, and prevent their defection to idolatry. To this end he calls a general assembly of all the people of Israel, and in a very eloquent speech gives them a brief historical account and deduction of the great mercies of God to them and their fathers, from the days of Abraham to that time. From the consideration of which, he earnestly exhorts them to renew the covenant with God, and solemnly to promise, that they would for ever “fear the Lord, “and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put “away the Gods which their fathers served in Egypt, “and serve the Lord.” And then in the text, as if they had never engaged themselves to God by covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice, and liberty. “And if it seem evil unto you, to
 “serve

“ serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will
 “ serve ; whether the God whom your fathers
 “ served, on the other side of the flood, or the
 “ Gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.”

Not that they were at liberty whether they would serve the true God, or not ; but to insinuate to them, that religion ought to be their free choice ; and that true religion hath those real advantages peculiar to it, as to recommend it to any considerate man’s choice. As if he had said, “ if it seem evil
 “ to you, after all the demonstrations God hath
 “ given, of his miraculous preservation of you,
 “ and the mighty obligations he hath laid upon
 “ you, by bringing you out of the land of Egypt,
 “ and the house of bondage, by so outstretched an
 “ arm, and giving you a rich land to possess: if
 “ after all this, you can quit the service of this God,
 “ and worship the idols of the nations, whom you
 “ have subdued and their vanquished deities: if
 “ you can think it reasonable so to do, which
 “ surely you cannot ; then take your choice, and
 “ chuse you this day whom you will serve.” And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares his own resolution, as a pattern and example for them, in which he is fixed and immoveable, whether they will follow him or not ; “ but as for me and my house, we will serve the
 “ Lord. So that what he said was in effect this : I
 I have proposed the best religion to your choice, and I both think and hope, you will all stedfastly adhere to it ; because it is so reasonable and wise, so much for your interest and happiness. But if you will be so weak, so wilful and wicked, not to discern and embrace the truth ; tho’ you should all make another choice and depart from the true God, to the worship of idols ; yet for my part I am stedfastly resolved, in a case so manifest and reasonable, that no number or example shall prevail with me to the contrary. For if this whole nation should revolt from the wor-

ship of the true God, and join in the worship of idols, and my family was the only one left in the whole world, who worshipped the God of Israel, I would still persist in this resolution, that “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” A resolution truly worthy of so great a prince and so good a man: And which is a double pattern to us; first, that we should, if occasion was, stand alone in the profession and practice of the true religion; secondly, by recommending the pious care of a good father and master of a family, to train up those under his charge, in the true religion and worship of God. “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” But at this time, I shall only treat concerning the duty of family religion.

And this duty is the more necessary to be considered, not only as being an essential part of religion, but as what is strangely neglected in our loose and degenerate age; for next to our personal homage and service to almighty God, and the care of our own souls, it is incumbent on us to make all who are under our charge and authority, God’s subjects, children, and servants; which is a more honourable and happy relation, than what they bear to us. Our children are a natural, as the rest of our family, are a civil and political part of ourselves; and we, and all that we have, belong to and ought to be devoted to God and his service. And they who truly fear God, will be solicitous to teach it to others, especially those who are under their more immediate care and instruction. God had so great a confidence in Abraham, as to say, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the word of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.” God passed his word for him, that he would carefully instruct his children and numerous family, in the true religion, and also charge them to propa-
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gate and transmit it to their posterity. And it is certainly now the duty of all fathers and masters of families, and an essential part of religion, that they be careful to do the same; for every man must give on account of those committed to his charge, as well as of himself, to God. I shall therefore shew wherein this duty doth consist; consider our obligations to it; enquire into the causes of the neglect of this great duty; and endeavour to retrieve the practice of it, by representing the fatal consequences attending the neglect, both to ourselves and the public.

As this duty is much better known than practised, I need not be long on this head. One principal part of it consists in the constant worship of God in our families; by daily prayers to God, morning and evening; by reading some part of the holy scriptures, especially the psalms and the new testament: And this is absolutely necessary to maintain and preserve a sense of God and religion, in the minds of men. Besides reading the holy scriptures, the great fountains of divine truth, we should add to these other pious good books, which are plain and fit for the instruction of all capacities, in the most necessary points of faith and practice; and this we should more especially do on the Lord's day, when the whole family may be easily brought and kept together, and have the opportunity to attend upon these things. But I must not omit to recom-

plentiful tables, among persons of the highest quality; as if such were ashamed, or unwilling to own, from whence these blessings came. O crooked and perverse, foolish and unwise generation! do ye thus requite the Lord for his bounty and liberality, who is the great author of all good things, on whom the eyes of all do wait, that he may give them their meat in due season? It is a sure sign of the prevalency of atheism and infidelity among us, when so natural and reasonable a part of religion, so just and grateful an acknowledgement of God's constant and daily care and providence over us, grows out of use, in a nation professing religion, the being and providence of God. May it not provoke God to take his blessings from us, when we deny him this just and easy tribute of praise and thanksgiving? Shall not God visit us for this horrible ingratitude, and be avenged on such a nation as this?

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Another very considerable part of this duty, consists in instructing those committed to our charge in the fundamental principles and careful practice of the duties of religion; instilling these into children when capable of them, line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there little; and into those of riper years, by proper means of instruction, teaching them those things in religion, as are most necessary to be believed and practised. Our children and servants having been brought to read, should be taught the first principles of religion, and by reading the holy scriptures and other good books, be prepared to receive the greater benefit and advantage from the publick ministry. We are carefully to instruct them in those principles of religion, as are most fundamental, and like to have the greatest influence on their whole lives; such as right and worthy apprehensions of God, of his infinite goodness and purity, and that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: Also to impress on them a lively sense

sense of the great evil and danger of sin, and a firm belief of the soul's immortality,² and of the unspeakable endless rewards and punishments of another world. If these principles once take root, they will continue and abide with them all their days.

This work of instruction ought not to be neglected at any time, but it is more peculiarly seasonable on the Lord's day, which ought to be employed in the religious exercises of piety and devotion; particularly in the public worship and service of God, where our children and servants should diligently and devoutly attend: It being the means which God hath appointed for increasing piety and goodness, and to which he hath promised his more especial blessing. Because there they have an opportunity of joining in the public prayers, and of receiving the benefit and advantage of them; and of being instructed by God's ministers in the doctrine of salvation, and the way to eternal life, and incited to the practice of virtue and piety. There they will be invited to the Lord's table, to partake of the Lord's supper, which is the most solemn institution of the Christian religion; and the frequent partaking thereof in remembrance of his dying love, those under our charge, as soon as they are capable, should be often and affectionately exhorted to. And after the public service is ended, we should read the scriptures and other good books to our families, and so should they themselves: The Lord's day being the best opportunity for servants, to think seriously of religion and another world. And it is of great consequence to the preserving a sense of religion among us, that this day be religiously observed, in the exercises of piety, and the care of our souls. For as some time ought to be set apart for the service of religion, there is no season so proper as on this day, when all may have leisure and opportunity for it. And parents and

masters of families, if they would have their children and servants in good earnest religious, they must not only allow time, but strictly and earnestly charge them to retire every day, more especially on the Lord's day, morning and evening; to pray to God, for the pardon of their sins, for his mercy and blessing, and to praise him for his daily favours and benefits conferred upon them. And to this end, care should be taken, that their children and servants be supplied with short forms of prayer and praise, suitable to their respective capacities and abilities.

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A principal part of this duty consists in giving good examples to our families. Thus David resolved, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my house, with a perfect heart." We must be exemplary to our family in a constant devout serving of God; in a solemn, prudent, and unblameable conversation. The best way to make those good who are under our care, is to be so ourselves; without this our instructions will have but little effect; for we cannot reasonably expect that any reverence or obedience should be paid to them. The admonitions of a good man will have great power to move and persuade others, to go and do likewise; but those of a bad man are languid, faint, and of no efficacy; because there is no encouragement for others to follow that advice, which they who give it do not themselves observe.

13. And we are under the greatest obligations strictly to perform this, both in respect of duty and interest: As to the former, all authority over others is a talent God hath intrusted us with, for their good and benefit, and for the right use of which we are accountable to him. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the temporal welfare of our families, to feed, clothe, and give them a comfortable

able subsistence; but much more are we to take care of their eternal happiness, in comparison of which all temporal concerns are as nothing. It would be cruel for a father or master, to suffer a child or servant to want the necessaries of life; but it is a much greater cruelty, to let an immortal soul, one for whom Christ died, to perish for want of knowledge and necessary instruction, how to attain eternal salvation. If he who doth not “provide for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” because he neglects a duty which the law of nature requires; what shall be said for them, who will not provide for the everlasting happiness, and prevent the eternal misery of those, who are so immediately under their care and charge? Nature as well as christianity obliges us to procure the happiness of our children, for they are part of ourselves; and if they perish by our neglect, the guilt of it will for ever lie at our doors. As to servants and other relations under our charge, common humanity requires us to be concerned for their happiness, as being of the same nature with us; but considered as Christians baptized into the same faith, and capable of the same common salvation, we are more strictly obliged thereto. And if we be remiss and negligent in the discharge of this duty; we can neither answer it to God, nor our own consciences; the consideration of which should effectually engage us to a faithful performance of it.

We are also obliged to this duty in point of interest: For as religion is the best and surest foundation, for the true discharge and faithful performance of the duties of all relations; it is therefore really for our own service and advantage, that those who belong to us, should serve and fear God. Would we have dutiful and obedient children, diligent and faithful servants? Nothing will so effectually

tually procure this, as to have the principles of religion, and the fear of God firmly settled in them. Abraham experienced the good success of his religious care, both in his son Isaac, and the chief servant of his house Eliezer of Damascus. What an unexampled instance of respect and obedience did Isaac give to the commands of his father, when without any reluctance he submitted to be laid upon the altar, and to be slain for a sacrifice, had not God interposed and prevented it by an angel; What an excellent servant was Eliezer to Abraham? How diligent and faithful in his master's service? So that he trusted him with all he had. And when employed in his son's marriage, what prudence and fidelity did he shew in the discharge of that great trust, having no rest till the business was accomplished? These are two powerful instances to encourage fathers and masters of families, to a religious care of their children and servants. Again,

How did the fear of God secure Joseph's fidelity to his master under a great and violent temptation? He had nothing to restrain him from so lewd and wicked an act, but the consideration of the great trust his master had reposed in him, the sense of his duty, and above all the fear of God, which preserved him from consenting to so wicked an action. "How can I, says he, do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Hence it appears to be our duty, and demands our greatest care, to instil the principles of religion into those that belong to us; for if the seeds of true piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it. But if our children and servants are not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect, they should regard and obey us? For nothing but religion obliges conscience; men will break thro' all other ties, when a fair opportunity offers. And as religion is necessary to procure God's favour, so is it to secure the

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the mutual duties and offices of men to one another. I proceed B.

To enquire into the causes of the shameful neglect of this duty, to the great decay of piety among us; and this may in part be ascribed to our dissentions and differences in religion, whereby, under pretence of conscience, a boundless liberty has prevailed, and the religious order of families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some men under colour of serving God a different way, according to their consciences, do wholly or chiefly neglect the worship of God; if they do not worse, I mean frequent places of debauchery and lewdness. And this is a great hindrance to masters of families, to bring their servants up in an orderly way of religion; and which ought to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion, that we may all be united in our worship and devotion, and serve God in one way; by which means the work of religious education and instruction will be more effectually carried on, and a steady authority and decent order maintained in families. And till we are better agreed in matters of religion, and our unhappy differences are laid aside, and that the public worship of God do in some measure recover its reputation, the good order and government of families as to the great ends of religion, is not like to have any considerable effect. Which should make all men who heartily love God and religion, to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these differences, that we may both in private families and public assemblies, “with one mind and with one mouth, glorify God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I therefore beseech you, in the words of St. Paul, “that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment,” so far

is necessary, “to keep the unity of the spirit in the “bond of peace;” and to prevent divisions and separations among christians. I proceed to the last thing proposed, which is to shew the fatal consequences attending the neglect of family duty, both to the public and to ourselves.

First, to the public. Families are the first seminaries of religion, and if persons are not there prepared, especially in their tender years, for public teaching and instruction, little can be expected afterwards. The neglect of a due preparation of our children and servants at home, to make them profit by what they hear and learn at church, is an error productive of the greatest mischief; because if no care be taken of them in their younger years, when most capable of religious impressions, we cannot reasonably expect any great good from them afterwards. For if the fear of God hath not been planted in them, they will be bad in all relations; undutiful children, idle and unfaithful servants, scandalous members of any church, unprofitable to the commonwealth, disobedient to governors, both ecclesiastical and civil; nay, burthens on earth, and as so many plagues of human society. And if no remedy be applied to this evil, it will continually grow worse, and in every age diffuse and spread itself, till impiety and wickedness, infidelity and profaneness have over-run the world, and made it ripe for destruction, as it was in old time; when the “wickedness of man was so great upon earth, “all flesh having corrupted their way, that the “flood came and swept them all away.”

Secondly, the consequences of this neglect will also be very dismal to ourselves, who will first feel the inconvenience of our own guilty negligence. For we can have no security of the duty and fidelity of our family to us, if they have no fear of God, nor sense of religion. So that besides the
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shame and sorrow, we shall have the first ill consequence of their miscarriages; and the wickedness they commit after, will, in a great measure, be charged upon us, and put to our account in the great day of judgment. And we ought to tremble to think with what rage and fury our children and servants will then fly in our faces, for being the cause of their eternal ruin, in not taking due care to prevent it. In that day, next to God and our own consciences, our children and servants will be our most terrible accusers if we neglect to instruct them in the way of salvation.—Let us therefore resolve with Joshua, that we and our houses will serve the Lord; that so, by God's grace, we may by our future care and diligence, discharge this important duty, and repair our former neglects. And if children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiously governed, what a happy delightful place, what a paradise would this world be, in comparison of what it is now? Let these things sink into our hearts before it is too late, and whilst the evil may be remedied; that we may not for ever lament this neglect, and repent of it when past redress, and there will be no place for repentance.

Discourse LXIV. Bp. *Moor*.

The great DUTY of public WORSHIP.

Pfal. xxii. 25.

My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation ; I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

MY design from these words is to shew the necessity of the public worship of God, and to represent the great benefits and blessings we may expect from praying to God, and giving him thanks in religious assemblies, where people meet on purpose for his service ; according to the example of David, who being delivered from terrible dangers, was not content with returning thanks to God in his closet and family, but he renders praises to him in the great congregation ; that sacred place, where the people were assembled together, to celebrate the divine goodness and mercy.

But before I proceed in this argument, it will be proper to observe, that it is not my intention to lessen our value and esteem for secret and family prayers, which are absolutely necessary to be daily performed ; for indeed the public service and private devotions have an entire dependance on each other. Our closet devotion will dispose us for family prayer, and that will engage us to worship him publicly, and with awful reverence in his own house. But if we have so little concern for our immortal souls, as scarce to offer one serious prayer to God all the week, 'tis not likely that any act of religion will be acceptable to him on the Lord's day ; for if we
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have no sense of religion at home, it will be only meer form in the church, which will not please God, nor have any influence on our lives. And yet all of us have more frequent occasions to pray, than we have opportunities to serve God in public; so that we must but faintly desire to obtain the kingdom of heaven, if we are content only to address God in his house, when we hourly stand in need of his mercy and favour. For every evil thought should immediately be opposed by prayer and resolutions against it; every good inclination be cherished by begging present help of God to promote it; every surprize into sin be instantly lamented and asked pardon for, and every blessing and unexpected mercy have immediate thanks returned to our kind benefactor: and this in all times and places as there is occasion, which sufficiently proves the absolute necessity of private devotions. Besides, in secret prayer we ought to confess all our particular sins with their several aggravations, by which we shall be more fully convinced of the guilt and folly, and heinous nature of them; this will shew us the danger of an impenitent state, and render us more sensible of the want of God's pardon, more desirous of, and grateful to him for his mercy. But a general confession of sin, is only proper for a public congregation.

I will now propose some reasons and considerations, in order to shew what obligations we are under, to offer unto God, prayers and thanksgivings in the public congregation; and what spiritual comfort and advantage we may from thence hope for and expect.—Public prayer is one of the most solemn acts of worship we can render to God; for by our thus devoutly worshipping of him, we manifest to others the high esteem we have for his most excellent nature, and testify our just sense of his power, wisdom and goodness. By implor-

ing his help on all occasions, we acknowledge his Almighty power, which nothing can resist. By begging his directions in matters of difficulty, we own his unsearchable wisdom, from which no design or contrivance can be hid. By trusting ourselves and affairs with him; by relying on his gracious aid and assistance; by earnestly intreating his pardon, for any breach of his holy laws; we profess that God is infinitely good and gracious, of great mercy and loving-kindness, to them that love and serve him. And the more constantly and more publicly we admire, praise and magnify those perfections of the divine nature, the more acceptable will it be to God, and the more useful to men, who by our good examples will be induced to imitate us in public acts of piety and religion. Nor can we better evidence the profound veneration we have for God, than in great assemblies to humble ourselves before him, and acknowledge his sovereignty and dominion over us; so as the affections of the mind correspond with the behaviour of the body, and that such acts of worship are not lip service, but proceed from our hearts. And as to the constant performance of this duty, we can never be discharged from it, so long as goodness and power continue inseparable from God's nature, and want and weakness from ours; so long as all our enjoyments are from him, in whom we live, move, and have our being.

If then we duly and carefully employ our thoughts upon God's all-perfect nature, which existed from eternity, and is without bounds, infinite and immense; if we also deliberately consider, that this pure and perfect being is our sovereign Lord and great benefactor, who advanced us into that noble rank of creatures which bear his glorious image; this will so influence us to give testimony of our honour, fear, and love of God, that we shall in
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the assembly of the saints, pray with earnestness and humility, hear God's word with attention and concern, and partake of the Lord's supper, with thanksgiving and devotion.

And as God bestows his blessings and favours on great numbers of people, so are they obliged to join in returning public thanks to God for it; since it is but just and natural, that grateful acknowledgments should be made, in proportion to the good which is received.—There are also national benefits, both of a spiritual and civil nature; of the former are all such, as where men enjoy the doctrines of true religion and virtue, without the addition of opinions, that are repugnant to the attributes and perfections of God, and the clear reason of man; and where, with decency and order God is worshipped in spirit and truth, free from the mixture of superstition and idolatry: And of the latter, are all such blessings as those partake of who live under governments, where their lives, goods, rights and properties are preserved and protected. All these and many other common mercies, are public and standing instances of God's bounty towards men, which therefore require an open and united return of thanksgiving and praise.

It should be farther observed, that as there are many causes and occasions for general thanksgivings, so are there just motives and reasons for public fasts and humiliations. The long enjoyment of God's mercies often makes men forget from whence they came, and the condition on which they are granted; and may not God remove the light of the gospel, when men slight and despise it, and will not reform their minds and manners? May not this provoke him to corrupt the air they breathe in, and destroy the fruits of the earth, with storms and tempests, or swallow them up by earthquakes; and when we apprehend the danger of any of these judgments,

or do actually suffer under them, ought we not in duty and interest, not only every one personally, to grieve alone for his offences against the Almighty ; but also in the most solemn and public manner, to weep, fast and humble our souls before God in prayer, imploring his mercy and forgiveness, and to remove from us what we feel, fear or dread ? And if God shall be pleased to hear our prayers, and afford us relief or deliverance from any calamities, then acts of praise and thanksgiving ought to be as public, as were our fasts and humiliations. For as particular favours are just reasons for our worshipping God privately, so do public mercies strictly oblige us to the performance of public worship ; and even sinners, by frequenting the temple of the Lord, if they have any wise and serious thoughts, may, by degrees, be restrained from being wicked ; it being the way which God has appointed to reclaim men from sin. Besides, if such do not go to church out of principle, yet the sincere devotion of others, or some passages in God's words, may be so directly pressed and pertinently applied to their own state, as to awaken them out of an ill-grounded security, and make them very solicitous to use the means necessary to obtain salvation. In short, it must be of the most fatal consequences to religion, either to lay aside, or neglect the public worship.

For in such case religion will only appear in particular families ; and was God solely to be adored, and his word expounded in private houses, there would soon be an end of all religion. Many masters of families cannot so much as read the holy scriptures, which contain the will of God and the means of salvation ; and too many of those that can, yet they are not capable of instructing their children and family in the necessary duties of religion and virtue. Others are of a stupid, listless temper, who
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never concern themselves with the thoughts of a future state, and therefore will have little or no care for the souls of their children and servants. But the worst scene of all, is the great number of heads of families, who are profane and lewd, and have given themselves up to their lusts and passions. And how deplorable must be the case of such families, who have no better guides to lead them to heaven.

Hence, some families would not be taught their duty, neither to God nor man; some would be but very imperfectly acquainted with the laws of God; others would have false and mean notions of him, unworthy of an infinite perfect being; of such as favoured and encouraged vice and wickedness. The most absurd opinions would be believed, and the most impious practices reconciled, with the religion that some would teach. The different opinions about God; and his way of worship, would be equal to the number of families; for every house would soon have its own religion. And when the worship of God in churches was once laid aside, and reduced to the closet, it will soon be drove from thence out of the world.

However harmless a matter therefore some may think it, customarily to absent from God's public worship, and how plausible soever their excuse for it may be; yet if traced thro' all their consequences, such notions will finally end in atheism, and banish religion out of the world.

But as public worship is a plain and just duty to God, for all his benefits, so it began with the world, and has been preserved in all times and countries. The belief of a God is not more universal, than that public honour and respect is to be rendered to him. Men have reckoned the worship of God among the laws of nature; as being the voice and dictate of nature, rooted in our souls by the God of nature.

For the same arguments which convince us there is a God, who made and governs the world, do as fully prove that all his creatures should glorify and adore him; and none have been more constant in the discharge of these great duties, than the people who were under the more immediate government of God; the patriarchs and good men before the law, and the Jews under it. Abraham erected altars to offer sacrifice, and prostrates himself before God, to express the greatness of his power, and the innumerable gifts he freely bestowed upon him. The Jews, by God's command, consecrated a seventh part of their time to the honour and service of God; and a great deal more was employed about his public worship.

And the very end of our Saviour's institution supposes public worship; for it was his business to unite a body of men, in the profession of his religion, by being baptized into his name, by embracing his doctrines, practising his precepts, trusting in his promises, and by partaking together of a holy feast in memory of himself. This body of men Christ calls his church, of which he is the head, and they the members. But how can this body subsist and live, without such an union, as will testify their relation one to another? and this must be by offering up joint prayers and praises to God. By baptism we are admitted into the church, and by the Lord's supper, charity and good will are universally maintained. The promises Christ made to his disciples were chiefly to plant, direct, support, and enlarge his church. And when they desired him to teach them to pray, every petition of the form was in the plural number; so that from the model of the Lord's prayer, it appears to be our duty frequently to join in prayer to Almighty God. And it is our Saviour's own words, that "if two shall agree on earth, touching any
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“ thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of
 “ my father which is in heaven.”

He also declares, that “ where two or three are
 “ gathered together in his name, there he is in the
 “ midst of them.” And if divine assistance be
 thus promised to a few, who meet to pray, what
 may not full assemblies hope for ; who with humble
 reverence and sincere affection, jointly confess their
 sins to God, implore his grace, and with thankful-
 ness declare the goodness of the Lord ?

St. Paul, in his wants and great difficulties, so-
 licited the prayers of the church. “ I beseech
 “ you, brethren, in your prayers to God for me,
 “ that you also will help together by prayer for
 “ us.” He was fully persuaded that the inter-
 cessions of the congregation would prevail with
 God. The primitive Christians also thought it
 their duty to meet together to pray, with the
 hazard of their lives ; and this they would never
 have done, had they believed that God only re-
 quired their separate private prayers. Besides, the
 devotions of men may be greatly increased, by
 their joining together in prayer ; for how can we
 behold men on their knees, humbly confessing their
 crimes, and abhorring their vileness and ingratitude,
 without detesting our sins, and praying earnestly
 against them ? Who can hear men offering thanks
 to heaven for God’s mercies, without remembering
 the wonderful things he hath done ? Who can see
 others uttering forth the praises of God, and not be
 disposed to bless the Lord for the peculiar favours
 shewn to himself ? What can fill a pious man’s
 heart more with joy, than to behold multitudes of
 his fellow-creatures, openly declare the grateful
 sense they have of the patience, long-suffering, and
 loving-kindness of God who made them, and of
 Christ who redeemed them with his own blood ?
 So that by our pious and discreet zeal in the house of

God, we may by our example excite the devotion of others, and be an instrument of converting many souls to God. I will now briefly represent the great benefits that will arise from our constantly attending the public offices of religion.

In the first place, we shall hereby preserve some sense of God and religion in the minds of those, who are regardless of them. There is something so agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind, in publicly praising and adoring our great creator, that men must have gone great lengths in wickedness, before they can bring themselves to a neglect or contempt of so wise an institution; and even then, it must strike them with some shame and remorse, by reminding them of their duty, when they see others joining with one heart and mouth, in their applications to almighty God. For the decency and solemnity of Christian worship, when duly performed, gives great seriousness to devote minds; it being a most affecting sight to behold men of all ranks unite in humbling themselves before their Lord and Saviour; to see rich and poor, the highest and the lowest, imploring those common blessings at the throne of grace, without which, neither private persons, nor societies, could subsist. And the public discharge of so necessary a duty, has also some good and happy influences on those who neglect it. For it gives at least some check to their impiety and profaneness, by discountenancing of them. And was it not for the frequent returns and devout attendance on those solemn assemblies, it is much to be feared, that the increase of profaneness and infidelity would be such, as to leave no remains of religion among us. And therefore no doubt it was, that the Almighty required the Jews under the severest penalties “to observe his sabbaths, and reverence his sanctuary.”

Another

Another benefit arising from worshipping God publicly, is, that it gives us an opportunity of openly professing our faith and love for our blessed redeemer. In our age, when men are grown so wanton with the blessings of heaven, as even to deny the God who bestows them; when luxury and debauchery are carried to the greatest excess, and men grow giddy with their iniquities; when they glory in “crucifying the Son of God afresh,” by following those lusts, which occasioned his being put to open shame; it must afford great satisfaction to the faithful Christian, to those that sincerely love their Saviour, to be able to declare in the most public manner, that they are not afraid to confess him. And this cannot be done with so much advantage, as at those times and places, which are immediately dedicated to God’s honour and service. And when public confession is joined to public worship, and men adore the God and Saviour in whom they profess to believe, this will be a strong and convincing proof of the sincerity of their profession; because they adore and confess their Redeemer in the wisest and best manner, they rejoice in doing him public honour, in edifying and comforting one another.

It is also a great benefit accruing from public worship, that it affords an opportunity of powerfully awakening and exciting others, to follow so good and so laudable an example. There is something so very moving, in the behaviour of an humble devout Christian, when he approaches God in prayer; there are such beauties in his devotion and deportment, which, when observed, is very affecting. I mean not noisy clamours and extatic raptures, which are offensive to all good men, but the quiet and still voice, with which a pious soul breathes out his prayers. And by such behaviour, in the discharge of this impor-

tant duty, they excite others to the like practice, and to “glorify their father which is in heaven. Again,

By paying our “vows to the Lord in the sight of all his people,” we thereby in some measure become intitled to the success of their prayers, at the same time that we offer up our own. Prayer is not only a great important duty, but tends to procure all possible blessings and advantages to men, if properly discharged. From hence I infer, that whatever benefits may flow from it when privately performed, we have all reason to expect much greater effects, when jointly made “in the courts of the Lord’s house.” Since more and greater reasons appear for the one, than can be offered for the other. For, “if the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,” and his ears will be open to each one’s private prayers; how much more regard may we suppose him to shew, to their united intercessions, in places set apart for his honour and service? If he is “nigh unto all, who call upon him in secret, and will hear their cry, and will help them;” how much more powerful must their joint applications be, when offered with one heart and one mouth? the considerations of this, ought to be one just and pressing motive, to attend those assemblies, and to “watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.”

Such are the great benefits, and many more might be added, that arise from our attendance on God’s worship. The comforts of civil life are chiefly, if not solely, built upon it; our own prayers are rendered more effectual by it; we further and promote the salvation of others, and give evidence of our own sincerity; and we lay some checks and restraints upon the wicked and profane, who impiously neglect or but seldom frequent it. I

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shall inforce all with this observation, that the saints in heaven, in their exalted state, do worship and glorify God together ; saying, “ thou art worthy, “ O Lord, to receive glory, honour and power, for “ thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure, “ they are, and were created. Blessing and glory, “ wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, power and “ might, be unto God for ever and ever. A- “ men.”

Discourse LXV. Bp. *Atter-*
bury.

External WORSHIP of no efficacy without
internal DEVOTION.

John iv. 24.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must
worship him in spirit and truth.

PERHAPS, at first sight it may seem need-
less to prove, that a reverend and pious de-
meanor in the public service of the church, in order
to render our devotions acceptable to God, is a ne-
cessary reasonable duty; since it will be thought,
that there is no good Christian but is well satisfied
of the truth of it. And yet, certain it is, that
there are many sincere, but deluded persons, who
think external modes of worship, not only unneces-
sary but superstitious, under the gospel dispensation;
and that the true worshippers of God, are to wor-
ship him only in spirit and truth. And even among
those who admit the necessity of bodily worship, how
many deny it in practice, by an indecent behaviour
in the public service of the church? In order there-
fore to convince those who have not sufficiently con-
sidered the importance of this duty, as also to raise the
devotion of such as are remiss and careless therein;
I shall endeavour to prove, by several arguments,
the reasonableness of external worship; and then
shew, that without internal devotion, external wor-
ship will be of no efficacy.

External

External adoration may be considered as part of that natural homage, which the whole man, soul and body, owes to God, on account of his creation, preservation, and sovereign dominion over us. If we are to worship God for our being and all the benefits we receive from him, as the dictates of reason inform us; then for the same reason should we use all those ways of worship, which best express our total entire dependance on him. The soul worships him, by conceiving awful ideas of his majesty and great excellencies; by invoking his aid and assistance, and by offering praises to him. The body worships him, by bowing, prostration, and all those humble devout postures, which best suit with those inward affections and dispositions of mind. Both make up a compleat harmony of divine worship, a sacrifice acceptable, and well pleasing to God.

Indeed, as we cannot form any idea of God, but by considering the limited perfections and excellencies of his creatures, and ascribing them to him without bounds; so we have no other way to apply ourselves to God, but by giving to him in a much higher degree those inward and outward marks of respect, which we usually pay to the dignity of any person, on account of his authority over, or beneficence to us. The respect we bear towards persons of great excellence, such as parents, benefactors, or governors, is generally expressed by a veneration of mind for them, and a submission of body to them. And whoever fails in either of these, is always thought to be so far wanting in his relative duty. Of this the mind of man is very sensible, and being therefore conscious of the superlative excellencies of the divine Being, and of its infinite goodness towards us, finds itself uneasy, till it has paid its due homage and debt of honour to it; which yet it can no otherwise do, than by applying

plying to God those outward sensible marks of respect, and inward submissions of soul, which are used to the sons of men. These, how insignificant soever they are, it ventures to pay, in sure confidence, that they will be grateful to that Being, “which accepteth according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

Thus is external adoration a point of natural homage, due to the supreme Lord of the world, in token of that entire dependance, which the whole man, soul and body, hath on him. Both therefore should join in paying the common tribute of praise, it being the very law of our nature, our bounden duty and service. And this is a way of reasoning used by the Holy Ghost in both testaments.

The Psalmist requires us “to bow down and kneel before God; because he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his hands.” And the Apostle urges us, “to glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God’s.” We are to glorify him both in body and spirit, that is, by outward as well as inward devotion; since both are God’s. And in another place, says he, “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reasonable service.” So that the presenting our bodies is a reasonable service, a worship agreeable to reason, and to the suggestions of our natural faculties. We also hope for the glorification both of body and soul in the next life; and therefore should worship and glorify God in this with the body as well as soul, if we expect God should glorify both in another state. As outward worship, without the inward, is dead, so the inward without the outward is not compleat; even as the soul, while separate from the body, shall not enjoy consummate glory, till the resurrection. And thus the consideration

consideration of outward worship, as it respects God the object of it, affords us one powerful motive to a composed and solemn behaviour in the public service of the church.

But, external worship, as it concerns ourselves, is an help and assistance, towards promoting the spiritual worship of our souls. There is a close connection between the mind and its organs; the motions of the one, do in some degree generally pass into the other. And this is no where so remarkable as in acts of devotion. When the mind is warmed with heavenly thoughts, it communicates these impressions to the body; and excites those several actions without, that greatly resembles what is done within. On the other side, devout postures of body, when duly attended to, do as certainly impart their force to the mind also. External worship is a just and reasonable duty, as it naturally excites the like inward acts of devotion; and is a means to fix attention on God, the best and most worthy object: and whatever clog the body may be to the soul in other respects, yet in this of devotion, it may be managed far otherwise, and the body rendered very useful and serviceable to the soul, in this duty. But,

If we consider outward worship as a sign by which we express to others, an inward religious principle; it will then appear, that we are highly obliged to the most solemn and devout use of it: For as we have proved it to be an instrument of God's honour, and our own advantage, so we shall find it will greatly contribute to the good also of our neighbour. And many are the advantages which the people of God do mutually receive from it, when met together. The cold and remiss worshipper, at the sight of an exemplary piety, is kindled into some degrees of holy warmth; the fervent and devout by it become yet more inflamed. A religious emulation, an only desire of excelling, then rises in the breasts of the faithful. He that observes

observes another composed in his behaviour, and devoutly engaged, will grow ashamed of his own indifference and spiritual dryness, and presently strive to imitate the amiable pattern, that he may become the object of other mens imitation. And not only believers, but even unbelievers may receive benefit by it. The profane scoffer has here an answer to his bold scoffs, in that silent and powerful argument which arises from the behaviour of a devout multitude, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. For according to St. Paul, “ if all
 “ do thus worship, and there cometh in one that
 “ believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convin-
 “ ced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are
 “ the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so
 “ falling down on his face, he will worship
 “ God, and report, that God is in you of a
 “ truth.”

Thus have I explained the several grounds on which external adoration stands, and the several good uses, to which it may be employed; how much the honour of God depends on it, the advancement of piety in ourselves, and our neighbour. Let us therefore be careful to practise a duty so plain and reasonable. Let us, when we enter the place of public worship, always remember, that the “ place wherein we stand is holy ground.” Let us consider, that if so many are the advantages, accruing from a due care of external worship, how great must the inconveniences be, that arise from an indecent and slovenly worship; a worship fit neither for God to receive, nor for man, his creature, to pay?

The first Christians, who were so exemplary in all the parts of Christian duty, above those of latter times, excelled us in nothing more than in the outward marks of devotion and reverence, which appeared in their public assemblies. They resorted to the house of God with the same holy awe and
 reverence

reverence as if they were really to meet and converse with him there. They continued all the time of divine service, immovably fixed to their duty, without the least sign of a wandering mind. They were not contented with the ordinary postures of devotion, such as bowing of the head or body, but prostrating themselves on the ground. And tho' these heights of devotion are too exalted for our degenerate age, in which iniquity abounds, and the love of many wax cold; yet, let us at least keep up so much of the spirit and life of devotion, as to render our behaviour sober and composed in the use of holy things, and to take away from wicked men an occasion to blaspheme. I proceed to shew, that without internal devotion, external worship will be of no efficacy.

The devotion of the hand without that of the heart, is of no acceptance with God; bodily exercise profiteth but little, unless accompanied with an holy warmth and elevation of mind. This is a very plain but unregarded truth; there are many christians who seem not to be convinced of it; and even such is the infirmity of our nature, that the best of us want sometimes to be awakened into a lively sense of it. Many frequenters of religious assemblies think their duty sufficiently discharged, if they regularly attend the time of divine service, join in the hymns and responses, and say amen to the prayers. If their outward behaviour is decent, tho' they are inwardly absent from the duty they are about, and their thoughts wandering on foreign vain objects; yet shall they go away as well satisfied, as if they had performed a reasonable service, and not offered the sacrifice of fools; forgetting what our Saviour said of the Scribes and Pharisees: "this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

That such a mock worship as this, such a mere farce and form of devotion, is not what God requires, will hearken to, or reward, I shall briefly shew, by observing how unproportioned it is to the divine nature, and our own; to the great end and design of prayer; and to those mighty blessings and benefits, with which it is attended, when duly performed.—The object of our religious addresses, is God, who is a Spirit; and who will be worshipped in spirit, with all the faculties and powers of our mind, with the utmost intention and vigour of thought: so that he who lifts his hands up to him, without the elevation of his heart, affronts him, instead of adoring him. Good David says, “bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” He summons every faculty and affection of his soul, all that is within him, to do homage to God, well knowing that a mere outward homage, would be a useless performance. “God requires truth in the inward parts, to whom all things are naked and open, who trieth the very heart and reins.” We cannot think to impose upon God, as we sometimes do upon men, by a mere form of godliness, without the power of it. When therefore we perform any part of our duty, more particularly, when we are immediately addressing ourselves to God by prayer and praise, intreating and adoring him; then must we give him our heart, or all besides will prove a vain oblation. Again,

Let us consider our own nature, as well as that of the divine Being. Are we not reasonable creatures? and as such ought we not to pay an entire reasonable service? But do we worship God, when the better half of us is unconcerned in the act? It is the mind chiefly, that is the man; when that is absent, the man is not present; he offers not a living victim, but a dead carcass; and how can
 God

God be well pleased with such a sacrifice? What is prayer, but an assent of the mind towards God; an holy engine by which we lift up our spirits to the great father of spirits; maintaining a sweet intercourse with him, breathing out from the bottom of our hearts, our common desires to him? but how can this be done, while our hearts are far from him? In scripture, mighty things are said to have been done, by the efficacy and virtue of prayer: but how? not by the mere bending of the knees, the uttering of words and syllables; but by the attention of the heart, by zeal, and fervency. It is only the fervent prayer of a righteous man, that availeth much. Indeed, this qualification of prayer is enjoined us by God; both as a becoming expression of our religious reverence towards him, and as a proper means to work in us those good dispositions, which he delights in, and loves to reward. If we ask with a fixed and fervent mind, this tends to make us humble, submissive, and dependent; it affects us with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and of the divine bounty and goodness of God; it also suspends for a time the evil desires of our hearts, and produces in us an heavenly frame and temper of soul. But can we imagine, that pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the fruits of the spirit, support against temptations; and the blessings of this life and the next, (with which God has promised to reward our prayers) should be purchased at the cheap expence of forms and appearances? that those devotions which affect not us, should affect God? that he should attend to, or regard such requests, as we neither regard, nor attend to ourselves?

Let us not then mock God, nor deceive ourselves! Let us not think we have fulfilled our duty, merely by resorting to the church; nor hope to atone by an outwardly decent behaviour, for an inward alienated

nated mind. But let us, whenever we come to the house of God, come whole and entire, to “offer and present unto God ourselves, our souls, our bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to him.” Let us resolve to worship him, not only with our lips and knees, (but in the same manner, as we are obliged to love him) “even with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength.”

Thanks be to God’s good providence, we are members of a church, where the public offices of religion are so modelled and contrived, as to raise the attention, and kindle an holy flame in the breasts of all sincere worshippers; and if we neglect to improve the means afforded us, we shall be more inexcusable, than the members of any other church in the christian world. The language wherein our service is performed, tends to fix and keep alive our attention. It is our own mother tongue, what we are acquainted with, and do understand. There is a church, whose public prayers are put up in a language unknown to most who join in them. But how can the heart be affected with words, when it understands not their meaning? The public devotions of an unlettered papist, is no other than a scene of distractions and wanderings from first to last.

And as our offices are in our own tongue, so are they most easy, plain, and level to the meanest capacities. The language, tho’ plain, simple, and natural, is yet solemn, majestic, and moving; significant and full, sound and wholesome. It is adapted equally to inform the understanding, to inflame the affections, of the wisest and weakest of christians.

I must also reckon it among the peculiar advantages of our way of worship, towards fixing the minds of men to that holy duty, wherein they are en-

engaged ; that our prayers and praises are offered up in a premeditated form of words, with which every one is before acquainted. I deny not, but that unpremeditated prayers, uttered with great fluency, devout warmth, and earnestness, may make strong impressions on the minds of some hearers : but then whoever joins in a prayer he knows not, must needs do it with some diffidence and fear, lest there should be any thing in it, improper and unbecoming : he must suspend his assent, until he has considered whether the expressions are fit for him to agree in or not : and by thus employing his thoughts, it cannot but check his devotion, by dividing and breaking the force of his mind. Whereas he who offers up his requests to God, in a known stated form, has no such avocations to struggle with ; but can directly and vigorously ask in faith, nothing doubting. He is at leisure to excite all the powers and affections of his soul, and to engage them in that spiritual service ; which is a benefit peculiar to the use of pre-composed prayers.

Another great advantage of our service is, that it is not one continued act of devotion, but consists of several distinct and entire forms of petition and praise ; whereby the mind is eased and relieved from too long an attention, and returns as it were, with new strength to its duty. The collects of our church are so framed, as to be highly useful to raise and enliven our devotions ; for as they generally begin with the awful mention of some attribute of God, so they end with reminding us of the death and intercession of Jesus. And can any considerations be more awakening than these, on our minds, during the time of divine service ? Besides, that useful and affecting variety of all sorts of religious duties, with which it abounds, does also greatly contribute to render us attentive and devout. There we confess our sins, and inter-

cede with God for the pardon of them : there we deprecate the divine judgments, that may be inflicted, and pray for all spiritual and temporal blessings, that can be bestowed on ourselves and others : there we offer up our praises and thanksgivings to God, for all the instances of his mercy and goodness to us : there we hear the holy scriptures read, and profess our belief of the great articles of faith. And as the priest has his share in the performance of these offices, so have the people too. Each is employed in stirring up the other into an holy emulation of heart and voice, mutually exciting each other's devotion. Our daily service is performed, and our sacraments administered in a reverend manner. Every part and circumstance of our worship, is so ordered, as to inspire us with heavenly affections ; to awaken our senses, and invigorate our minds to devotion. Since then we have so many helps and advantages towards worshipping of God in his sanctuary, with a devout frame and temper of soul ; let us resolve from this moment, to make a due use of them ; to repair often to the house of God, with holy reverence and awe, and to lift up our hearts together with our hands, whenever we thus approach him.

Discourse LXVI. Dr. Clarke.

Of MORAL and POSITIVE DUTIES.

Mat. xxii. 40.

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

THE answer our Saviour gave to the question proposed to him by the Pharisee, “ which “ was the great commandment in the law ? ” was this : “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with “ all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all “ thy mind, and with all thy strength ; ” and that the second was like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : and he then added, in the words of the text, “ on these two commandments “ hang all the law and the prophets.” That is, these are the ultimate end and design of religion, and all positive precepts are subordinate thereto, as being the only means to obtain these great ends. To which the Pharisee replied, “ well, master, “ thou hast said the truth ; ”---these are more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

This determination of the question by our Saviour was plain and clear, full and decisive, there being no comparison between the excellency of ritual and moral duties. The love of God, and our neighbour, are the essence of true religion ; the highest improvement and perfection of our rational nature ; the sum and fountain of all other moral duties ; and the ultimate end, for which all positive commandments were ever given. All the precepts of the law of Moses, all the exhortations of the prophets, tend and are directed to this great end and de-

lign. And it may justly be wondered at, how the Jews could be so ignorant of the nature of true religion, as to make any competition between the value of mere external forms, and the real practice of true virtue; when God by his prophets had so frequently declared, that their “sacrifices and
“oblations, washings and purifications, feasts and
“solemn assemblies, fasts and humiliations, were so
“far from being acceptable in his sight, without
“the practice of justice, truth, righteousness and
“charity; that tho’ those rites were of his own
“institution, they were the greatest abomination in
“his sight, as only proving their deeper hypo-
“crisy.”

And yet notwithstanding the many plain and frequent declarations of the prophets, it is evident that men of the greatest character and esteem for learning and piety among the Jews, did in our Saviour’s time, almost universally fall into this fatal mistake. They were very strict in observing the outward rites and ceremonies of the law, which ought not indeed to be left undone; but they neglected the practice of the weightier and more indispensable duties, of truth, righteousness and goodness towards men. They were very superstitious in outward purifications, but took no care to purify their minds from unrighteousness and all uncleanness. Nor is it difficult, but easy, to account for this. For, to men of corrupt affections, and vicious habits, the practice of virtue and religion is very troublesome. To mortify and cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, to conquer and subdue evil inclinations, confirmed habits, and unruly passions, is like “cutting off a right hand, and pulling out
“a right eye, or for a man to be born again, when
“he is old.” But as it is necessary, for men to make some appearance of religion, corrupt minds therefore, in order to procure the advantages which the
profession

profession and credit of religion are apt to gain in the world, must call certain forms or opinions by the name of religion, instead of what is really so. They must make religion consist in things better fitted to procure the applause of the world, than the sincerest love of God, and our neighbour; than meekness and simplicity, justice and charity, holiness and purity of mind, and the practice of other virtues. This one mistake occasions the great and general corruption of mankind; is the first and last error in matters of religion. Thus acted the Pharisees in our Saviour's days: and thus among Christians, where popery prevails, and in other places where the same spirit has gained ground; how has God's worship been corrupted, and turned into pomp and superstition? How have the empty forms and appearances of religion, shut out the true love of God, and obedience to his holy commands? How hath false zeal for the corrupt doctrines and traditions of men, turned Christian love, meekness and charity, prime and fundamental duties, into what is directly opposite to the end and design of all religion; even into the most inhuman cruelties? How have penances, confessions, absolutions, and other weak observances been substituted in the room of true repentance and reformation of life? What pains have such men taken to reconcile the name of religion, with the practice of wickedness? and how totally neglected have been those great and eternal duties, "the love of God, and our neighbour;" which comprize all moral duties? For as to positive injunctions, they are only subservient to them, as means to an end. And that all moral duties are contained in, and may be reduced to, the love of God, and our neighbour, will appear by the following considerations.

God is a Being of infinite perfections, the fountain of all goodness and happiness, from whom are

derived all excellencies, that are to be found in any parts of the creation. To love God is to have always fixed in our minds a just sense of the perfections of his nature, and of his ineffimable goodness to his creatures. This, if carefully attended to, must naturally have such an influence on our practice, as to cause us to praise and adore him continually, to devote ourselves wholly to his service, constantly to worship him, and only him, whose power is directed by infinite goodness for the benefit of all his creatures. And how will this love of God naturally oblige us to govern our passions, to moderate our appetites, to despise all the allurements of sin, and apply ourselves wholly to the observance of his just and righteous commands?— Thus all the duties of the first table, which relate to God; and those which respect ourselves, or the government of our passions, by the rules of reason and religion, do all spring from the love of God, and are contained in, and may easily be reduced to it.

And thus also are all the duties of the second table, contained under, and may be comprized in the love of our neighbour. God created and sent us into the world, to love, assist, and do good to one another; and whoever constantly pursues this end, will never greatly fail in the particulars of his duty. He who loves his neighbour sincerely as himself, and does to all men what he desires they should do to him; and uses his endeavours to promote the universal peace and happiness of mankind, will upon this principle regularly perform all parts of his duty towards men: and from this fountain of universal love and charity will naturally flow all those streams of virtue and good works, in which consists the life and beauty, the excellence and glory of religion. Such an one will make it his business to promote the public good, and contribute all he can

towards the peace and welfare of the world. He will treat his superiors with chearful submission; his benefactors with gratitude, and decent respect; his equals with affability and readines to do all good offices of kindness; his inferiors with gentleness, moderation and charity: and thus under the love of our neighbour are contained all the duties of the second table. “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these commandments, hang all the law and the prophets.”— I now proceed to shew, that all positive and ritual injunctions, tho’ they ought not to be left undone, yet they are subordinate and subservient to moral duties. This will abundantly appear by the following considerations.

That the moral duties of life, the love of God, and our neighbour, are things in their own nature good and excellent, and of eternal obligation; they receive not their obliging power from being commanded; but their obligation is eternal, arising from their own nature. Our obligation to love God, proceeds from the nature and attributes of God; our obligation to love and assist our neighbour, arises from the nature of man, and our relation to one another; from our state and condition, from the exigencies of life, the necessity of societies, from the equity, reason and nature of things. These moral duties, therefore, are in their own nature good and excellent, necessary to preserve the order and happiness of the world, to improve and perfect our minds, to qualify and make us capable of that state of glory, for which God has designed us hereafter. But all ritual ceremonial observances have no intrinsic goodness in their own nature, nor any obligation, but what merely arises from their being positively enjoined. And tho’ it is our duty to perform them, when and where commanded,

yet they can never come into competition with those duties, whose obligation is necessary and eternal, arising from the absolute excellency of the nature of the things themselves. Again,

All positive and ritual injunctions, can be but subordinate to the practice of moral virtue, because the former are only as means to obtain the latter. In the perfection of virtue and goodness consists the image of God, the chief happiness of man, the excellency and perfection of our nature; and therefore this must be our ultimate end, the principal scope of all our actions; and nothing else can be truly valuable and worthy of esteem, but only as means to attain this end. Ritual observances in religion, if they truly increase our devotion to God, if they enlarge our charity and goodness towards men, if they remind us of our obligation to purity and temperance in ourselves, then indeed, they are of excellent use, and so far as commanded, are of indispensable obligation. But even then baptism does save us, not barely by washing away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God. The sacrament of the Lord's supper confirms our title to eternal life, by renewing our obligation and vows, to obey that covenant, upon which eternal life was promised in Christ. Circumcision, and the purifications under the law, were means of salvation to the Jews, not by any virtue in themselves, but as instances of obedience to the will of God, and as representations of their obligation to purity and holiness. But where these observances are not used as means to this end, they become useless and unprofitable; "commandments which are not good, and precepts by which men shall not live. Circumcision, to them that obey not the law, was accounted uncircumcision;" and baptism, and the Lord's supper, to them that obey not the gospel in a virtuous life, is but attempting to please God

God by profaning his feast and despising his ordinances. In a word, the kingdom of God, says our Saviour, is within you. Every man's religion is not what he professes, or makes a shew of, in external observances ; but what influence it really has, upon the man himself, in the habit of his mind ; in the course of his actions, in his family, in his business, in his dealings with mankind, in his common conversation, and even in his diversions too, as well as in his more seldom acts of prayer and devotion. For it is not " the eating with unwashed hands, or any " thing that cometh from without, can make a man " morally unclean ;" but only the wicked dispositions, that are within the heart of a man : so likewise, no rites or ceremonies, nor any thing that is without the man, can make him truly holy and religious ; but only that inward, habitual, virtuous disposition of mind, the fruits of which in his actions, determine the true character of the man. Was this one fundamental truth sufficiently attended to, Christians would not make their religion, which consists in universal goodness and charity, to become, on the contrary, an occasion of hatred, quarrels and contentions ; which is to contend about the means, and lose the end.

The same thing yet further appears, in that moral duties, or the practice of virtue will continue for ever, but all positive commands are but of temporary obligation. The love of God and our neighbour, will remain and be perfected in heaven ; but all ritual observances are appointed only for the assistance and improvement of our religion here on earth ; when that which is perfect is come, these subordinate institutions will cease. Hope and faith itself, and all other graces and gifts of the spirit, must necessarily end at the consummation of all things ; " whether there be prophecies they shall fail ; " whether there be tongues they shall cease ; whether there

“ there he knowledge, it shall vanish way : But charity only never faileth.” Our love of God will be as much more perfect in heaven than it is here, as our knowledge of him will be then much more increased, “ for we shall see him as he is ;” and our love of our neighbour will be then as much improved beyond what it now is, as the nature of angels is more excellent than that of frail men.

From hence it may be observed, that the great and principal end of true religion, is the promoting the practice of moral goodness and righteousness. God is a being of infinite and essential purity and holiness ; and there shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, “ any thing that defileth, neither “ whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lye.” So that those virtues, which are absolutely necessary to the enjoying the happiness of heaven, must be the principal branches of our duty here ; which virtues our Saviour calls “ the weightier matters of the “ law.” For, “ in Christ Jesus neither circumcision “ availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith “ which worketh by love. For circumcision is nothing, “ and the uncircumcision is nothing, “ but the keeping of the commandments of “ God ;” for these things are good and profitable unto men.”

But tho’ the great end principal and of true religion is the promoting the practice of moral virtue and righteousness, yet the externals also of religion, such as matters of order and decency, and particular appointments, are not to be neglected. Tho’ the weightier matters of the law ought to be done, yet the others ought not to be left undone. Positive institutions under the Christian dispensation, however they are not of the essence of religion, yet as helps and means of it, are not to be omitted and neglected. Indeed, that form of religion is the most perfect, which has the fewest positive external

nal rites, and lays the least stress upon them ; and where such as are appointed, have the most immediate tendency to promote virtue and holiness. This is true in all cases : The end is always best attained, where the means made use of are fewest in number, most direct in their nature, most obvious in their tendency, and only so far relied on, as to promote the end proposed, which is principally to be regarded ; and the means only with respect to the end.—The inferences from what has been said are short and obvious. For,

From hence appears the peculiar excellency and advantage of the Christian religion ; that it is not like the Jewish, burdened with a multitude of outward rites and ceremonies, such as perpetual washings, purifications, sacrifices, and other typical observances, which neither they nor their fathers could bear ; but it only requires of us, in order to eternal salvation, faith in God and Jesus Christ, repentance from dead works, and obedience to the laws of Christ, in expectation of the resurrection to eternal judgment. Hence also appears the great wisdom and usefulness of those few external rites in the Christian religion ; such as the preaching of the word, and administering the two sacraments ; all which have a direct, natural, and immediate tendency, to promote the ends of real virtue and holiness. By preaching of God's word, men are instructed in their duty, and constantly exhorted to perform it ; by baptism, they are admitted into a solemn obligation to obey it ; and by the Lord's supper, they renew and confirm that obligation. But excellent as these means are, both to promote their designed end, and as being positively commanded by Christ ; yet that they are still but means, subordinate to, and useful only as they promote the practice of real goodness, righteousness and charity, is evident from hence, that the virtues which these institutions were intended

intended to promote, are absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation ; and without which no unrighteous person, continuing such, can possibly enter into the kingdom of God. The gospel itself, to such persons, instead of being a favour of life unto life, is, on the contrary, the favour of death unto death. Baptism, and the Lord's supper, will be of no benefit to such, but increase their condemnation. On the other side, tho' positive institutions, were declared by our Lord as generally necessary to salvation, yet there are some cases which are manifestly excepted. For who can believe that infants dying suddenly before baptism, shall perish, for what cannot be their own fault? The penitent on the cross, tho' not baptised, yet salvation was promised him by our Lord. And many converts in the primitive times, who were martyred before they could be baptized, by their dying literally with and for Christ, were more than figuratively buried with him by baptism into his death: All which clearly shews the difference between the things which absolutely must be done, and what ought not to be left undone. Again,

From what has been observed, it further appears how contrary to christianity the church of Rome acts, in multiplying mere forms and ceremonies without number ; particularly, in making additional sacraments of their own invention, to amuse the people, and withdraw their attention from the practice of real and true virtue. Thus confirmation, by which men only ratify in public their baptismal vow ; and ordination, which is the solemn appointment of persons to a particular office ; are with them sacraments. Also, instead of true repentance and amendment of life, they have the sacrament of penance. And thus by grossly misrepresenting a passage of St. James concerning the sick being anointed with oil, and having their sins forgiven,

given, and their bodily diseases miraculously cured, is built the superstitious sacrament of extreme unction. And because St. Paul compared matrimony with the spiritual union between Christ and his church, and calls that similitude a great mystery, which word the Latin translator ignorantly renders a great sacrament; hence is matrimony with them another sacrament. There are innumerable other things of the like nature among them, of which St. Paul would have said, with greater earnestness than even of the Jewish observations; the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Lastly,

It is certain, that every person or doctrine which would separate religion from an holy life, and make it to consist merely in such speculative opinions, as may be defended by an ill liver; or in such outward solemnities of worship as may be performed by a vicious and wicked man, does greatly corrupt religion. For the design and very essence of religion, is to make men good and happy; the design of the revelation of the gospel, is to destroy superstition, and restore the truth of religion, by correcting men's opinions and reforming their manners; by introducing repentance, and securing to us its being acceptable thro' the merits of Christ. If without this, men will pretend to be religious by any other method, they wholly mistake the nature of religion, and the design of the gospel. If they will not add to their faith virtue, but think it sufficient that they hold the truth, tho' it be in unrighteousness; they are like the man who built his house upon the sand; their very faith will but increase their guilt, and the truth which they profess, will but the more severely condemn them for being workers of iniquity; which condemnation that we may escape, let us be careful to observe and practise the duties that have been recommended.

Discourse LXVII. Abp. *Sharpe*.

Of BAPTISM, and how far necessary to
SALVATION.

Mat. xvi. 16.

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

OUR Saviour having by his life and preaching, by his miracles and resurrection from the dead, laid a sufficient foundation for the ready belief and entertainment of his gospel among mankind, did, upon his ascension into heaven, issue out his royal charter and commission to his apostles, to go and preach this gospel all the world over; “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Or according to St. Matthew, “go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always to the end of the world.” This was the apostles commission; the great trust committed to them, and to all succeeding ministers of Christ, to the world’s end. And lest it should be surmized that this order of the ministry might signify very little, there being no enforcement of it, no obligation laid on the people to receive the message they were to preach, our Saviour takes care to remove that pretence, by adding in the words of my text, “he that believeth, and is baptized, shall
“ be

“ be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be
“ damned.” This is a sufficient obligation upon all
persons whatsoever to whom the gospel is preached,
to receive and embrace it, since no less than their
everlasting salvation depends upon it. My present de-
sign is to make some observations upon these words,
“ he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,
“ and he that believeth not shall be damned.” And the
first thing I would observe is, that since men, to
the world’s end, are to be saved by believing the
gospel, then there is an evident necessity, that there
should be always an order of men appointed on
purpose to preach the gospel : For, as St. Paul
truly argues, “ how shall men believe in him of
“ whom they have not heard ? And how shall they
“ hear without a preacher ? and how shall they
“ preach except they are sent ? If Christ intended
that the belief of his gospel, should be the way of
salvation, he must certainly have designed there
should be men set apart to preach this gospel, so
long as the world shall endure ; and this we find is
done. For says he, “ lo I am with you alway,
“ even to the end of the world.” Meaning there-
by, that he would not only by his Spirit assist the
apostles in the preaching of the gospel during their
lives, but also continue that assistance to those who
should succeed them in the work of the ministry,
so long as the world should last. Another thing to
be remarked is, that our Saviour makes baptism as
necessary a condition of salvation as believing ; for
he doth not say, “ whosoever believeth shall be
“ saved, but, whosoever believeth, and is baptized,
“ shall be saved :” He joins them both together.
And what are we to learn from hence ? I answer, not
that Jesus Christ has laid as great a stress upon an
outward ceremony, as upon an inward virtue ; no,
by no means. But that the belief of christianity,
without taking the profession of it upon us, and ob-
liging

liging ourselves to live according to its precepts, is not sufficient. A man will perhaps say, he believes the history of our Saviour to be a true history, and that he hath a great esteem for his person, and considers his doctrine as the most excellent, useful, and divine morality that was ever delivered to the world. But this confession of faith falls extremely short of what is expected from those, who hope for any benefit by our Saviour. How great respect soever a man pretends to have for the gospel, yet if he does not enter himself into the number of Christ's disciples by baptism, vowing all obedience to Christ Jesus as his lord and master, owning his religion upon all occasions, and communicating in his worship and service, tho' he may be a well-wisher to christianity, yet he cannot be called a Christian.

Examine the scriptures, and see what made any a Jew, or an Israelite: Was it enough to think honourably of the law of Moses? No; but a man was to be circumcised, and obliged to live according to that law. The case is just the same as to our christianity, "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The business of Christ, as our Redeemer, was to meditate or procure a new covenant between God and man, and to seal it with his blood. God's part was to grant unto all that entered into this covenant, the forgiveness of their sins, the grace and assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable them to live a holy life, and obtain an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven: The condition of this covenant on man's part was, that all who expect to partake of those benefits, should believe in Jesus Christ, own him for their Saviour, assent to all his doctrines, and endeavour to frame their lives according to the rules he prescribed. This is that gracious, that happy covenant, which God established with mankind, thro' the mediation of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus. Here is an everlasting covenant made between God and man, sealed with the blood of the Son of God ; and all mankind who will be eternally happy, may, and should be entered therein ; not the father for the children, but every one for himself, as was done in the covenant of circumcision. And how that is our Saviour himself tells ; go, saith he, “ disciple all nations, baptizing them in the “ name of the father, and of the Son, and of the “ Holy Ghost.” Baptism then is the way he hath appointed for the entering into this covenant ; and great reason there was for it. Our Saviour found, when he came into the world, that the Jews had made use of baptism many ages, for the admission of profelytes into the true religion. He therefore, that came to take all nations, people, and languages into his covenant, chose that ceremony which had been used for that purpose, and applies it to his own institution, ordering all persons from thenceforth to enter into his covenant by baptism.

But tho’ St. Peter expressly says, that “ baptism “ saves us ; and that whosoever believeth, and is “ baptized, shall be saved ;” yet, that he might not be misunderstood, the apostle immediately explains himself saying ; “ not the washing away the filth “ of the flesh,” it is not baptism which saveth us, “ but the answer of a good conscience towards “ God ;” that is, if those who took the vow of baptism, did with a good conscience perform the solemn answers that were made by them to the questions then put, as to their forsaking the devil and his works, owning Jesus Christ and his religion, and leading a life agreeable to his holy laws, this is what would effectually save men in the day of the Lord Jesus. The outward ceremony of washing with water would avail little, but that with the things signified thereby, namely, a holy and pure life, suitable to the Christian faith, is what

together would be effectual for the salvation of all men. So that when our Saviour saith, "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," his meaning is this, that the bare assent to his doctrine is not enough to give a man a title to that salvation which he hath purchased and promised; but there is a necessity of entering into that covenant which he procured of God for mankind by his death. The outward ceremony of entering into that covenant is outward baptism, and therefore all Christians must be baptized. But the main thing intended in that covenant, and signified by that baptism, is an hearty owning of Jesus Christ; a pure, holy, and innocent life, conformable to the doctrines of the gospel. Whosoever thus believes in Jesus Christ, and is thus in covenant with God, and thus endeavours to perform those conditions, which by that covenant are on his part required, every such man shall be saved. But whosoever continues an infidel or unbeliever upon the preaching of the gospel, every such man shall be damned. This I apprehend is the full importance of our Saviour's words.

What I would farther observe is, that the baptism of water as appointed by our Saviour, was not a temporary institution, a ceremony just to last for that age; but it was designed by our Saviour to continue in use among his disciples, as long as he had a church upon earth. The reason of it is plain, because this was the method he appointed for the admitting men into his covenant and into his church. If therefore all particular persons, from age to age, are to believe in Christ, to be entered into his covenant, and made members of his church; then all particular persons are to be baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And if this be so, what can we say of some religious sects among us, who are so very spiritual, that they will have nothing to

do with such a carnal ceremony, as that of baptism with water; pretending that the whole thing is either meant in a mystical sense, or that it is long since abolished? This is the case of the Quakers and some others. These people call themselves Christians, for they pretend to believe in Jesus Christ; but do they really deserve that name when they were never entered into covenant with him? However, to speak the most tenderly of them; if they are Christians, surely they cannot be esteemed right true Christians, because they live in a constant transgression of as plain a precept of our Saviour, as any in the gospel; and such a precept too, as all Christians in the world, till this last age, did ever make a conscience of religiously observing.

Another thing I would remark is, that from these words we may easily satisfy ourselves, what is the true notion of the catholic church, out of which there is no salvation? All Christians are agreed, that Jesus Christ did found a church while he was upon earth, that should continue to the end of the world, and against which the gates of hell should never prevail. All Christians are likewise agreed that this church is but one, tho' spread into never so many countries; and this is what we acknowledge in our creed, when we say, "I believe in one catholic and apostolic church." Lastly, it is also agreed by all Christians, that out of this one church there is no salvation, at least promised by God, or covenanted for by our Lord Jesus Christ. The question then is, that as there are so many different and opposite churches in the world, all pretending to be the true church, but notoriously contradicting one another both in doctrine and worship, which of all these is the true church? Now the before-mentioned words of our Saviour afford us a plain answer to this question, which is, that wherever the gospel of Christ is preached, and men do believe it, and are baptized therein,

therein, such is a true church. In all those places all the world over, where this is observed, there is the true church. And every one of those combinations of men so preaching, so believing, so professing, are true parts and members of the catholic church (that mystical body of Christ) out of which there is no salvation. I do not say they are all equally pure, or that a man may communicate with all of them equally safe; but that they are all true parts of the catholic church, some more sound, others more corrupt. This is a very plain intelligible notion of the catholic church, and which I will prove undeniably true beyond all contradiction, from the words of our Saviour, “he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;” and this I shall do in the following manner. It is owned and confessed, that none out of the catholic church can be saved; but our Saviour here declares, that whosoever believes, “and is baptized,” is put into a capacity of salvation; it therefore follows, as a natural consequence, that whosoever believeth and is baptized, is within the catholic church. For is it true, that whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; or is it not? If it be not, then there is no reliance on our Saviour’s words, who yet is the author of our faith. If it be true, then every such person is a member of the catholic church; otherwise people may be saved without being in the church. The question then that every man ought to put to himself, as to which of the different communions in Christendom, he would chuse to venture his soul in, is not which of these communions is the true catholic church, in opposition to all the rest, as the Papists put it; for perhaps none of them are so, tho’ they are all parts or members of that catholic church: But the fair question that every man ought to put to himself is, in which of those communions that he hath any

any knowledge of, is the gospel of Christ most purely taught and professed, according to the primitive rules of it ; and consequently, which of them may he join himself to, with the greatest safety ? And any one, without much pains, may easily return an answer to this question.

And from hence we are able to give a true account of the measure and standard of that faith, which is required of Christians in order to their salvation. All Christians agree that we must be believers. But some, taking advantage of this, will not allow us to have a right faith, or to be orthodox Christians, unless we receive all those notions and propositions, which they esteem articles of faith. And yet our Saviour, in the words of my text, hath given us a rule, by which we may know what is necessary to be believed : For he commissioned his apostles, to preach the gospel unto every creature, that whosoever believeth," that is, the gospel, " shall be saved." It is the gospel therefore that we must believe, or that doctrine which Jesus Christ himself taught, and the apostles from him preached to the world, and which was in their times put into writing, and is fully contained in the books that we call the new testament. This gospel then is the rule of our faith, and every doctrine there delivered we must believe ; but what is not there delivered, or can be deduced from thence, we are not to believe as an article of faith. This is that rule of faith, which our church, as well as the holy scriptures prescribed ; by which we are not only a true, but a right, and sound church. Indeed, we cannot upon those principles believe the infallibility nor supremacy of the church of Rome, nor transubstantiation, purgatory, invocation of saints, nor twenty other such articles, which that church makes necessary to salvation, and condemns those who deny them for heretics and infidels ; because we find none

of those particulars in the holy scriptures, which most certainly would have been there, did God require our belief of them.

Another reflection I would make is, that the words of our Saviour doth only respect those people to whom the gospel of Christ is preached, and not others. But shall every one be damned that believeth not, when they never heard of the gospel? No; but the meaning of the words is, that those promises of salvation, and threatnings of damnation, which are mentioned in the gospel, do only concern such as have the gospel preached to them, and who have means and opportunities afforded to embrace the one, and avoid the other. Some will then ask, what shall become of those who never had those means and opportunities; are they to be saved or damned? I answer, nothing can be said certain of their case, but they must be left to the uncovenanted mercies of God. The promises of salvation in the gospel, are made only to those who believe in Jesus Christ, and enter into his covenant by baptism. Nor are any in the scripture threatned with damnation, but such as reject the gospel, after it is preached to them, or who dishonour their profession by a wicked life, which is not the case of those we now speak of: However, we are not to determine either way, but to rest assured the judge of all the world will do what is right; and that, at the great day of retribution, God will then vindicate not only his justice and truth, but his goodness and mercy also, to the satisfaction of the whole world.

Lastly, what is here promised to all Christians, and denounced against all unbelievers, was designed by our Saviour to extend to all ages. As those who then believed and were baptized upon the apostles preaching, were put into a condition of salvation, so are all who now enter themselves into the Christian covenant. And as those who continued infidels

and unbelievers when the gospel was preached, were doomed to damnation ; so will all such as now deny or reject that gospel, which is preached unto them. There is the same necessity of believing in Christ now, as then, and the same guilt and punishment in refusing him ; for there is no other name then or now, given unto men by which we can be saved. Let not then any think that baptism, without faith in Christ, and performing whatever he hath commanded, will signify any thing ; for notwithstanding their baptism, whosoever believeth not the gospel, shall be damned.

Would to God all who go by the name of Christians, but in their hearts do not own Christ for their Lord and master, would seriously consider this. Many there are who are baptized, and call themselves by his name, and are present where his worship is celebrated and his sacraments administered, yet if there be any regard to be given to what passes in their conversation, they have no more true belief of christianity, nor real veneration for Jesus Christ, than for Mahomet and his Alcoran : And it is a melancholy consideration, that there should be any such men, in such a country as ours, where the gospel is preached in its native truth and simplicity, without those mixtures of foppery that are to be found in other countries, which might alienate the minds of the wise from it.

But say some, it is against all reason and justice, that a man should be damned for what he cannot help ; that they would believe the gospel if they could, but they cannot for want of evidence. I grant that a man cannot believe what he will, no more than he can love and hate what he knows nothing of. Nor is it pretended any man shall be damned, for not believing what is not in his power ; but only where any thro' their own fault will not believe ; or where they might have believed, had

they been sincere, honest, and virtuous men ; in either case the unbelief of such is the effect of vice, wickedness, and immorality, and for which any such will be accountable, as much as for adultery, murder, or any wilful crime.

By way of application then, I shall earnestly address myself to all such among us, who, however they outwardly profess the Christian religion, and frequent our assemblies, are in their hearts unbelievers. And I beg of such in the name of God, to examine themselves seriously concerning the grounds of their unbelief, and see if they can satisfy their own consciences, that they have done all which serious, prudent, and unbiassed men would do, in a matter of such importance as this is ; wherein no less than their everlasting salvation or damnation is concerned ? For instance ; have you seriously and deliberately considered the Christian religion in all its parts ? Have you acquainted yourselves with all the doctrines of it, how suitable they are to the natural notions of God and religion, and the great tendency they have to make mankind wise and happy ? Have you examined the precepts of the gospel, and observed how much they excel the morality of the best philosophers, and how well adapted to the uses and indigencies of all men, in every state and condition of life ? In a word, how happy would the world be, if all men did sincerely believe the doctrines, and carefully practise the precepts thereof ? Or have you seriously taken into consideration the rich and invaluable promises which this religion makes to mankind, preferable to any other ; such as the forgiveness of all our sins upon true repentance, the assistance of God's grace to enable us to live holy and pure lives, and an eternal, immortal life of glory and happiness in another world ? Even natural religion will teach us, that all these things are worthy of God to promise, and
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that we extremely want the assurance of these things, in order to the making us good; yet no other religion in the world hath assured us of them, but the religion of our blessed Lord. Again,

Have you impartially examined the evidence and proof which Christ gave of his being sent by God to teach all these things to the world, and the little weight there is in any objections against it? Have you looked into the prophecies of the old testament, which for two thousand years foretold a Saviour to be sent to mankind, and carefully observed how exactly they were fulfilled in our Saviour? Have you considered the person of our Lord, and his way of living? How sincere, pious, charitable; how devoted to God's service; how free from all suspicion of being a designing man; and how constant even unto death, in asserting his pretensions? Have you thought of the prodigious miracles that he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine? The voice of God from heaven to testify that he was the Son of God; his resurrection from the dead, and visible ascension into heaven; which things are demonstrations to all mankind, who believe a God and providence, that Jesus Christ was no other than he pretended to be, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Lastly, have you considered, that the same power and virtue which was in Christ, for the doing of all these wonderful works, was also, as he promised, continued to his apostles, and to all the preachers of the gospel for many years afterwards, even till they had converted the world from idolatry, to the belief of Jesus Christ? And that by no other ways or methods, but by the excellency of their doctrine, the holiness of their lives, the wonderful miracles they performed, and their readiness at any time to lay down their lives, for the cause of the christian religion.

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These are some of the many particulars which you ought very well to consider, before you can satisfy yourselves that you have reason to reject the gospel of Christ. But you perhaps say, you have thought of all these things, and yet you are not convinced that you ought to embrace Christ's religion. This one would almost think impossible: But should it be so; then you have no thought of them free from bias and prejudice. Or the objections and dissatisfactions which you have met with about the Christian religion, is not the result of a free and indifferent enquiry; but rather you have learnt them from the discourse of lewd debauched company you converse with. If so, there is no great reason you should insist on them, this not being fair thinking: However, be so ingenious as to examine yourselves a little farther. Are you really concerned for another world; and do you sincerely desire and endeavour to approve yourselves to God as well as you can? If you do, then I am sure you will put in practice all that natural religion teaches about this. For tho' you do not believe in Christ, yet you will then live soberly, virtuously, and pray heartily to God, to direct you in the way that is acceptable to him. Let me therefore ask you; do you every day address the throne of grace for assistance and direction? Do you hate every thing that is apparently evil, and make it your business to be as pious, charitable, and sober, as is possible? Whether you believe in Christ or no, these are the dictates of natural religion; and you must thus live, otherwise you are not qualified for any direction or assistance from God. And whoever thus frames his life, such a man cannot be but a hearty Christian. The truth is, men that are of this temper, who are thus honestly disposed, never fail to believe in Christ at last, tho' they may not at the beginning. All such shall come unto Christ because the Father draweth them. All such, because they endeavour to do God's will

will, shall know of Christ's doctrine, that it is of God; all this our Saviour assures us. But it is not the virtuous, the good, the humble, the modest, the charitable, the piously disposed, that disbelieve christianity, but another sort of men: And I pray God the great reason of this unbelief is not, that the doctrines of the gospel do not suit with those principles of liberty which they have espoused; nor with that course of life they are engaged in; and therefore, since the gospel is against them, they will be against the gospel. But woe be to all such, for of all mortals they are in the most hopeless condition.

“ I pray God convert them from the evil of their
“ ways, that they may understand the things that
“ belong to their peace, before they be hid from
“ their eyes.” And we ought all to join in this prayer not only for their sakes, but for the public. For atheism and irreligion are infinitely mischievous to the nation, as well as to those particular persons, who maintain and promote them. And God grant that all of us, who do heartily believe and embrace the Christian religion, may frame our lives and conversations suitably to it, that so we may not disparage our holy faith, but rather “ adorn the doctrine of
“ God in all things.” This is the true way to obtain happy, peaceful days in this world, and which will infallibly bring us safe to the kingdom of heaven, after this life is ended? which God grant for the sake of his dear Son, our blessed Saviour.

Discourse LXVIII. Mr. Jackson.

On the SACRAMENT of the LORD'S SUPPER.

I Cor. xi. 26.

FOR as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death, till he come.

THE sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, commonly called the Lord's supper, being the principal and most solemn institution of our religion, and the seal of the covenant of grace in Christ's blood, by which we obtain remission of our sins, and the happiness of a future state, is of the greatest importance to be rightly understood, and duly and worthily received by every Christian. I shall therefore endeavour in the following discourse to shew plainly and distinctly, the ground, nature, and meaning of this holy institution; the end for which it was appointed; and the qualifications necessary for the worthy receiving it.

Our blessed Saviour, who came to fulfil all righteousness, both by a perfect obedience to all the precepts and ordinances of the law, and by accomplishing the types and predictions relating to his person; did not only lead a life of sinless innocency and holiness, but was also very punctual in the observance of every positive and ritual institution, which God hath appointed. He strictly observed all the Jewish fasts and festivals of divine appointment, and was always present at the celebra-
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tion of the passover, the great sacramental festival of the Jews ; instituted to be a memorial of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, when God preserved them from the destroying angel ; who whilst he slew the first-born of the Egyptians, passed over them, and was therefore called the pass-over. The paschal lamb, which God commanded to be then slain, and the blood of it that was sprinkled on the posts of their houses, as a token of their preservation from a temporal death, and their long slavery in Egypt, was a type of Christ, the lamb of God, who from the foundation of the world, was appointed to be slain, as a sacrifice for our sins ; and by his blood to redeem all mankind from eternal death, and the spiritual bondage of Satan. Christ therefore, the antitype of the pass-over, took occasion at this solemnity, to accomplish, and put an end to that, and all other sacrifices of the law, by exhibiting the substance of what they were only the shadow ; and representing by the elements of bread broken, and wine poured out, the sacrifice of his own body and blood, which was immediately to be offered for the sins of the world ; and appointed that this, as the memorial thereof, should be continued thro' all ages. The sacrifice of the paschal lamb, which commemorated the temporal deliverance of the Jewish nation only, was now to cease ; and the sacrifice of the lamb of God, by which eternal redemption was purchased for all men, was to be celebrated in its stead.

From the manner of celebrating the Jewish pass-over, we may easily understand our Lord's meaning, as to what he did, and said, when he instituted the holy sacrament of his own death. When the paschal supper was ended, he, after the custom of the Jews, (who at the passover offered bread and wine, in the way of thanksgiving for the blessings

of the year) “ took bread, and blessed it, and brake
 “ it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take,
 “ eat, this is my body given, [or broken] for you ;
 “ and he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave
 “ it to them, saying, drink ye all of it : for this is
 “ my blood of the new testament, which is shed
 “ for many, for the remission of sins.” Which
 words, tho’ figurative, are sufficiently clear and
 plain, being agreeable to the customary way of
 speaking among the Jews, and so could not be mis-
 understood by our Lord’s disciples. The true
 meaning of the words is, that he took bread and
 blessed it ; he did not change the substance, or alter
 the nature of it, but only gave thanks to God, or
 blessed God for it ; and thus both St. Luke and
 St. Paul express it. Indeed, it should have been
 rendered, he gave thanks, when speaking of the
 bread, as well as of the cup.---He added, this is my
 body, and of the cup he said, this is my blood ;
 or, this bread, and the wine in this cup, are the re-
 presentation and memorial of my body and blood.
 By this action then, our Lord signified to his dis-
 ciples, that the breaking and eating of bread, and
 the pouring forth and drinking of wine, should be
 as a sign, token, or memorial of his body which
 was crucified, and of his blood, which was shed on
 the cross ; in like manner, as pouring out the blood,
 and eating the flesh of a lamb, had represented and
 preserved the memory of the paschal lamb slain in
 Egypt, when their nation was delivered from the
 captivity of that land.

That this is the true signification of our Lord’s
 words, will appear from the customary phrase of
 scripture, with which the apostles were well ac-
 quainted. Thus the paschal lamb is expressly called
 the Lord’s passover, even before God had passed
 over the Israelites, and slain the first-born of the
 Egyptians ; and therefore that sacrifice could not

be understood to express the Lord's passover, as literally, really, and actually commenced, but only to be the representation and sign of what was soon to happen. It was a token, that God would pass over them, and smite the Egyptians. And thus, when Christ calls the bread and cup his body and blood, as being then broken and shed, he could not be understood to mean, that they were really the substance of his body and blood, then actually sacrificed, (for he was then alive;) but only that they were instituted to represent before-hand, and to all future ages, his body and blood, which were ready to be made a sacrifice for sin. Agreeably also to our Lord's way of speaking, concerning his body and blood, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, was in all generations, after its institution, called the Lord's passover; as being the memorial of that event, which was literally, and actually, passed long before. And when the Jews, eating of the paschal lamb, were said to eat of the body of the passover; or, when eating of the unleavened bread, they said, "this is the bread of affliction, which our fathers did eat in the land of Egypt;" they meant not, that the one was the substance of that very paschal lamb, and the other of that very unleavened bread, which their fathers had eaten in Egypt; but only that they were the memorials of them. Justin Martyr tells us, that the ancient form of the passover, used by the Jews in Ezra's time, was, "this passover is our favour, and our refuge:" by which they could not mean, that the paschal lamb was literally their favour, who delivered them out of Egypt, but only was a figure and representation of that salvation and deliverance, which God wrought for them, when he instituted this sacrifice as a memorial of it.

So that our Saviour, when he said, "this is my body, and this is my blood," spake according to
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the usual well known stile of scripture, and intended to signify thereby, that the bread and wine were the representation and memorial of his body and blood ; but not that those creatures were the very thing, which they only represented. Thus the “ three branches, and the three baskets, are three days ; the seven fat cows, are seven years ; the ram with the two horns, is the kings of Media and Persia ; Sarah and Hagar, are the two covenants ; the seven stars, are the angels of the seven churches.” All which and other like expressions, no one ever understood literally, but only in a figurative sense. And in vulgar speech, nothing is more common, than to call the representation or figure of a thing, by the name of the thing itself. Thus we say, this is my father, or, this is the king, when we are speaking of, or pointing to the picture or image of them. Hence it appears, from the natural idioms and use of language, particularly of the holy scriptures, that the proper, literal, and only true sense of our Lord's words in the institution of this sacrament, is, that the bread and wine are the type, figure, image or representation, of his body and blood commemorated by them.

Had the apostles understood our Lord to mean, that the bread and wine were really the very substance of his body and blood, they would no doubt have immediately murmured, and been offended, (as many of his disciples had been before, at some expressions of a similar nature) at the absurd and shocking nature of this doctrine ; and at least have asked, as the Jews before did, “ how can he give us his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink ? ” how absurd would it have been, for them to suppose they did eat his body broken, and his blood shed, when their senses assured them, his body was whole and entire, and that his blood ran in his veins ; or, could they have believed so great an absurdity ? Yet, how shocking

shocking must it have been to them, who were Jews, to drink blood, against the express command of their law, much more to drink human blood, even the blood of their Lord and master? This is an opinion so horrid and unreasonable, that they must have been startled at the thoughts of it; and would at least have desired him to explain his words, had they imagined there was any difficulty in them. But it does not appear, that they were at all surprized at what he said; and therefore no doubt understood him to mean, that the sacramental bread and wine were by him appointed to be a memorial of his body and blood, in the same manner, as the paschal lamb, which they had just been eating, was of the Lord's passover; and that in this sense only he called them his body and blood: and which was agreeable to the common use of such phrases, and the plain reason and nature of the thing itself. And indeed, had the phrase been unusual, or liable to be misunderstood, yet our Lord removed all apprehension of their supposing him to mean, that the bread and wine were his real body and blood, by expressly styling the wine, after he had called it his blood, the fruit of the vine; which it could not be, if it was changed or transubstantiated into his real blood. To enumerate the absurdities and contradictions, both to sense and reason, which attend the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, would fill a volume; I shall therefore only make a few observations on these words; and then proceed to the other heads of this discourse.—If the bread and wine had been changed into Christ's real body and blood, then, when he said, "this is my body, and "this is my blood," he must have held his whole body and blood, and his hand also, in his hand. And his body must have been broken, and his blood shed, which he held in his hand, at the very time that the same body was not broken, and the same

blood not shed, but whilst both were whole and entire in their living substance : to suppose which is infinitely absurd. Again, our Lord would not have said, this is my body which is broken, and my blood which is shed, had he meant his real body and blood ; because they were not then actually broken and shed, but were to be so afterwards : but it was true and proper to say this, if he meant by his body and blood, the memorial and representation of them, they being then sacrificed in a typical and representative manner. The truth is, Christ instituted the sacramental eating and drinking of his body and blood, to be in memory of his sufferings, “do this in remembrance of me ;” but if his real body and blood are offered up in the sacrament, it cannot properly be said to be in remembrance of them, the thing remembered being always supposed absent, and not present : it is therefore very absurd to suppose, that the very substance of Christ's body and blood, which are remembered in the sacrament to have been sacrificed, is really present, and actually sacrificed in it. Besides,

The eating of blood was not only against the express letter of the law of Moses, but even the apostles by the direction of the Holy Spirit, obliged christians to abstain from it : which surely they would not have done, had they believed, that by Christ's own appointment, they constantly drank in the sacrament the very blood of their Saviour. And had they taught such a doctrine, it would have justly rendered the christian religion abominable to both Jews and Gentiles ; as commanding a rite more barbarous and absurd, than was ever believed or practised amongst the heathens. Nor is there any thing at this day, which makes christianity so much laughed at, and contemned by Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels, as the Romish doctrine of sacrificing and eating the real body and blood of their

their God and Saviour. The doctrine of transubstantiation is so repugnant both to sense and reason, so horrid and shocking in its nature, that as the judicious Hooker well observed, it is a millstone hung upon the neck of popery, which may one time or other sink it. I proceed to consider,

The ends for which this sacrament was appointed; and they are these: to be a fœderal rite or sign, of the covenant between God and man by Christ; a solemn memorial of our Saviour's death and passion; and a token of the communion of Christians with Christ, and of their union with each other.

As to the first, The ancient custom of making leagues and covenants was by sacrifices, and they were ratified in the blood of the victim. Thus the "first covenant that God made with the Jews, " was dedicated with blood. For Moses took of " the blood, (of the sacrifices) and sprinkled it " upon the people, and said, behold the blood of " the covenant, which the Lord hath made with " you." Thus also the second and better covenant, of which Christ is the mediator, was established and consecrated in his blood; and is expressly called the " blood of the covenant, where- " with we are sanctified." And as in the " first " and old covenant, without shedding of blood, " there was no remission of sins;" so in the second and new covenant, it was necessary for Christ to die, that by " his blood he might obtain eternal " redemption for us." It is by virtue of his sufferings and death, that God hath entered into covenant with us, and engaged himself to pardon our transgressions, and to " remember our sins and " iniquities no more." And as the blood of Christ was of infinitely greater value, than the blood of bulls, by which the first covenant was ratified; so the second covenant established by his blood,

is founded on better promises, wherein God hath granted us remission of sins here, and given us assurances of an eternal inheritance hereafter; which was what the law neither declared nor promised. It therefore plainly appears, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was instituted to be a fœderal rite and token of the new covenant, which God made with us, in the blood of Christ as our mediator; whereby God hath engaged for his sake, upon the performance of the conditions required on our part, to be merciful to our sins, to receive us into his favour, and to confer on us the happiness of eternal life.

A second end of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is to be a memorial of Christ's death and sufferings. Our Lord commanded his disciples to receive it in "remembrance of him. And St. Paul says, that as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death, till he come." If then the Lord's supper was appointed, to be a commemoration of the death of Christ, until his coming again to judgment; it plainly follows, that the obligation, which all Christians are under to receive it, is perpetual, and binds them to the end of the world. Whenever, therefore, we come to the Lord's table, to partake of the sacramental bread and wine, we must not imagine we are at a common table, to eat and drink the ordinary food of life; but we must consider, that we are performing a most solemn part of religion; that it is the supper of the lamb of God, to which we are invited; and that the bread and wine are consecrated to such holy excellent ends and uses, that even the angels themselves desire to partake thereof. We must then, with holy and pious affections, with thankful hearts, stedfast faith, and unfeigned charity, remember that these material elements,

elements, simple and mean as they appear, represent to us the greatest benefits and blessings, that were ever vouchsafed to mankind. We must remember, that they are the memorial of the death of Christ, our Saviour, whose body was broken, and blood shed on the cross for our sins; and by which God hath entered into a gracious covenant of peace with us, and promised to be a merciful father to us, and to make us the children of his love, and heirs of his glory; and that the receiving these elements is the legacy, or dying charge left us by our Lord, that by them we should continue the remembrance of his death, which he suffered for our sakes, and of the inestimable benefits which we obtain thereby.

The bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are also a token of our communion with Christ, and of our union with one another, "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." By which is meant, either, that in this sacrament, we communicate or partake of the body and blood of Christ, by partaking of the eucharistical bread and cup, which are the memorials of them; or else, that by this sacramental rite, we profess to hold communion with Christ, and own him for our Lord and Saviour, whose blood was shed, and body broken for us, either of which senses may safely be admitted; and by breaking and distributing one loaf amongst the communicants, is represented our being united in one body, and members of that one body, the church, of which Christ is the head. It is a token of our spiritual union, whereby in the most solemn manner, we profess obedience to our Lord and master, one faith in his

blood, and one hope of eternal salvation ; and we are thence more strongly engaged to be of one heart and mind, and to testify all that charity, love and affection to each other, which so sacred an institution of religion, cannot but require. I proceed,

In the last place to shew, what qualifications are necessary to the worthy receiving this sacrament ; and these are, “ to examine whether we repent us
 “ truly of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to
 “ lead a new life ; to have a lively faith in God’s
 “ mercy thro’ Christ, with a thankful remembrance
 “ of his death ; and to be in charity with all men.” This is the whole duty required of every Christian, to the worthy participation of this sacrament, all which St. Paul comprehends under the general head of “ examination ; Let a man examine himself,
 “ and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of
 “ that cup.” That is, let him search and examine his own heart and conscience, whether he hath a due conception of and reverence for this holy institution ; and rightly considers, that what he eats and drinks at the Lord’s table, is not common food, but the mysterious representation and memorial of Christ’s body and blood, sacrificed for us ; also whether he receives them in token of the love of Christ dying for us, and is heartily sorry, and sincerely penitent for all his sins. Lastly, whether he hath so deep a sense of that divine love and charity, which our Lord by his death shewed to the souls of men, as to imitate his example in doing good, to be charitably affected towards his fellow Christians, and do all kind and good offices to the souls and bodies of men. If on an impartial reflection, he finds himself possessed of such religious sentiments and holy dispositions, he may “ then eat of that
 “ bread, and drink of that cup,” and hope to receive all the benefits of Christ’s death and passion,
 which

which are exhibited by them, and will be conferred on all worthy partakers. But if not; or if he has contrary thoughts and dispositions; if being disregarding of the end and uses of this holy sacrament, he esteems the receiving it, to be an indifferent ceremony; if he retains no grateful remembrance of Christ's sufferings for our sins, and is not careful to conform his life and actions to our Lord's example and precepts: if he does not bewail all sinful neglects of duty, and wilful practice of vice and wickedness; if he bears any malice, or ill will towards his neighbours, or inclination to return injuries done to him; then, as the apostle adds, "he eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning, or regarding the design and benefits of Christ's death, represented in this sacrament;" and is also guilty of a violation and contempt, "of the body and blood of Christ," thereby commemorated; and renders himself liable to condemnation.

Certainly did men seriously consider this sacramental ordinance, nothing could tend more to excite in them all those holy dispositions, which are requisite to make them worthy partakers. For, what can affect us with a deeper sense of the heinous nature and guilt of sin, or be a more powerful motive for us to repent of and forsake it, than the remembrance, that it caused the Son of God, to empty himself of his divine glory, and heavenly happiness, which he had with God before the world was, and to humble himself in our nature, and to die an ignominious, painful death on the cross, to atone for our sins? What can more strongly engage our gratitude and thankfulness, than the continued memorial of so great a benefit? What can give greater assurance to our faith, that God is merciful and propitious to us, than the frequent receiving of the sacramental elements, which are the signs and seals of that covenant, wherein

God hath promised to be “merciful to our un-
 “righteousness, and to remember our sins and ini-
 “quities no more.” Lastly, what can lay on us
 higher obligations to mutual love benevolence and
 charity, than the consideration of our Saviour’s
 transcendent love, set before us in the symbols of
 his death and passion, which he freely endured, that
 he might reconcile us to God’s favour, and unite
 us in the firmest bands of love and amity with each
 other. “For if God so loved us, as to send his
 “only begotten Son into the world, to die for us ;
 “we ought also to love one another ; and to be
 “kind, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even
 “as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.”
 And if it seems unnatural, for brethren according
 to the flesh, who are members of the same family,
 to live in variance and discord with each other ; it
 must be more highly criminal and indecent, for
 those who are members of the one mystical body
 of Christ, and nearer allied in one spiritual fraterni-
 ty ; who eat and drink at one common table of
 the Lord, and are fed and nourished together, with
 one bread of eternal life, to entertain any en-
 mity, or be divided and alienated in their affections
 from one another. The love which Christians owe
 to each other, is so necessary a duty, that it is made
 the condition of their obtaining the love and mer-
 cy of God ; and the obligation is so inseparable
 from the Christian profession, as to be the very
 mark and token of our being true disciples of
 Christ ; for by this, says our Saviour, “shall all
 “men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have
 “love one to another.”

To conclude ; let every one come to the holy
 communion of the body and blood of Christ, with
 all those pious and christian affections before-men-
 tioned, and which are required of every worthy com-
 munion ; and in the performance of this most sacred
 office

office of religion, let him give most humble and
“ hearty thanks to God the Father, for the redemp-
“ tion of the world, by the death and passion of
“ our Saviour Christ, both God and man. Let
“ him truly repent for his sins past ; have a lively
“ and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour ; amend
“ his life, and be in charity with all men ;”
(as our church most excellently exhorts us) “ so
“ shall he be a meet partaker of these holy my-
“ steries.”

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