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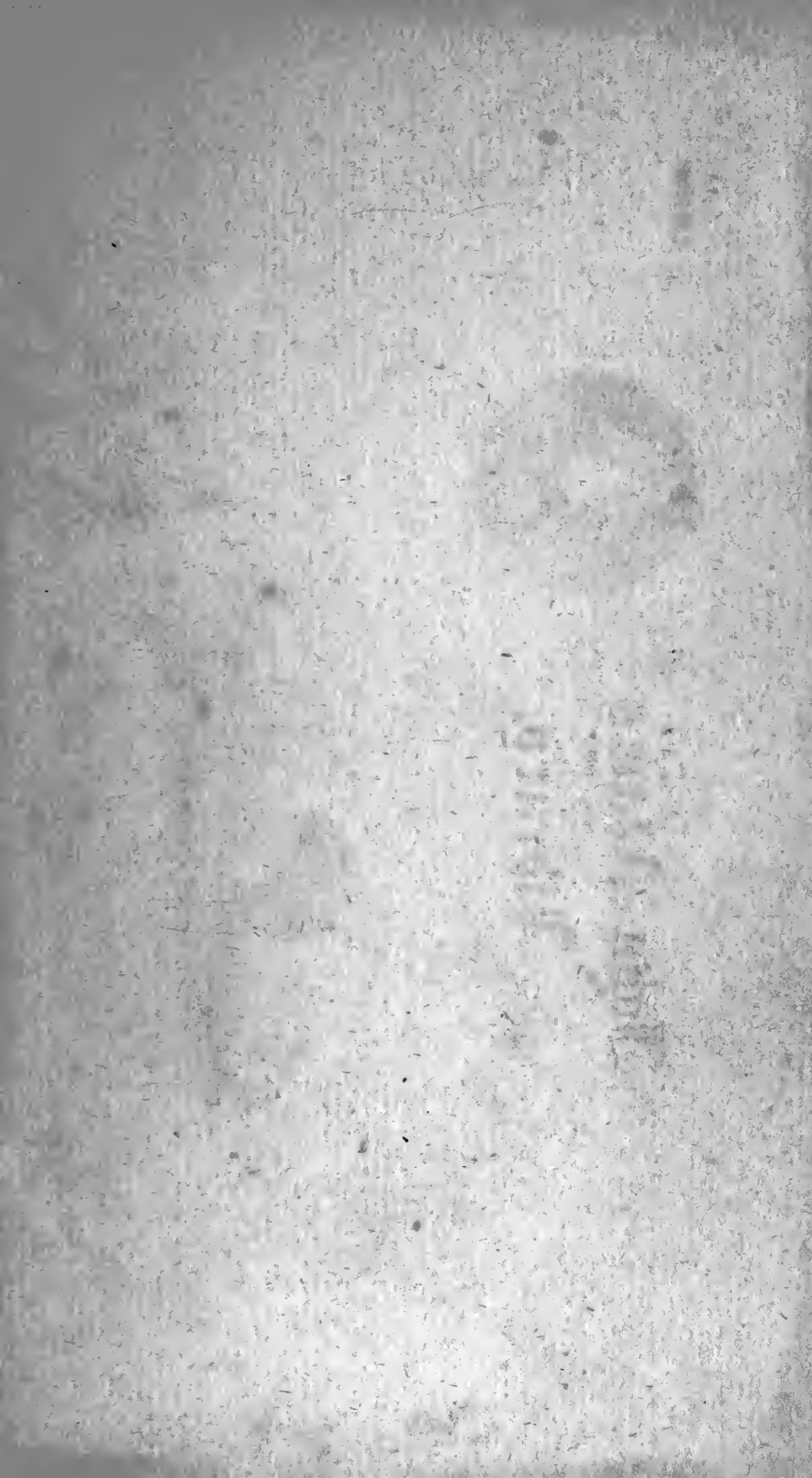
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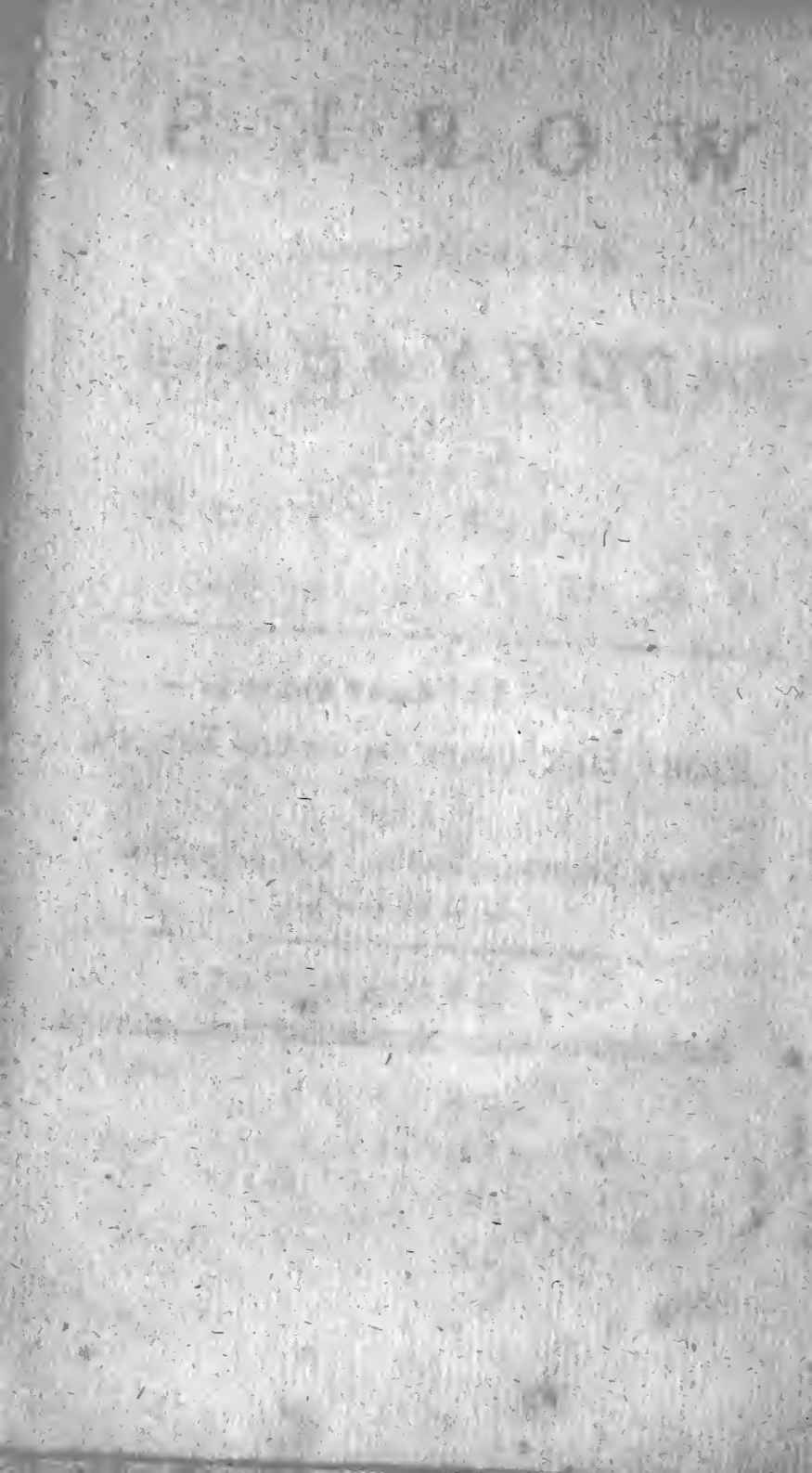
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T H E
W O R K S

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. *JOHN SHARP,*

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *YORK.*

V O L. V. CONTAINING,
EIGHT DISCOURSES on Several Subjects,
W I T H
FOUR SERMONS on the I M I T A T I O N of
C H R I S T.

The T H I R D E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N :

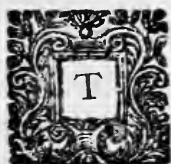
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J. RIVINGTON. M.DCC.LIV.

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THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

(Prefix'd to the first Edition of Vol. 5, and 6.)



THE First volume of archbishop Sharp's sermons was published by himself, being a collection of such as he had printed upon several occasions before the year 1698.

The Second volume was published by his bookseller after his death, and takes in the remainder of his sermons, which were printed in his lifetime, and his two discourses upon conscience, which were formerly publish'd without a name, and make part of the collection of London cases.

And those two volumes contain all that he himself had suffered at any time to go abroad into the world.

But his executors were a little more liberal of his productions; and in 1717, they added to the collections made by himself, and then by his bookseller, as above-mentioned, two volumes more, consisting of sermons never before printed. But this step nevertheless was taken by them with due caution, and after advice had with some judicious prelates, who had read them after they were transcribed, and confirmed the resolution of making them public.

And now, after several years elapsed, two volumes more have pass'd the press, being the last addition that will be made to the collection of his works, save a small reserve of discourses in the popish controversy, which may possibly, some time or other, be published with other of his papers relating to that controversy, and penn'd likewise in those times.

The first and principal design of transcribing these, which are now printed, from the original manuscripts in short-hand, (for all his sermons
were

to the READER.

were wrote in characters) was to preserve and rescue them from the danger they were in of being irretrievably lost, by being buried in the cypher, if not extracted thence, and brought to light by one who was perfectly well acquainted with the characters he used, and with his peculiar manner of expressing and compounding them. The transcript was begun some years since, and proceeded very leisurely, and with several interruptions, under the uncertain view of whether it should ever be made public or no, till the year 1730, when the greatest part of it was finished, perused and approved by competent judges, and at length prepared for publication.

The reader therefore may be assur'd (and it is chiefly for his satisfaction in this matter that this advertisement is prefixed to the edition) that these are the genuine works of the author, to whom the title page ascribes them; and that they are not rashly obtruded upon the world, as posthumous works too often are, but offered after mature deliberation, and under a real conviction of their being as perfect in their kind as any wherewith this last age hath been presented.

Indeed, the bare avouching them to be genuine, supersedes any further recommendation of
A 3
them.

them. Both the character and writings of the archbishop have been generally so well esteemed, that they stand in no need of the suffrage of the publisher, but will be able to support themselves (even in an age by no means favourable to good men and good books) so long as truth can stand her ground, and sound reasoning with perspicuity shall be accounted the chief character of perfection in writing, especially upon divine and moral subjects.

Most of the treatises in this first volume are compounded, some of two, some of three sermons, joined together in the form of continued discourses, which will account for the length of several of them, as it also gave occasion to entitle them discourses rather than sermons. The design of this disposition was to preserve the chain of reasoning upon each subject entire and uninterrupted, without those recapitulations, which, tho' necessary indeed under their division into distinct sermons, in order to accommodate them to the pulpit, yet are altogether unnecessary to be retain'd for the perusal of the reader, who would rather be incommoded than relieved by such unseasonable breaks in the body of a just discourse. But however no more liberty was taken with them, than would barely answer this end
of

of convenience, by omitting the introduction or preambles to the subsequent sermons, when more than one were form'd upon the same text. And because the same liberty could not be so well taken with the four last sermons in this volume, which are all likewise upon one text, therefore they are published intire, as they were found in the copies.

The other volume consists wholly of single sermons, publish'd verbatim as they were preached, at least without any design'd omission or alteration. Most of them had been deliver'd at court, before their late majesties king William, queen Mary, and queen Anne, as the dates prefix'd to them will shew. And several of them were the sermons which he usually preach'd in his diocese, and elsewhere, in the latter part of his life, as being best calculated, in his own opinion, (so it may be justly presum'd) for doing good to mankind, and the discharge of his own duty, as a minister of the gospel.

Could these sheets have carried any impression of that energy and zeal with which the living author of these discourses address'd them to his auditors, and to which they owed no small share of that beauty and influence which they
once

once had from his own mouth, they would have been more welcome and more valuable to the reader. One excellence indeed they cannot be depriv'd of, which, in some measure, will supply the want of those external and additional graces that accompanied and adorned them in the pulpit, viz. that spirit of piety which yet enlivens and breathes through them all, and demonstrates them to be the real issues of his heart, and the very dictates of his soul, by such marks of evidence as are easy to be discover'd, tho' difficult to be describ'd, and impossible to be counterfeited.





CONTENTS

OF THE

FIFTH VOLUME.

DISCOURSE I. Page 1.

CONCERNING the witness of the Spirit.

ROM. viii. 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

DISC. II. p. 18.

Concerning the advocateship of the Holy Spirit, and the proper distinctions between that, and the advocateship of our Saviour.

Deliver'd in three sermons, on this text,

JOHN xiv. 16. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

DISC.

DISC. III. p. 49.

Of grieving the Spirit. Of the sealing of the Spirit. Of the different notions of redemption in holy scripture.

Deliver'd in two sermons on this text,

EPH. iv. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.*

DISC. IV. p. 80.

Of the various callings in life: and the inferences from thence. That christianity makes no change in human callings, or in the civil relations of life: and the inferences from thence. Of the requisites of a lawful calling, and how it is to be distinguish'd from one that is unlawful. Of gaming.

Deliver'd in two sermons, on this text,

I COR. vii. 17. *But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk: And so ordain I in all the churches.*

DISC. V. p. 109.

Of diligence and watchfulness in our christian calling. How our time is to be spent, and our leisure improv'd, to useful purposes: And particularly what wisdom and prudence christians are to use in evil and dangerous times.

Deliver'd in two sermons, on this text,

EPHES. v. 15, 16. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

DISC. VI. p. 145.

The danger of cloaking or dissembling our sins.
Confession of sins necessary to repentance. What sort of confession that must be.

Deliver'd in two sermons, on this text,

PROV. xxviii. 13. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.*

DISC. VII. p. 171.

The efficacy of believing, to salvation. Against infidelity.

Deliver'd in two sermons, on this text,

MARK xvi. 16. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: But he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

DISC. VIII. p. 196.

Of Conformity to the customs and ways of the world,
How far allowable, and how far not.

Deliver'd in two sermons, on this text,

ROM. xii. 2. *Be not conformed to this world.*

The four sermons on the imitation of Christ contain
as follow; viz.

S E R M. I. p. 222.

Our obligations to live as Christ lived.

On this text,

I PET. ii. 21. Latter part.—*Leaving us an example,
that ye should follow his steps.*

S E R M. II. p. 243.

A casuistical discourse on the same text.

S E R M. III. p. 263.

Of Christ's piety, diligence, and charity.

S E R M. IV. p. 280.

Of Christ's humility, and meekness, and acknowledg-
ing God in his actions.



DISCOURSE I.

Concerning the Witness of the Spirit.

ROM. VIII. 16.

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



HIS passage is something difficult, and commonly not rightly understood. For the clearing of which there are four things to be done :

- I. To shew what is meant by the Spirit.
- II. What is meant by the children of God.
- III. What is meant by the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit.
- IV. How, or in what sense the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

The three first of these points are pretty obvious, so that I need spend no time in insisting on them.

1st, By the Spirit here is undoubtedly meant that Holy Spirit which our Lord promised he would send upon his disciples, after he was ascended into heaven; and which accordingly came upon them on the day of Pentecost, and which from thenceforward was to continue with the church to the end of the world. This Spirit is here in the text called the Spirit *itself*, to represent him as a person, because in the verse before the apostle had used this word spirit in another sense, viz. for a state and dispensation. *Ye have not, says he, received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15.* That is, ye are not now in the Jewish dispensation, which is a dispensation of servants, wherein ye are left to your natural fears; but ye are in the dispensation of sons: Ye may now call *God Father*; for the Spirit *itself* (as he goes on), that Spirit who hath the principal agency and management of this new dispensation, *bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*

But, 2dly, What is meant by being the children of God? To this I answer, that to be a child of God, in the scripture-phrase, is to be an heir of immortality; or to be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven: That is to say, either in actual possession of it, or in right and title to it. Thus our Saviour tells us, *Luke xx. 35, 36. That they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that future world and the resurrection from the dead, can die no more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* And thus our Saviour himself was stiled *God's Son*, as upon other accounts, so also upon this, that God begot him from the dead, and exalted him to an immortal glorious life in heaven. *Thou art my*
Son

Son (saith God) *this day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7. Which passage the apostle applies to our Saviour's resurrection, Acts xiii. 33. And it is with this respect that St. John speaks—*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. So that to be a son or a child of God, and to have a right and title to eternal life, is the very same thing. As also sufficiently appears from the next words that follow after my text, *If we be children, then are we heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*, Rom. viii. 17.

But, 3dly, What is meant by this expression of the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit? Is it meant that the Holy Spirit doth, by his secret inspirations, his inward suggestions to the minds of good men, possess them with an opinion, or, if you will, with an assurance, that they are the children of God, and that they shall certainly go to heaven, without giving them any reason for it. Thus indeed it is commonly taken. But I can by no means think that this is the meaning of the words. I conceive that which the apostle here meant, is this; *that the Holy Spirit by the visible sensible operations which he wrought in, and amongst christians, gave an assured proof and testimony to their minds, that God owned them for his people, and as such would glorify them with his Son Jesus at the last day*. That I take to be the meaning of the expression. But now what these operations were, or in what way the Spirit did, or doth witness with our spirit, is my

4th Inquiry; which I shall dwell longer upon.—
And here it is fit we should take notice, that there is a

twofold witness or testimony of the Spirit to our being the children of God: The one, general and public, respecting the whole church, or the whole body of those who profess the christian faith, in opposition to all unbelievers; the other, particular and private, and only respecting single persons. Both these ways, I say, doth the Spirit witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And to both these ways, it is probable, the apostle had respect in this text.

I. I begin with the public witness. First of all, I say, the Spirit gave an undeniable proof to christians, that they were the children of God, by the public testimony he gave to the truth of the promises of the gospel; in descending upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and enabling them to speak all languages, to cure all diseases, to cast out devils, to raise the dead, to foretel things to come, and to work all sorts of miracles, for the confirmation of the christian faith: And, which ought to be particularly taken notice of, when he gave them a power likewise to transfer these gifts and powers upon others, even as many as they should lay their hands upon them; so that not only the apostles, but a great number of other believers, in all places, were able to work miracles, for the attestation of the truth of Christ's doctrine.

Here now was as plain a testimony of the Holy Spirit to the minds of all christians, that they were the children of God, that they had the true religion among them, that they, in opposition both to Jews and Pagans, were God's peculiar people, and that he would at the last day, when this world should have an end, own them as such, and reward them with everlasting life, as our Saviour had promised them.—I say, here was as effectual a witness of the Spirit to the truth

truth of all this, as was possible to be given. It was both a witness to themselves, and to all the world: A witness to their own minds and spirits, for their infinite comfort under all their present distresses, and for their encouragement, to persevere stedfastly in the christian religion, whatever trials they should be called out unto: A witness also to the unbelieving world, for their confusion, if they did not quit their infidelity, and enter themselves into this family of God, this society of christians, to whom the promises of adoption and eternal life were made over.

But it will be said, how doth this witness of the Spirit concern us who live at this day, and see none of those extraordinary miraculous effects of the Holy Ghost? How is this a testimony to our spirits, that we are the children of God? I answer, it is the same witness and testimony of the Holy Spirit with our spirits, that it was when St. Paul wrote this epistle. We do not, indeed, see now those visible effects and operations of the Holy Spirit, for the convincing us of the truth of Christ's promises, that were then to be seen; but the reason is, because there is no need of it: for if that was a good witness to the minds of christians then, it is still a good witness to us now. If they, from what they saw, might reasonably be convinced that the christian religion was the way to heaven; we, from what we read of those things, and the certainty we have of the truth of them (in all the ways that a thing done long ago may be made certain to us) we say, we have the same reason to be convinced that christianity is the way to heaven still.

If it be said, that evidence of sense is of greater force than evidence of report, let it come from what hands it will; I answer I grant it to be so: But yet

what we want of the Spirit's witness, by reason of our not being present when those things were done, is abundantly made up by the Spirit's witness in our days, to the truth of Christ's promises, which they who lived then, had not the benefit of. As for instance, the fulfilling of our Saviour's promises, time after time; the strange success and speedy propagation of Christ's religion throughout the world; the miraculous preservation of it in the world; the destruction of the devil's empire, where ever the christian faith got footing; with a great many other things, not now seasonable to be insisted on; so that, taking these things together, the fulness of the evidence we have for the truth of the matters of fact, wrought by the Spirit in the ancient times for the confirmation of Christ's doctrine, and the new arguments that the same Spirit hath given us since; we, at this day, have as much reason to say with St. Paul, as any in those days had, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*: That we christians, in contradistinction to men of all other religions, are the very people of God, and heirs of eternal life, if we do not forfeit our title to it by a loose and wicked life.

Two or three practical inferences I desire to draw from this point, before I proceed any further.

I. It ought to be matter of unspeakable comfort and rejoicings to us, that we have such an infallible witness as the Spirit of God, to bear testimony to our minds, that we are in a right and sure way to eternal happiness: that we wander not in the dark, uncertain what course to steer, and uncertain what will become of us hereafter: (as they who are without Christ, must needs be) but have all the assurance that honest men need, or wise men can reasonably desire; that by believing

believing and practising our religion we shall undoubtedly arrive at immortality. O what a lively sense ought we to have of this inestimable blessing! How deeply ought we to be affected with it! How heartily ought we to praise God for it! We should never in our devotions leave this unmentioned. We should perpetually acknowledge in the most grateful manner, the infinite obligations that God hath put upon us, in disposing us into so happy a country as this of ours is, where we have the privileges of a christian education, and enjoy so plentifully the certain means of obtaining eternal glory.

2. The Spirit's bearing witness to our minds thus effectually, that we are the children of God, should be an argument to us above all others, that we should never depart from our christian profession; but that we should hold it to our lives end, without wavering; nay, and be zealous for it: For where can we have eternal life but in the faith of Jesus Christ? And to what people in the world hath the Holy Spirit set his seal that they are God's people, but to the society of the christian church? This consideration should inspire us all with an invincible resolution to maintain our faith against all opposition; it should fortify our minds against all the scoffs and railleries we can meet with from profane, atheistical men, in the profession of it. It should comfort and relieve us under all the difficulties, or hard circumstances, that we can be exposed to upon the account thereof. And lastly, It should animate us with such a constancy, in adhering to this faith, that we should rather chuse to quit our lives, than to depart from it.

3. We are always to remember, that when the Spirit gave his witness to the christians that they were the children of God, it was to the christians, as professing

the true faith of Christ: to the christians, as professing that faith which was delivered by our Lord Jesus, and preached by his apostles to the world, and afterwards by the same apostles, or apostolical men, put into writing, and conveyed down to us in the scriptures of the New-testament: And therefore it infinitely concerns us to hold stedfastly that faith which Christ thus deliver'd, and the apostles preach'd, and the scriptures contain, (as, God be thank'd, That and no other, is the faith which our church holds forth) and by no means to add to it, or detract from it. So long as we believe and profess christianity, as it was taught in the apostolical times, so long we are sure the Spirit beareth witness to us, that we are the children of God. But if we take up, or receive any other faith, from whatsoever quarter, or under whatsoever specious name it comes recommended; any faith that is contradictory to, or inconsistent with that of the first ages; any faith that may be called another from that which is scriptural, and was *once delivered to the saints*, Jude v. 3. then we can no longer warrant that the Spirit of God shall bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

4. But lastly, Though it be here said of all christians in general, that the Spirit bears witness to them that they are the children of God, yet it is to be remembered that no benefit will hereby accrue to any particular person that professeth christianity, if he does not lead his life according to the precepts of it. And therefore it mightily concerns us all, to adorn our profession by a holy life: To take care *lest that a promise being made unto us of entering into God's rest, we should fall short thereof*, (Heb. iv. 1.) thro' a careless, sensual ungodly life. It is true that all men are by baptism made

made the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life : But yet, no man shall actually inherit that everlasting life, but he, who *through the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the body*, Rom. viii. 13. and *lives righteously, soberly and godly in this world*, Tit. ii. 12. If it be said, how can this be, that any of those to whom the Spirit witnesseth that they are the children of God should prove the children of the devil? The answer is easy; that whatever they may prove in the event, yet by their christianity they are the children of God, and have a right and title to the inheritance of christians: But if they depart from the rules of their religion, they forfeit that right, and they cancel that title by their wickedness and folly. They are just in the case of disobedient, incorrigible children, who were born heirs to a good estate; but through their manifold miscarriages and undutifulness have so provoked their parent, that he at last thinks fit to disinherit them, and cut them off from that which nature and his fatherly kindness first designed them to.

Thus far I have pursued the first notion I gave of the witness of the Spirit, that which is general and public, and concerns the whole body of christians; and it is in this sense that some of the most learned expositors do understand this text. But yet for all that, upon a more strict consideration of the apostle's design in this chapter, and of what goes before, and what follows after my text; I am very inclinable to think that St. Paul in these words does more principally intend (or at least that he hath a particular respect unto) that latter notion I gave of the witness of the Spirit: I mean, that private testimony which the Holy Spirit of God gives to the minds of particular christians, that they are in the favour of God, and shall be rewarded with our Lord Jesus at the last day. He doth not exclude the public miraculous

testimony which the Holy Spirit in those days gave to the christian cause; but he seems to take in also another testimony of the Spirit, by which every christian then might, and all christians, to the end of the world, may, conclude that they in particular were and are the elect of God, and shall certainly one day be glorified with our Lord Jesus Christ. This is that which I called the private witness of the Spirit, and which only concerns particular persons; and of this I come now to treat in the second place.

II. If it be asked, what this private witness of the Spirit is, to the minds of particular persons, that they are the children of God, or wherein it doth consist? I answer very briefly, as far as we can gather from the apostle's discourse, both in this place, and in others of his epistles, it consists in this, viz. In the Holy Ghost's dwelling in the hearts of particular christians, and enabling them to mortify their lusts, and to lead an holy life, in all sobriety, righteousness and godliness. Now this indwelling of the Spirit, and these fruits thereof, where-ever they are found, are to those that have them a seal of the Spirit of God upon their souls, *whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption*, as the apostle expresses it, *Eph. iv. 30.* They are *an earnest*, or *a pledge* of their future happiness, as the same apostle in other places calls them, *2 Cor. i. 22.* *2 Cor. v. 5.* *Ephes. i. 13, 14.* Lastly, they are a testimony or evidence to their spirits, that they are the true sons of God, and shall be glorified with Jesus Christ in another world; which is the tenour of his expression in my text.

Now, that this is the true meaning of the Spirit's witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God, so far as that witness concerns particular persons,

sons, will appear evidently from what goes before in this chapter. The main design that the apostle is pursuing, is, to encourage and animate the christians of his time, against the sufferings and persecutions they were likely to meet with in this world, upon account of their religion; and this he doth chiefly from the consideration of the great rewards that were laid up for them in the other world. And to this purpose he tells them in the tenth verse, *If Christ be in you, the body is indeed dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness*, Rom. viii. 10. That is, your body is indeed obnoxious to all sorts of outward calamities, and even to death itself, which is entailed upon the sons of Adam, upon account of sin: But yet the Spirit of Christ, which he hath given to dwell in you, will procure you a glorious life in another world, upon account of that inward spiritual righteousness which he worketh in you. This is the sense of that verse. But because what he here saith is very shortly expressed, and so might be obscure, he explains himself sufficiently in the next verse. *If, says he, the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*, v. 11. Here the apostle speaks plainly, and his words need no comment: And I desire you to attend to them; for they seem to fix the sense of all that follows after. That which comes next in the three verses following, are these words; *Therefore, brethren, ye are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh*, Rom. viii. 12. (and the reason he intimated before; for it was that which wrought death in the world); *but to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit: for, says he, if you live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye thro' the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*, ver. 13. that is, live in another world.

world. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God (that is, as many as the Spirit of God dwells in) they are the sons of God,* ver. 14. that is, as I explained before, they are the children of God, because they shall be the children of the resurrection: *For,* as he goes on in the next verse, *ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear,* ver. 15. viz. ye are not brought back again to such a dispensation, as the Jews were, under the moisaical covenant, which made no promises of eternal life; but the people under it were left to their own fears and natural apprehensions of a future judgment; and the letter of the law gave them no relief against it: *But,* says the apostle, *ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, abba, Father;* viz. Ye are now in a gracious dispensation, in a filial state, where ye may cheerfully call God, abba; which, being interpreted, is, father; and, as his children, not doubt of receiving an inheritance from him in the world to come. And then come in the words of my text: *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together,* Rom. viii. 16, 17. The plain sense of which words, if we make them to cohere with all that went before, cannot appear to be other than this: viz. That that Spirit which dwelt in Christ, now dwelling in christians; that Spirit which raised up Jesus, now raising up his members from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness, is a witness to all those in whom he doth thus dwell; to all those who are thus led by him; is a strong evidence to their minds that they are the sons of God, and the brethren of Christ, and consequently that they shall be sharers of his inheritance, and be glorified with him; if so be they do patiently and constantly

stantly endure the sufferings they are called out to for his cause, as he did before them.

This, as I take it, is the full sense of this text. And now, I hope, I may have liberty to make some practical observations upon it; and then I shall conclude.

I. And first of all, from this account that has been given, we learn, what the true marks are of a child of God; or, upon what grounds any person can rationally assure himself that he is in God's favour, and shall go to heaven. For as the miraculous operations of the Spirit in the days of the apostles were the public testimony of the Holy Ghost, that the christian church in general was the people of God, and designed to everlasting happiness; so the Spirit's dwelling in the souls of particular christians, is his private testimony to particular persons, that they are effectually the children of God, and shall be actually raised up to everlasting happiness. This, I say, is the great, if not the only evidence that any person can give to himself of his particular right and title to the kingdom of heaven. And this, I think, is clear from what has been said: But if it be not, pray observe the apostle's words a little before at verse 9th, which will put the matter out of doubt, viz. *Ye are not, saith he, in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* So that to have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, is a certain proof that we belong to Christ. And on the other side, not to have him dwell in us, is a certain proof that we do not belong to Christ.

But doth not the Spirit dwell with all christians? I answer, No; by no means. All persons indeed that are baptiz'd, and profess christianity, are by designation the temples of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy
Spirit

Spirit would dwell in them: But yet for all that, he doth not actually dwell in all, because some of them do themselves put a bar to it. The Holy Spirit dwells with his church; is present in all Christ's public ordinances and administrations, and is ready to assist every person that doth with sincerity apply himself to the service of Jesus Christ. But he dwells not with any soul but those that have so far made use of his assistance, and encouraged his holy motions, that they begin to frame their actions according to his conduct, and he becomes a principle in them of a holy christian life.

But you will say, this is hard to be understood: You tell us, that the Spirit's dwelling within us is the evidence of our being the sons of God; but still we are at a loss to know when the Spirit dwells within us. I answer, you need not be much at a loss for the knowing of that; for St. Paul in those very passages I have now read to you, has given you sufficient rules by which you may judge, whether the Spirit of God dwell in you, or no: And they do amount to this: We may know we have the Spirit, *if we be led by the Spirit*, ver. 14. that is, if our designs and actions be in the general course of our lives suitable to the precepts of the gospel. Again, we may know we have the Spirit, *if we do not live after the flesh, but endeavour to mortify the deeds of the body*, ver. 13. Again a third time in this chapter he tells us how we may know whether we be in the flesh, or in the Spirit. *They, saith he, that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit*, ver. 5.

If all this be not plain enough, let us consult him farther in another epistle, viz. to the Galatians, chap. v. where he tells us plainly, that we may know we are in the flesh, *if we do the works of the flesh*; and we may know

know that we are led by the Spirit, if we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Galat. v. 19, 20, 21. *The works of the flesh, says he, are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But, on the other side, (v. 22, 23, 24.) the fruits of the Spirit are these, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:— And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* I do not know what plainer signs or characters can be given, either on the one hand, of sin reigning in us; or on the other hand, of the Spirit's dwelling in us, than these that are here given by the apostle.

2. Taking now this for granted, I observe in the second place, that that which some people take for a mark of a true child of God, is no mark at all. Some do so understand these words in my text of *the Spirit's witnessing with our spirit, that we are the children of God*, as to conclude that if they have an impulse, or impression on their own minds, that they are in a state of grace, and the elect of God: If it be strongly whispered and suggested to them, though they do not know why, nor wherefore, that they are in the right way, and that God accepts of them; why this passes with them *for the witness of the Spirit of God with their spirits, that they are the children of God.* And on the other side, others that have not these comfortable impressions, these satisfactions, this assurance (as they call it), in their own minds; but are fearful, and

apt to distrust their condition, and to believe the worst of themselves, [These] conclude, that they have not this *witness of the Spirit* that my text speaks of; and consequently, that their portion is like to be very miserable. But in truth, neither the one nor the other of these persons I have now represented, do reason right in this matter. The former are not one whit the better or the safer for their comfortable persuasion of themselves: Nor are the latter in any more danger for their melancholy apprehensions concerning their condition. Both the one and the other must be tried by the fruits they bring forth in their lives, and not by unaccountable impulses. The most sanguine man, the most confident and assured person, if he do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit I have now named, hath no testimony from the Holy Ghost, (whatever he fancies) *that he is the child of God*. And again, the most dejected and melancholy soul, if he do in his life and conversation bring forth these fruits, he hath *the witness of the Spirit that he is the child of God*, tho' he be not aware of it; and tho' through the present disorders of his mind he is not capable of receiving any comforts from it.

3. But lastly, and to conclude, since all the evidence we can give to ourselves that we in particular are the children of God, is that the Holy Spirit dwelleth within us; how infinitely doth it concern us, both to endeavour that the Holy Ghost should take up his habitation in our hearts; and also, after he hath so done, to be careful that we do not by our ill treatment of him give him cause to depart from us. Would we invite and prevail with the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within us? The way is, to forsake our sins, and to devote ourselves entirely to God's service; and to solli-

cit him most earnestly with our daily prayers, that he would purify our hearts, that they may become a temple fit for him to dwell in ; and withal to encourage and improve every good motion and every opportunity that he puts into our hands of growing in virtue and goodness. By this means we shall allure the good Spirit of God to take up his lodging in our hearts. And when once it is our happiness to have received so illustrious a guest ; oh ! with what zeal should we endeavour to preserve him ! how careful should we be, not to admit any thing into our hearts that may grieve him, or give him occasion of displeasure ! How watchful ought we to be over ourselves, that we do not engage in any unlawful course, any sin against conscience ! for that is directly to affront him, and to take part with his enemies. With what diligence ought we to guard ourselves from all sorts of impurity and sensuality ! because these are the things that of all others do most defile our bodies, and render them unfit for the Spirit of purity to dwell in, as the apostle often tells us (1 Cor. vi. 13—20.) Lastly, how industrious should we be to take all occasions of improving every grace and every virtue with which God hath adorned our souls : And in order to that, to make use of all those means that our Lord Jesus has appointed for that purpose ; amongst which the frequent receivings of the blessed sacrament is a principal one.

These are the methods by which we may secure the Holy Spirit to ourselves. This is the way to make him dwell with us for evermore : And never to leave us, never to quit his habitation ; but to be our constant guide here, and our rewarder hereafter : To be in us a constant principle of grace in this world, and to raise us up to an eternal and unspeakable glory in the world to come.



DISCOURSE II.

Concerning the Advocateship of the Holy Spirit, and the proper distinctions between that and the Advocateship of our Saviour.

[Deliver'd in Three Sermons.]

JOHN XIV. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Or thus :

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Advocate, that he may abide with you for ever.



HE Word in the original is, *παράκλητος*, which, because it comes from a word that hath a double signification, our translators made a doubt, whether they should render a comforter, or an advocate : and therefore for sure-
ness

ness sake they put in both the words ; the one in the text, and the other in the margin of our bibles. So also in John xv. 26. and xvi. 7. and ver. 26. of this chapter.

But undoubtedly *παράκλητος* here hath the signification of an advocate, and not of a comforter, as I shew by and by : And therefore I shall all along follow the latter translation.

The words are part of the last sermon that our Saviour made to his disciples, immediately before his passion. And indeed a very comfortable sermon it was, and very seasonable to his apostles, who at that time stood in great need of comfort. They now saw their dear Lord and master was to be taken from them, and to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and to be crucified. Matt. xxvi. 2. Upon this, *sorrow* (as there was great reason) *filled their hearts*, John xvi. 6. and they could not but look upon themselves in a most deplorable and desolate condition. Our merciful Saviour was not wanting to them upon this sad occasion ; but as he had always treated them with the greatest kindness and tenderness in the world, so now he more especially sets himself to ease their troubled minds, and to fortify them against the approaching disasters. Many excellent considerations he proposeth to this purpose : But three things especially he insists on in this chapter ; which, if they were well considered, would afford them unspeakable consolation, by letting them see that it was much better for them that he should leave them, than that he should stay any longer with them. The first thing was, that he did not mean to leave them with a design of returning no more to them, but he only went as an harbinger before them, to prepare them places in his heavenly
king-

kingdom. And he would in due time come again and fetch them, and bring them thither, where they should for ever enjoy him, without fear of parting any more. *Let not, saith he, your hearts be troubled; * believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: And † having gone and prepared a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also,* John xiv. 1, 2, 3. Secondly, This further eminent advantage they should receive from his going to his Father, that thereby they should be secure of a friend and a patron in the court of heaven. Hereby he should be put into a capacity of doing every thing for them that they desired: For so great from henceforward should his authority be with his Father, and so powerful his intercession, that they should ask nothing in his name, (if it was for the interest of the church) but it should be granted. *Because I go unto my Father, says he, whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* John xiv. 13, 14. These things considered, they had no reason to be troubled at his departure; but rather to rejoice. *If ye loved me, says he, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father.* John xiv. 28. Especially when he assured them, in the third place, that tho' he left them for the present, yet as soon as he was ascended to the Father, he would send down another, to supply his place with them: One that should take care of their concerns; should manage all their affairs; should be their great patron and advocate in the world; and

* It is the marginal reading.

† εἰς οὐρανὸν ἵνα ἔλθω, after I shall have gone, &c. See Grot.

and he should never leave them, but abide with them and their successors, and with all believers to the end of the world: And this should be no other than the Spirit of truth. This is the sense of my text: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another advocate, that he may abide with you for ever*; John xiv. 16. *even the Spirit of truth, as it follows in the next verse, whom the world cannot receive; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*, John xiv. 17.

Now upon this account his stay among them was so far from being desirable, that he tells them in the sixteenth chapter, ver. 7. *that it was expedient for them that he should go away; for if he did not go away (if he did not ascend to the Father) the advocate would not come unto them: But if he departed, he would send him to them.* The coming of the advocate, then, was to be the effect of his ascension into heaven, and of his powerful intercession with God. And that is the reason why he says in the text, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give him unto you.* And that is the reason why St. John says in another place, (ch. vii. 39.) *that the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

There are three points which the text leads me to inquire into: All of them very useful, because very conducing to a right understanding of the christian dispensation, and that method which God set on foot for the bringing men to salvation by Jesus Christ.

I. And first of all; Whereas our Saviour here and in other places speaks of the Holy Ghost under the notion of a *Paraclete*, which our translators commonly express a comforter, but I think might more properly be render'd an advocate;— I shall inquire into the importance of that term, and give an account of the true notion of it, that so we may all know what we mean

mean when we call the Holy Ghost a *Paraclete*, or advocate, or comforter.

2. Secondly; whereas our Saviour here saith that he will pray the Father, and he shall give them another advocate; by which it is implied that the Holy Ghost is not the only advocate, but that our Saviour is one advocate, and the Holy Ghost another; I shall therefore inquire into the difference between our Saviour's advocateship, and that of the Holy Ghost; or, in what respect Jesus Christ is our advocate, and in what respect the Holy Ghost is.

3. Thirdly, whereas our Saviour tells his disciples that this advocate whom he should send, even the Spirit of truth, should abide with them for ever; and yet it is plain matter of fact that he doth not now abide in the church in the same manner that he did with the apostles; I shall therefore in the last place inquire into the several acts, or instances, or expressions of this advocateship of the Holy Ghost, and shew, which of them were peculiar to the times of the apostles, and the primitive christians; and which of them were common to all the times and ages of christianity.

I. I begin with the notion or signification of the term *Paraclete*, which is here and in other places used by St. John to express the office of the Holy Ghost, and which accordingly hath ever since been by the church in a manner appropriated to him. Thus in the *Te Deum*, *Also the Holy Ghost the paraclete*: for that is the word in the original. It is used but five times in the whole New-testament: Four times in this gospel of St. John, where the Holy Spirit is spoken of; and once in an epistle of the same apostle, where our Saviour is spoken of. 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 1. *If any man,*
says

says he, *sin, we have a paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

But now in these places where it is applied to the Spirit, our translators have always render'd it comforter; and in that place where it is applied to our Saviour, they have render'd it advocate: But what foundation there is for this distinction, I do not know. It seems more reasonable to think that St. John meant the same thing by *παράκλητος* when he used it of our Saviour, and when he used it of the Holy Ghost: And therefore since it is clear that in that text where this name is given to our Saviour, it ought to be render'd advocate, and not comforter [for to translate the apostle's words thus: *If any man sin, we have a comforter with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins*—will make no good sense; for when we have offended a person, we have need of an advocate with him, and not a comforter; one to make intercession for us, and not one to give consolation]: I say, since this is clear and beyond dispute, then, methinks, it should be clear also, that in those other four texts, where the name of paraclete is by the same writer given to the Holy Spirit, it ought to be render'd advocate likewise; or at least by some other word of an equivalent signification. And this will appear yet clearer, when we consider, that in one of these very texts where the Holy Ghost is called the paraclete, he is plainly represented under the notion of an advocate, and not of a comforter. The passage which I mean is John xvi. v. 7, 8, 9. which I shall explain particularly hereafter.

I will but add one thing more, and I leave this criticism; that in all Greek authors, as far as I can learn,

παράκλητος hath always the signification of an advocate, or one that is called to assist and defend another, when he is to answer in a court of judicature; but is never used to signify a comforter. And this was the notion also that the Jews had of a paraclete; from whom we may reasonably presume that St. John had this word; as appears by that known proverb of theirs in the Talmud, *He that keeps one commandment, makes to himself a paraclete or an advocate; but he that commits one sin, prepares to himself an accuser.*

I should not have been so long about a signification of a word, but that I think it is of some importance to us to have a right notion of the character which the Holy Ghost bears in the christian dispensation, which you see is primarily that of an advocate: that being the proper signification of paraclete.

Taking the word now in this notion, it will signify to us in general such a person as appears in the behalf of another: Such a person as defends another, when harm is intended against him: Such a person as interests himself in the affairs of another, either by intreating for him, or pleading his cause, or any ways managing his business: In a word, any one that is concerned for another as a patron or defender, solicitor or intercessor, is a paraclete, or an advocate in the sense that is here intended. And thus much of the notion or signification of a paraclete in general; which was my first point.

II. Well now, both our Saviour and the Holy Ghost, as the scriptures inform us, are thus our paracletes, our advocates, our patrons: The next question therefore is, wherein the patronage or advocateship of the one differs from that of the other: In what sense our
Saviour

Saviour is our advocate, and in what sense the Holy Spirit is so.

Now if we look into the scriptures, we shall find that the difference of this office in these two persons lies in this, *viz.* that our Saviour is our patron in heaven, and the Holy Spirit on earth. Our Saviour pleads our cause, and manages our affairs there; and the Holy Spirit, as his deputy and vicegerent doth it here. Our Saviour is our *advocate with the Father*, as St. John in the fore-cited place expressly calls him; and the Holy Spirit is our advocate with the world. Our Saviour appears for us before God the Father, who is consider'd as the great Lord of all; and the Holy Spirit appears for us and for our cause, against the world, and the devil, who are considered as our adversaries or accusers. They both have undertaken the defence of the same cause, and of the same persons; but in these different respects.

1. To treat of this matter a little more distinctly, and first of all as to the advocateship of our Saviour.

The scriptures assure us, that our Saviour having given up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, ascended up into heaven, with this mind and intent, to appear before God for us; to present himself to his Father with that sacrifice that had been offered up on the cross on our behalf. As the high priests under the law, who were the great types of Christ, carried the blood of the sacrifices that were slain, into the holy of holies, which was the representative of heaven, and there presented that blood before God, for the atonement of the people of Israel, for whom those sacrifices were slain; so, I say, did our Saviour, the true high priest of the world, upon his ascension, present himself with his sacrifice before God in the heavenly tabernacle,

nacle, the holy of holies, not made with hands: and by the merits and virtue thereof did then begin (and will for ever continue it) to recommend all christians, and all their concerns, and all their prayers to his heavenly Father, to intercede for them continually; and to render God favourable and propitious to them. This is that the apostle tells us, in the ninth of the Hebrews, ver. 24. *Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true one; but into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us.* Thus also in the 7th chapter, ver. 24. *This man, says he, meaning our Saviour, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he evermore liveth to make intercession for them.* And thus lastly, St. Paul in the eighth to the Romans, ver. 33. *Who, says he, shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who sitteth at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us.*

It would take up too much time, to mention all those places of scripture that relate to this advocateship of Christ, that we are now speaking of. I shall only observe these following particulars concerning it, which may sufficiently explain the nature of it to us. And I draw them all from the epistle to the Hebrews, where this point is largely treated of.

First of all, That the advocateship of our Saviour only respects God; and it consists in this, that he doth continually commend us and our affairs to his heavenly Father. *He is our advocate with the Father,* as St. John styles him. 1 John ii. 1.

2dly, This advocateship of his, this intercession for us, is not in an humble supplicatory way, but with power and never-failing efficacy : So that whatever he represents to God as his desire on our behalf, he certainly and effectually obtains for us.

3dly, This advocateship of Christ, and the efficacy of it, hath its foundation principally in the virtue and merits of that sacrifice of himself, which he offered to God upon the cross.

4thly, This advocateship of Christ, is the very same thing with his everlasting priesthood. Christ is therefore our high-priest, because he is our patron with God, and continually intercedes with him on our behalf: This being the notion of a priest. Whether his offering up himself upon the cross at Jerusalem was an act of his priesthood, or rather a consecration to it, I will not now dispute ; but he became a high-priest after the order of Melchisedeck, (which is the notion of his priesthood that St. Paul all along pursues in his epistle to the Hebrews) when, after he was raised from the dead, he entered into the holy of holies, with that body of his that had been offered on the cross, and sat down on God's right hand, and became our patron, our advocate, our intercessor with God for ever. At the same time indeed he became our king too ; for then he had all power given him in heaven and in earth. But there is this difference between these two offices, that the one of them respects God, the other respects us. As our priest, he intercedes with God for us. As our king, he employs that power, which he hath received from God, in the governing us.

5thly and lastly, Christ being thus our high-priest, our advocate with God, it follows, that all our pray-

ers to God ought to be put up in his name; since it is he that presents them to God, it is he *through whom we have access to the Father*. Eph. ii. 18. It is for his sake, and upon his account, that they are at any time effectual. All the returns of our prayers, and all the blessings we receive from God's hands, are owing to the virtue of our Saviour's intercession and advocateship.

This is a full and plain account of our Saviour's advocateship. And by these particulars we may easily discern in how different a sense the same office is given to the Holy Ghost; which is the other thing I come to speak to.

2. The advocateship of the Holy Ghost, as I said before, is not in heaven, but in the world: Doth not so much respect God, as the world, and the devil. His office is in the place of Christ to plead the cause of the church against its enemies; to be its patron and defender upon earth, and to manage the affairs of it so, that it may be victorious in this world over all its opposers. Under this notion of an advocate he is plainly represented in John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. a passage which I before referred to, but shall now explain more fully, because it is an express declaration of the advocateship of the Holy Spirit, and a clear account of the effects that should ensue upon his descent on the apostles, as the patron of the christian cause.—*Nevertheless I tell you the truth*, says our Lord to his disciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [advocate] will not come to you: But if I depart I will send him unto you, and when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me: Of righteousness, because I go to my*
Father,

Father, and ye see me no more : Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Now we shall have a very easy admission into the sense of this difficult passage, as it hath been usually accounted, if we translate παράκλητος, advocate, instead of comforter, and ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον, convince the world, as it is in the margin, instead of reprove the world, as our translators have render'd it in the text. That there is good ground for the former alteration, appears not only from what hath been said upon my first head, by way of criticism upon the word παράκλητος, but from the acts attributed to him in this place, for reprov^{ing} or convinc^{ing} the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, are the proper acts or offices of an advocate, but by no means of a comforter. And that we have sufficient authority for the latter alteration is evident from a parallel place to this in the eighth chapter of this gospel, ver. 46. τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει, or as some copies read it ἐλέγξει ; which of you convinceth me of sin, that is, which of you can shew me that I am guilty of sin in teaching and in acting as I do? And besides, tho' it may be good sense to say that the Holy Ghost shall reprove the world of sin, yet that term is not applicable to the two instances that follow ; for it is not sense to say, he shall reprove the world of righteousness, or of judgment. Another passage there is in Tit. i. 9. which will shew us the full import of ἐλέγχειν in this place. There it is said, that a bishop should be qualified not only to exhort, but also ἐλέγχειν τὰς ἀπειθήσασα, to convince the gainfayers ; to justify the things of Christ against all opposers.

This then certainly is the sense of the word in this passage that we are upon, viz. that when the Holy Ghost, the advocate for Christians, is come, he will

convince the world, he will justify the cause of Christ to the world, both in point of sin, in point of righteousness, and in point of judgment. The office of an advocate is to defend and make good the cause he hath undertaken. So the Holy Ghost, having, as an advocate espoused the cause of Christ, he will maintain it, and justify it against all opposition.

As to the three particular instances in which he will justify it, we now come to give an account.

And here in the first place, let us consider what this cause of Christ was that this advocate undertook to justify and defend. The cause of Jesus Christ was plainly this: God sent him into the world as the great prophet, who was to declare his will to mankind, in order to their salvation. But he was looked upon by the Jews, as a false prophet, as an impostor and deceiver: And instead of giving him that entertainment and reception that was due to him, they crucified and slew him. All which was brought to pass by the contrivance and instigation of the devil, the prince of this world, who having long usurped an empire and dominion over mankind, was loth to be thrown out of his possession; which he was sure to be, as soon as Jesus should be believed on in the world. And therefore by procuring that he should be thus punished as a malefactor, thought by this means to quash for ever all his pretences of being a prophet, and so to secure and establish his own kingdom. This was the cause of Christ which the Holy Ghost came to vindicate.

Now the question comes, What the Holy Ghost was to do in the vindication of it? In what instances he was to shew himself an advocate for this cause which he had espoused? In answer to this question, if we consider our Saviour's case, we cannot even, accord-
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ing to the principles of common reason, and the use and practice of mankind in these matters, desire more to be done by him than these three things :

1st, To justify the truth of our Saviour's mission ; to convince the world that Jesus Christ was that great prophet which God had promised to send for the salvation of mankind, and that it was a great sin in those to whom he was sent, that they did not believe in him.

2dly, To vindicate the personal innocence and righteousness of Jesus Christ, to shew that he was really a virtuous, holy person; however he was thought of in the world ; and at the same time to make out the equity and righteousness of God in suffering him to be so evil treated.

3dly, To make out the justice or the judgment of God upon those that were the authors of those injuries that Christ suffer'd in the world : To shew that he was so far from countenancing or abetting the wicked conspiracy against Jesus, that he gave a manifest evidence of his justice by retaliating upon the principal agent and contriver of it, what he thought to have done to Jesus : That is, destroying and casting him out of all that power and dominion which he had hitherto possessed in the world.

These three things, I say, in common reason, and according to the course of proceedings among men in like cases, were the principal points which it concerned the Holy Ghost, as an advocate, to vindicate the cause of Christ in. And these are the very things which our Saviour said he should do, when he came into the world ; and accordingly when he came he did them effectually.

First of all, he *convinced the world of sin, because they believed not in Jesus Christ*, (ver. 9.) viz. He gave a proof beyond all exception and contradiction that Jesus

Christ was the great prophet sent from God; and that the Jews who did not receive him were guilty of a very great sin; and still a greater in that they crucified him. For let this only be considered, that the Jews had now been four hundred years without the Holy Spirit; so long, a least, had the gifts of prophecy, and all other miraculous powers been absent from them; and all this time they were expecting the Messiah. Now certainly the Holy Ghost being thus visibly sent down upon the disciples of Christ, after so long an absence, and manifesting himself to their eyes, to their ears, to all their senses in so illustrious a manner, by the mighty works that he wrought, and the wonderful gifts that he bestowed, could not but be an argument beyond all contradiction, that Jesus was from God, and consequently that the Jews, in not believing on him, were guilty of a very great sin. For these being things which it was not possible should be brought about by human arts or devices, nor by the power of the devil, because they evidently tended to the destruction of his kingdom, must necessarily be from God; and consequently Jesus Christ was owned by him as a true prophet, which was a plain and sufficient conviction of the sin of the Jews in rejecting him.

Secondly, He convinced the world of righteousness, *Because, says our Saviour, I go to my Father, and ye see me no more* (ver. 10.) And here the point is, what righteousness that was that the advocate should convince the world of: Certainly it must either be Christ's righteousness, or God's righteousness. The sense is good either way; and the reason here annexed is as applicable to the one sense, as to the other.

[1.] The Holy Ghost coming down was a demonstration of Christ's righteousness, viz. that he was in his own person very innocent, no ways a criminal as
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the Jews had accounted him, and accordingly, in pursuance thereof, had condemned him. For had he been a wicked, flagitious person, God could never have owned him for his Son, and exalted him to that high power and dignity in heaven and in earth, that it was apparent and evident he was exalted to, by his having power to send down the Holy Ghost, and by him to atchieve such wonderful things as proclaimed Jesus Christ to all the world to be the very Son of God, and that he was gone to his Father.

[2.] Again, the holy Spirit's coming down was likewise a means to convince the world of righteousness with respect to God; that is to say, to take off the objection that might have been made against the equity of God's dealing with Jesus Christ, to suffer him, who was so innocent a person, to fall into such hard circumstances, and undergo such unheard-of sufferings and persecutions. For by his appearing with such mighty signs and wonders for the maintenance and justification of the cause of Christ, he shewed clearly to all the world, that God had made a sufficient compensation to our Lord Jesus for all that he underwent, having exalted him to his own right-hand, and for the suffering of death made him *both Lord and Christ*, (Acts ii. 36.) *and given him a name above every name, so that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him, both of things in heaven and things in earth, as the apostle speaks, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.*

But [3dly] There is another point mentioned with reference to which the Holy Ghost should convince the world, and that is in point of judgment. The Advocate *when he cometh shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*, (ver. 11.) By judgment, here is plainly meant God's punitive justice.

The devil, or prince of the world, had by his instruments, as he thought, effectually brought destruction upon Jesus Christ, and put an end to his pretences of being the Messiah that was to rule the world. It therefore concerned the justice of God's providence to retaliate upon the devil this mischief which he had wrought; and by sending down the Holy Ghost, the Advocate, he effectually did it; for by this means the devil was brought to suffer that judgment and condemnation which he meant to have brought upon our Saviour. He meant to destroy Jesus Christ: But now *he that had the power of death, the devil himself, was destroyed*; *Heb. ii. 14.* And this our Lord himself foretold, when he first sent out his disciples by the power of the Spirit to preach the gospel; *I beheld satan, says he, as lightning fall from heaven, Luke x. 18.* And indeed he fell unexpectedly from all that power and authority which he had so long exercised among the nations. For no sooner did the Holy Ghost come upon the disciples, but they converted mankind, where-ever they came, from the slavery of the devil, to the liberty of the sons of God. The effects of which, with reference to our purpose, were two:

[I.] All the oracles which had been so frequent, and made so great a noise in all parts of the world, were struck dumb: And this we have not only from the authority of the primitive christian fathers, who made use of this as a great argument (and indeed it was so) for the truth of christianity; but also from the acknowledgment of the pagans themselves. *Porphyry* confesses that 'after the time that the religion of Jesus was preached in the world, they had no benefit by their oracles, or by their sacrifices, but they seemed to be forsaken by their Gods.' And *Plutarch* hath left us

a book upon record of the ceasing of the oracles in all places ; of which he can give no account ; but we christians can.

[2.] The other effect was the throwing out idolatry in all places, where-ever the christian religion was entertained. The devil, in all pagan countries before our Saviour's time, had his temples, sacrifices, mysteries, and all the instances of divine worship paid unto him. And indeed he might, in a proper sense enough, at that time be stiled *the god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. for all mankind, but the Jews, did pay him homage. But upon the coming of the advocate after our Saviour's ascension, and the mighty evidence that he gave of the truth of the christian religion for near three hundred years together, all those idolatries wore off ; and the world was no longer subject to the prince of darkness, but became worshippers of the only true God, *and of Jesus Christ whom he had sent*. The heathenish temples were demolished, their sacrifices turned out of doors, their idols broken down, and where-ever christianity prevailed *there were no other Gods but one*. And it did prevail over all the Roman empire, which was then the most considerable part of the known world. And, God be thanked, it doth prevail at this day, and ever will do so through the power of the Blessed Spirit, its patron and defender, who manages the affairs of it, and of every particular christian so, that at length all the true members of the church may attain to that eternal inheritance that Christ purchased for them.

Having shewed then the different nature and effects of the advocateship of Jesus Christ in heaven, and that of the Blessed Spirit upon earth ; I now proceed to my third and last general head, which is, to enquire into
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the several acts, or instances, or expressions of this advocateship of the Holy Ghost, (by which he began to administer this office for the church, and by which he continues still to do it, and will do so to the end of the world) and to shew which of them were peculiar to the times of the apostles, and which of them are common to all the times and ages of christianity.

III. It is very easy to gather from what hath been said, that the Holy Ghost was a patron or advocate for the christian cause in the times of the apostles, in a way quite different from that in succeeding ages; for the reason is obvious: The world was then to be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment: Now the world is convinced of all these in the manner I have before described. The gospel was then to be effectually preached and propagated among unbelievers, and idolatrous nations: Now the gospel is preached, and churches are planted. Christianity was then to meet with a world of opposition: Now it is entertained as the public religion of many kingdoms and nations. There was then all sorts of divine evidence to be given for the truth and credibility of it, in order for the conversion of the world to it: But now we enjoying the benefits of those miraculous evidences, and having (besides) other abundant proofs of the truth of christianity, (which they in that age had not) there is no need that those miracles should be continued or repeated.

This difference of the times and states of things, makes the administration of the Holy Ghost's office in those times to be different also from what it is in these. Though yet he is still as much the advocate for Christ, and the church, as he was at first: And doth and will abide

abide with it for ever, as our Saviour promised in my text.

1. Well as to those instances of the Holy Ghost's advocateship, which were peculiar to the apostles and their times, the scripture mentions these four following :

First of all, the Holy Ghost shewed himself an advocate for the christians, in that he spoke in them and for them to kings and governors, before whom they were convened for the cause of Christ : Bestowing upon them likewise an extraordinary boldness and presence of mind in preaching the gospel. This assistance of the Holy Spirit we find our Saviour promised to his disciples when he gave them their first commission to preach : *Ye shall be brought, says he to them, before governors and kings for my name's sake, for a testimony to them, and the Gentiles, Mat. x. 18. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, ver. 19. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you, ver. 20.* And this promise we find was abundantly made good in St. Peter and St. Stephen, and others of the first martyrs. Now though I doubt not but God will sufficiently assist all pious persons in these days, when they are called out to bear testimony to the cause of Christ ; yet, I much doubt, whether in any case they are to expect the same inspiration that is here promised the apostles ; so that words shall be put into their mouths when they preach, or when they pray, or when they make any other discourse, without using the common means of meditation, and the like.

Secondly, Another instance of the Holy Ghost's advocateship for the apostles, was the bringing all things to their remembrance whatever Christ had said to them ;
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so that no passage of our Saviour's discourses to them was forgot by them, but was ready at hand in their memories when there was occasion for it. This our Saviour himself instanceth in as one of the things that the Advocate when he came should do for them: As we have it in the 26th verse of this chapter, *These things, saith he, have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,* John xiv. 25, 26. Now it is plain, beyond all contradiction, that this must be spoken to the apostles only, who heard what he had said, and could not possibly relate to any that came after them.

Thirdly, The Holy Ghost did not only bring all things to their remembrance, but furnished them with a power of judging unerringly as to matters of faith. So that they should not only remember the doctrine of our Saviour, but rightly understand it; and be able, without any mistake, to propose it to others. (And certainly this was a privilege which no particular man, and no particular church, since the apostles time, could with any reason pretend to.) Every christian truth that was necessary or expedient to be known in the church, the apostles were made acquainted with, and could certainly and infallibly distinguish it from what was error: This is another effect which is attributed to the advocate when he should come; thus in the fore-mentioned verse, *when the Advocate shall come, he shall teach you all things: And again, in the 16th chapter of this gospel, ver. 13. when the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth.*

Now by virtue of those three before-named powers which were conferred by the Advocate upon the apostles, they

they were not only furnished completely for the preaching of the gospel, but also for the putting it into writing, (that it might be faithfully and entirely transmitted to all succeeding times) or, at least, taking care that others should do it for them. And accordingly to these effects of the Holy Spirit's advocateship, to this extraordinary assistance that went along with the apostles, we owe all the books of the New-testament. Which now are, and must for ever be, the rule and standard of our faith.

Fourthly and lastly, The Holy Ghost appeared as an advocate for the christian cause, in furnishing the apostles, and other first converts to christianity, with such extraordinary miraculous powers, as could not fail to procure credit to their doctrine and preaching; and speedily to bring off the world from judaism and heathenism to the belief of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all the opposition that was made thereto by the powers of the world, and kingdom of darkness. We all know what a divine power our Saviour was acted with, and what astonishing works he wrought among the Jews for the proving himself to be sent from God; yet, says he, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.* And this promise of his he made good to a tittle after his ascension into heaven, not only to the apostles, but to all those believers on whom they laid their hands, as we have abundant evidence from several places in the New-testament. And here indeed, in these extraordinary manifestations of himself for the propagation of the christian doctrine, did the Holy Spirit most visibly and illustriously shew himself a patron of the cause of Christ.

To reckon up the several powers of this nature that were bestowed upon the first christians, will be a hard task at this distance of time. Nine of them St. Paul has joined together in one-text: *To one, says he, is given the word of wisdom by the Spirit; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9.* (that is, such faith as our Saviour speaks of, when he says, *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you, Mat. xvii. 20.*) *To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, (1 Cor. xii. 9.) To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy, or foretelling things to come; to another discerning of spirits, or knowing people's hearts; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues, (ver. 10.) All these, faith he, worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will, ver. 11.* These were the gifts which our Lord Jesus, *when he ascended up on high, received for men, Psal. lxviii. 18.* These were the gifts that his vicegerent, and our advocate upon earth, bestowed upon the apostles, and they to others, both clergy and laity, both men and women, so long as there was occasion for them.

What now was the result; what was the success of these strange things? Why, it is notorious to all the world; a religion that had nothing of any external charms in it; a religion, whose principal article was to believe in a crucified Saviour; and the principal reward of owning it was, in this world, only a crown of martyrdom; a religion that was preached only by poor and contemptible persons, men of no learning, no education; a religion that was opposed with the greatest malice and violence imaginable, and against which the
whole

whole power of the empire did set itself, endeavouring by all manner of arts, all manner of cruelties, to extirpate it out of the world; yet this religion, thro' the uncontrollable power of the Spirit, broke thro' all opposition, bore down all before it, spread like lightning through all places, and gained entertainment where-ever it came, till, at last, it became the religion of the empire, and kings and princes were nursing fathers to it.

Thus powerful an advocate did the Holy Ghost shew himself for the christian cause; and thus effectually did he make good what our Saviour had foretold of him, that he should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

2. But all this while we do not deny, nay we earnestly contend, that the Holy Ghost is still with us, as well as he was with the apostles. He still is the church's advocate, now that christianity is planted, and there is no need of those extraordinary assistances we before spoke of: Present still he is with his church, and ever will be, to all purposes that are needful, either for the glory of God, or the preservation of the church, or the salvation of any man's soul.

Now, tho' I dare not be nice and particular in giving an account of this matter, yet these four things I dare say we may always expect and promise to ourselves from him, even to the end of the world. I shall be very brief in speaking to them.

First of all, We may be sure that as by his power and influence the church of Christ was first effectually planted in the world; so he will always take care that the church built upon the foundation of Christ and his apostles, shall in all times and ages be continued and preserved: And in order to that, that there shall be always

ways a succession of pastors and ministers in the church, who shall always teach all necessary fundamental truths, and be furnished with sufficient powers and abilities for the discharge of their function, *viz.* for the begetting souls to Jesus Christ; and by the administration of the word and sacraments, putting them into a way of obtaining everlasting salvation. Less than this we cannot suppose to be contained in these promises of Christ, *that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church*, Mat. xvi. 18. and *that he*, by his Spirit, *will be with his apostles and their successors to the end of the world*, chap. xxviii. 20. But then it is to be remember'd always, that it doth not follow from hence, either that any particular church is secure from error, or from other great failings; or that any particular church shall always continue to be a church. Because a particular church, or a particular nation, may so reject the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and by their grievous and often repeated transgressions so affront God, as to provoke him at last to give them up, and *to remove their candlestick from them*, as St. John expresses it, *Rev.* ii. 5. The promise of the perpetual presence or advocateship of the Holy Spirit is only made to the church of Christ in general, not to any particular church or member of that body; and it is only so made to the church in general, as to import that that church shall never fail from the earth; but not at all that it shall never fall into errors or corruptions.

Secondly, As the Holy Ghost, for making good the promises of Christ, will take care that there shall always be a church; (*viz.* several societies of men agreeing in the common faith under their lawful pastors, wherein so much christian truth shall be taught as is necessary to salvation) so the same Spirit will always
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take care to be present in the ordinances and administrations of the church, both for the enlightening the understandings of men to receive and embrace all necessary truths, and inclining their wills to practise accordingly. I dare not say of any sort of men in the world that have the essentials of christianity among them, but that the Holy Spirit is always at hand, by his inward power and virtue, to accompany the outward means which God hath been pleased to bestow or continue amongst them.

Thirdly, I say this further; the Holy Spirit of God never did, nor ever will fail to direct and govern the lives and actions of all believers that mean honestly, and heartily devote themselves to the service of Jesus Christ. He will not fail to inspire their minds with good thoughts, to give them grace and strength to resist the temptations of the devil; to assist them in their prayers and devotions; and *whereas they know not what they should pray for as they ought, to make intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. (for which reason chiefly, as some learned men have conceived, he hath the name of Paraclete or Advocate given him in scripture, namely, as the intercessor for the saints; tho' I am apt to think, with St. Chrysostom, that this text is rather to be understood of the extraordinary gifts of prayer in the first ages :) And to preserve them from all dangerous and destructive errors, to furnish them with sufficient powers to mortify and overcome all their evil habits and corrupt affections; and finally, if they be compliant with his holy motions, to bring them all at last to the kingdom of heaven. I do not say that they shall be secured against all errors, and against all sins; but if they be persons of probity and integrity, such as sincerely desire to know
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their Master's will, and to do it, they shall for ever be kept from all damning errors, and for ever be secured from such snares and temptations to evil practices, as, if they were exposed to, and left to themselves, they could not avoid falling under them.

But fourthly and lastly, While I am talking of the ordinary grace of God, and the ordinary instances of the Holy Ghost's advocateship in the world; yet I would not exclude out of that account even the extraordinary communications of God's grace and spirit, when an extraordinary occasion offers itself. When in our days an unusual case happens, that is to say, when a particular church, or a particular person, is put under such difficulties, or trials, or temptations, that God Almighty sees they cannot be got over without a greater assistance of his divine power than is ordinarily bestowed; in such a case as this, I say, God will bestow all the assistance that is needful: And that assistance of the Spirit, though it be more than is usual, yet, in our case, comes under the notion of ordinary grace, or the ordinary acts of the Spirit's advocateship. Our Lord Jesus hath purchased the Holy Spirit for his disciples, not only for those of one age, but for all his followers to the world's end; and at the same time that he promised to send the Holy Ghost for the advocate, he promised that he should *abide with us for ever*, as my text hath it. There were indeed greater occasions of his appearing illustriously, visibly, and miraculously at the beginning of christianity, than there can be now. But if the same occasions could happen again, he would, without doubt, appear suitably to those occasions; for his power is not shortened; and we may be certain that he will never leave us nor forsake us, unless we first leave and forsake him. In the mean time let us
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not be dismayed at any thing; let us not doubt of his constant support and assistance. Though he do not inspire us to work miracles, or speak languages; yet he will for ever inspire us both to believe aright, and to practise aright, if we use our understandings as we ought to do, and do not wilfully depart from the known rules of our duty. And if ever it please God to expose us to extraordinary temptations, his Spirit will then extraordinarily assist us, and we shall as certainly overcome them, as if we had been acted in the same way that the apostles and primitive christians were.

I have been the more careful in distinguishing between the extraordinary and ordinary instances of the Holy Ghost's advocateship in the world; because the not attending duly to it hath brought abundance of fanaticism, and enthusiasm, and other mischiefs into the church of Christ. Whilst we are reading the New-testament, and do often there meet with such surprising things about the gifts and effects of the Holy Spirit, and do not distinguish between those that were proper and peculiar to the apostolic age, and those that were to be continued to the church for ever after, it is hardly avoidable but we must needs run into a great many mistakes; and such mistakes as have by experience been found very prejudicial both to the peace of Christendom, and the salvation of mens souls.

For instance, I pray what is it that hath made so many quakers and gifted brethren amongst us, but the misinterpreting and misapplying those texts which speak of the gifts of the Spirit, which they so understand as to make no distinction between the times then and the times now? They read, for instance, a prophecy in Joel, that when *the last days should come, God would pour his Spirit upon all flesh, and their young men should see visions,*

sions, and their old men dream dreams, Joel ii. 28. Acts ii. 17. And again, that in those days (as the prophet Jeremy hath it) every man shall no more teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, Jer. xxxi. 34. And accordingly they find the matter of fact true, for St. John speaks to all the christians to whom he writes in these terms: The anointing, says he, which ye have received abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, 1 John ii. 27. What now do they collect from these passages? Why they conclude that in these days, which are the last days, the Spirit of God is poured upon all flesh: And every one hath a right to expect immediate impulses and revelations as to what he is to believe and to practise. That by this assistance of the Spirit every brother may understand the mysteries of the holy scriptures, without the troublesome way of studying human learning; nay, and may take upon himself the pastoral office, and become a guide and teacher of others, without any warrant from human authority, merely upon the impulse of the Spirit of God. These are the consequences that have been drawn from these and such texts of scripture. And so far have they been promoted and improved by several among us, that reason and prudence, and all acquired learning, are rather accounted by them hindrances to the work of God's church, than any ways contributing to the promoting of it. Nay, they are arrived to a pitch above the scriptures themselves, which they look upon as a dead letter in comparison of the light within them, the witness, the anointing which they have received from

above;

above; which is the only measure with them of truth and falshood, and of good and evil.

I cannot deny but these enthusiastic people, that talk at this rate, have some colour for this their notion from the letter of several passages in the Old and New-testament. But then, I say, that colour would quite vanish, if they would but take care to distinguish between the effects of the Spirit that belonged to the converting of the world, and those which were to be his constant permanent operations among such as were already christians. There is no one will deny, but the apostles, and those in their times, had these inspirations, these revelations they speak of; and the texts that they produce, are some of them plain promises and predictions of them, and some of them plain proofs that those promises were made good. They did see visions, and were endued with extraordinary talents of wisdom and knowledge without human methods, and might expect particular impulses from the Holy Ghost upon every occasion that presented itself, where they wanted either light or direction: And all this was indeed little enough for the discharge of that great work they had upon their hands, viz. the bringing over the world from judaism and heathenism to christianity. But that being once done, and the gospel of Christ, and all things pertaining to it, being plainly left in writing by the apostles or apostolical men; as there would from henceforward be no need of those assistances of the Spirit; so it would be a vain thing to expect them. We are not to desire these immediate revelations, nor to expect that God should vouchsafe them to us if we prayed for them. God hath declared all his will, that is necessary for us to know, by our Saviour and his apostles: And the rules which they have given us, together with our own

natural light and reason, and the other outward means and helps of instruction which are every day at hand among us, are sufficient, abundantly sufficient, to guide and direct us, both as to belief and practice, through all the cases and emergencies that can ordinarily happen to us. And in extraordinary cases God will take care, some way or other, that we shall not be at a loss. And therefore, to pretend to the Spirit now-a-days, either for preaching, or praying, or prophesying, or denouncing God's judgments, or for any other thing, in such a way as implies immediate inspiration; or to set up a light within us, contrary to the light of reason, or different from the light of scripture without us; I say, to do this is such a piece of folly and freakishness, that if all of us should incline this way, it would presently render mankind fitter for a Bethlehem, or an hospital of lunatics, than to live in free society.

But I shall not pursue this point, or any other, further. Let us heartily acquiesce in that light and assistance which it hath pleased God to bestow upon us by means of his Holy Spirit. And let us always most readily and chearfully yield obedience to all his motions, and pray constantly for his directions and assistance; devoting ourselves entirely to the service of God, in those ways which his blessed Son hath laid before us in the gospel.



DISCOURSE III.

Of grieving the Spirit. Of the sealing of the Spirit. Of the different notions of Redemption in Holy Scripture.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

EPH. IV. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.

FOR the right understanding of what is meant by *grieving the Holy Spirit*, it is fit that we carefully distinguish between these four expressions, *viz. resisting the Spirit; blaspheming the Spirit; quenching the Spirit; and grieving the Spirit*. All these are scripture expressions, and denote some affront put upon the Holy Ghost, some sin committed against him. But yet they have every one of them different significations, and are used to quite different purposes, though common readers make no

distinction between them. I will give you a short account of each of them, the rather, because hereby we may rectify some popular mistakes in these matters.

1. And first as to that phrase of resisting the Spirit, so far as we can judge of the sense of it by the context, it is spoke with respect to those who wickedly oppose the truth of God, when it is declared to them. They are said to resist the Holy Ghost, who obstinately stand out against those means that the Spirit of God makes use of for the converting them to the true religion. Thus St. Stephen, in the seventh of the Acts, ver. 51. tells the unbelieving Jews, *Ye stiff-necked, says he, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.* How was it now that their fathers resisted the Holy Ghost? Why that we may learn from what follows: They persecuted and slew the prophets whom God sent to them from time to time to declare his will to them. And how was it that they, the children, viz. the present generation, resisted the Holy Ghost? Why in that, notwithstanding the powerful miracles that Jesus Christ and his apostles wrought among them by the Spirit, they still continued infidels and opposers of the gospel: This was their *resisting the Spirit*: From whence we may gather, that it is not every disobedience or non-compliance with a good motion that is made in our souls, that may be called a *resisting of the Spirit*: But it must be a wilful, perverse, obstinate opposing of God's truth that doth deserve that name.

2. In the second place, as for blaspheming or speaking against the Holy Ghost, that is a degree higher than this, for it implies not only the not being convinced by the miracles that were wrought for the proof of Christ's religion; but further, by slandering or calumniating

niating the Spirit by which they were wrought, saying, that he was not the Spirit of God, but *Beelzebub the prince of the devils*, Mark iii. 22. This was the sin of the pharisees, and it appears so heinous in the eyes of our Saviour, that he declares, that whosoever *shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation, because they said he hath an unclean spirit*, Mark iii. 29, 30. So that without doubt that famous sin, which we call the sin against the Holy Ghost, and which is looked upon as unpardonable, is nothing else but our attributing the miracles of Christ to the power of the devil. From whence we may judge whether any of those people among us, who are apt to fancy they have committed that sin, can possibly be guilty of it.

3. As to the phrase of *quenching the Spirit*, we meet with it among the precepts and advices which St. Paul gives to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. v. 19. *Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophecies*. It is plain he speaks this of those who were already christians; but yet not with respect to the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit of God, which all christians were partakers of, but with respect to the extraordinary miraculous effusions of the Spirit, which were given to some christians in those days. The meaning of the precept is, that they who had these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon them, should be very careful that they did not lose them, that they did not die in them. He useth this term of quenching, because the Holy Spirit is in scripture called a fire; and when he came upon the apostles, he came in the likeness of fire. And accordingly, as he here talks of *quenching the Spirit*, so he elsewhere speaks of *stirring up the Spirit*, 2 Tim. i. 6. alluding in both expressions to the notion of fire: Cer-

tain it is, as a fire must be stirred up and recruited, otherwise it will in a little time be extinguished, so it was with those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in those days. The men that had them were concerned to be wonderfully careful in the exercise of them; never to let them lie idle and unemployed in their hands; nor to make use of them to any selfish worldly purpose. It concerned them likewise to be frequent in prayer; to be strict and severe in their lives; to mind the cause of God above all things, otherwise God would withdraw those assistances of the Spirit from them, the Spirit would perfectly be extinguished in them, and they wholly lose the power of working miracles, and speaking languages, which before they were endowed with. This is the meaning of *quenching the Spirit*; which being so, we cannot but take notice how impertinently this phrase is used by a great many in our days. A man that addresses himself to God in a form of prayer, and doth not use his extemporary faculty, is, by some sort of people among us, said to *quench the Spirit*. But certainly this is quite wide of the expression as St. Paul used it; unless we could make it appear, that every one who talks to God in a sudden extemporary way, without premeditation, was supernaturally and immediately inspired from heaven so to do, and was as much acted by the Divine Spirit as the apostles were in their miraculous performances; which, for my part, I think it a hard matter to believe of any pretenders to inspiration among us.

4. As for the last phrase, that of *grieving the Spirit*, which we here meet with in my text, I come now in the last place to consider it. And I conceive that this phrase is not used with respect to those who are infidels, as the terms of *resisting the Spirit, and blaspheming the Spirit,*

Spirit, are used; nor with respect to the miraculous extraordinary effects, which were visible in many places and persons in the first times of christianity; which the term of *quenching the Spirit* doth refer to; but it is a precept given to those who have already taken the profession of christianity upon themselves; and it is spoken with respect to the sanctifying gifts and graces of the Spirit, *viz.* those communications of the Spirit which were not peculiar to the first times, but common to all believers to the world's end. The Spirit of God is here considered as a guest that hath taken up his lodging in our hearts; at least, as one that desires to be our guest; as having acquired a right and title to us, by virtue of the contract and covenant we made with God in our baptism, and undertaking the vows of christianity. And under this notion of a guest or lodger we are bound not to grieve him, not to afflict him, or make him sad (for so the original $\mu\eta\ \lambdaυπη\iota\tau\epsilon$ signifies) *Ne contristate Spiritum*, says the vulgar Latin very properly. That is, to be careful that we give him no offence, not to do any thing that shall displease him, or by any unkind usage of ours make him weary of his habitation, and give him occasion to remove from us. His meaning is for ever-more to dwell with us; as indeed he is the very principle of the life of a christian, and we cannot live as christians without him. It is not more necessary to the constituting of a man, that a human soul inhabit in a human body, than it is to the being a true christian, that the Holy Spirit of God inhabit in the soul and body of the man. It is true, the Holy Spirit of God doth not dwell actually in all who profess christianity: but then it is true, that all who profess christianity, are not true christians. But this is certain, that it is every professor's own fault, that

the Spirit doth not dwell within him. It is certain, that he is ready and willing so to do, and for this purpose, so long as men have not sinned to such a degree that God thinks fit to give them over to hardness of heart, he fails not, as there is opportunity, to suggest good motions to their souls. As he affords them the outward means of salvation, the word and sacraments, so he accompanies those outwards means with his inward grace and influence. And if they themselves do not prevent his operations in them, he will effectually at last, by the destruction of their sins, work himself a room and place in their hearts; and lodge there for ever, if they do not dislodge him. And indeed this is the very whole design of the gospel of Christ, to unite us to himself by the means of the Holy Spirit; to plant in us a new nature; to possess us with a principle of life, higher and more divine than that which we received from our parents. By being called to christianity, we are called to be the perpetual receptacles and temples of the divinity. This honour and dignity, by our undertaking the christian profession, we are designed for; and whosoever doth his part towards it, is actually made partaker of it. And no man can pretend to any benefit by his christianity, in whom the Spirit of God doth not thus dwell. For this we have abundant evidence all along from what our Saviour and his apostles taught us. This is the meaning of all those places that set forth the union between Christ and his church; making him to be the head, and christians the members. This is that which our Saviour saith in the xvth of St. John, ver. 5, 6. *I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast out as*

a withered branch. There is the same relation between Christ and christians, that there is between the vine and the branches: The same necessity of communication of vital influences from the root to the branch in the one, as in the other: Which communication of influences is made by the Holy Spirit of God, derived from Christ, and diffusing himself into every particular member of the whole body of christians. Hence it is christians are so frequently called the temples of the Holy Ghost. *Know ye not, says St. Paul, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. And again; Know ye not that your Bodies are the members of Christ? 1 Cor. vi. 15. Which he explains presently after thus; Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you; which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ver. 19. And the same St. Paul in the viiith to the Romans, ver. 9, 10, 11, &c. lays the foundation of our relation to Christ, and our hopes of eternal life, in this very thing, viz. the Spirit of God his dwelling in us; as may be there seen more at large.*

This then being the privilege of all christians, that by their being consecrated to Christ, they have a right to the continual presence of the Holy Ghost in their souls; or if you will, God hath so great a right and property in them, that he sends down his Holy Spirit to take possession of them, in order to the securing and sealing them for his own in the other world; we may easily from hence gather what it is to *grieve the Holy Spirit*, (which is the thing we are now enquiring into) viz. We then grieve him, when, being already christians in profession, we either will not vouchsafe

him a lodging in our hearts, which he doth desire; and in order to the obtaining it, makes frequent applications to our souls by his holy motions: Or when we have already given him entertainment, we carry ourselves so unbecomingly towards him, as to tempt him to forsake us. We then *grieve the Holy Spirit*, when, having taken upon ourselves the covenant of baptism, and thereby consecrated and consigned ourselves to God, we either refuse to admit the Spirit to take possession of us, or having admitted him, do not shew that respect, nor observe that decency, nor express that kindness that is due to so worthy a guest; but by our rude and unmannerly and ill-natured behaviour towards him, put such affronts upon him, as highly provoke him to quit his habitation.

Having thus explained the meaning of the precept, and shewn you the foundation upon which it is built; I cannot but make a reflection or two upon what hath been said, before I pass any further.

I. And first, How ought the consideration of this to affect us! What are we, poor creatures, that God should deign to take up his habitation in our souls! And yet we see he is pleased to do so. God doth more really inhabit in every pious soul, and vouchsafe his presence there, than he doth in any temples or churches dedicated to his service. Oh, what a mighty honour and happiness is hereby conferred upon our natures! The highest angels of heaven cannot boast of greater privileges than we enjoy. Oh, what an argument is here to make us infinitely careful, and solicitous, and jealous over ourselves! What a shame and disdain should the sense of this infuse in us, to mingle and communicate with any impure thing! With what an ardent desire, and zeal, and resolution, should this inspire

inspire us to perform all noble, and brave, and extraordinary actions for the cause of God! The Holy Spirit is pleased to take up his residence within us. How pure and spotless, how untainted with worldly lusts and sensual affections, ought we to preserve our hearts! How shall we dare to let any unclean thing approach so sacred a place, unless we could suppose that light can have fellowship with darkness, or that God can have communion with Belial. The Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell with us, and to dwell with us for ever, if we banish him not. How ought this to refresh us under all afflictions, support us under all temptations, animate and encourage us in the most dangerous adventures that we are called out unto! How can we despair of victory in all our contests against the world, the flesh, and the devil, when we have one so mighty to save, ready at hand upon all occasions! How can we want relief in the greatest extremities, when the fountain of joy and consolation has taken up his lodging in our souls!

2. But secondly, Let us take occasion from hence to admire the infinite love, and affection, and tenderness that the Holy Spirit of God bears towards us. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit.*—The words intimate a sense of grief and trouble in him, when we shew any unkindness to him. He seems to be afflicted and made sad when we behave ourselves frowardly and perversely towards him. It is true, there are no passions, properly speaking, in the divine nature; nor can the Holy Spirit be capable either of joy or grief, or any other human affection: But all these things are attributed to God by way of compliance with our infirmities, who are not wont to be so deeply affected with things, unless they be conveyed to us in such a way as we ourselves have experience of. But this is certain, that as from the

terms of God's fury and indignation, and the like, we may safely conclude the infinite aversion that is in his nature to all sin and wickedness; so from such phrases, as these of his repenting of the evil, of his pitying and having compassion on his creatures, of his being grieved and made sad by the injuries that are done to him, we may conclude the infinite love and good-will he bears to mankind. If therefore the consideration of the infiniteness of his majesty who dwelleth within us, will not prevail upon us to treat him with respect and reverence; yet, one would think, if we had any ingenuity, that the sense of the unkindness that he takes when he is ill-treated by us, should work upon us. Will the holy blessed God vouchsafe to be grieved for such a worm as I am, when I refuse his kindness, and will not comply with his love? And shall not I be grieved for my own ingratitude? Can I be so impudent as to live in a daily course of forgetfulness of God, and transgressing his laws, when by so doing I do not only affront his sovereignty and greatness, but also sin against the greatest kindness and tenderness, that ever was conceived in any breast? A kindness so great, that it cannot be expressed? The best words to set it out are borrowed from our passions and tenderest sense of things that we have: But, alas! they fall infinitely short of truly expressing the love that God bears to us. Oh! therefore let us think upon this. Let us consider what it is only to grieve or afflict by our unkindness any one that is our friend, and who hath by all instances of goodness endeavoured to deserve well of us. Human nature cannot bear the thoughts of having disobliged such an one without a sensible trouble. Oh then! how can we with patience endure to think of grieving the Holy Spirit, who, as he is, without comparison,

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the best friend we are capable of having, (as he hath done more for us, and is ready to do more for us, than we can either expect or imagine) so is he pleased to express his resentment of our unkindness in so tender and affectionate a manner, as if he was one of our own nature; nay, joined in the nearest relation and friendship to us.

But I leave this, to shew in the next place what those things are by which the Holy Spirit is grieved.

Now, in general it may be said, that our sins, and they only, are the things which do grieve the Holy Spirit. There is nothing in the world in us, but sin, that give him any displeasure. Neither the infirmities of our nature, nor the circumstances of our condition in the world, nor our manifold temptations, nor persecutions, nor distresses, nor any thing in us, or about us, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. It is only sin: A wilful swerving from the rules that God hath set us, and by which the Holy Spirit desires to govern us, that can give him occasion of offence. For this is the only thing in the world that is contradictory to his nature, and to the ends for which he is pleased to dwell within us. But tho' this be the general answer to the enquiry, yet, for the impressing the thing the more upon the mind, I shall branch it out into four particulars, pursuing the metaphor of the text, which supposes the Holy Spirit to be a guest or a lodger in our hearts.

1. And first of all, We grieve the Holy Spirit, when we neglect him, when we behave ourselves with carelessness and indifference towards him. It must needs trouble any guest to see that he who entertains him, tho' he doth not openly affront him, yet doth not shew him that respect he deserves, nor takes care to please him

him in all things. This very thing is a kind of flighting of him; and the same flight we put upon the Holy Ghost, when we do not heartily give up ourselves to be governed by him in all things; when we do not diligently attend to his holy motions, and vigorously pursue them: But on the contrary live careless and idle lives, suffering the good thoughts that God is daily suggesting to our minds, to die in us, without any effect. This must needs grieve the Holy Spirit, for it is a plain evidence that we neglect him. If we had that regard for him that we ought, we should not suffer that care he takes of us, and that he hath of our good, to be thus utterly without effect; but we should be watchful over ourselves, and be continually looking into our own hearts, and seeing how things went there, and improve every opportunity, every good motion that the Spirit affords us, to our advancement in virtue and goodness. It is not enough that we live without doing any great hurt in the world, that we are not guilty of grievous and scandalous crimes; but we must be heartily and sincerely good, and we must be daily growing better and better. This is the end of the Spirit's dwelling within us: And if we do not make use of his presence to this end, we shall provoke him, at length, to forsake us, and give us up as trifling souls, upon whom no good is to be done.

2. But secondly, As we grieve the Holy Spirit by our carelessness and indifference, and not attending to his holy motions; so we do yet more grieve him by every act of wilful, deliberate sin; or by sinning against our conscience, either in single acts, or in a habit of any sin. Sins of ignorance and inadvertency, sins that we fall into unawares and thro' surprize, the Holy Spirit will bear with; but the indulging of any one sin in the
course

course of our lives, or the committing any one act of sin against our natural light, wilfully, deliberately, when the Holy Spirit within us testifies to us, that we ought not to do such a thing; I say, this is so high an affront put upon the blessed Spirit, that it is not to be borne withal: it is a downright violation of all the laws of hospitality: it is a betraying our guest, and taking part with his open enemies. And what guest will not forsake his habitation when he is thus treated. Oh! therefore, as we love our souls, let us have a care of these sins; let us do nothing against our conscience; let us never willingly and deliberately do a thing that we know to be evil. It is not to be told how much by any such actions as these we wound our own souls, and what misery we bring upon ourselves. This is the certain way to drive away the Holy Spirit from us, and if ever he do return again, it must be upon a very severe and particular repentance.

3. Thirdly, Tho' all sins do grieve the Holy Spirit, and wilful sins most; yet there are some sins that have a mark set upon them in the scripture, as being of such a nature as to grieve the Holy Spirit in a more particular manner than others. And these are the sins that are more immediately committed against our bodies. Such are all sorts of uncleanness and intemperance. The Spirit of God is a spirit of purity, and therefore nothing so opposite to him as all fleshly pollutions and sensuality. Indeed the very notion of his being a guest and lodger with us, supposeth that we are obliged in a more particular manner to take care that our hearts, where he is to dwell, should be thoroughly purged from every thing that is filthy and unclean. And this is the very argument that St. Paul uses to the Corinthians, to make them especially careful to avoid fornication, and other uncleanness; namely, because their
bodies

bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost. The body, says he, is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ! Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid! Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body: But he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. And ye know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, 1 Cor. vi. 13. 15. 18. 19. And in the text we are now upon, when St. Paul bids us not to grieve the Spirit, he seems to have an especial regard to the grieving him by wantonness and uncleanness, by lewd and scurrilous discourses. This the context plainly intimates. For in the verse before, he gives them this caution; *Let no corrupt communication, says he, proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers,* Eph. iv. 29. And then it follows in the text, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.* And what we say of lust and uncleanness, the same is to be said of gluttony and drunkenness: for these are as noisome and offensive to the Holy Spirit as the other, and render the man who is guilty of them every whit as incapable of his divine inspirations. Indeed the Spirit of God cannot lodge in a soul that is impure and sensual in any kind. And therefore, if ever we expect to be sealed to the day of redemption, it will infinitely concern us all to keep our bodies pure and undefiled, to possess them in sanctification and honour, 1 Thess. iv. 4. A man that is given to lust or drunkenness, is no more capable of receiving or lodging the Holy Spirit, than a stye is fit to be made a temple.

4. But fourthly and lastly, As there are some particular sins, so there are some particular circumstances of

sins, that do likewise grieve him in a more especial manner than others. Now of these circumstances, this I cannot but take notice of, as a chief one, viz. our continuing to pursue a sinful course of life after we have often engaged ourselves by solemn vows and resolutions to forsake it. There is nothing more hated by God or man, than the sin of unfaithfulness and ingratitude. The best friend in the world, if time after time we abuse his kindneses, if upon every turn when we have need of him we solemnly engage to him to do this or the other thing that he would have us, and yet when that turn is served, we forget all our promises and engagements, and fall again to that practice that we know will above all things in the world disoblige him: I say, in such a case as this, the best friend in the world will, without scruple, shake off all thoughts of friendship with us, and have nothing more to do with persons who are so ungrateful and perfidious. It is a matter of great comfort to us, that the patience and kindness of God doth so infinitely exceed that of the best friends upon earth. But yet our baseness, and treachery, and inconstancy, in a customary breach of vows and promises, I say these things will (if any thing in the world can) provoke God Almighty to abandon us, and leave us to ourselves. The holy Spirit of God will strive with us for a long time; but God hath told us, that *his Spirit shall not always strive with us*, Gen. vi. 3. We may, by our frequent back-slidings, after our solemn engagements to the contrary, so weary him (if I may speak in scripture language, Isa. vii. 13. Jer. xv. 6. Mal. ii. 17.) that he may think fit to give us up. However, it is certain, that every man that is thus false and treacherous, takes the most ready course in the world to bring this judgment upon himself.

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And so much it may suffice to have spoken upon the precept itself, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.*

I come now to the other part of my text, viz. The argument wherewith St. Paul enforces this precept; and that is the consideration that it the is Spirit *that sealeth us unto the day of redemption.* In speaking to which words, I must, First, Enquire what is meant by the day of redemption. Secondly, What is meant by being sealed unto the day of redemption. And, Thirdly, How, or in what sense the Holy Spirit doth thus seal christians: From all which it will apppear what a mighty argument the consideration of this ought to be to us, *not to grieve the Spirit.*

I. And first let us enquire what is meant by the day of redemption. The writers of the New-testament speak of a four-fold redemption which Christ hath wrought for us, viz. A redemption from the law: A redemption from the guilt and punishment of sin: A redemption from the dominion and power of sin: And a redemption from the grave.

I. I shall speak a word or two upon each of these particulars. The scriptures speak of a redemption from the law. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles thro' Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith,* Gal. iii. 13, 14. And again, *When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,* Gal. iv. 4, 5. The Jews were properly and immediately concerned in this redemption from the law; for none were under the law; (viz. obliged to obedience to it, or obnoxious to the curses of it) but they to whom it was given. And this redemption

redemption consisted in this, that Christ, by his death, did wholly put an end to the mosaical covenant, so that the Jews were no longer under the obligation to the law, nor subject to the inconveniencies it brought upon them. And justly might this be called a redemption; for it was a restoration of that people from a state of bondage into a state of liberty, Gal. xxiv. 5, 31. So long as they were under that covenant (*viz.* the dispensation of the law) they were in a servile condition, *rather servants than sons*, (ver. 1, 2, 3. 5.) nor was it possible for them, by means of the law, to attain to *justification*, Rom. iii. 20. or a state of God's favour and acceptance. But Christ, by putting an end to this covenant, set on foot a better, *viz.* the evangelical, that was first made with Adam, and then with Abraham, *430 years before the law*, Gal. iii. 20. which, as it gave better conditions (requiring only faith and repentance instead of many cumbersome ceremonies) so it was *established upon better promises*, Heb. viii. 6. making over to us not only the pardon of our sins, and the assistances of the Spirit, but eternal rewards in another world. So that to be redeemed from the law, was indeed an inestimable privilege.

But it may be asked, how doth this redemption concern us Gentiles, since we were never under the law? I answer, it doth concern us infinitely; and the benefit we have received hereby, is as great as that was to them. It is true, we cannot properly be said to be *redeemed from the curse of the law*, because we were never obnoxious to it; (*for what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law*, Rom. iii. 19.) but then we were in as bad a condition, or worse; for we were left in our pure naturals, in that low degenerate state, in which we came into the world; tho' we were not
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subject to the maledictions contained in the law, yet we were subject to that death, which was the general punishment threatened to the disobedient under the law, and was the curse and sentence denounced against Adam and his posterity. And we had no more light or means to approve ourselves to God, or to attain to a state of justification or salvation, than the Jews themselves had under the law: Nay, indeed, not near so much. But now Christ's redeeming the Jews from the curse of the law, and entering them into a new covenant, Gal. iii. 29, &c. 1 Cor. i. 30. or rather renewing the old covenant of the gospel made with Abraham, became justification and salvation to us Gentiles also. For so had God ordered the matter in his dispensation of times and seasons, that when the mosaical covenant should be abrogated (which *was a wall of separation and partition between the Jews and Gentiles*, Eph. ii. 14.) and the evangelical covenant take place in the stead thereof, then should the *Gentiles* also be *adopted into God's family*, and *they which were before strangers and aliens*, should become equally his sons and heirs with them, who had before been his peculiar people, Rom. xi. Eph. ii. 12, 13. 19. Gal. iv. 5. And this is the *great mystery* that St. Paul so often speaks of, Rom. xi. 33, &c. Christ, when he put an end to the covenant of the law, brought both Jews and Gentiles into one and the same new covenant; and gave to both the same promises, and the same means, and the same hopes of salvation, Eph. iii. 6. so that the one had no advantage above the other. And upon this account it is that we find St. Paul mentioning the redemption of the Jews from the law as a matter that did nearly concern, and much redound to the benefit of the Gentiles; as particularly in the two texts above-cited; *Christ hath*

redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. And what the blessing of Abraham was, the next words shew; *That we*, viz. both Jews and Gentiles, *might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith*, Gal. iii. 13, 14. The promise of the Spirit was one of the great privileges of the evangelical covenant, which was made with *Abraham*. And this promise was not made over to the Jews by their law; but when that law was abrogated by Christ, then that promise was made good both to them and to the Gentiles. And to the same purpose speaks that other passage I quoted, *The Son of God was sent to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*, (Gal. iv. 5.) viz. he was sent to redeem the Jews from their bondage, that from thenceforward Jews and Gentiles might be no longer discriminated, but all might be made heirs of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

I have dwelt the longer upon this head, to give some light to those texts which relate to the redemption from the law; because it is a point which is generally little understood, and consequently much misrepresented. Nor indeed can there be any good sense in the notion of this redemption, unless we take along with us the key that I have given: But with the help of this we may clear up several passages in St. Paul's epistles, which are commonly thought very obscure and difficult.

And it appears, from what has been said, that this redemption from the law is so far from being an inconsiderable thing, with respect to us of the Gentile world, that it is the foundation of all the other three redemptions that remain to be spoken to, viz. from the guilt of sin, from the power of it, and from the grave, or the power of death: All these follow upon it; or it is
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the general under which these particulars are contained. For you see that the notion of redemption from the law, as that term is used in scripture, doth not only imply the abrogation of the first covenant of the law, but takes into it the establishing a new covenant, both with Jews and Gentiles. Now the promises made over in this new covenant are neither more nor fewer than these three: First, The pardon of sin, which is the very same thing with redemption from the guilt of sin. Secondly, The assistance and graces of the Spirit, which are the same thing with the second redemption from the power of sin. And thirdly, Eternal salvation of body and soul in the other world, which is the last redemption I mentioned, viz. from the grave. So that our redemption from the law doth virtually contain in it all the others.

2. But however, for the clearing the text, it is fit that something should be said to each particular. In the second place therefore, when the scripture speaks of the redemption that was wrought for us by Jesus Christ, sometimes by that term is meant a deliverance from our sins, viz. from the guilt and punishment of them. Thus is the word used in Eph. i. 7. and Coloss. i. 14. In both which texts we meet with this passage (where the apostle is speaking of Jesus Christ) *In whom, says he, we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Christ by his death procured for all believers the remission of all their sins, bought off the punishment that was due to them; so that no true disciple of his shall ever be called to an account for them in another world. And this is that notion of redemption that doth commonly obtain among us. When we speak of Christ as our Redeemer, we mean it with relation to his dying for our sins, or making such satisfaction to God for them, that we, upon the account there-

thereof, are acquitted or justified, though this be indeed only one branch of our redemption.

3. For, in the third place, Christ came as much to redeem us from the dominion of our sins, as from the guilt of them. It was never his design that a wicked man should be justified before God, and continue still wicked: but he was sent as well to destroy sin in our mortal bodies (to subdue it so by the power of the Spirit, that it should not reign in us) as he was sent to deliver us from the dreadful consequences of it, viz. the punishments of another life, which would otherwise have fallen upon us. And this is another notion of redemption that we meet with in scripture; as for instance, *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. In this place it is plain that Christ's redemption of us is the enabling us to mortify all our lusts and evil habits, and to become holy and virtuous livers; that as before we were the slaves of sin and of the devil, so we should from henceforward walk as the freemen of Jesus Christ.

4. But then, besides these three notions of redemption already mentioned, there is also a fourth in the New-testament, and which indeed is the consummation of all the rest, without which they would not have been compleat: and that is the eternal glorification both of our souls and bodies at the last appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we were obnoxious to eternal punishment for our sins, which Christ by his death redeemed us from; as likewise we were the slaves and vassals of sin, which slavery Christ, by sending his Holy Spirit, redeemed us from; so after these redemptions were wrought, there still remained a fourth, viz. the redemption of our bodies from the grave, and the uniting

uniting them with our souls in perfect happiness. And this to be effected by that Spirit which raised up Jesus from the dead at the day of the general resurrection. Now in this sense, as well as in the other fore-named, we have the word redemption frequently used in the New-testament; as Heb. ix. 12. *Christ by entering into the holy place (that is, the highest heavens) hath obtained eternal redemption for us.* That is to say, our Saviour ascending up into heaven with his body, to sit at the right-hand of God for evermore, is an evidence to us, that he hath obtained an eternal redemption for us: and he is a pledge and assurance to us, that our bodies shall be redeemed from the grave, and live in heaven eternally with him. This likewise is the notion of redemption in the viiith chapter to the Romans, ver. 23. there, says the apostle, *We ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.* Where you may observe, that that consummation of happiness at the general day of judgment, which St. Paul and other christians here waited for, and groaned after, is called by two names; first, the adoption, or sonship: and the reason of this name is clear, because christians are not, and shall not be compleatly manifested to be the sons of God, till they be made partakers of the resurrection. For this we have our Saviour's express authority, who, speaking of those who shall be *thought worthy of the rewards of the other world in that day*, tells us, *that they are the children of God, being (or because they are) the children of the resurrection*, Luke xx. 36. Rom. viii. 19. The other term, by which that state of future happiness is expressed, is the redemption of the body; which is a very proper expression. As for our souls, they

they were redeemed before, by being delivered from the power of sin, and from the eternal punishment consequent upon it; and to no other kinds of death were they obnoxious. But our bodies are not redeemed till that glorious happy day, when they shall be restored from the grave to live for ever with the soul in unspeakable happiness. Another text, wherein the word redemption is taken in that notion we are speaking of, is in the first chapter to the Ephesians, ver. 13, 14. where the apostle saith, *After that ye believed ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.* In which text there is no difficulty, when we know what is meant by *the purchased possession*, or, as it is render'd in the margin, *peculiar treasure*. And, without doubt, this must be understood of the church, the whole body of faithful christians, whom Christ purchased with his blood; upon which account they may truly be called his *purchased possession*, or his *peculiar treasure*, as the Israelites were called by God after he had brought them out of Egypt, Exod. xix. 5. Well then, if *the redemption of the purchased possessions*, Psal. cxxxv. 4. be no more than the redemption of the church, or the whole body of christians; then the plain sense of the place is, that God gives us his holy Spirit as an earnest of that inheritance which he will bestow upon us at the general redemption of the church, which will be at the day of the resurrection. And there is no doubt but this passage and my text are directly parallel, and mean the same thing. No doubt but the redemption here must be the same with the redemption there, viz. not any redemption that is past or present, but that of christians, which is yet to come at the general judgment. In truth, there is no other notion of

redemption that will fit the place. And of this it is that our Lord himself seems to speak, where, having mentioned the signs that should precede his approach to judgment, he says, *When ye see these things come to pass, then lift up your heads, and look up, for your redemption draweth nigh*, Luke xxi. 28.

Having thus given a particular account of the several notions of redemption, and shewn from thence how we are to understand *the day of redemption* in my text; let us, in the next place, enquire what is meant by *being sealed to this day of redemption*: of which I shall speak more briefly.

II. A seal hath always been used for two especial purposes; either for the confirmation of covenants and contracts between God and man, or for marking any thing for one's own. Now to either of these uses of a seal, we may suppose the apostle to allude, when he says that we are sealed by the Spirit. If we take it in the former notion, then the sense is this; that as it is the custom amongst men, to confirm their agreements and covenants by mutually setting their seals to the instruments wherein the articles of them are recorded, so God having made a covenant with all faithful christians, wherein he promises to give them eternal life in the other world, he is pleased to ratify this covenant, and the promises therein made on his part, by sending down the holy Spirit into their hearts; which is the strongest assurance that he can possibly give, that he sincerely intends to make good to us what he has promised, and that on his side the contract is inviolable. And such a seal hath God set to this covenant of Christianity, as hath infinitely the pre-eminence above the seal of the Jewish covenant that was before it, and gives greater

greater security to us that God will perform it. The seal of that covenant was only an outward seal, an external mark in the flesh, viz. circumcision: But this is an inward seal, a seal in the heart and mind. The Israelites were sealed in their flesh to the possession of the earthly land of Canaan; but christians are sealed in the inward man by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon their minds, to the possession of that inheritance that is eternal in the heavens. But we may well suppose that the apostle doth by this phrase of sealing allude to the other use of a seal, as it was, and is still used by merchants and men of trade, viz. as a declaration of their right and propriety in a thing. Thus it was the custom of those persons, [that] whatever commodity was bought by them, or consigned to them, to have their seal or mark put upon it, whereby it might be distinguished from all others, and known to be theirs only: Nay, in those times they did not only set their seal upon goods, but upon persons too, whom they bought or had any property in. And accordingly, in allusion to this, we find in the revelations, that the true worshippers of Jesus Christ, that were to be saved in the midst of the judgments and calamities that were to fall upon the antichristian churches, are said to have the seal of God on their foreheads: And on the other side, they who belonged to the beast, who were subjects of antichrist, are said to have the mark of the beast upon them. And in this sense the phrase is used even of our Lord our Jesus Christ, for he is said *to be sealed by the Father*, John vi. 26. viz. God, by his sending the Holy Spirit down upon him at his baptism, did declare to all the world, that Jesus Christ was owned by him. And in this sense all christians may be truly said to be sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption; that is, God, by giving them the Spirit, hath marked them for his own;

they have an evidence in themselves that they belong to him, and that they shall certainly have their portion in the resurrection of the just. And this I take to be the full meaning of the phrase in my text, of *being sealed*.

III. My third and last enquiry is, How, and in what sense the Spirit doth seal us to that day. There are three notions of it.

The first of which is very false, though commonly received.

The second is true, but yet not full; nor I suppose, principally intended in this place.

And therefore I conceive the third is to be preferred.

I. The first account of the Spirit's sealing is this: We commonly take the Spirit's sealing us to the day of redemption, to be his testifying to our hearts that God is reconciled to us, and hath forgiven us all our sins. We fancy that he doth, as it were, whisper it into our ears; we seem to hear a voice within us that bids us be of good comfort, for God hath accepted us. Now when we have these suggestions, we believe that then the Spirit doth seal us, and witness with our spirit: But when we find our minds cloudy and melancholy, so that we think not so well of ourselves, then we believe that we are in a state of desertion, that God hath forsaken us, and refuses to seal us with the Holy Ghost. Now, according to this notion, the sense of my text must be, have a care that you do not grieve the Holy Spirit; for if you do, he will not testify to your minds that you are the children of God, but you shall be in a very doubtful and uncertain condition, and want all that comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost, which otherwise you might have. But to this I say, that tho' I doubt not but that God sometimes, and in some particular

particular cases, is pleased to manifest his goodness to the souls of pious persons in an extraordinary manner, and to fill them with inexpressible joy and consolation, and to possess them with an undoubted assurance of their eternal happiness, more particularly at the hour of death, or in a time of difficult trials, especially in the case of martyrdom: Yet I deny utterly, that this is the sealing of the Spirit spoken of in the text, and that for these reasons; first of all, there is no text of scripture that gives countenance to such an interpretation of the sealing of the Spirit; for all those that I know of, place his sealing in his being within us, and not in his suggesting to our minds a good opinion of ourselves: And thus it is we must interpret that famous text of St. Paul, of the Spirit's witnessing with our spirits, that we are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 16. as any one will be convinced, who carefully examines the context, and considers the occasion upon which these words are made use of.

Secondly, It is no where promised by God in scripture, that men shall ordinarily have that testimony of the goodness of their condition that this notion implieth, and consequently the sealing of the Spirit cannot consist in it. The ordinary way of coming to an assurance of our future happiness is, by reasoning with our own hearts, examining and comparing our lives and actions with the rule that Christ hath given us to walk by. If our consciences, upon such an examination, give us in evidence that we have sincerely performed the conditions of the christian covenant required on our parts, viz. that we do truly believe and repent; then we may conclude that we are in a safe and good condition. I say, this is the way that the scripture (Lam. iii. 40. Gal. vi. 4. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) chalketh out to us for the gain-

ing of assurance; and no man can come to it otherwise, unless God be pleased to deal with him in an extraordinary and miraculous way, which I suppose, every one is not to expect.

Thirdly, If the sealing of the Spirit be the Spirit's possessing our minds with a strong persuasion that our sins are forgiven, what will become of them who never had this strong persuasion, and yet, for all that, are very honest, and sincere, and devout christians? There are a great many in the world, who truly desire and endeavour to serve God as well as they can, and live honest and virtuous lives, and hope well too in the mercies of God, but yet have none of those extraordinary overflowing consolations of the Spirit that this notion supposeth: Nay, many of them are frequently apt to distrust their own condition, as thinking they are not so good as they should be; Nay, and perhaps they may die in that opinion. What shall we say of such? that they are not sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption? God forbid! I should much less doubt of the happiness of such a person in the world to come, tho' I saw him go out of this world unsatisfied as to his future state, than I should of one who had those sweet and comfortable inspirations of his being the child of God, if I saw that he had been less careful in his life and conversation than the other.

But fourthly, That strong assurance which we sometimes feel in our minds that we are in a good condition, cannot be the Spirit's sealing to the day of redemption, upon this account; that at this rate, the Spirit's sealing us would be no seal of God at all; viz. it would be a very fallible seal, and the man who had it, might for all that be in a miserable condition. The plain English is, that there is nothing in this persuasion

or confidence of our good condition (unless it be fetched from some other ground than this strong impulse on our minds) but what a very wicked man may have as well as the best. A wicked man may at some times, and in some humours, especially when his brains are heated, and his blood runs quick in his veins, and he hath for some time vigorously bent his mind to the applying of Christ's righteousness to his own soul: I say, in such a fit of devotion as this, he may easily be brought to fancy himself as true a believer, and as great a saint, as the best of them; though in the mean time there is no real lasting change made upon his heart, but when the heat is over, he becomes the same man he was before. All that I mean is this, that if there be no other notion of the seal of the Spirit of God but this that I am speaking against, it may oftentimes prove no more than a strong fancy: and the person that will the most easily come by this seal, will not be he who studies to serve God best, but he who hath the most lively and brisk imagination; which is, in effect, to make the seal of the Spirit of God a foundation for all the enthusiasm in the world.

2. But secondly, Leaving this extravagant notion of the seal of the Spirit, let us come to a more sober and justifiable one. Many very learned interpreters do conceive, that *the Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption*, is to be understood of those extraordinary miraculous effusions of the Spirit, which were vouchsafed to the christians of the apostles time, for the quicker spreading, and the greater confirmation of the christian religion; all which gifts of the Spirit are ceased in our days. Now, according to this notion of the Spirit, the sense of the text is this, that the Spirit of God, which was in this manner poured forth

upon the apostles and the other christians in their days, was a seal and an evidence to them and to all the world, that the christians were the children of God, that he owned their cause, that he acknowledged them for his people, and would reward them at the day of the general retribution: Nay, these works of the Spirit were not only a seal to the christians of those days, but to us at this time, and will be so to the end of the world. For the works that were then done, are a confirmation to us at this day, of the truth of Christianity, and a seal that God hath set to the evangelical covenant, that he will make good the promises of the gospel to the whole succession of believers for ever. This now, it cannot be denied, is a very true sense of the Spirit's sealing, and ought by no means to be refused or excluded; but yet I conceive it is not the full sense of the words, nor the sense principally intended by them. And my reason is this, because it appears pretty clear from the context, and also from the text itself, that the Spirit is here considered as a lodger and a guest in the heart of christians, and under that notion they are bound not to grieve him; and every christian is concerned in that advice or precept; and he is therefore concerned, because the Holy Spirit is to seal to him a title to his eternal inheritance. But now *if the Spirit's sealing to the day of redemption* be only his confirmation of christianity by the extraordinary works which were wrought in the primitive times, then either all persons are not concerned in the prohibition of not grieving him (but only those in whom he vouchsafed his extraordinary presence in order to the working miracles): Or, if all persons be concerned in it, then the argument, whereby the apostle would enforce it, is either none at all, or but a very dry one. It is therefore reasonable to believe,

3. In the third place, that these words are spoken not with relation to the extraordinary works of the Spirit, but to his constant assistances to all christians; and the true sense and meaning of our being sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption will be this; that the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, and enabling us to mortify our lusts, and to live a life of purity and holiness, is that seal that God hath set upon us to distinguish us from the rest of the world, and to make us his own children. For any man to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, is a certain argument that he belongs to God, and that he shall be raised up among the happy at the last day. On the contrary, whosoever hath not the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, cannot plead any right to the promises of everlasting life made by our Saviour. Which St. Paul does more fully make out in his eighth chapter of the Romans.

This then is the sum of the text, that we had need be very careful how we grieve or offend the Holy Spirit, because our everlasting happiness or misery depends upon his dwelling, or not dwelling within us. If we so carry ourselves as not to grieve him, he will dwell within us; and that indwelling of his, is our certain evidence and security that we shall be made partakers of everlasting life. If by a careless and wicked course, we so provoke him, that he quits his habitation, and leaves us to ourselves, then we have no seal of God upon us, we can challenge no right or property to the rewards of God's children at the last day, but are left in the crowd of the miserable, to receive our portion with apostate angels, and with hypocrites and unbelievers.



DISCOURSE IV.

Of the various callings in life: And the inferences from thence. That Christianity makes no change in human callings, or in the civil relations of life: And the inferences from thence. Of the requisites of a lawful calling, and how it is to be distinguished from one that is unlawful. Of gaming.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

I COR. vii. 17.

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk: And so ordain I in all the churches.

AT the first reading of these words one would think that God's *distribution to every man*, here spoken of, was meant of the *Charismata*, or those spiritual gifts which were in the times of the apostles plentifully bestowed upon all sorts of christians in an extraordinary and miraculous way, for the edification of the church,

church, as indeed the phrase is sometimes used in these epistles. But the relation which this text hath to what goes before doth necessarily determine us to understand the words, *as God hath distributed to every man*, in another way. The apostle, in this epistle, has frequent occasion to discourse about the notion and limits of christian liberty; and in this chapter he resolves a case or two *ex professo*, which were put to him about one great point, wherein it was pretended christian liberty was mightily concerned, and that was in the business of matrimony. The case was this, whether a christian who was married to an unbeliever (that is, either to an infidel, jew, or heathen) might not, by virtue of his christian liberty, depart from the unbelieving party, and dispose of himself as he thought fit. Of this St. Paul's resolution is, that if any, who hath taken upon him Christ's religion, *have an unbelieving woman to his wife, and she is willing to dwell with him*, notwithstanding his new religion, *he should not put her away*, ver. 12. And, on the contrary, if a christian woman had an infidel for her husband, *she should not depart from him so long as he was willing to cohabit with her*, ver. 13. This is the effect of what he has said in the verses immediately before my text. And for this advice he gives two reasons; one drawn from the benefits which might come to both by thus living together; for, in all probability, it might be a means to bring over the unbeliever, whether it was husband or wife, to the true belief, and so save their souls: The other is drawn from the nature of Christianity in general, which is such, that it never made, nor doth make any alteration in the civil relations or callings of mankind; but left men, as to these things, in the same circumstances in which it found them; and therefore it was

fit and reasonable that all men should continue in that calling, and that condition, into which they were disposed by the divine Providence at that time when they were called to be christians. And this is that which is represented in the words of my text, and the true account of the relation it hath to the foregoing part of the chapter. *As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk*: That is, into what condition or lot soever a man is put by the Providence of God, in what state or function soever he was placed, when our Lord Jesus called him to be a disciple, in that let him continue, in that let him walk, even after his becoming a christian. And this, says the apostle, *I do ordain*, as a rule to be observed, not only among you Corinthians, but *in all other churches*. And having laid down this general advice, he dilates upon it in an instance or two more in the following words; *Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised*, ver. 18. That is to say, Is any Jew converted to christianity? Let him not, after his conversion, use any art to make himself appear as if he had never been circumcised. And so, on the contrary, let no Gentile when he comes over to Christ's religion, put on the badge of judaism, which is circumcision, but let him remain as he is. And so again, in the 21st verse; *Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it; but if thou may'st be made free, use it rather*: That is, art thou in a condition of a slave or bondman when thou receivest christianity? Do not think that the liberty which thou obtainest by thy christianity will allow thee to go away from thy master: No, if thy master will set thee free, it is well for thee, and thou art to thank him for it: But if he will not, thou must keep

keep as thou art; for thy religion doth not alter the civil state or condition of thy life; only there is this for thy comfort, when thou art once a christian, tho' as to thy civil condition thou art a bondman, yet thou art Christ's freeman. Thou shalt enjoy all the privileges which he purchased for thee; which indeed are glorious and great, for thou shalt be set free from the power of sin, and from the consequence of it, eternal death. Which is a far greater privilege than any manumission from thy earthly master can instate thee in.

This is the plain meaning of St. Paul's instances; which having laid down, he concludes this point with a repetition of the general exhortation that went before in my text: *Brethren, let every man abide in the same calling, wherein he is called, viz. let him continue in the same civil state of life wherein he was when he first became a christian.*

Having thus given an account of the text, I observe these three points from it, which I shall make the heads of my discourse:

I. God hath made various distributions to mankind; or the distribution of mankind into various conditions and functions is from God.

II. The christian religion hath made no change or alteration as to matters of civil degrees or callings; but hath left all men, as to these things, in the same posture and station in which it found them.

III. Since the various circumstances and callings into which men are disposed, are from God, no man can be justified who lives in such a way, or follows such a course of life, as cannot be supposed to be of God's distribution.

The first of these points is the supposition or foundation upon which the text proceeds.

The second is that which is directly intended in it.

The third is a necessary consequence from it.

I. God has made various distributions unto mankind; or, the distribution of mankind into various conditions and functions is from God. *As God hath distributed to every man, so let him walk.* It is God who hath distributed. As he is the parent of mankind, so he is the author of that variety of gifts and faculties, of powers and abilities, of tempers and fitnesses, which are to be seen among them: And also of all those several ranks, degrees, and stations, of all those several callings and functions, and employments, which must necessarily arise from that variety. All men are not made alike, nor framed with the same inclinations, nor qualified for the same employments, nor fitted for the same circumstances. And as various as are the talents and geniuses of mankind, no less various is the outward lot and condition into which they are disposed. And, in truth, the necessities of mankind in this world do absolutely require all this variety. Without this multitude of distributions, and degrees, and callings, neither public societies could be maintained, nor the good of particular persons in any tolerable way attained or secured. This truth St. Paul hath most elegantly set forth in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 12. where he compares the society of christians to a national body. There he shews, that as in the natural body there are many members, and all those members have not the same dignity and honour, nor the same use and office, and yet every member, even the meanest, hath its particular use, by which it doth real service to the body; nay, so useful it is, that the body cannot be
with-

without it : So it is in every commonwealth or body-politic, whether ecclesiastical or civil. There is a necessity both in the church and in the state, that there should be variety of functions, and degrees, and conditions. There must be some to govern, and some to be governed. There must be some more conspicuous, and some more obscure. Some for bodily labour, others for contemplation. Some whose gifts lie this way, and others whose talents lie the other way. And yet there is not one of these, but in his degree and station either is, or may be, as useful as any who belong to the society ; so that *the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* Nay more, *those members of the body which seem to be most feeble and dishonourable, are yet very necessary,* 1 Cor. xii. 21, 22.

I speak not this to discourage any man's endeavours to advance himself and his condition in any lawful way. No: as any man hath parts, or friends, or opportunities, he may do what he can to better his fortunes, and may leave one employment to follow another. But this I say, no man ought to be discontent with that present condition that by Providence he is cast into. For if he be a good man, it is certainly best for him, and when it ceaseth to be so, God will take care that he shall be put into another.

The inferences which I make from this point are these two following :

1. That all men, in what calling or station soever they are placed, ought to be well pleased with them, since they come from God : *God hath distributed them unto them.* It is both foolish and sinful for any man to be in the least displeas'd, that he is not in such desirable circumstances as he fancies some others about him to be.

be. Others live easily, and fare deliciously, but he is forced to earn his living with the sweat of his brow, and that but a hard one too: This man hath the talents of knowledge and learning, but he hath no abilities of that kind. Several of his neighbours have mighty advantageous, thriving employments, but his is a dull and mean one. He is forced to be a servant and live under the command of others, whereas others can dispose of themselves and their time as they think fit. I say, how unequal soever these kinds of dealings and dispensations seem to be, yet, coming from God, and being so necessary in the world, they ought to be very well taken by those who are in them. God had no unkindness to me in placing me in this station rather than another, but really dealt with me in that way which was both more fit for me, and wherein, if I be not wanting to my trust, I may do a great deal of service to my generation. I was not made for a statesman or a magistrate, or to be great and noble. In these ways I might, perhaps, have undone myself, and done hurt to the public instead of good: But in that poor mean lot I am placed, I am secure, and may do as much service to mankind in my way, as the greatest of them can do in theirs. Every calling that is a lawful calling, every condition that comes to me by Providence, be it never so hard, or uneasy, or contemptible, yet is of God, and ordained for great and good ends: And a man ought no more to be dissatisfied with it, or take it unkindly that God has disposed him into it, than the foot, in the natural body, ought to be displeas'd that it is not made the hand; or than the hand ought to be [that it is not made the head.

2. The second inference I make from this point, is, that since there are varieties of callings and varieties of gifts

gifts and distributions in order to the fitting men for these callings, every man in the choice of an employment or way of living for himself, or those under his charge, ought to have great regard to those natural gifts and distributions which God hath bestowed upon him or them. Every one may be serviceable to God and his country; but not all in every way; but some in one way, and some in another. Here therefore lies our great skill and prudence, to chuse fitly for ourselves. And here lies the great duty of those who have the care of youth, to place them in such circumstances as best agree with their natural temper and talents. It is a ridiculous thing to train up him to learning who hath an aversion for a book; or to put him to a trade or an active life, that is made for study and retirement. The genius, and disposition, and capacity of every one is principally to be attended to, and the education to be suited to them, and then a calling to be chosen which suits with both, and no worldly considerations ought to divert us from this proceeding. It is not a justifiable motive to design a person to any employment merely upon this account, that it is a way to raise him in the world, and by the means of the friends and interest we can make, we have a fair prospect of getting him preferment in this course. No: If there be either an averfeness of temper, or an incapacity of parts, we extremely both wrong the youth under our care, and the public too, by thus yoking and fettering him. The motives of wealth and greatness, and secular advantages are then only allowable, when a man's natural talents and abilities give hopes that he is fitted for such callings, or such a kind of education, as may lead to those advantages. And, in truth, if this consideration were better attended to, abundance of young persons would

not miscarry, which now do; and the world would receive a great deal more benefit and advantage by those who are born into it.

II. But I proceed to my second general point, which I observed from this text, *viz.* that christianity has made no change or alteration as to matters of civil relations, or degrees, or callings among men, but has left every man, as to these things, in the same posture and station in which it found him. Every man is to abide in that condition, or that calling in which he was made a christian; that is the direct sense of the text. And indeed it is a true representation of the nature of our religion, which, if it had been otherwise, would never have so effectually recommended itself to the world, as we see it hath done. The design of our Lord's coming into the world, and setting on foot his religion, was only to better the morals of mankind, to make them innocent, and holy, and virtuous in all conditions of life, and by that means, by the virtue of his death, to reconcile them to God, and make them heirs of everlasting life in another world. But it was no part of his design to meddle with the civil constitution of mankind, which did arise from nature, and was wholly in order to this world. Christ meant not to intrench upon any man's rights, whether princes or private persons: He meant not to abolish any privilege or any due arising to any man, either from custom, or contract, or law: He meant not to alter the outward condition or circumstances of any man, which the divine Providence had disposed him into: For though he was a king, yet his kingdom was not of this world, but wholly in order to another; and therefore it was all one, as to his subjects religion, whether they were governors or governed, married or unmarried, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, bond or free,

free, statesmen or mechanics; they were all equally acceptable to God, and Christ never intended to put them into other circumstances. So far was he himself from meddling with these matters, that he would not so much as determine a controversy between two brethren about a piece of land, lest he should be said to take upon him the office of a judge. He, though he was, as I said, the king of the world in a spiritual sense, yet, being born a subject as to his human nature, he was as obedient to the laws, and customs, and constitutions of the state where he lived, as the meanest subject. And as he behaved himself, so did he command all of his religion to behave in imitation of him. So likewise did his apostles exhort, to give to all men their due; to submit to every constitution of man for the Lord's sake; to obey those who had the rule over them; and to continue in that condition, or that calling, wherein they were called to be christians.

Now if this be a true representation of christianity, as without doubt it is, then we may justly make three inferences from hence:

1. First, how much they are to be blamed who forsake their callings and ordinary way of living upon a pretence of a purer religion: who will needs be so holy, and so much above the pitch of other christians, that they will have nothing to do with the world, or the things that concern it. Of this sort are some of our enthusiasts, who wholly neglect the business of their callings under a pretence of religion, and run up and down from house to house, from meeting to meeting, for the gratifying their fancies, and propagating those religious notions which have possessed their heads. But as for their domestic concerns, their families, their children, or servants, or the employments by which they

they should get their livelihood, these are quite neglected and laid aside. And of this sort likewise are those persons among the Romanists, who, upon pretence of devotion, refuse a calling whereby they may be in a capacity of doing service to their country, or leave their calling after they have entered into it, and retire into monasteries to live at their own ease, and to be free from the cares and troubles of this world. Both these sorts of persons are to be blamed. They do not consider the nature of the christian religion, which is to make men holy in their persons and in their lives, but not in the least to take them off from their worldly callings, or from using those talents which God hath given them for the benefit of the country where they live. They do not consider the obligation they have to the public society whereof they are members, which is injured by these kinds of practices: For hereby they are not only render'd useles to the commonwealth, wherein, if they followed an honest calling, they might be very serviceable; but they do oftentimes a great deal of mischief to it, by unsettling and subverting other men, and filling their heads with abundance of foolish notions and scruples in religion, which are dangerous to government, and the public peace and happiness. And as for their better serving God, by thus leaving their callings, it is mere pretence. For he serves God best who doth most good in the world. But that is not to be done by throwing up our callings, but by honestly, and industriously, and laboriously prosecuting them. He serves God the best, who doth it most universally and effectually. Not he, who spends the most time in praying, or reading, or hearing, tho' all these be necessary duties, and without which it is impossible for a christian to live as he should do; but he, who,

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together with the performance of these duties, takes care to express a diligent and laborious charity to the public: To set an example of innocence and virtue, and a religious conversation in a life of business and action: To be useful to his family, to his friends, to his neighbourhood, to the whole kingdom; in educating children, doing offices of kindness and charity as he hath opportunity; serving his generation in the diligent management of those parts and those talents that God hath given him in some lawful useful employment, to the public advantage. This is that course of life which most expresses religion, and most tends to the glory of God, it being a practice of our Saviour's great precept, that we should *let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 16.

2. If Christianity has made no alteration as to the natural and civil relations and obligations that men have to one another, but hath left these as it found them, then they are much mistaken who plead it as a part of their christianity to be exempt from obedience and subjection to the powers and magistrates of this world; that upon this very account, that they have the honour to be the servants of Christ, think themselves perfectly discharged from any other master or governor. This, though it be as wild a principle, and as opposite to christianity as can enter into the mind of man, yet there have been, and it is to be feared there still are, who call themselves christians, among whom it hath found entertainment. And here there are two sorts to be taken notice of, and to be reprov'd. [1.] Those who account it an infringement and violation of the privileges which Christ hath conferred upon them, to be in subjection to any one at all. Of this kind were
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some of the anabaptists in Germany and our fifth-monarchy men. They will have no king but Jesus: All secular government is an usurpation upon the Lord's people. Let Christ be set upon his throne, and down with all unchristian magistrates, whether ecclesiastical or civil. All the Lord's people have equal privileges, and therefore away with all degrees of superiority and inferiority. *Christ hath bought them with a price, and therefore they must not be the servants of men, but ought to stand fast in the liberty in which Christ hath set them free, and not again be entangled in the yoke of bondage.* [2.] Others there are who do not carry this levelling principle so high, but yet hold so much of it as will necessarily render government a precarious thing, and not fail to embroil the world in confusion. They are not against magistrates, but against all wicked ungodly magistrates. They are not against some mens having greater honour and greater estates than others; but they are against the honour and riches of the profane. Their principle is, that the right which any man hath to a crown, or to an office, or to an estate, is altogether founded in his being godly and gracious, and of the right religion. But if he be a wicked man, or an opposer of Christ's true religion, he forfeits all his right and title to whatever he had, and not only may, but ought to be dispossessed of it, though it be never so effectually secured to him by the laws of the land. But both these are wicked unchristian principles, as well as destructive to human society. Whatever the notion of christian liberty be, I am sure it meddles not with civil government, nor civil rights; nor will it bear out any man in resisting or opposing the secular magistrates, be they good, or be they bad; be they of the right religion, or of a wrong; be they christians,

or be they heathens. Nor will it give any man a title to my estate, or my office, or allow him by force or fraud to detain from me what is my due by law, or dispossess me of what I am possessed of, though, as to my person, I should be the vilest wretch upon earth. Nothing makes void a civil right, but a civil law; and my christianity is so far from setting me above laws, that it strictly enjoins my obedience to them. If christianity is so tender of mens civil rights, as that it will not permit a very slave to depart out of his master's family without his master's leave, though his condition there may be well supposed very hard and uneasy (as we see it is in this chapter, ver. 21.) little can we imagine that any man is warranted by or upon account of the gospel (nay, though it was for the gospel's sake) to disquiet or disturb the peace of the nation, to raise rebellion, or to abet it; or, in a word, to withhold or withdraw, either from the public, or from any private person, any right or due which nature or law hath vested in them.

3. If christianity hath made no alteration as to the civil degrees and callings of men, but hath obliged all *to abide in that degree, and to walk in that calling* they are cast into by the Providence of God; then they are much to be blamed, who, upon pretence of any gifts or powers they are furnished with, think it lawful to forsake their station, and usurp places or offices which they are not lawfully called to. I do not here speak of a man's changing one calling, or one way of living, for another; as for instance, when a man cannot do so well in one employment to go to another, which is either fitter for his temper, or wherein he hath a fairer prospect of living more comfortably in the world; this is unquestionably lawful, and every man may, in such case,

case, do as he thinks fit : But I here speak of entering upon places or offices, which either by the laws of the land, or the laws of God, men are not warranted to execute. This, I say, is not to be done in any case.

And here I have likewise respect to two wild fanatical principles, which men are apt to take up, which yet, where-ever they are entertained, fail not to fill the state with seditions, and the church with schisms in abundance. They are these : that where there are abuses and corruptions in a church or state, there every man hath authority to reform them, though he be not commissioned thereto by law, but indeed acts in contradiction to it. The other is, that whosoever finds himself gifted and qualified for the work of the ministry, and thinks he may do the church good service in that way, may, without any further call, enter upon that office.

But both these are directly contrary to the apostle's precept in the text, *Let every man abide in that calling, wherein he is called, and so I ordain in all churches.* Art thou a private person? Thou must not take the sword in thy hand to punish malefactors, nor invade a jurisdiction that doth not belong to thee of reforming public abuses ; nay, though thou seeest that the magistrate to whom it belongs is negligent herein, and does not perform the trust committed to him. If things, either in church or state, go not so well as they should, thou mayest, nay, thou oughtest, to do all that in thy sphere thou art capable of doing for the amending them. Thou must use thy hearty prayers to God, nay, thou mayest, if thou please, modestly represent thy sense of things to those who are in a more public station, and are more immediately concerned about these things ; and, in a word, thou mayest use all honest

nest endeavours that the law of the land allows thee. But still thou art not to transgress thy bounds. Thou art not to forget in what capacity thou actest. A private man is not a magistrate, and therefore must not invade his office. An inferior magistrate is not the supreme, and therefore must not exceed the limits of his commission. And as for the secret whispers and impulses of God's Spirit, which are often pretended for such illegal usurpations, they are not to be regarded. *God is the God of order, and not of confusion*, as the apostle has told us, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. and therefore all these suggestions and impulses which tend to confusion, which, if they be followed, naturally create disturbance to the public peace, cannot be from God, but are the effects of an over-heated brain, or illusions of the devil. Besides, the age which we now live in, is not an age of inspirations and impulses: we have a standing and fixed rule to proceed by in all our actions, and that is, the written word of God, and the law of the land. And whatever actions are not warranted or allowed by them, no immediate inspiration or impulse can justify—And the same thing is to be said as to the ministerial function. A man may have exceeding good parts, and a great talent in speaking: He may have likewise attained a considerable skill in the scriptures and other sorts of learning, and have all the other qualifications which are needful to make him a very useful minister of the church: But still this alone, without a lawful call, doth not impower him to take that office upon him; nay, he quits his station, and can neither answer it to God nor the church, if he does. But is not the very having these abilities, and the desire of making use of them, a lawful call without any more? No: He must have the call of men too, even the call of

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those whom Jesus Christ hath intrusted with the government of the church. If a man do not come in this way, he is not a lawful shepherd, but an intruder into Christ's flock, whatever natural or acquired abilities he may have to fit him for the employment.

III. But to leave this point, I proceed to the third general head which I propos'd to speak to; which is not indeed directly affirmed or contained in my text, but is rather a necessary consequence from it, viz. That since the various circumstances and callings into which men are disposed, are from God, therefore no man can be justified, who lives in such a way, or follows such a course of life, as cannot be supposed to be of God's distribution. This, I say, is a natural consequence of my text; and it thus ariseth: The text implies that every man hath talents and gifts distributed to him by God, in order to the fitting him for some civil employment or course of life. It implies likewise, that according to the variety of these talents and distributions, men are actually disposed into several callings, and degrees, and conditions, by the providence of God, and in these they are to walk, or in these they are to exercise themselves. All this is affirmed or implied in my text. Now that which I gather from hence, is, that if any man do not walk, or do not exercise himself in such a course of life, or such a civil employment, as answers the ends of God's distributions to him, and suits with the station and degree he is disposed into by God's Providence, but either follows no calling at all, or, which is worse, gets his living by an unlawful one; such a person, I say, doth not walk as God hath distributed to him, and therefore his course of life is not to be justified. Every man therefore must have a calling, and every man's calling must be of God's distribution,

tribution, viz. it must be warranted by the laws of God, and suit with the ends for which God hath made his distributions, and appointed callings in the world.

To speak more particularly : To the making up of a calling, such as God hath appointed, there seem to go these three things :

1. That the course of life, or the employment that a man pitches upon, be such, as will be sufficient to exercise his diligence and industry. If it be not such as will keep him out of idleness, it deserves not the name of a calling: There is nothing so contrary to the nature of man, as to let his powers and faculties rust for want of employment. Our souls, next to the divine and angelical natures, are the most active beings in the world. It is true, they are not all equally active in the same way, but every one, according to the proper powers which God hath bestowed upon it, in the natural composition of the man; and therefore, though men have not only the liberty, but also a necessity upon them, to employ themselves several ways, yet every one is so to employ himself, as to keep his faculties in constant exercise, and to be able to give a good account of his time. And, in truth, if all other things be equal, those are the best callings, that a man can follow, in which he hath the largest sphere of activity for the employing his industry, and improving his natural gifts and talents; and in which he hath the best opportunities of filling up all the vacant interstices of his time to good purposes.

2. Another requisite of a calling, is, that it be such a course of life as doth employ a man's time innocently and lawfully; for otherwise, be it never so full of business, it is none of those callings which God hath distributed mankind into, and therefore is by no means

to be followed. Well, but what callings are innocent and what are not? I mean not to enter into a discourse of particular callings, or to arraign or pass sentence on any one trade or art which is used among us: But I only lay down this general rule for the judging of this point, which may be applied to any particulars, as we have occasion. Any calling that doth, in the nature and design of it, either act sin or encourage it; any calling that doth directly minister to vice and wickedness of what kind soever; that is not an innocent calling; and a man had better be reduced to the extremest degree of poverty, than get his living by such a one. But here I desire it may be taken notice of, that when I speak of ministering to vice and sin, I put in these words directly, and in its own nature; for there may be several callings and professions which do indirectly and by accident minister to the vices and sins of men, which yet, for all that, are not unlawful callings. For instance; every body knows that taverns and victualing-houses, and such like places of entertainment, are often used to the purposes of intemperance and luxury. But then, I say, this excess is not a natural consequence of keeping such houses, or the thing designed by them; but it is a subverting the ends for which the law allows them (which ends are the conveniencies of men, and not their debauches;) and therefore these are lawful callings notwithstanding their abuses. Only it extremely concerns all those who follow such employments, to be as careful as possibly they can, not to suffer, much less to contribute to, such kind of irregularities. And as it is in this kind of life, so it is in many others; nay, I may say in most, by which men get their livings.

3. Another requisite of an honest calling is this, that
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it be of some advantage to the public, and not merely for the getting a livelihood. If any man was so foolish as to give another constant wages for picking straws, or catching flies, or doing some other such ridiculous and unnecessary work; I do not think it justifiable in that man, who should employ himself this way, tho' it was for the getting his bread. Here may indeed be no want of work; the man may take pains enough, such as they be, in this foolish way; and I cannot see that such an employment doth directly minister to vice: But yet here wants something to make it a lawful calling, and that is, usefulness to the public. A man cannot answer it to God, nor to the world, for thus employing his time or labour, because he doth no good; he serves no end, either of necessity or convenience, to mankind; and consequently lives to no purpose. These are indeed ludicrous instances which I have given: But for any thing I know, there are some employments, about which several busy themselves, which serve to as little purpose as those which I have now mentioned.—But here again; When we say that every calling ought to bring in some advantage to the public, to make it an allowable one, my meaning is not to exclude all callings from being lawful ones, which are not of absolute necessity to the life of man. No. I would put no scruple into any man's head, who follows a trade or an employment, which is not so very necessary, but that the world might do well enough without it. For I account even those to be lawful arts or ways of living, which minister any way to the convenience, nay even to the ornaments, the delights, the recreations, of mankind; always supposing that these conveniencies, or ornaments, or recreations which they serve, to be innocent in themselves, and no ways repugnant to the rules of the gospel.

But if they be forbidden recreations, or forbidden ornaments, then that calling which serves to them, cannot be a lawful calling. But then, having granted the allowableness of these callings, because they do in some degree bring benefit to the world; (for even to minister to the honest delights or ornaments of human life, is a benefit :) it is fit that I should add this further, that those callings are always more eligible (and to be preferred) which serve the necessary ends of human life, than those which minister only to its conveniencies; and those which are highly convenient in a commonwealth, before those which only make provision for recreations or ornament; for these last are the lowest degrees of callings, how gainful soever otherwise they may be.

Having thus given an account of the nature of callings, and the obligation which all men are under to live in the exercise of them, I cannot but make some application of what has been said to some particular sorts of people among us.

(i.) It were heartily to be wish'd, that the nobility and gentry, and all men of estates, would seriously take an account of themselves, how they stand as to this matter. They, as well as others, are to follow some employment, in which they may exercise their natural parts, and do service to the world. If they do not, they are, for any thing I know, as great criminals as those vagrants and idle people which the law orders should be sent to the house of correction, to be made to work for their living. It is the most ridiculous thing in the world to fancy, that because a man is honourably born, or hath an estate, that therefore he is no ways concerned in the world, but just to live after his own mind; and that only the poorer sort of people

ple are made for labour and care. Why, the greatest of men are but the stewards of God's blessings, and are as accountable to him for them, as the poorest; and the more talents they have, the more diligent ought they to be in employing these talents to their Lord's advantage. Well; but what is the calling or employment which persons of this quality, we are speaking of, are to follow? To which I answer, That whatever their calling be, I am sure it is not merely to contrive for their pleasures and diversions, and to fill up their whole time in passing from one delight and recreation to another. They have more to do within doors, than to eat and drink neatly and modishly, to sleep and dress, to receive visits, and read romances. And they have more to do without doors, than to go about telling of news, paying of compliments, visiting the theatres, and meeting at clubs. And yet, as the world now goes, for a gentleman to spend his whole time in these kind of things, is accounted a very innocent way of living; and they want not the reputation of sober and virtuous persons, who employ themselves no worse. And I must confess that this may be called indeed virtue, in comparison of that wicked course of life which others are engaged in, who spend their days and their nights in revelling and drunkenness, in swearing and burlesquing religion, in pursuing unlawful amours, and all kind of debauchery—O! who would take pains to get an estate to have it thus spent! What sober man would not desire a thousand times rather to see his son an honest industrious ploughman or mechanic, than to see him the sprucest, the wittiest, the wealthiest gentleman of the age, and to live at this rate? O what will these men say for themselves, when the impartial judge of the world comes to enter into a

strict account with them, not only for their time which they have had in common with others, but for these extraordinary advantages of birth, wit, education and fortune, which they had above other men! Nay, how will they answer for this course of life to their country, which might expect great matters from them? For they should be the prime stay and support of the kingdom where they live; the great examples, and encouragers and patrons of all virtue, and industry, and ingenuity; whereas, as they have ordered the matter, they do little or no good at all to the public, unless perhaps by accident, to those who raise benefit to themselves out of their folly: Nay, so far are they from doing good to the public, that by their dissolute conversation they do a great deal of harm. And the only end which those advantages, which they have above others, serve to, is to put them into a capacity of doing more mischief; of being greater burdens and diseases to the nation, than they could have been without those advantages. But what is all this said for? To reproach the gentry, and those who have estates? God forbid that it should the least enter into my heart; but to awaken and rouse those who live idly and unprofitably, and to set them upon serious thoughts, and serviceable employments. That they may live like themselves, be the honour and the ornament, as well as the defence and security of the nation: That they may put themselves into a capacity of serving their king and their country, as well in peace as in war: That they be useful to all who are under them, and all who are about them, in other ways than by spending their money among them: That they be hearty lovers of God, and of his true religion, and patterns of loyalty, sobriety

ety and godliness to all those to whom the influence of their example doth extend.

(2.) But there is another particular, to which I desire to make application of the general doctrine of callings, which I have been insisting on. And I do it the rather, because I am afraid the age we live in doth too much need it: It is the business of gaming. I should be loth to say that all gaming is, simply and in itself, unlawful, or that even a serious christian may not sometimes, and at some seasons, use the common games for the relaxation of his mind, and obliging and diverting his company. No certainly; so long as play is used only as a recreation, it is allowable; and the reason is, because there is no law of God or man that doth forbid it. And if it be not forbid by a law, the use of it cannot be unlawful. But then every sober man is to take care that this liberty be used with great prudence and caution, viz. that he do not let it exceed the bounds of an innocent recreation: for instance, that he do not set his affections too much upon it, or play with such concern as to be put into a passion at his bad success; that he sits not too long at it, nor comes to it too frequently; that he always prefers his necessary business before his divertisements; that he so order his recreations of this kind, as that they render him the more fit to spend his other time the more usefully; and lastly, that he play not for money, but diversion; at least for no more money than what he can very well lose without the least discomposure of mind, and without the least prejudice to his family or estate. And it must be less too than he is willing to give upon a good occasion, and less than he doth oftentimes bestow upon objects of charity: And lastly, when he does play for such little sums, it must be rather for the in-

creasing his diversion, or the better entertainment of his friends, than for the sake of augmenting his stock.

Thus far I say, and with these restrictions, to use play is innocent enough. But here is the misery: There is a sort of men who even make a trade of gaming; it is their constant employment, whensoever they can find out company to their purpose; and they venture great sums at it, even such as may endanger their whole fortune, if they should prove losers. It is not their diversion, but their serious business; and they pursue it as industriously, as other men do their necessary callings. And to some indeed, this is their only livelihood; for they have no other way of getting bread for themselves and their families. But this whole thing, as thus practised, is stark naught, and abominable both in those who have estates and in those who have none. And whosoever makes this his way of living, has a sad account to make to God Almighty.

It is one requisite of a lawful calling (as has been already shewn) that it be sufficient to employ a man's time and his talents in a way suitable to the ends for which they were given him. But can there be a worse consumption of our time, or a greater abuse of our talents, than to put both of them to no greater use than throwing a dye, or turning a pack of cards? To make any calling lawful, it is required that it should not minister in its own nature to sin and impiety. But what doth more naturally minister to these purposes, than this way of gaming we are speaking of: Or what doth more effectually tend to engage a man in all sorts of crimes and immoralities? Of this we need no greater evidence than the undecent and impetuous passions of all sorts, the execrable oaths, and imprecations, the lies, and cheats, and coufenages, and brutish quarrels
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and contests, that do inseparably attend the trade of gaming.

But further, What benefit, or what advantage, doth from hence redound to mankind? (for that is another thing we ought to be satisfied in before we pronounce any course of life to be lawful) Why, if the gamesters will be concluded by this, they are certainly cast; for there is nothing of good, I mean of public good, can possibly come from this trade of theirs; but on the contrary, abundance of evil of all kinds; and that not by accident, or through the miscarriage of a particular person, here or there, but by direct and necessary consequence of the thing itself. How many men are undone for ever in their morals, by being once dipp'd and initiated in this infernal mystery? And as if damning their souls were not enough, how many thousand estates have been broken and ruined? How many families, wives and children hath it reduced to the extremest degree of poverty and contempt? Nay, what more expeditious method hath ever been found out to bring a man to an untimely end; whether by poison, or a quarrel, or the gallows? In a word, the thing is so desperate a venture, that whosoever is once deeply engaged in it, there is little hopes of his ever coming off without a grievous wound, either in his conscience or in his estate, if it be his good luck to escape utter destruction.

And after all, pray what is the advantage men propose to themselves in running such risques as these? What is it which makes them venture so desperately? Is it that it is great and genteel to game high? Why, among all men, who either have wisdom or sobriety, or who love their estates, this is exploded as the most unaccountable madness in the world. Is it the pleasure

of gaming which tempts them? Why that is every whit as much gratified by playing for nothing, or for trifling fums, as if they stak'd their estates, their wives and children. Well then it must only be the covetousness of money that makes them venture so deep. This, I believe, is true, generally speaking. But then it were well if they would consider how wretchedly they defeat that desire of money, if it should be their fortune to lose what they play for, and how miserable they must needs be thereupon. But perhaps they think not of this; their thoughts are wholly taken up with the hopes of winning. Why let it be so; and suppose they have that luck and success they wish and hope for, are they ever a whit the richer for this? Is their stock in the least increased by what they win at play? A great many wise men will say, No. For they say that all gain which accrues by play, is unlawful gain, and ought either to be refunded to the party it is gained from, or to be given in charity, or to public uses; but by no means to be put into a man's stock, lest the unlawful mixture should corrupt the mass of what is lawfully gotten, and make it unprosperous to the possessor, as it is often seen in the course of the world. And this is not said altogether without reason; for indeed it will be hard for the wittiest of the gamesters to make out a lawful title to any considerable sum which he wins by play, tho' he win it never so fairly. As for little petty fums which men stake for their diversion, and the one is as willing to lose as the other to win, and where no damage accrues to the party by the loss, these have a quite different consideration. But as for great fums, wherein a man is, or ought to be, concerned, it is not so clear that they are lawful gain, or that a man can, with a good conscience, take them, or keep them, let them

them be never so fairly won. For in all dealings between man and man, that gain is only accounted lawful, for which there is a valuable consideration. A tradesman ought not to take his customer's money, unless he afford him commodities to the worth of it; nor ought any man to make a gain of another, unless he either do something, or give something, that bears some proportion, or makes some compensation for the gain he makes of him. This is the standing rule of justice and equity in all dealings between man and man. In every lawful gain there is a valuable consideration. But now, in the gain which accrues to a man by play, there is no such consideration: Nay, so far from that, that a man cannot be a gainer in that way, but the other whom he deals with, or who is concerned with him, must of necessity be as much a loser. Now surely, that cannot be a just or allowable way of getting, which is perpetually and directly to the hurt and loss of another man. Nor is this the sense only of two or three nice and severe casuists, but of the wisest and best men of all ages and all religions. 'Twas the old Roman law, that all the money which gamesters won, should be taken from them, and employ'd upon public works, as being unlawfully gotten by them. Aristotle accounts, that the profit which a man gets by the dice, and the purchaces that a thief makes upon the highway, are to be ranked equally among the unlawful gains. And St. Augustine tells us, *Bona aleâ amissa, tanquam furta ablata, veteres restituenda putabant, viz.* The antients were of opinion, that money won by dice, or at tables, &c. ought to be restored like money that was stolen.

I am sensible it will be a hard matter to persuade all men of the truth of this. But however, I cannot but lay

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lay before them what the sense of wise and good men has been concerning this affair. And whether all will believe this or no, I hope all sober persons, who are either concerned for their happiness in this world, or salvation in the next, and who have any regard either for their estates, or families, or reputations, will keep out of this ungodly course of gaming, and will seriously apply themselves to such ways of living, wherein they may be serviceable to their families, to their country, and to the church of God; adorning their profession by a holy and unblameable life, that so their souls may be saved in the world to come.





DISCOURSE V.

Of diligence and watchfulness in our christian calling. How our time is to be spent, and our leisure improved, to useful purposes. And particularly what wisdom and prudence christians are to use in evil and dangerous times.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

EPHÉS. V. 15, 16.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

HIS *circumspect* walking which is here recommended, and *redeeming the time*, which is laid down as an instance of it, may be interpreted two ways :

1st, It may either imply great diligence and watchfulness in prosecuting the work of our christianity in general,

general, and in order thereto, that we improve our time to the best advantage, spending as little of it idly as is possible; or,

2dly, It may imply prudence, and caution, and discretion in the management of ourselves and our affairs with reference to this world, especially in times of difficulty and danger; that by this means we may gain time to ourselves, and avoid the mischiefs that the evil days threaten us with.

Each of these interpretations, as it hath good authority on its side, so doth it likewise afford us useful instructions, and therefore I shall reject neither of them, but in treating upon this text shall take them both in, beginning with the interpretation first mentioned.

St. Paul, in the former part of this chapter, is evidently exhorting the Ephesians, that laying aside all wickedness and sensuality, they would live a holy and a pure life; and he doth it from this consideration, that *they had been sometime darkness, but now were light in the Lord*; therefore they ought to *walk as children of light*, ver. 8. They were heretofore in a heathen state, but now the light of the gospel did shine forth to them; and therefore it was an infinite reproach to them if they did any longer pursue the unfruitful works of darkness. Wherefore (as the apostle goes on in the words before my text) *The Spirit of God saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, ver. 14. And then comes my text, *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*, ver. 15, 16, 17. As much as to say, it is the will of the Lord that ye should
awake

wake from the sleep of sin; that ye should arise from death to life; that ye should mortify your evil habits and corrupt affections, which have so long enthrall'd you; and live from henceforward a holy and a spiritual life. This it is to which ye are called, and obliged by the gospel. It therefore infinitely concerns you to look about you, to be very watchful of your own actions, to be circumspect in all your behaviour, to redeem the time past, which you have spent in vanity, by improving the time present to the best purposes, nay to catch at all opportunities of advancing in virtue and goodness. (This is the meaning of redeeming or purchasing the time that is here mentioned). And so much the rather, because it is an evil and dangerous world ye live in. Ye have a great many enemies to conflict with; ye have a torrent of bad examples and customs to struggle with; ye are surrounded with temptations of all sorts; so that unless ye be wonderfully careful of your own conduct, and watchful over your enemies, you are in great danger to be run down, and lose all the fruits and rewards of your taking upon yourselves the profession of christianity.

This is the account which some of the interpreters give of this passage. Now taking St. Paul's precept of *walking circumspectly* in this sense, it contains in it these following duties, or will oblige us to these following particulars:

I. First of all we must look narrowly to our hearts, that is to say, to our purposes and intentions. Whoever means to *walk circumspectly*, must above all things, take care of his designs, that they be well fixed and settled. If a man live at random, having no principles to act by, no steady aims or purposes to pursue, he is unprovided of all defence, and exposed to the assaults

of every temptation that comes in his way. I cannot say that his guard is easily broken, for he has no guard at all, but is like a ship without a rudder, carried away with every wind; like a house without lock or bars, a ready prey to the first enemy that shall attack him. If therefore we mean to live to any purposes of religion, it is absolutely necessary that we should in the first place, look carefully to our hearts, so as to keep them always in a good frame and disposition. My meaning is, that we so fix our aims and designs, as that it shall be the constant unchangeable principle of our minds, and the great business we propose to ourselves throughout the whole course of our lives, to endeavour to approve ourselves to God in our whole conversation. Whatever other projects we may have in our heads, yet to make it our first and chief care to please God in every action we do, and for no consideration in the world to violate our duty, or make our conscience uneasy. This that I now say is not only an instance of *circumspect walking*, but the very foundation of it. If we would *walk not as fools, but as wise*, we must lay the first step here, for it is *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, as Solomon tells us, Prov. ix. 10.—And without doubt this is that which he adviseth in another place, where he saith, *My son keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of that are the issues of life*, ib. iv. 23. Thine heart: What is that but thy designs, thy purposes, thy intentions, which are the springs and principles from which thy actions flow? If these be well fixed; if these be guarded and preserved pure and sincere, they will produce such a conversation, as will end in eternal life; but otherwise, the issues of them will be death.

2. But secondly, another instance of circumspection, is to examine carefully every action before we engage in it. The circumspect man will not venture upon things hand over head, but first considers and weighs the matter that is before him. And always his first enquiry is, whether the thing be lawful, whether it be consistent with his duty; and if it be not, he will by no means engage in it: Nay, though it be lawful, if it be not also expedient, (which is the next thing he considers) that very consideration is enough to make him forbear the action. It is not the company he is engaged in, nor the solicitation of his friends, nor his present inclination or humour, nor the heat of a passion, nor the serving of any interest; I say, none of these things will sway him; but he will examine both his own conscience, and the fitness or unfitness of the action; nay, he will take a view as far he can of all the consequences that will follow upon it, and what influence it will have upon his own spiritual good, or the good of others, before he will venture upon it. Easy, and weak, and careless persons are drawn to do any thing that is presented to them under fair colours, but those who are circumspect, will examine all the colours, by putting them into several lights. The very notion of circumspection is to look round, and to view, and consider every thing in all its several shapes, and respects, and tendencies. And if we would make it our practice thus to look before us, thus to scan and examine our actions before we engaged in them, how happy, how good, how virtuous might we be? How many sins should we avoid, that we are now daily surprized into? How many temptations might we overcome, that now daily lead us captive? But, alas! here is our misery, we rush into actions upon a present heat
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and *impetus* without much thinking or considering; and hence it comes to pass that we are betray'd into a thousand follies and sins, which afterwards we have too just cause to repent of. If we did but use to look before us, we should rarely miscarry. *Ponder the paths of thy feet*, says Solomon, *and then all thy ways shall be ordered aright*, Prov. iv. 26.

3. Another instance which this precept of circumspect walking will oblige us to, is to be careful to put a stop to the first beginnings of evils that we feel in ourselves. All our sins do arise from some passion or appetite that is within us, which commonly is excited and takes fire at some external object, and from hence grows unreasonable and extravagant; and there begins the sin. Now it is pretty much in our power, if we have used our minds to think, and are not strangers to our own humours and constitutions; I say, it is very much in our power to stop the beginnings or the first motions of any irregular passions or appetites; I mean so far, as that it shall not proceed to a criminal action; nay, not so far as to obtain a full consent of the will. For before it comes to that, reason may interpose; and if we cannot vanquish the desire or the passion by arguments, yet we may stifle it easily, by diverting our thoughts to other objects. But if we once give way to it, and do not presently suppress it, it is a hundred to one it grows too strong for us, and doth produce its effects in our outward actions, though much to our sorrow and repentance afterwards. It is here just as in any combustible matter which is set on fire: If we take the flame presently, it is soon extinguished; but give it a little scope, and it proves often beyond your power to quench it till it hath done mischief. Here therefore will lie a great part of the christian circumspection

pection that is required of us, *viz.* to attend carefully to the first motions and inclinations that are excited in our hearts by any object or occasion that happens to be presented to us; and if we find them irregular, and tending to sin, by all means to put an immediate stop to them. If we take this method, it is impossible we should fall into any grievous or presumptuous sin: and tho' we may be guilty of many faults and infirmities, yet we shall not be capable of doing any thing that shall much wound our conscience, or forfeit our title to God's favour.

4. Another instance wherein this vigilance and circumspection that is here recommended by the apostle is to be exercised, is this; we should never in this world apprehend ourselves free from danger, but live in constant expectation of being assaulted by our spiritual enemies; and upon that consideration we should always be upon our guard. We are never so secure, but that we may be in danger the next moment. How often are we drawn away to that which is evil, even then when we did not in the least dream of any such matter. Temptations are always ready at hand, so long as we carry these mortal bodies about us. There is nothing so innocent, but it may, and often doth, prove a snare to us. Our business, our company, our nearest relations, nay, our very meat and drink, as necessary as these things are, yet do they oftentimes prove great temptations to sin. And if we are thus tempted when we are most at our own command, what temptations must we expect in our other conversations and entanglements with a busy, designing, and yet a malicious and a wicked world. Yet such is the lot and portion of all of us, that whether we will or no, we shall be engaged in some troublesome and dangerous adventures.

tures. It concerns us all therefore, as much as the frailty of human nature will allow us, always to keep a strict guard over ourselves, to look to our senses, to look to our tongues, to look to our appetites, and to watch over all our actions. *We must* (as the apostle exhorts) *stand with our loins girt about, having on the whole armour of God*, Eph. vi. 14. Our Saviour tells us, *That if the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would have come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken through*, Mat. xxiv. 43. The application he makes of that parable concerns us as much as those to whom he spoke it, viz. *What I say unto you I say unto all, watch*, Mark xiii. 37.

Thus I have given an account of all the particulars of that circumspection that is required of us in the text, in the sense in which I am now treating of it; so far, I mean, as I could collect them from the general words. But there is one particular of this circumspect walking yet behind, which I think I ought not only to take notice of, but insist a little more upon than I have done upon the rest, both because the apostle hath in the text particularly mentioned it, and likewise because it is of such importance, that if it be not taken care of, all that has been said about circumspect walking will signify nothing.

The thing that I mean, is *redeeming our time*: see *that ye walk circumspectly, &c. redeeming the time*. Whether you will take this as an instance of our walking circumspectly, or as a means to secure our so walking, is to me an indifferent matter. But I am sure it is not indifferent, but absolutely necessary, that men should be seriously called upon to put it in practice. This therefore shall make the second part of my discourse.

Redeeming the time in the sense that we are now speaking of it, (for as to the other sense of the phrase, as it imports the gaining of time, it doth not yet come under consideration) I say, *redeeming of time* may be understood two ways, either with respect to the time past, or the time present. To redeem time past, is to make amends for our former carelessness and negligence in any work we were engaged in, by using double diligence in that work afterwards. Thus a traveller may be said to redeem his time, who, having loiter'd a whole day in an inn without making any progress in his journey, doth the next day go a double stage, performing the journey both of that day and of the day before.

Now in this sense of the phrase, redeeming the time is a duty that doth highly concern us; all those of us I mean, who have lived loosely or viciously the former part of their lives. If ever such persons come to be serious, and to take wise counsels, they must endeavour to recover all that time they have mis-spent by a more than ordinary diligence for the time to come. The farther they are gone in any evil course, the more severely must they exact of themselves the practice of the contrary virtues. They must not sit down content with the ordinary degrees of virtue and goodness, which would be indeed commendable in a young beginner; but they must labour to be so good, and so abundant in the work of the Lord, as, if they had not gone astray, they might have been presumed at this time to have been according to the ordinary rates of mens progress in virtue. This is to redeem the time past.

But though this be a very useful sense, and indeed that which our English phrase of redeeming the time
doth

doth most properly import ; yet, as I take it, this was not the sense St. Paul must be supposed principally to have designed, when he used this expression ; and therefore I shall pursue this notion of it no further.

Redeeming the time in the apostle's sense must have respect chiefly to the time present. The words which he uses are ἐξαγοραζόμενος καιρόν, which, if we would render strictly and properly, are as much as if we should say, buying or purchasing the time or the season. So that his meaning is, we are to value time extremely, and to purchase it at any rate, though it be with the loss of our pleasures, or conveniencies, or any other thing that the fleshly principle within us is most delighted with. We christians must act in our spiritual concerns, as merchants and tradesmen do in their temporal, who let slip no time, no season, no opportunity of improving their estates, and making a good bargain for themselves ; but prefer the gain of their trade above all the little designs of ease, or good company, or the like. Now taking this to be the meaning of *redeeming of time*, there are three things which the duty will oblige us to :

1. To take care that we employ our time, and that we employ it innocently. And this indeed is the lowest degree of *redeeming our time*.

2. A step higher than this, to increase and improve our time, by cutting off, as much as in us lies, all unnecessary consumptions of it.

3. And which is yet a further degree of *redeeming time*, to improve all that time which we have gained to ourselves by the retrenching our superfluous expences of it, to the best and noblest purposes we can put it to.

I shall consider these particulars a little more distinctly and carefully.

I. The first and lowest instance of care that this duty of redeeming our time will put us upon, is, that we employ our time, and that we employ it innocently. We are at no hand to pass away our time in idleness, but constantly to find some work for ourselves. For any man at any time to be able to say of himself, I have nothing to do; if he means thereby that he knows not how to employ his next hour, is a certain argument that the man is either a very silly or a very dissolute person. If it comes to that pass with us that our time lies upon our hands, and we know not what to do with it, but are longing and wishing that this or the other good hour would come when we shall meet with something whereby we hope to gratify ourselves, things are in a marvellous bad posture with us. We ought to flee idleness, as we would the worst disease; not only because it renders a man's life burthensome and uneasy, nay, I may say, a very torment to himself, but because it is very mischievous and very criminal. It is that which makes a man perfectly useless in the world, and he lives to no other purpose than, cormorant-like, to devour the fruits of the earth. It is the infallible way to spoil all that briskness of temper, that vigour of constitution, and quickness of parts, that God hath given him, and to make him sottish and stupid. It is the inlet to temptations of all sorts, and the occasion of most of those misadventures that befall us in this life. The devil never wants baits for such kind of people, and however they be applied, 'tis odds but they succeed, and the man is caught. And besides all this, idleness is a great sin in itself: It is one of those three sins that brought fire and brimstone upon Sodom, as the prophet tells us; and therefore surely it is not an ordinary malignity that is in it. Our time is one of the most precious

cious talents that God has intrusted us with, and in this respect more precious than any of the rest, that it is only ours for the present, and gone the next moment; so that whatever portions of it we lose in idleness, are impossible to be retrieved by us; whereas we cannot say that there is such a flux in the other blessings we enjoy.

I wish this matter was seriously considered by all of us. We should not then have among us so many, who are at such a loss how to pass away their time; who are so cloy'd with it, that they know not what to do with themselves for many periods of their life, and could be content to be in a state of perfect insensibility during those intervals.—But it will be said, Why do you blame these persons? For they have really nothing to do, they have no employments to follow, they are not under the sad circumstances of being necessitated to drudge and take pains for the getting a livelihood. But is this a sufficient excuse for their being idle? Has not every man in the world work enough to employ himself about all the days of his life, though his life were twice as long as it is? Hath he not a soul to save, and will not securing that concernment put him upon daily study and exercise? Is he not a member of a society, and accordingly is bound to improve all his faculties as much as they are capable, for the doing good to his family, to his country, and to the kingdom where he lives? Hath he not a trust to manage with reference to himself, and is bound, as he will answer to God, to make the best improvement he can of those talents of wit and reason, and other endowments, that his Lord hath bestowed upon him? Are there not every day opportunities put into his hands, which if he will lay hold of, he may either do good to others, or to himself?

We may please ourselves with idle fancies as much as we think good: But the time of our life is rather too short than too long for the work we have to do in it. And though we have been so good husbands of our life, as to have secured our main concernment, yet it is impossible we should have any time left, which we may not employ to very good purposes: Nay, there is none among us that need to throw away an hour idly, who can either think or meditate, or who can read, discourse or work, or is fit to keep company, or manage any business, either within or without doors; or who hath any sense of devotion, or hath any skill in any art that is ingenious or ornamental, or can do any thing that is praise-worthy and acceptable to mankind. If there be any who have none of these qualifications, let them be idle, and pass away all their days in sleep, if they think fit; but God help all such as are in such circumstances, for in truth they are very miserable.

But there is another thing to be considered under his head. As every one is to take care that he employ his time, so he must also take care that he employ it innocently. As he is not to spend it idly, much less is he to spend it viciously; for this is worse than the former, or, to speak more properly, it is a purchase of a bad principle to its worst consequences. We had better do nothing, though that be bad enough, than do an ill thing. And yet, God knows, this we are often too prone to. In order to avoid one extreme, we are apt to run into another. Rather than sit idle, which is a thing that the heat and briskness of our tempers has a natural aversion to, we will be doing the devil's work, and helping forwards to our own and other peoples undoing. For truly, no better do some among us employ themselves. We hate to sit

still: We must busy ourselves some way or other. This is very well: But yet if our business be to spend the time in good fellowship, as we call it, in drinking and revelling, to the prejudice of our health, and the inconvenience of our families, and the unfitting ourselves for the performance of those duties which our station in the world requires of us: If our business be to prosecute any design or intrigue of lust or wantonness, or any ways making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the unlawful desires of it: If our business be to go about as tattlers and busybodies in other mens matters, telling stories of this or the other person, and making ourselves pleasant at their charge: If our business be to game and play, or, which is as bad, to design the over-reaching of others, and making a gain of them to ourselves in any other, tho' the more serious way: Lastly, If we busy ourselves in any thing that doth not become a christian, that is contrary to that innocence and purity which the gospel requires of us; in all these instances we had much better have been doing nothing. This kind of business is worse than idleness, and we are so far from well husbanding our time, that we have have the severest account to make for it that is possible.

2. But secondly, If we would *redeem our time*, it is not enough that we be not idle, or ill employed, but we must also make as much as we can of our stock of time, by cutting off from it all those unnecessary consumptions, in which we are often too lavish of it.

It would make most of us (nay, even those among us, who are not addicted to any great vices) very melancholy to sit down, and seriously consider in what way the greatest part of our time is spent. As things commonly go, one half of it, very near, if not altogether,

ther, is taken up in eating, and drinking, and sleeping. And of the other half, how much of it goes in little impertinent affairs, in idle chat and talk when we are in company, in vain and foolish thoughts and fancies when we are alone, in paying or receiving visits from our acquaintance, in divertisements and recreations, and the like? So that in truth it is but a very little portion of time that most persons (even they who cannot be said to be vicious livers) can give a good account of, as having employed it to any really useful purposes.

I do not deny but there is a time to be allowed for all these things, for they are in their degree and in their season very necessary, or at least very convenient. Without some of them we cannot live; and without others we cannot live so comfortably, or so decently. But this is that we complain of, that the custom of the world, and our own evil habits, have introduced unreasonable and extravagant expences of our time upon these things. Nature is certainly contented with a moderate portion of sleep; and health will be as well, or better, preserved, though we do not sit hours at meals, or so frequently engage ourselves in tipping and impertinent conversation. A very little time will serve to apparel us decently; and we may divert ourselves, and enjoy our friends, and perform the necessary civilities we are obliged to, without making it a sort of an employment. In this therefore will consist a main point of our good husbandry as to our time, viz. to cut off as much of it as we can from these kind of things, to be employed in more serious and profitable ways.

3. And that indeed is the third and the highest degree of *redeeming our time*, viz. that we study to improve

all that time we have gained to ourselves by the retrenching our superfluous expences of it, to the best and noblest purposes we can put it to.

And truly here lies our main business, if we would effectually *redeem the time*. We must be careful not only to spend it innocently, but also usefully, either to ourselves or others, that being the great end our time was given us for, and the great business we have to pursue in this world. I confess indeed such is the infelicity of some persons, that they know not well how to spend a day to good purposes. But for this they may thank either their bad education, or their own carelessness. There is no body, of what kind of parts or qualities soever, but is capable of becoming very useful, and, I may say excellent, in some way or other, if either their parents would look well to their genius, and suit their education to it; or themselves, after they are come to years of discretion, would observe what they are fitted for, and lay out themselves accordingly.

To give particular instructions or directions in this matter that may reach every body's case, is more than I can do, or if I could do it, is more than I should have time for now. But two general points I may lay down, which I am sure all persons, let them be of what rank, or degree, or condition soever they will, are deeply concerned in.

(1.) The first is, that they mind seriously the work of religion, and the worship of God. This is their greatest concernment of all, since both their happiness in this life and in the next depends upon it. So that they may be absolutely certain, that whatever time they bestow upon this affair is well spent, and they will never repent it. Is it not infinitely fit and reasonable,
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that He who gave us all our time, should have some daily portion of it devoted to him? Especially considering that the time thus improved, brings in both the greatest pleasure, and peace, and profit, to ourselves, that we can possibly reap in any way of spending it. Let us therefore at all times be sure to attend to our spiritual concerns, whatever other business we neglect. Let us take time for meditation, and examining the state of our souls, and fixing our good purposes and resolutions to serve God faithfully all the days of our lives. Let us take time for reading the scriptures and other good books, and informing ourselves in every branch of our duty, and the motives and encouragements we have to put it in practice. Let us take time for devotion, for praising God for his mercies, for contemplating his excellencies, for imploring his continual grace and assistance, for expressing acts of repentance for our past follies, and dedicating ourselves anew to our Maker. These are truly profitable and gainful exercises, and so much the more to be recommended, because they are natural and easy: every one is capable of employing himself in these things: they require no learning, nor skill, nor parts; nothing in the world but an honest heart. Let every one therefore, who would husband his time well, set out a constant portion of it to be spent in these works, either more or less, as his condition and way of living is. The more time he has at his command, the greater portion of it he ought to devote to pious uses. And if he have but little to spare from his other necessary employments, yet let that little however be given to God, and the concerns of the soul.

(2.) But secondly, would we spend our time to the best purpose? Then let us be sure to mind our callings;

and that not only out of worldly considerations, (tho' those be very allowable motives and incitements to a man's diligence in any thing he undertakes) but also out of conscience. For really to be industrious in the pursuit of our vocations, not to be slothful in business, is a duty we owe to God as well as to ourselves; and the neglect of it is a great sin. A careful and laborious prosecution of a lawful calling in an honest way, is not only a means of thriving in the world, and a means to secure us from those temptations to vice and wickedness to which slothful persons are exposed; but it is also an act of religion, and that which doth recommend us to God, and procure his blessing upon us. Nor doth this point only concern mechanics and tradesmen, or magistrates and those who are in any office or fixed employment, (all which have callings properly so stiled) but also all other men, of what rank soever, though, by reason of their quality and estate, they sit so loose from the world, as not to be engaged in any particular vocation. Yet these men have their callings too, which they are bound to attend. Besides the offices and duties of religion which they, above all others, (as having the greatest opportunities) are to charge themselves with the strictest observance of, it is fit, nay it is necessary, they should propose to themselves some useful and commendable designs to pursue in the course of their lives, which is to be their calling and employment. They have great advantages above other men, both for the improving their minds, and for the doing good in their generation. And they may be assured those talents, those advantages, shall one day be severely accounted for; and woe be to them, if they *have hid their talent in a napkin*. They who have wealth, or power, or interest in the world, do much
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more influence the affairs of the public, than meaner persons. And oftentimes, upon their carriage and behaviour, the good of the whole neighbourhood, and in proportion the fortune of the kingdom, doth much depend; and therefore they are especially concerned to be careful and prudent in the government of their lives, and industriously to apply themselves to all praise-worthy things which make for the public benefit. They have really a great work to do, if they would well consider it; for besides, that they are obliged to be patterns to all others who are about them, and depend upon them, setting them examples of religion, sobriety, humility, modesty, bounty, and charity: and besides, that they have greater revenues and larger estates to manage, and greater families to take care of, both as to soul and body, which will take up some part of their thoughts and time; and besides, the many temptations to idleness and luxury, to pride and vanity, that their fortunes will expose them to, which will require a constant watchfulness to resist, and a great deal of pains to overcome: And lastly, besides the trouble, and the hurry, and the ceremony of a daily confluence of company, that a great estate is generally incumber'd with, which one, who consults his own ease, would not buy at any rate, and which, where-ever they are, do need a great virtue to support them; I say, besides all these things, there are required greater acquisitions and accomplishments of mind in the nobility and gentry, than in others of an inferior rank. As they ought to understand business and conversation better than others, so, if they would not make themselves contemptible and disparage the place they hold in the world, it is fit that they should be competently learned in all polite and ornamental knowledge; but especially in all that

fort of knowledge which will render them useful to their neighbours, or to the public. To be ignorant in matters of this nature, is a scandal and reproach to them. Now any one who considers these things, will not readily say, that a man of estate is without a calling, and hath nothing to do. On the contrary, he must be convinced that those persons have a great deal of very necessary work constantly to employ themselves in. And as the case stands thus with persons of quality of the one sex, so doth it also with those of the other. Women have a calling to follow as well as men; and if they seriously attend to the several branches of it, they will find that they have little time to lavish away idly. If they seriously consider the duty they owe to God and their own souls, in performing their devotions regularly, and exercising themselves in all the christian graces and virtues, in order to the securing their everlasting happiness in the world to come; if they consider the duty they owe to the several persons they stand in relation to; to their husbands, in managing the household affairs with prudence and discretion; to their children, by bringing them up carefully and virtuously; to their servants and families, in well-governing and providing for them; to all their neighbours, in being kind, and charitable, and helpful to them upon all occasions (the difficulties and laboriousness of which they will find to be greater, in proportion to the greatness of their qualities and fortunes); I say, if they consider all this, they will be sensible they have work enough to do, and time little enough to do it in, though they redeem as much as they can, from dressing and visits, and the gaities and pleasures of the world.

Lastly, To draw to a conclusion of my present topic; as to young persons of both sexes, who are as yet under
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the wing of their parents, and free from the business and cares of the world, all that has been said concerns them as well as others; for youth is the time of their laying the foundation of all those good qualities, which will enable them afterwards to spend their days innocently and usefully. And if they be not thus train'd up, and exercise themselves in an active and serious way of living, there are not so great hopes that they will make the right use of their time when they come to be men and women.

And here I leave the consideration of my text, according to the former interpretation given of it, as *circumspect walking* implies diligence and watchfulness in prosecuting the work of our christianity in general; and *redeeming of time*, the improving our hours to the best advantage, spending as few of them idly as is possible.

I proceed in the next place to consider the other interpretation of the text, which I mentioned at the beginning of this discourse, *viz.* that it may imply prudence, and caution, and discretion in the management of ourselves and our affairs with reference to this world, especially in times of difficulty and danger, that by this means we may gain time to ourselves, and avoid the mischiefs that the evil days threaten us with.

I own, that the discourses and sermons that are commonly made upon redeeming of time, do run upon the former way of interpretation, namely, in that sense in which I have hitherto expounded and treated upon my text; and that it is seldom expounded in this latter sense which I have now given, and am about to consider. But yet, for all this, I must confess, that I think this latter sense is preferable to the other, that it is the true one, and that which the apostle meant in this place.

This phrase *ἐξαγοραζόμενοι καιρόν*, which we interpret *redeeming the time*, is but used three times in the whole Bible; once in the Old-testament, and twice in the New-testament. In that place wherē it is used in the Old-testament, our interpreters have rightly translated it *gaining the time*. The passage is in Daniel, chap. ii. 8. where, when the magicians could not answer Nebuchadnezzar's question about his dream, but would have put him off, in great anger he tells them, *I know*, says he, *of a certainty, that ye would gain the time*. The Chaldee or original word hath plainly this meaning here, though properly and strictly it signifies to buy the time, as may be seen in the margin of the Bible. And accordingly Theodotion renders it by the same Greek word which is here used in my text; and which we have translated *redeeming*, but which might be as properly render'd *gaining the time*. The magicians are said to *gain the time*, because they used delays and other artifices to save themselves from the present displeasure of the king. And in the same sense undoubtedly the word is to be taken in one of the texts of the New-testament, where it is used, viz. Col. iv. 5. and which indeed is exactly parallel to the text we are upon, and is a just exposition of it. There, says the apostle, *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without*, (that is, towards the Jews and Gentiles, among whom ye converse) *redeeming the time*. Redeeming the time; What is that? Why gaining the time, avoiding the present dangers you are threaten'd with by your prudent and wise behaviour.

This now being unquestionably the meaning of the expression in two of the three places where it is used, I think there can be no great doubt but it must have the same meaning in the third, which is my text; and especially,

ly, if we consider the reason which is here given why it did so much concern all christians to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, endeavouring to redeem the time, viz. *because the days were evil*. All which things consider'd, lead us to this plain and short paraphrase of my text, wherein, I think, St. Paul's whole meaning is comprehended. "Ye are to consider, O Ephesians, that the days you live in are evil days; the times are full of dangers and difficulties: It concerns you therefore, both for your own sake, that, you may preserve yourselves, and for your religion's sake, that you may bring honour to it, to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; to behave yourselves with all the exactness, and prudence, and discretion, that ye possibly can, that by this means you may redeem or gain time to yourselves, and avoid the dangers, whether spiritual or temporal, which the evil days will expose you to."

This I take to be the natural meaning of the text; and for authority, it hath St. Chrysostom's to vouch for it, who was among the antients the best interpreter of holy scripture.

Taking now this to be the meaning of my text, the argument I have to treat of from it, is, *that* wisdom and prudence, or *that* circumspect walking that christians are to use in evil and dangerous times, both for securing themselves, and bringing honour to their religion.

This would indeed be a difficult argument, if we were to take our measures from the politics of this world, which change as often as the times do change, and which have no fixed rule but just the present interests, and which often put men upon reconciling contradictions, and which are not contriv'd so much for the honest men, as the cunning men of the age. I say,

say, if the christian politics were of this nature, it would be a presumptuous thing in me to meddle with them; but, God be thanked, the politics of a christian are quite of another strain: They are the same in all times: they are easily understood by every body: their rules and maxims never clash with one another; and the more honest any man is, the more capable and the better qualified he is for the living up to them: and therefore, without pretending to be one of the wisest men in the world, I may safely venture to give an account of them.

The truth is, all the christian politics are resolved into one maxim, which every body is well acquainted with, viz. That a great deal of honesty, mixed with a little discretion, is the best policy. The saying is not the less true because it is grown into a proverb; and I dare say, that both the reason and the experience of mankind in all ages, generally speaking, do bear testimony to the truth of it. That God, who in the contrivance of our natures stamped a vigorous sense of virtue and honesty upon our minds, as the great law by which we were to be governed, hath, in all ages, taken care to give reputation and sanction to that law, by blessing and protecting the honest and virtuous, notwithstanding all the crooked contrivances and machinations of subtle men to the contrary.

But to come to our business. The enquiry is, how St. Paul would have the christians in his days to behave themselves in evil and difficult times? He tells us in general, that they are to *walk circumspectly*, that is, as we say, cautiously and prudently. But how is this caution and prudence to be expressed? Till that be declared to us, his trumpet gives but an uncertain sound, and we are no wiser than we were? I answer, that
 what

what St. Paul has here laid down generally, he has in his other writings treated of most particularly; and therefore to these other passages of his we must have recourse for the directing ourselves in the application of this his general precept.

I. The first thing I take notice of in his writings relating to this matter is, that rule of his which he often takes occasion to put the christians in mind of, viz. that they should avoid, as much as they could, the giving offence to any, and make all innocent compliances with those they convers'd with. Thus he saith to the Philippians, *Let your moderation be known unto all men,* Phil. iv. 5. And again in another place, *As much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men,* Rom. xii. 18. And again in another place, *Put them in mind to be gentle, shewing all meekness to all men,* Tit. iii. 1, 2. And lastly in another place, says the same apostle, *Give no offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the church of God,* 1 Cor. x. 32. And of this kind of temper and conversation the same St. Paul proposeth himself for an example, *Even, says he, as I please all men in all things,* ver. 33. *To the Jews I became as a Jew. To them that are without law, as without law. I am made all things to all men,* 1 Cor. ix. 20. 21, 22.

The meaning of these and such like speeches is this; that we are to yield to the weakness and necessities of those with whom we converse; not violently striving against the stream in smaller matters, nor affecting a singular and morose behaviour, but being mild and easy in our conversation, rather receding from our little rights, than exasperating men against us; suiting our manners as far as innocently we can, to the times we live in. And thus it is that Grotius expounds the very text I

am upon; *redeem the time*. What is that? Why, saith he, *Honestis obsequiis vitate pericula, viz.* endeavour to avoid the dangers which threaten you, by all decent and innocent compliances.

But then you are to remember that this rule of giving no offence, and of pleasing all men, is to be understood with these two restrictions :

(1.) First of all, that the things wherein we comply with others, be things of an indifferent nature, such as may be innocently done, or left undone. If they be things ill in themselves, or forbidden by the laws of God and our religion, then to comply with the world is to conspire against Christ; then to please men is not to be the servants of God. How valuable soever peace and a quiet life may be, yet we are upon no account to stretch a point of conscience for it.

(2.) Secondly, The matters wherein we accommodate ourselves to the humour of others for peace sake, must not only be innocent and lawful in themselves, but such also wherein the laws and constitutions of the place have laid no restraint upon us. We owe a great deal to our neighbour, and we ought to comply with him as far as we can, though by so doing we depart from some of our own rights: but yet at the same time we owe a great deal more to the public than we do to any particular person whatsoever, and therefore must not violate the public laws to gratify the best friend we have. There are many things for instance in the outward worship of God, in which, if we were left at our own liberty, we might innocently and prudently condescend to the ignorance or infirmities of others; and it would be sometimes fitting so to do. But if public authority hath interposed and made a rule for us; if the laws have enjoined such a time for worship,

or such a form of prayer, or such gestures, or garments, or the like; here to swerve from our rule, because others do not like it, and to do things of our own head for the humouring them, is a thing not becoming the modesty of any christian.

The only reflection I make upon what I have now said, is this; If it be unreasonable to break public rules and laws, though never so indifferent in themselves, for compliance sake, how much more unlawful and intolerable must it be to dissemble or depart from our religion for the humouring of others. There are some, I doubt, who are for carrying this principle of compliance so far as to think fit to be always of that religion which is most in fashion. So long as the protestant faith is established by law, and countenanced by the government, they will be zealous for that: But if popery (nay, perhaps Turcism) should get the ascendant, and come in the place of it, they could without much difficulty change their sides. This, I grant, is a very easy and expeditious way to save ourselves whole and harmless in all times: And if there was no such thing as honesty and conscience in the world, it might be very adviseable; but no man, who hath any sense or regard to either of these, can possibly think of it without abhorrence. This I must observe, that the primitive christians were so tender of compliances in matters of religion, and this point of the open profession of it, (when they were called to it) was then thought so necessary, that any among them who did but so much as throw a grain of incense upon the heathen altars (which was interpreted as a sacrificing to their gods) tho' it was for the saving of his life, was presently excluded the communion of christians: Nay, tho' a man did not sacrifice, but only accepted a ticket

or certificate from the officers that he had done so; I say, even complying thus far, was looked upon and reputed so great an affront to Jesus Christ, that the man was ranked among the apostates: And so were all those likewise who delivered up their Bibles to the persecutors upon any account whatsoever. And these three sorts of persons I have named, were the *Thurificati*, the *Libellatici*, and the *Traditores*, which we so often meet with in the ecclesiastical writers.

O therefore! let it be an immoveable principle within us, in all times to be constant to that which we take to be the true religion. Let us hold the profession of our faith without wavering. Let no prospect of worldly gain or advantage, let no persuasions or insinuations of friends, no concernments of our families and children, no terrors of persecution, or death itself, make us fall from our own steadfastness. Let us remember what our blessed Lord hath told all his disciples, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 32. *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father and the angels of God*, Luke xii. 8. But thus much of my first head. I proceed to the next.

2. Another point of christian wisdom and circumspection in evil times recommended by St. Paul, we shall find to be this; viz. the preservation, as much as is possible, of love and unity among those who are of the same religion. There is nothing that he more presseth in all his epistles, as a means both for preserving the church in the evil times which were then, and for recommending christianity to the adversaries of it, than that those who profess'd it should be firmly united among themselves: *That they should be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind*. So
he

he speaks in the 2d chapter to the Philippians, ver. 2. That they should *put on bowels of mercies, and forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.* So he speaks in the 4th to the Ephesians, ver. 2, 3. It had been happy for Christendom if this point had been always carefully observed. The divisions of christians among themselves have done more hurt to Christ's religion, than all the force and malice of its open enemies could ever do. And as it stands with christianity in general, so doth it with any church in particular: Love and unity among the members of it is the surest expedient, both to preserve them from common danger, and to support them under it. On the contrary, *Divide & impera* (as the saying is) do but break them into parties and factions, do but fill them with variance, and hatred, and animosities one against another, and you open an easy passage for a common enemy to enter in among them; or if he be there already, you give him occasion to exercise greater severity and rigour, than perhaps otherwise would have been thought reasonable: Nay, it frequently happens, where such parties and breaches are, that not only a way is opened for an enemy to enter, but one of the parties brings him in, and turns persecutor of the brethren. Men care not what they do, so that they can but oppress the opposite party, which at that time stands most in their way, though it be to their own undoing at the long run. This is fairly intimated by St. Paul to the Galatians; *If, says he, ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another,* Gal. v. 15. His caution implies, that there is no necessity in order to the ruin of a church or nation, that the members thereof should always fall into the hands of them who wish them ill;
for

for they themselves, by their unseasonable and bitter quarrels, may oftentimes do the work.

3. But in the third place, among the points of prudent walking in evil times, we ought not to omit that which St. Paul orders Titus to put the christians in those days in especial remembrance of; *Put them in mind, says he, to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, Gal. iii. 1.* And St. Peter likewise lays the same charge upon those to whom he writes with reference to the evil times they lived in; *Submit yourself to every ordinance of man; whether to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him.—For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15.* Nothing did more recommend christianity in the world, than the peaceableness and loyalty of its principles. Had it been a peevish, unquiet, seditious, and turbulent religion: had it countenanced discontent or faction, or allowed its profelytes to oppose the government, or even to complain or shew themselves uneasy under the administration of it; it had never so happily weathered out the storms that were raised against it, and got such kind entertainment in the world. The enemies of it did indeed endeavour to possess the minds of those who were strangers to it with a belief that it had an evil aspect upon the secular power, and that the promoters of it were a company of ill-affected persons: But if they could have made good this charge, they had in all probability done their work, and put a stop to the growth of that religion, which was destitute of all worldly advantages for the making its way. But the quite contrary did appear both in the doctrines which it taught, and in the lives of all those who took it upon them. Never did any religion, nor any subjects,
give

give such security to princes and states of the enjoyment of all their natural rights, as the christian religion and the christian subjects did. From whence it was manifest, that this was the best contrived and fitted to be the religion of the world; and that all men, who would prove good subjects indeed, must turn christians. Since therefore such is the nature of the christian religion, so obedient, so submissive to authority in its principles; and since such advantages may be expected to the christians themselves, and to the world, by living up to these principles, it cannot but infinitely concern all, who profess this religion, to be very careful in this point; to give no occasion to the higher powers to look upon them as enemies, or as disaffected to their interests: but on the contrary cheerfully to own the government which gives them protection, and both in thought, and word, and deed, to pay all faithful allegiance to it. The christians thought this to be both their duty and their interest in the very worst of times, when they had no better princes to rule over them than such men as Caligula and Nero. How much more then ought we to charge ourselves with the practice of it, who are in so much happier circumstances, both with relation to our government, and our princes who administer it?

4. Another particular that falls under the general rule of *walking circumspectly, and redeeming the time, because the days are evil*, is that which is recommended by St. Paul in these words, *I beseech you, brethren, says he, that ye study to be quiet, and mind your own business, that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without; I* Thess. iv. 11, 12; as much as to say, that the way to recommend yourselves to *them who are without*, and to make them think honourably of you, is to *study to be quiet, and to mind your own business*. This is an excellent

lent rule of wisdom at all times, but more especially in times of danger or difficulty. Let every man disentangle himself as much as he can from all sorts of quarrels and embroilments, and from all things that may probably occasion them. Let every man consult his own ease and repose among his neighbours, by giving no disturbance to them, and avoiding, as much as is possible, disturbance from them. Lastly, let every man dwell at home, as much as his circumstances will give him leave, and mind his own affairs, (which will find him work enough to do) but meddle as little as possible with things that are foreign, and which do nothing concern him. I say, let every man do thus, and he shall find the sweet, and the comfort, and convenience of so doing, let him live in what times he will. They who are busy-bodies in other mens matters, create trouble and mischief to themselves in the best of times, and therefore much more may they expect to reap the ill consequences of their pragmatistical humour when the times are ticklish and boisterous. The way to live quietly and peaceably is to sit still, and take what comes without murmuring; to hear and to see, but without making spiteful observations and reflections; to be very careful of our words, that they do not needlessly grieve or provoke any: Especially to be in all cases tender of our neighbours reputation as of our own. But they who give themselves a liberty of talking about every thing, and every person, what their own ungoverned passion or humour suggests to them; and they who will be invading other mens offices, and giving their advice where it is not asked, and meddling with affairs they have nothing to do with; they who are perpetually complaining of the times, and quarrelling with the present

sent constitution of things; they who make it their business to enquire into the slips or vices either of public or private persons, and will always have something to insinuate to the disadvantage either of the one or the other; I say, this sort of people, as they do a great deal of mischief to the public, so it cannot but be expected, that by their too much meddling they should now and then burn their own fingers. To conclude this point; To study to be quiet and mind our own business, is as likely a means as any to preserve a man from all the outward inconveniencies that the times can expose him to. But if it be ineffectual that way, and the man cannot avoid suffering, yet he had better suffer thus than otherwise; nay, he ought to thank God that he so suffer. *Let none of you, says St. Peter, suffer as an evil doer, or as a busy-body, in other mens matters. But if any man suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on that behalf.* 1 Pet. iv. 15. 16.

5. But lastly, in speaking to this argument, I ought not to omit another thing, which seems fairly to be hinted to us by St. Paul, as a very proper means of redeeming the time in evil days; viz. a more than ordinary diligence and exactness in our whole conversation. His words in the text are, *ἀκριβως περιπατεῖτε*; which if we would render strictly, it must be thus; *See that ye walk accurately, that ye walk exactly*; that is to say, Let your conversation be regular and irreproachable in all things, suitable to the copy that Christ our Lord hath set before you to follow, and suitable to the holiness and purity of that religion which you profess. As christians are to have a regard to their whole conversation at all times, so are they especially in evil and dangerous times: They should then especially

cially endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God in all things, as St. Paul elsewhere speaks, Tit. ii. 10. that is, to set it out to its best advantage: They should not fully the native beauty of it by any corrupt, or mean, or undecent conversation, but give the world a fair view of its amiableness and goodness by their innocent and unspotted lives: Nay, they should set it out to the best advantage, making it by all exemplary virtues and graces to appear so charming to those they converse with, that they may fall in love with it. *I beseech you*, says St. Peter, 1 Ep. ch. ii. ver. 11, 12. *as strangers and pilgrims* (being as it were, in a strange country, and amongst many enemies) *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.* Honest; how is that? Why laudable, commendable, honourable, such as may be well thought of among the Gentiles; just as St. Paul useth the same phrase in the 12th of the Romans, ver. 17. *Provide things honest in the sight of all men*; that is, take care that all your matters be so decently managed, as that they may be approved of, and well reported among men. And this sense the following words of St. Peter do confirm, 1 Ep. ii. 12. *That whereas*, says he, *they, viz. the Gentiles, speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* — Here then is the province that is committed to all of us; this is the work that God hath put us upon: We are to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things. Tit. ii. 10. We are to recommend our religion to all about us, not only by living free from blame, but by abounding in all virtue, and in all good works. Hear, I pray, what St. Peter speaks to this purpose in the third chapter of his first epistle, ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. quoting a passage out

out of the Psalms, *He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good: Let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* There is certainly great sense and reason in these advices; and all the men in the world cannot prescribe more effectual methods for the procuring a peaceful, happy life to a man's self, or blessings to his country, than these are: For by thus doing, we take the surest way not only to recommend ourselves to men; but, which is more than that, we take the surest way to approve ourselves to God, who certainly both takes care of his church and us; and who doth so order the affairs of the world, that he will never suffer any thing to come to pass upon earth, but what shall prove for the good of his church, and of all particular persons, who truly love and fear him.

Let us all therefore apply these rules to ourselves. Let us live up to our principles. Let us not barely make a noise and a talk of what we believe and profess; but let us shew to all the world, that we have the true faith of Christ among us, by bringing forth such fruit in our lives, as his holy doctrine and religion doth naturally tend to produce among mankind. Let us do nothing that is bad, nothing that hath even the appearance of evil. Whatever seems to be unjust, or even hard to those we deal with, let us forbear it. Whatever looks like knavery or a trick, let us avoid it. Let our words and actions be all of a piece, being true to our words, and sincere in our professions of kindness. Let us be ready to do acts of humanity, and kindness, and charity, as often as they fall in our power. Let us
forgive

forgive injuries, and endeavour to *heap coals of fire on the heads of those that do them*; Rom. xii. 20. that is, by our generous obliging treatment of them, melt them into reconciliation and friendship with us; for that is the method, they say, of melting the hardest metal, by heaping coals of fire on the top of it. Let us be regular in all our conversation, setting examples of piety and devotion, of temperance and purity, of moderation and contentedness, of humility and affability, and meekness to all above us. In a word, *Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, honest, and of good report; if there be any praise, any virtue, let us follow these things*, Phil. iv. 8. This is the true and proper way both to secure ourselves, and to do honour and service to our religion, in all times whatsoever. *Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. iii. 13. The christian religion is a thing so amiable, and its precepts so extremely agreeable to the nature of mankind, that wherever they are lived up to, they will by degrees mollify the heart of the most obdurate, and conciliate love and respect, at least tenderness and compassion, from all sorts of men. Let the times be what they will; the better a man lives, the more upright and just, the more humble and peaceable, the more devout and charitable, the more innocent and virtuous he is, the better he is like to fare in this world. But however that happens, this comfort such a man hath, that he is of all others the fittest to conflict with a storm: And if it pleases God that he fall under it, blessed, unspeakably blessed, shall he be; for exceeding great shall his reward be in the other world.



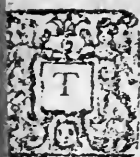
DISCOURSE VI.

The danger of cloaking or dissembling our sins.
Confession of sins necessary to repentance.
What sort of confession that must be.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

PROV. xxviii. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : But
whoso confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall find
mercy.*



HIS is undoubtedly one of those texts of scripture which is referred to in the exhortation before morning and evening service in our common-prayer-book — “ Dearly

beloved brethren, the scripture moveth us in sundry places, to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, and that we should not dissemble and cloak them before the face of Almighty God

“ our heavenly Father, but confess them with an
 “ humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.” For
 certainly the text speaks of *covering* and *confessing* our
 sins with respect to God, and not with respect to men.
 Indeed, to conceal our sins from men, except in the
 case of injuries done to our neighbour, (and there we
 are bound to acknowledge our fault, and make satis-
 faction) is so far from a fault, that in many cases it
 would be great imprudence not to do it ; since to make
 them public might do a great deal of hurt both to our-
 selves and others.

And as for confession to a minister, (though that is
 always lawful, and sometimes highly expedient ; and
 if people among us did more practise it, there is no
 doubt they would find both great comfort and great
 benefit thereby, yet) it cannot reasonably be thought
 to be intended in this place ; and some of the papists
 themselves, and those the most learned of them, do in
 plain-terms acknowledge as much, telling us, that these
 words of Solomon are not spoken of auricular or sacra-
 mental confession, because the sacrament of penance
 was not in being at that time, but was instituted by
 Christ long after. So that he doth not here speak of
confessing our sins to men, but to God ; that being the
 confession that is every where in the Old-testament in-
 sisted on as a necessary expression of our repentance. So
 also the *covering* our sins which we are here cautioned
 against, and which is opposed to confessing, must be
 the *covering* them with respect to God. *He that cover-
 eth his sins shall not prosper : But whoso confesseth them,
 and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.*

In speaking to which words I shall shew,

I. First, What is meant by *covering, cloaking, or
 dissembling our sins*, together with the danger of so do-
 ing. *He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper.*

II. Secondly, What kind of confession that is which is here made an essential part of repentance towards God; and how it comes to be so necessary. *Who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.*

I. First of all, What is meant by *covering* our sins; or, as our liturgy expresses it, *dissembling and cloaking them before the face of Almighty God.* For here a question ariseth, How can any man cover or hide his sins from God?

To which I answer, That truly and literally speaking he cannot; for, as St. Paul tells us, *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do,* Heb. iv. 31. He sees every action of our lives, and hears every word of our mouths, and understands every thought of our hearts. So that to hide any thing from God is perfectly impossible; and he is a fool, and ignorant of the nature of God, who thinks to do it: But yet such fools and ignorants many of us are, that tho' we cannot conceal any thing from God, we may desire it, and we may endeavour it; at least, we may be so stupid, so inattentive, so very careless of our own actions, as to think that because we do not look into them, God will not; because we do not see them amiss in ourselves, God doth not; and because we are willing to make the best we can of our own state, to think that God will be willing to do so likewise: And this, in scripture language, is a *covering of sins.* Though we cannot, in a strict and proper sense, cover our sins from God, yet we may do it interpretatively; that is, we may use such arts for the palliating our sins, that, in God's account, will amount to the same thing, as if we thought or endeavoured to blind the eyes of his sovereign majesty, so as that he should not see them. It is worth the while to explain this matter a little more

particularly, and to give an account of the several ways in which men may, in this sense, be said to *cover their sins*. By which means we shall be the better able to examine our own consciences about this point, and where we find ourselves guilty, there to make application to ourselves.

1. First of all: A man may be said to *cover his sins*, when he hath no sense of them; when he is so little apprehensive of his faults that he will not own them to be such; but is as easy and unconcerned about them, as if he was perfectly innocent.

And this happens two ways. Either through a stupid inadvertency, or through an over-weening conceit that hath possessed a man of his own righteousness and goodness.

In the former of these ways the adulterous woman, that Solomon describes in the 30th of proverbs, ver. 20. *covered her sins. She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.* And this, God knows, is the case of some among us (though I hope they are not many.) They live in a course of profaneness and wickedness, following their brutish devices and desires in every thing, without any regard to God, or to good manners. They stick at nothing that may please their humour, or gratify their lust, be it never so wicked, supposing that they keep within such compass that the law shall not take hold of them. And so far are they from being uneasy and troubled at this course of life, or owning themselves to be great sinners before God upon account of these things, that they rather stare and wonder at any one that shall blame them for these extravagancies. God help such poor wretches, for there is no human means left to help them. These men do continually cover their sins, and are just in the same

same condition with those that God speaks of in the prophet Jeremy, *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright. No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle,* Jer. viii. 6. O! a sad condition is this! (even the worst on this side hell) when a man pursues a wicked course with the same insensibility of danger, with the same unconcernedness and fury with which a horse rusheth into the battle!

The other thing, that often occasions the *covering of our sins* in this way (*viz.* renders us insensible of them) is an opinion that we have taken up of our own righteousness and good qualities, which doth so fill our minds, that we have no leisure to reflect on our miscarriages. Of this we have a notable instance in the pharisee, that our Saviour brings in as going with a publican into the temple to pray, Luke xviii. 10. This pharisee, instead of acknowledging his sins to God, (as he ought to have done, and as the publican did) had other matters to think of. He was so full of himself and his own performances, that he never reflected on any thing wherein he had offended against God; but, on the contrary, instead of condemning himself, he despised others, and particularly that poor publican: *He thanked God that he was not such a one as he,* ver. 11. He thanked God that he was not guilty of any open scandalous sin; and mightily did he magnify his fasting and his devotion, and his other good actions, ver. 12. This now was a *covering of his sins*, and he sped accordingly. For, notwithstanding this magnificent opinion he had of his devout and strict way of living, the other poor sinner, that *durst not look up to heaven, but smote his hand upon his breast, crying out, God be merciful to me a sinner;*

this man *returned to his house justified*, ver. 14. and accepted of God, when the other was rejected.

I need make no application of this to our present purpose, it is so plain. But I desire every one who is concerned in it, would do it; and I only add this: Let us all look to it, how we *cover our sins* in this way, (*viz.* by not acknowledging ourselves sinners, but being insensible of our faults, and of our guilt,) upon what pretences soever it be: Whether it be that we are really so bad, that we have lost all sense and discrimination between good and evil, as it was in the former case I mentioned; or whether it be, that we think ourselves so perfect, that we see no sin in ourselves, as in the latter case: I say, let us all have a care of this upon the admonition that St. John gives us in this matter, and I wish we would all remember it; *If, says he, we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we do confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

2. But in the second place, a man is said to *cover his sins*, not only when he denies them, or thinks himself not guilty of them, but when he excuses them, when he makes apologies for them, when he sets himself to find out reasons to justify himself for the commission of them.

Of this we have a remarkable instance in king Saul, who, when he had transgressed the command of God in sparing Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the spoils that were taken in the war, 1 Sam. 15. and Samuel comes from God to reprove him for it, and to charge him with disobedience and rebellion against God for doing it, though he could not deny the fact that he was charged with, nor could deny that it

was expressly against God's order, yet nevertheless insisted stiffly upon this, that he had not done ill in doing what he did : for, as for the sparing of the king, it was but an act of humanity and mercy ; and as for the booty that was taken, he thought it a piece of religion and piety to *save the best of the sheep and the oxen for sacrifices to the Lord*, 1 Sam. xv. 15. Thus he justified himself.

But did the prophet approve of this justification ? No, far from it. On the contrary he tells him plainly, *That to obey the voice of God was more delightful to him than all sacrifices and burnt-offerings*, ver. 22. *And that rebellion against the divine command, was as the sin of witchcraft : And because he had thus rejected the command of God, therefore God had rejected him from being king*. ver. 23. This was the consequence of Saul's sin, and of his *covering it*. You see *he did not prosper*.

But thus are we in these days too apt to *cover our sins*. When we have done things forbidden by the laws of God, such things as we know we cannot justify, (if the scripture and the light of nature be to guide us) yet, when we come to reflect upon those actions, it shall be hard but we will find some righteous, or some necessary end or other, that we had in our minds and intentions, when we did those actions, that will clear us from all blame concerning them : Either the necessity of the times, or the necessity of our own circumstances, or the serving our friends, or the shewing our zeal for religion, or some such other warrantable cause, put us upon those proceedings, which otherwise we should not have ventured upon. And when we can once say, I had a good end and intention in what I did, or it was necessary for me to do it, or that good ends were served thereby, and God in his providence gave me the success I

desired; why these considerations (let the action in itself have been never so bad) do so buoy up a man's spirits against all the reflections which otherwise his conscience would be apt to make upon such an action, that really he cannot call himself to account for it, nor confess it before God as a sin. But this is but another way of *covering of sin*: and he that useth it shall not prosper. Let us all know and remember, that no necessity, no conveniency, no good ends, will ever justify an action that is bad in itself. St. Paul having long ago told us, *That those which do evil that good may come, their damnation is just*, Rom. iii. 8.

3. But, thirdly, a man may be truly said to cover his sins, when he doth what he can to extenuate them; when, tho' he doth not justify them as in the former case, yet he lessens them; when instead of representing to God, or to himself, his own wickedness; and manifold miscarriages in their just dimensions, and with their just circumstances, he is wholly intent upon those points that take off from the heinousness of them, and would seem to render that which was a crime to be but a venial sin.

And thus really men do frequently deal with God and with themselves. They are apt to say of their sins, as Lot, when he saw Sodom on fire, once said of the city Zoar, which he would have had preserv'd, *Is it not a little one? and my soul shall live*. Gen. xix. 20.

To what purpose but this were all those soft and genteel terms invented, by which we usually censure great and notorious sins both in ourselves and others? How usual is it to represent faults of a more than ordinary malignity by such easy characters as shall affright no body from the doing of them? How many wilful deliberate transgressions are not only called, but thought
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to be sins of surprize or pure infirmity? A course of drunkenness and debauchery passes often for no more than an excess of sociableness, or a little too much good nature: And the worst brand of it is, that the poor man who is guilty of it, is the least kind to himself. Do not many of us excuse our violent ungovernable passions, our furious, wrathful, quarrelsome, uneasy conversation to all about us, by such soft censures as these, That, alas! we are of something too hasty a disposition, and are too apt to be put out of humour? Doth not intolerable uncharitableness and censoriousness often pass under no heavier a name than of a little too much freedom of speech, without any other mark of infamy? What amongst a great many is pride and contempt of others, but only reservedness of temper? covetousness and oppression, but only frugality and careful management of one's affairs? Uncleanliness and fornication, but only a heat and folly of youth? And a abundance of other instances of this kind may be given.

And as we thus lightly pass censures upon the greatest sins, whether of ourselves or others, in our discourses, so it is much to be feared we have the same apprehensions between God and ourselves, when we come to reflect upon them, and to exercise acts of repentance for them. Even in this case how extremely apt are we to catch at every twig, to take advantage of every circumstance that any ways seems to contribute to the alleviating the sins that we find ourselves burden'd with? What new and uncouth measures have we made to ourselves for the estimating the greatness or littleness of sins? We do not make a judgment of them by the word of God, and the rules of reason, but by other fantastick rules, by the commonness and frequency of them among mankind, by the reputation

they have in the world, by our inclinations and tempers, and by the powerfulness of the temptations by which we were solicited to them.

As for instance ; if we be among the number of the common finners ; if our sins be of that kind that we see daily and every where practised among us, why then it naturally falls into our minds that we are not the first, nor the only persons, that are guilty of this fault. There are thousands about us that are as deeply concerned in this matter as we : And sure, where so many are concerned, the punishment will not light so heavy upon one. If it be a fashionable sin we are engaged in, a sin that hath gained credit and reputation among the generality of men, why still that doth more either vindicate us, or excuse us. For what prudence is it for any man in this age to be singular ? Who can bear the taunts and derisions that will be thrown upon us for not complying with the humour of the times, but living like men of another world ? If we be in the briskness and gaiety of our youth, when we thus fly out into extravagant actions, why that is a salvo for them all. A trick of youth is always at least excusable : As our juvenile heats wear off, and our judgment increases, we shall of ourselves return to more sober counsels. In the mean time both God and the world will pardon our youthful extravagancies. If the iniquities we labour under be those which we are prompted to by our particular tempers and inclinations, why sure we shall never be called to a strict account for them, since it is not in any man's power to alter or new model his constitution. At the worst, this is but an human frailty, which every man in our circumstances is too apt to fall into,

But:

But what are all these pleas and pretences, but so many instances of *covering our sins*? If we meant honestly, and dealt with uprightness between God and our souls, we should not be thus sagacious in contriving ways to mitigate our offences, nor so forward to make use of them, if they were contrived to our hands. A sincere honest penitent would think of none of these things, at least he would not regard them. The main thing he would consider, would be his strict duty, and what obligations he had to perform it. What the laws of God and Jesus Christ had obliged him to; and what strength and power he had to live up to those laws, and how highly he was engaged, by the oath he had taken to Jesus Christ, so to live. What solemn vows and resolutions he had made to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to yield up himself entirely to the service of his Saviour. Such an honest man would not insist much on the corruptions of the times, and the bad examples before him, and the strength of natural inclinations, and the like; but he would think seriously of his duty, and what his conscience had often suggested to him about it, and what assistances God in his word had made over to him by his Holy Spirit for the performing of it, and how intolerably he should be self-condemned if he did neglect it.

I say, if we were honest and true-hearted to God and our own eternal interests, we should reflect upon these things. We should estimate our sins and failings by these rules, and not judge of them by those common measures which loose and sensual minds have found out for the lessening and extenuating of them.

4. But fourthly and lastly, There is another way of covering our sins, not unfit to be mentioned in this place, because it is too frequently practised; and that is,

is, by taking the blame off from ourselves, and laying it upon others. Though we are not ignorant of the fault, neither do justify it, nor yet extenuate it, yet we are loth it should lie with all its load upon our own shoulders, and therefore prudently transfer it upon those that were some way or other either tempters to it, or occasions of it.

To give you an instance from scripture of this kind of covering of sins: Adam, our first parent, had no sooner fallen in paradise by eating the forbidden fruit, but when God came to chide him for his fault, he had his answer ready, that it was not so much his fault as Eve's. *The woman, says he, that thou gavest me to be with me, she tempted me, and gave me of the forbidden tree, and I did eat,* Gen. iii. 11. By this first instance of sin in the world, we may learn how natural it is for men to rid the blame and the guilt of their evil actions off from themselves, and to lay it upon others. And let us all examine our own consciences, whether this also be not frequently practised among us. How very ordinary is it when we are thinking of those things that are apt to trouble our consciences, and make us uneasy, to make just such a defence for ourselves as Adam here did? If we can but find out either an author, or a partner, or an occasion of our sin, we are well enough. With some men the course of life they are engaged in, the necessary unavoidable temptations that their business or employment doth expose them to, is thought a just sufficient reason to exempt them from the practice of those strict rules of virtue and piety that other christians take themselves to be obliged to. With others, that set of company and acquaintance they are linked with, is an apology for all the extravagancies they run into. Saith the one sort, if I was of
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another

another calling, had I but another profession, I should certainly avoid those sins that I now daily fall into. Saith the other, if I had not such continual temptations from my friends and acquaintance, I should certainly be another kind of man than I am. All this may be true, so far as we can judge of such contingencies. But yet notwithstanding, if we think this seriously, and make it our apology to God Almighty for our daily sins, we do but juggle with him, and do not deal so uprightly and sincerely as we ought to do. For I would fain know what state of life is there that will not yield the same matter of excuse for the faults we are guilty of? What condition in the world can we imagine ourselves to be placed in, wherein we should not have the same pretences, and still should have found out some body, or some things, besides ourselves, to have borne the blame of our sins and irregularities? No; all this is still a *covering of our sins*, an unwillingness to find ourselves guilty: Such a self-love and tenderness of our own ease, as will do us no good in the world; for when all is done, he that *covereth his sins, shall not prosper.*

Let us now make application of these things to ourselves: And what application can that be but this? If all sinners, as, I am sure, there is not one that now hears me but is so, what have we all to do, but to humble ourselves before God, acknowledging that we are miserable sinful creatures, and that if he should deal with us according to our deserts, we must expect nothing but indignation and woe?

For, alas! the very best actions of our lives, if they were to be scanned according to the exactness of his law, and the perfection of his holiness, would yield us but little comfort, they being all some way or other faulty. We have nothing to fly unto, but the boundless compassion of our gracious God, (thro' our Lord Jesus Christ)

Christ) whose mercy is over all his works, and is, like his majesty, truly infinite. To him therefore let us go. To him let every one of us address himself with the poor publican, *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner*, Luke xviii. 13. Let us say with *Job, I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men!* Job vii. 20. *I abhor myself in dust and ashes*, xlii. 6. Let us say with the prodigal, *father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy child*, Luke xv. 21. Let us say with David, *Out of the deep do I call to thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. If thou shouldest be extream to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? O therefore enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. But there is mercy with thee, therefore thou shalt be feared*, Psalm cxxx.

Ah! my brethren, if we had true notions of ourselves and of our own condition, and made a fair and just representation to our minds of God's infinite holiness and purity, and of our own sinfulness and impurity, we should all be thus affected.

Away therefore with all thoughts of covering our sins; let us on the contrary, with grief and sorrow of heart, expose them. To God, I mean, let us expose them. Let us unburden ourselves to him, and with contrition and devotion acknowledge our own guilt, and beg his pardon.

II. And this brings me to my second enquiry in my proposed method; *viz.* What kind of confession that is, which is made in the text an essential part of repentance; *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.*

For it may be justly asked, Is confession any thing else but the telling God that we have offended him? And how comes this to be so meritorious a thing? Is not contrition

contrition and sorrow for sin of a great deal more value than this comes to? And is not resolution against sin still more fit to enter the definition of repentance? and yet these things are not named.

My answer to this is, That it is very certain that contrition for sin, and resolution against it, are every jot as necessary to a true repentance as the confessing of it is. But this we are to remember, that confession, both in the scripture notion of it, and in the reason of the thing, doth contain and include in it both these things.

We are much mistaken in the nature of this confession, if we make it to be no more than an acknowledgment, or repetition, or enumeration of our sins before God: (tho' I grant that the word, in its first and proper signification, expresses no more.) No: This is the least of that which is implied in this, when it is accounted a part of repentance.

If confession was no more than a particular distinct acknowledgment of our sins to God, then that would be the best confession that gave the most punctual account of every the least minute circumstance that happens in the sinful action: He would confess best that could tell best the story of his sins. But, alas! there is nothing in this that can recommend us unto God. When we speak of confession of sins as a means of obtaining pardon for them, we mean by it such an actual attention to our sins, and to our guilt, and such an hearty acknowledgement thereof to God Almighty, as includes in it both shame and sorrow for what we have done, and likewise stedfast purpose of heart to do so no more. To confess our sins, is to own with shame and confusion of face, that we have transgressed the righteous laws of God, and deserve his wrath and dis-
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pleasure, and so far to dislike, to disapprove, and to detest our own actions, that we severely purpose never to be guilty of the like again.

We need not be long to seek what kind of confession that is which my text speaks of, if we will but attend to what we require of one another in cases of affronts and offences done to ourselves. Supposing a man hath done some great injury to us in word or deed, upon which we are grievously offended with him, so far that we break off all those terms of friendship and amity with the man which were between us before: He desires to be reconciled to us, and in order to that, common sense teacheth him to come and acknowledge his fault; and accordingly he doth so, and we accept of his confession as a good satisfaction: What is it now that moves and inclines us so to do? Is it that he hath told us some things that we knew not before? No; for we did sufficiently know all his unhandsome carriage to us, and that made us out of charity with him: Is it that he doth in a handsome speech, and with many rhetorical amplifications, set forth the particulars of the injury, and tell us what first inclined him, what neighbour encouraged him, with what intrigues and circumstances the whole business was carried on? Why in this he may shew himself a very artificial man in telling a story: But this alone causeth no relenting in us. He may tell us all this, and in as good words, by way of drollery or defiance: That which works upon us to forgive the man the injury that he did us, is purely and solely the mind with which this confession is made. We see that he is heartily sorry for what he hath done; he is ashamed of it, and by this confession doth what he can to undo it again. He heartily wishes that he had never done it; and was it to do again, he would abhor the thoughts.

thoughts of doing it. This now is some compensation to us; nay, it is really the best satisfaction he can make us: And upon this consideration of the man's repentance, we do repent also, and forgive him.

Now just upon the same account that we value or accept the confession of offenders towards ourselves, doth God accept of the confession of our offences towards him: Namely, the virtue and acceptableness of it doth not lie in the material confession itself, but in the disposition of the heart and mind wherewith it is tendered. By this we may, in some measure, see what confession that is to which a pardon of sin is in the text promised. It is not barely a repetition of the faults we are guilty of to God Almighty; nay, tho' that repetition be made never so often, or never so particularly: But it is such an acknowledgment of our faults as is accompanied with shame for them, with hatred to them, and with resolutions to amend them. So that confession of sin doth plainly include in it three things:

First, That we be heartily sensible of our sins past, and sorry for them, and angry at ourselves for having committed them. And this is that which in common speech we call *contrition*.

Secondly, That this sense, and this sorrow, and this indignation, do put us upon applying ourselves to God, and there with shame and confusion laying open our miserable condition before him, and humbly and heartily begging his mercy and favour thro' the merits and intercession of our Lord Jesus. And this is that which is *confession* in the precise strict sense of the word.

Thirdly, That at the same time we enter into steadfast and serious purposes to amend what hath been amiss in us, and to live more carefully, more obediently to the laws of God for the future. And this is that which is called *resolution*.

And

And now having thus explained the nature of confession, we have a fair and easy way opened to us for resolving the other part of our enquiry in this matter; and that is, how confession comes to be so necessary, so indispensable a part of repentance. For it is easy to be collected, from what has been said, that confessing our sins in this manner, is, in the reason of the thing, a point so necessary, that we are no ways qualified for the obtaining forgiveness of them without it.

Can that man be, in any sense, capable of mercy, that either stands upon his own vindication, or is so little sensible of his fault, that he will not so much as make acknowledgment of it? There is no man that so behaves himself, can expect to find the least favour from any earthly tribunal before which he is convened, tho' the matter for which he is called in question be of never so small a concernment. And can we expect that the supreme Lord of the world will pass by offences done against his infinite majesty, and in contempt of his eternal laws, upon easier terms?

Whosoever doth not sorrowfully confess and acknowledge his sins, cannot, in any sense, be said to repent of them. And sure, without repentance, there can be no forgiveness. If it be said that repentance consists in the forsaking of sin, and not in the confessing of it, I answer with a divine of our own, "That that may indeed be the notion of a heathen repentance." For the pagans, it is confessed, took very little notice of this part of religion which we are now talking of. But it is far from being the repentance that God hath prescribed to mankind in the Old and New-testament. Nor indeed would any of us accept of such a repentance ourselves (if it may in any sense be called by that name.) We should not think ourselves well dealt with, in case
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of any injury done to us, that the man who had affronted us once, did so no more. But we expect that he should acknowledge his first fault, as well as that he should reform it.

I do not say that we can justly stand upon this, or require these terms of reconciliation from our brethren. But it is infinitely fit and reasonable that God should from his creatures. We are bound to forgive one another; but God is not bound to forgive us. That which in us is an act of duty, is in him an act of free grace and mercy. If therefore it be supposed that we are all sinners towards God, and stand in need of his mercy, and that we shall not find mercy without repentance of our sins, it will follow that our repentance must as well look backwards as forwards; that is to say, we must not only look to the reforming of our life for the future, (for that can do no more than prevent the displeasure of God for the time to come) but we must also look to the undoing, as well as we can, our fore-past sins, in order to the obtaining God's forgiveness of them. But this is no way in the world to be done, but by meekly, and humbly, and sorrowfully confessing them.

And accordingly this is the condition that God in scripture every where requires, in order to the granting his pardon and mercy for our former transgressions. *If we confess our sins* (says St. John, 1 Ep. i. 9.) *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* And thus also David, Psal. xxxii. 5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my sin unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin.* But this is not all that is to be said for the necessity of confession, as we have explained it: For, in the second place,

2. As no man is qualified for the mercy of God that doth not devoutly confess his sins, (because not to confess is an argument that the man doth not truly repent) so, if we do consider what is imported in confession, we shall be convinced that it is a thing, that in the very nature of it must needs, above all other things we can do, recommend us to God; for it is doing what right we possibly can to the several attributes of God to which we have done dishonour. If God had never commanded this expression of repentance, yet we should easily have gathered from the reason of the thing, that it is the best, the most natural compensation we can make to God for the breach of his laws. Not that, in true speaking, there is any compensation, any satisfaction to be made by us to God; Christ, by his sacrifice on the cross, hath done that for us; and that satisfaction that he made, we humbly tender to God on our behalf, and pretend to no other. But this nevertheless we may say, that by approaching to God with an hearty sense of our sins, and confessing them before him with truly contrite and penitent hearts, we make the best reparation we are capable of, for the affronts and injuries which by our sins we have done to any of his attributes. By thus accusing and condemning ourselves, we do right to God's sovereignty and absolute power, by acknowledging him to have both a right and an ability to punish us. We do right likewise to his goodness, since we acknowledge that we have acted vilely and unworthily, and against our own interests, in transgressing his laws, which we cannot but be sensible are infinitely reasonable and good, and much for our advantage to observe. To his omnipresence and omniscience also we make some satisfaction, since our confession of our faults

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Supposeth that we have a sense that God knows and taketh notice of all our actions. In a word, by hearty and penitent confession of our sins, we both justify God, and give glory to him. We may say both these things, because we have warrant from scripture for them. David therefore makes a confession of his sins to God, in the 51st Psalm, ver. 4. *That God might be justified in his sentence, and clear when he is judged.* And when Joshua exhorts Achan to confess his sin, tho' yet it was well enough known already in the congregation, the argument he useth to persuade him, was, that this confession was for the glory of God. *My son, says he, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.* Josh. vii. 19.

This that I have said is abundantly sufficient to shew what great reason there is, that confession of sins should be made so indispensable a condition of the forgiveness of them.

I might add several other considerations, drawn from the great benefits and advantages that we ourselves do receive by the practice of it; as for instance, the great peace, and comfort, and satisfaction that it must needs yield to an afflicted, troubled mind, thus to have disburden'd itself of all its loads and incumbrances (as certainly, to a sensible spirit, the conscience of sin is of all others the greatest burden.) So that upon this account God's obliging us to the confession of our sins is the greatest mercy to us that can be. I might also add another consideration, viz. the mighty obligation that this practice of confession doth lay upon all of us to forsake the sins we do thus confess. Such an obligation, that really we must be impudent if we can always confess, and yet always return to the same sins again. So that upon this account

account it must be acknowledged that it is as much for our good, as for the reasonableness of the thing, that confession of sins is made so necessary a part of repentance.

But I shall wave these things, and proceed (by way of application of what has been said) to say something of the manner in which we are to confess our sins, and to give a few directions about it.

The great business that we have to take care of in the exercise of this part of repentance, is, that we do deeply affect ourselves with a sense of the great evil of sin, and the affront it puts upon the Divine Majesty; as also with a sense of the infinite obligations we are under to obey all the laws of God, both upon the account that they are so just and reasonable in themselves, and likewise upon account that God, by so many instances of kindness to us (as every one of us, if we would reflect, can give thousands of instances to ourselves) hath laid such powerful and irresistible engagements upon us to live up to a conformity to them.

1. If now we be affected with a sense of these things as we ought to be, we shall in the first place, whenever we approach to God to confess our sins, express a hearty sorrow for having offended so good, so kind, so gracious a God, so continual a benefactor: For having transgressed such righteous, such unexceptionable laws, which were given us purely for our benefit; and which we can never transgress but we act against ourselves and our own interests. We shall blush at our extreme ingratitude to God, and see our own folly in so unaccountably departing from him in any instances; and at the same time we have these thoughts, we shall seriously resolve to be wiser for the future, and accordingly we

shall anew dedicate and devote ourselves to the service of God our creator, and Jesus Christ our redeemer, renewing our vows and purposes that we have so often made to him, in a faithful endeavour, in all our thoughts and words, and deeds, to govern ourselves by the laws he hath prescribed us. All this is implied in the notion of religious confession, as I have before explained it, and is indeed the very life and soul of it.

2. But then, secondly, The more particular our confession is, the better it is, and the more acceptable it will be: Not upon account that God ever needs to be inform'd of what faults we are guilty, or takes any delight in the rehearsal of a long catalogue of sins; but because this particular confession is an argument and an expression of the sincerity of our repentance, and shews that we have searched and examined our hearts to the bottom, and that we harbour no concealed affection to any particular sin whatsoever, but that we are willing to bring out every enemy that speaks opposition to God and his laws, to be slain before him.

3. But, thirdly, He that confesseth as he should do, will be sure not to favour himself in his confession; he will not be forward to make excuses or apologies for his sins. He will not say, that the faults he hath been guilty of, are either little in their own nature, or brought upon him by such temptations as he could not avoid. On the contrary, he will rather aggravate his faults, and lay a load upon himself, that God may lay the less load upon him. He will acknowledge himself to be a base, vile, unworthy creature, unfaithful to his vows and solemn purposes, and ungrateful to his God, who is every day heaping obligations upon him. He will remember all the engagements God hath laid upon him, and that he hath laid upon himself, to a strict life of vir-

tue and holiness. He will bitterly censure his own folly, and unaccountable extravagance, that he hath in any instance departed from those rules. In a word, the aggravating circumstances which he can in his own mind apply to his sins, will so affect him, that he shall become vile and mean in his own eyes; so unworthy a thing, that he will from the bottom of his heart profess to God, that he is not worthy the least of his mercies. And certainly this is the confession that is acceptable to God. This is the *judging of ourselves* that the apostle speaks of, 1 Cor. xi. 31. by which we prevent *our being judged of the Lord*. And lastly, this is that oblation which David speaks of, Psal. li. 17. *of a broken and contrite heart*, which he says, *God will not despise*.

4. But, fourthly, It is also to be remember'd, that the quicker and speedier our confession is after the commission of any sin, the more virtue it hath in it, and the more easily it obtains a pardon. When it is our unhappiness at any time to commit a fault, it is the worst course we can take to lie under that fault. When the sin is newly done, our conscience (unless we be very bad) doth not fail to charge it home upon us; and we are then deeply sensible of it; and if we go immediately to God Almighty to unburden ourselves of the load it lays upon us, we shall do it very affectionately, and with truly broken and contrite hearts; whereas if we let the matter rest as it is, and do not presently make our peace with God by humble confession and begging pardon, our hearts in a little time will grow much harder, we shall lose all that pungent sense we first had of our sin, and it will be a difficult matter afterwards to retrieve it. Besides, it is a hundred to one; if we delay the present time, but the sin gets ground upon

upon us. By not having made confession of it, and renewed our resolutions (which is the setting ourselves in the same state we were before, the next temptation to that, or any other sin, will the easier find access to us, and prevail upon us. We have by that sin disarmed ourselves. We have slacken'd our guard, and are more obnoxious either to the same, or any other enemy, that will make assault upon us.

If we design therefore to live virtuously and religiously, whenever we are overtaken in a sin let us presently repent of it, and beg pardon for it, and reinforce our good purposes. By this means the greatest crime we can commit will not do us any great mischief. But if we let things alone, and defer our reconciliation with God, even a little sin may prove dangerous and of fatal consequence. It is in this case as it is with the wounds of the body: A grievous wound, presently taken care of, will find an easy cure; but if thro' our negligence we let it rankle and ulcerate, it proves oftentimes hard enough for the skill of an able surgeon.

Upon this account I cannot but earnestly recommend to you the rule that is so often mentioned in our books of devotion, viz. That every night before you sleep, you would take an account of the actions of the day past; that you would examine your consciences what has been done well that day, and what has been done amiss; and for the former to return hearty thanks to God; but what you find of the latter, not to sleep, till you have confessed it to God, and begged his pardon for it. If we would be thus punctual as to our repentance and confession, it would be in a manner impossible for us to miscarry at the long run.

5. But lastly, to conclude, There is another advice that we should do very well to put in practice in this

business of confessing our sins, *viz.* That besides our daily confessions and those others that we may have occasion for, we should appoint to ourselves some stated times, (and those as frequent as our affairs will give us leave) for the more solemn performance of this duty. Why should we not once or twice in a month set apart some hour or hours in a day for this business; that is, to take an account of our own actions, to examine the state of our souls, to see how we are gone, forward or backward, in the great work we have to do, and to adjust accounts between God and us. Nobody but those that have tried it, will easily conceive the benefits that we shall reap by this exercise. 'Tis certainly the greatest preservative of our virtue and good estate towards God that can be. And it is likewise the surest way to set us right, if we have gone astray; especially if to this exercise we add the renewing our vows by partaking in the holy sacrament.

In a word, Let us all repent earnestly of our sins, and return to the Lord with all our hearts, confessing our own vileness and wickedness before him, and taking up most serious and stedfast resolutions to serve him faithfully for the time to come in newness of life. Then will God accept us and pardon us, and give us such a measure of strength and assistance, that we shall both walk acceptably before him in this world; and shall likewise be made partakers of his eternal glory in the other.




DISCOURSE VII.

Several useful observations from this text,
The conclusion against infidelity.

[Delivered in two Sermons.]

MARK XVI. 16.

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved : But he that believeth not, shall be damned.

UR Saviour having, by his life, and his preaching, and his miracles, and his resurrection from the dead, laid a sufficient ground and foundation for the ready belief and entertainment of his gospel among mankind, comes upon his ascension into heaven, and as the last act he had to do upon earth, to issue out his royal charter and commission to his apostles, to go and preach this gospel all the world over ; and this he does in these words, *Go ye (saith he) into all the world, and preach*

the gospel to every creature. St. Matthew hath set it down a little more largely, *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 whatever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* This was the apostles commission; this was the great trust committed to them, and in them to all succeeding ministers of Christ to the world's end.

But now lest it should be surmised, that this order might signify very little, since here was no enforcement of it, no obligation laid upon the people to whom they were to preach to receive their message, our Saviour takes care to remove that pretence by adding these words following, (which are the words I am now to discourse of) *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Here is an obligation with a witness upon all persons whatsoever, to whom the gospel is preached, to receive and embrace it, since no less than their everlasting salvation or damnation depends upon it.

That which I design at present upon this text is, to make some observations and reflections upon it, partly in order to the clearing the sense of it, and partly by way of inference from it.

Our Saviour here orders his apostles to *go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*, declaring, that *whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: And whosoever believeth not, shall be damned.*

The first thing I beg leave to observe from hence is, That since men, to the world's end, are to be saved by believing the gospel, then there is a necessity that there should be always an order of men in the world, whose business it should be to preach this 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 be sent?* If Christ designed that the belief of his gospel should be the way of salvation as long as the world lasts, he must certainly have designed that there should be men set apart to preach and make known this gospel as long as the world lasts likewise. Accordingly we find that he hath *de facto* done so: For the commission he gave to his apostles, he did really mean should extend to all those that should succeed them in that ministry, as appears plainly in the last clause of it, as I read it to you out of St. Matthew, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.* What is the meaning of that? Would he be with his apostles to the end of the world? Why, that could not be; they were to go off the stage in a few years; and so they did: But the world hath continued many ages after their death, and is yet like to continue. Christ's meaning then could be no other than this, that he would not only by his Spirit assist the apostles in the preaching of the gospel during their lives, but he would also continue that assistance to those that should succeed them in the work of the ministry, even as long as the world should endure; and accordingly we see that he hath hitherto made this promise good, having for above 1600 years all along continued a succession of Christ's ministers to gain souls to Christ, and all along likewise continued a succession of Christ's people in all parts of the world, who are gained to Christ by their ministry; and as he hath hitherto made good his promise, so we doubt not but he will continue to do it to the end of the world.

We beg therefore of all people, that they would not think it strange that at this day they see a sort of men (you may call them by what contemptible names you please) that are so zealous for this business of Christ Jesus and his gospel, making it their set work to be talking of it once a week, nay, and now and then, being so plain with you as to tell you, that it is upon the peril of your salvation if you do not give ear to their message. The men may be contemptible enough; but yet the errand they come upon is not contemptible. How untowardly, how ungraceful, how unacceptable soever they may be as to their other circumstances, yet, if they preach nothing but the gospel of Christ, you are bound to listen to it, nay, you are miserable if you do not. And as for those that do embrace it, it is no less a valuable treasure to them, for being had from earthen vessels. Let it not therefore be objected to us, when we preach Christ Jesus to you, that it is our trade; we must talk at this rate, for we get our living by it: Alas! it is but small comfort to get a livelihood by other people's credulity; I think an honest serious man would rather starve than live by cheating. If there be any atheists or infidels among the clergy, any that, whilst they preach Christ Jesus to the people, believe no better of him and his religion than as a mere fable (as they say Pope Leo the tenth did not) they are certainly the worst of men, and the greatest impostors that the world can shew; and let them be treated as such; no man will be sorry for it. But when we heartily believe in Jesus Christ and his religion, and are really persuaded that neither we nor you can be saved without it, and likewise are called by the authority of God and man to the public preaching of it, we think it very hard we should be the less credited, because it is
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the profession we live by. If our Saviour's words be true, *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned*; it is certainly more your interest than ours, that you should all be such believers as we would have you. But let that be as it will, we shall have a sad account to make, if, being ministers of the gospel, we suffer you to perish for want of telling you of these things; or, if we cannot tell you any thing but what you knew before, at least for want of calling upon you, to put in practice what you know. Time was, when the preaching of the gospel was so far from being encourag'd by the state, that to be a public minister was the ready way to martyrdom: Yet in those days there were as many preachers, in proportion to the number of the hearers, as there are now: Nay, and their saying then was, *Væ mihi si non evangelizavero*, Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel! I hope such times will never come again; and I hope none among us wish for them: But if they should come, I doubt not but God would raise up those that would still preach the gospel, and would declare, even at the peril of their lives, that *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned*.

The second thing I observe from these words is this, That our Saviour here so puts his proposition, as to make baptism as necessary a condition of salvation as believing; for he doth not say, *Whosoever believeth shall be saved*, but thus, *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*: He joins them both together. What are we to learn from hence? that Jesus Christ has laid as great a stress upon an outward ceremony, as he hath done upon an inward virtue? No, by no means: But this; that the belief of christianity, without taking the profession of it upon us, and obliging ourselves to live

according to it, is not sufficient. A man will perhaps tell you, that he believes the history of our Saviour to be a true history, and that he hath a great esteem for his person, and looks upon his doctrine as the most excellent, and useful, and divine morality that was ever deliver'd to the world. Why now this seems a pretty fair account of the man's religion in comparison of what we can have from others. The gentleman that makes this confession of his faith, is civil to our Lord Jesus Christ. But yet this extremely falls short of what one must do that means to have any benefit by our Saviour. How great a respect soever a man pretends to have for the gospel, yet if he do not take the profession of it upon him, that is to say, if he do not enter himself into the number of Christ's disciples by baptism, vowing all obedience to Christ Jesus as his Lord and master, and owning his religion upon all occasions, and communicating in his worship and service, we cannot say that he is a christian, though he may be a well-wisher to christianity.

Examine the scriptures, and see what it was that made one to be a Jew, or an Israelite in the old time. Was it enough to think honourably of the law of Moses? No; but a man must become circumcised, and oblige himself to live according to that law. The case is just the same as to our christianity. I will speak the thing as plainly as I can; and in what I shall say, you will have a full account of the meaning of the words of my text. The business of our Lord Jesus, as our Redeemer, was to mediate or procure a new covenant between God and man, and to seal it with his blood. God's part in this covenant was this; He was to grant unto all those that entered into this covenant the forgiveness of their sins, and the grace and assistance

of his Holy Spirit, for the enabling them to live a holy life; and lastly, an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God. This was God's part. The condition of this covenant on man's part was this, That all they who expect to partake of those benefits, should believe in Jesus Christ, and own him for their Saviour, and assent to all his doctrines, and endeavour to frame their lives according to those rules he hath prescribed them. This is that gracious, that happy covenant which God establish'd with mankind through the mediation of our Lord Jesus. Well, now here is a covenant made, an everlasting covenant between God and man, sealed with the blood of the Son of God. All mankind that will be eternally happy, are to be enter'd into this covenant, actually and particularly enter'd, not the father for the children, but every one for himself, as it was in the covenant of circumcision. But how is that to be done? Why, our Saviour himself hath taken care to order and prescribe the way of it; *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 which 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 his countrymen the Jews had used that ceremony of baptism many ages, for the admission of profelytes into the true religion. He, therefore, that came to take all nations, and peoples, and languages into his covenant, laid hold of that ceremony, which he already found to his hands used for that purpose, and applies it to his own institution, ordering all persons from henceforward to enter into his covenant by baptism.

But what then? Was there no more required to the making men partakers of the benefits of this new covenant,

nant, but only to be baptized into it? I answer, no more, if we truly understand the importance of baptism; but a great deal more, if you take baptism only for the washing or sprinkling with water. St. Peter, in his 1st epistle, chap. iii. ver. 12. tells us expressly, that *baptism saves us*; and by telling us that, he saith as much as our Saviour here saith, that *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*. But then, that he might not be misunderstood, he immediately explains himself, *Not, saith he, the washing away the filth of the flesh*: It is not that baptism which saveth us, *but the answer of a good conscience towards God*; that is to say, the solemn answers that were made by those that took the vow of baptism on them to the interrogatories that were then put to them concerning the forsaking the devil and his works, and owning Christ Jesus and his religion, and walking according to the holy laws he delivered. It was the performing these answers with a good conscience that would save men effectually in the day of the Lord Jesus. The outward ceremony of washing with water would signify little; but that with the things signified by it, that is, a holy and a pure life, suitable to the christian faith, that would be effectual for the salvation of all men.

To apply now all this to our business:

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,

covenant, and signified by that baptism, is a hearty owning of Jesus Christ, and a holy, and pure, 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, as I take it, is the full importance of our Saviour's words in my text.

The third thing I observe from hence is this ; 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, and 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. If now this be so, what must we say of some religious sects among us that are so very spiritual, that they will have nothing to do with such a carnal ceremony as that of baptism with water is : Either pretending that the whole thing is meant in a mysticā sense, or that it is long ago antiquated ? Thus do the Quakers, and some other sectaries.

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 ? But however, to speak the softliest

of them ; if they be christians, sure they are far from being right sound christians, because they live in a constant transgression of as plain a precept of Jesus Christ, as any in the gospel ; and such a precept too, as all the christians in the world, till this last age, have always made a conscience of religiously observing.

The fourth thing I remark upon this text, is this ; That from these words we may be fairly led into an easy method of giving ourselves satisfaction concerning a question that hath made not a little stir and bustle in the world ; not that there is much difficulty in the thing, but that men, by endeavouring to serve parties and factions, have industriously made it difficult. The question I mean is, 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 likewise are agreed, that this church is but one, however it may be spread into never so many countries ; and this is that which we acknowledge in our creed, when we say, *I believe one catholic and apostolic church.* Lastly, it is likewise agreed by all christians, that out of this one church there is no salvation, at least no salvation promised by God, or covenanted for by our Lord Jesus Christ. But now here comes the question ; Where is this true church to be found ? since 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. Why now, methinks, we have a plain answer to this question from my text, and that is this ; Where-ever the gospel of Christ is preached, and men do believe it, and are baptized into it, there is a true church :

church : In all those places all the world over, where this is made good ; in all those places the true church of Christ is ; and every one of those combinations of men so preaching, so believing, and so professing, are true parts and members of the catholic church (that mystical body of Christ) out of which there is no salvation. We do not say that they are all equally pure, or that a man may communicate with all of them with equal safety : But that they are all true parts of the catholic church, though some more sound, and others more corrupt. This, you will say, is a very plain intelligible notion of the catholic church : But how do we prove it ? Why, we can prove it undeniably, beyond all contradiction, from the very words of my text. 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 undeniably, that whosoever believeth, and is baptized, is within the catholic church. I do ask, Is it true, that whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; or is it not ? If it be not, then we cannot rely upon 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.

So that you see in this present divided state of Christendom, where there are so many different communions, if a man be unsatisfied which of them he should chuse to venture his soul in ; the question he is to put to himself is not this, which of these communions is the true catholic church in opposition to all the rest ? as the papists put it ; for none of them are so, tho' perhaps they are all parts or members of that catholic church : But this, In which of those communions, that he hath 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 he may with the greatest safety join himself to? Now if this be the question, as it certainly is, a serious enquirer may, without very much pains, give himself satisfaction.

The fifth reflection I make upon these words is this: We may from hence be 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 can come up to all those notions and propositions which they esteem articles of faith. One would think therefore that some rule ought to be given us, by which we might measure the sufficiency of our faith, or by which we might know when we have believed all that is necessary; that so we might not be under the tyranny of such usurpers upon our consciences, as would be always imposing on our faith, till at last they came to make us swallow impossibilities for divine revelation. And such a rule, methinks, our Saviour hath here given us. His commission to the apostles is, *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature*; and he adds, *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved*. Believeth? believeth what? Why certainly the gospel that he spoke of before: *Whosoever believeth the gospel, and is baptized, shall be saved*; that must be his meaning. It is the gospel therefore that we must believe; and to the believing of that alone, without any more, the promises of salvation are made. But what is this gospel? Why, it is plainly that doctrine which Jesus Christ himself taught, and which the apostles from him preached to the world, and which was all in their times put into writing, and which is all fully contained in those books that

that we have at this day in our hands, which we call the New-testament. This gospel then is the rule of our faith. Every doctrine that is there delivered we must believe : But as for any doctrine that is not there delivered, nor can be deduced from thence, we are not bound to believe that as an article of faith, let it come never so well recommended by the authority of popes or their councils, nay, or back'd with the credit of miracles wrought for the attestation of it. This, I say, is our rule of faith : That rule, which our church prescribes to us as well as the holy scriptures ; and blessed be God we do so strictly keep to it. So long as we do so, it is impossible but we must be not only a true church, but also a right and a sound church. We cannot indeed, upon those principles, admit of abundance of points, which our neighbours lay so much weight upon, as to make all those that deny them to be infidels and heretics. We do not believe the infallibility of the church, nor the supremacy of the church of Rome, nor transubstantiation, nor purgatory, nor invocation of saints, nor twenty other such articles, which they make necessary to salvation. And the reason is, because we find none of those things in the gospel, as it is contained in the holy scriptures, which we are sure would have been there, if God had made it our duty to have believed them. But we believe all that the gospel teacheth, and make use likewise of all the means that are possible to understand it in its true sense : and this we are sure is all that Christ hath required of us, as to the business of believing.

But sixthly, Another reflection I make upon this text is this ; That this proposition of our Saviour's, *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned,* doth only
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respect those people to whom the gospel of Christ is preached, but not others to whom it is not preached. This will appear by the connexion of these words with the former, *Go, saith our Saviour, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*; and then he immediately subjoins, *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned*. How is that? Shall every one be damned that believeth not, tho' they never heard the gospel? No; that cannot be inferred from these words, but only this; those that upon the preaching of the gospel do embrace it, and enter into the new covenant it tenders to them, those shall be saved: but those that upon the preaching of the gospel to them do not embrace it, all such shall be damned. But here is not a word said of those that never had the gospel preached to them, either as to their salvation or damnation. The inference I draw from hence is this; That those promises of salvation, and those threatenings of damnation, which are made in the gospel, do only concern those that have the gospel preached to them, and that have means and opportunities afforded them for the closing with the one, and avoiding the other. But what then is to become of those people that never had these means and opportunities put into their hands? Are they to be saved, or are they to be damned? I answer, we can say nothing to their case, but must refer them to God. To pronounce positively of their salvation we have no warrant, because the promises of salvation, as the gospel declares them to us, (and we have no promises of salvation but in the gospel) are only made to those that believe in Jesus Christ, and enter into his covenant by baptism. On the other side, to pronounce of their damnation, seems very harsh and uncharitable; nor do I know that any
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in the scripture are threaten'd with damnation, but such as reject the gospel after it is preached to them, or dishonour their profession after they have embraced it, by a wicked unholy life; neither of which can be said of those we are now speaking of. We ought therefore, as I said, to determine nothing about them either way, but to leave them to the uncovenanted mercies of God, if I may so speak. For what have we to do to judge another man's servant, as St. Paul expresseth it? They are God's servants, and to him their master they stand or fall; and if it pleaseth him, he is able to make them stand. This we are certain of, that the judge of all the world will do right. Nor will he demand the tale of bricks, where he hath allowed no straw to make them. And this we are likewise certain of, that when the great day of retribution shall come, the day when all accounts shall be cast up, and rewards and punishments distributed to every one according to their works, God Almighty will then vindicate not only his justice and his truth, but his goodness and his mercy also, to the satisfaction of all the world; and a thousand ways he may have of adjusting those matters, and such like intricate points, which we now cannot conceive.

But in the seventh place; The last reflection I make upon these words, is this; That what is here promised to all christians in my text, and what is here denounced against all unbelievers, was designed by our Saviour to extend to all ages of the world. As those that then believed, and were baptized upon the apostles preaching, were put into a condition of salvation, so are all people put into the same condition that at this day among us do enter themselves into the christian covenant. And as those that continued infidels and unbelievers when the gospel was preached to them then, were doom'd to damn-

damnation; so shall it fare likewise with all those that now-a-days deny or reject that gospel that is taught among us. There is the same necessity of believing in Christ now that there was then; and there is the same guilt and punishment of refusing him; for there is no other name under heaven given unto man, either then or now, by which we can be saved. There is indeed this difference between the persons that were preached to then, and those that are preached to now; that in those days people first believed, and afterwards were baptized; but now (as it must be in countries where christianity is the national religion) people are first baptized, and afterwards they believe; or, to speak a sad truth, some of them afterwards do not believe. But let not any think that their baptism without faith in Christ, and owning their relation to him in all the instances that he hath commanded, will signify any thing. Notwithstanding their baptism, we still declare, and we have authority so to do, that whosoever believeth not the gospel shall be damned.

I would to God all men, that go by the name of christians among us, but yet in their hearts do not own Christ for their Lord and master, would seriously consider this. They have put on Christ's livery, as I may speak, for they are baptized, and they call themselves by his name, and they do not refuse to be present where his worship is celebrated, and sometimes where his sacraments are administered, especially when they have a turn to serve; but yet, if there be any regard to be given to what passes in their conversation, and that in such humours too, when one would be apt to think they must speak their minds, they have no more true belief of christianity, nor real veneration for Jesus Christ, and his gospel, than they have for Mahomet
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and his alcoran. It is a melancholy consideration that there should be any such men in a christian country, especially in such a country as ours, where the gospel is taught in its native truth and simplicity, without those mixtures of foppery, which in other countries might alienate the minds of sagacious persons from it. But it is the pleasure of God that his religion and his church should always be exercised by enemies from one quarter or other. When superstition on one hand, and enthusiasm on the other, could not, after their utmost efforts, do us any mischief, lo ! atheism and infidelity start up and seem to threaten us with ruin. But this is our comfort, that as the principles that lead to those things are impious and hated of God, so we are sure they can never serve any interests of man ; but on the contrary, are the most destructive to human society of any thing in the world : And therefore we cannot doubt but the government will do all that is possible for the discouraging and putting out of countenance all this sort of principles. And that very thing alone, with this kind of people, will do more toward the effectual suppressing of them, than all the arguments in the world.

But in the mean time they call for arguments from us ; and God forbid we should refuse them. They plead that it is against all reason and justice, that a man should be damned for that which he cannot help : Our text here saith, that *Whosoever believeth not the gospel, shall be damned.* They answer to this, “ That they
“ would believe the gospel if they could, but they can-
“ not ;” and they urge, that a man cannot believe more than he hath evidence for ; for it is no more in our power to believe what we have a mind to, than it is to *add a cubit to our stature*, if we have a mind to be taller ; and therefore, say they, what sense is there in
saying

saying that a man shall be damned for not believing the gospel, when it is not in his power to believe it if he would?

This is the greatest objection that is made against our text. I beg therefore your leave to give an answer to it, and then I have done. And here we do readily allow them all that they ask. We grant that a man cannot believe what he will, any more than he can love or hate what he knows nothing of. When any thing is proposed to a man's belief, his understanding must first be convinced of the truth of it, before he can believe it. The thing must either be plain to him at the first sight, or it must be proved by deduction from plain principles that he doth already acknowledge; or lastly, he must believe it upon the credit or authority of the person that proposeth it to him, who is such a one as he hath reason to think cannot, or will not impose upon him: In a word, every one who believes a thing, must have some reason, or at least must think he hath some reason, for the belief of it.

But then, after we have granted all this, it must likewise be acknowledged on the other hand, that there are a great many things which a man cannot, or doth not believe, tho' there be reason and evidence enough to be given for the truth of them: As for instance; I dare say you will all allow, that there is reason and evidence enough to be given that there is but one eternal God, the maker of heaven and earth, and that the sun, and moon, and stars are no Gods, but only the creatures of God; and yet it is certain that there hath been, and are people in the world that worship these creatures as eternal Gods. Again, I say, you think there is proof enough to be given that the bread and wine in the sacrament do continue in their natures, and are truly
bread

bread and wine, even after the words of consecration have been pronounced upon them ; and yet you know there are a great many christians in the world that are so far from being of this belief, as to take them for the very real body and blood of Christ. You see then, that as a man cannot believe without reason, so he may still continue an unbeliever, tho' there be all the reason in the world that he should believe.

Well, what do we gather from hence ? Why, we gather from hence a plain solution of this difficulty that is before us ; and that is this:

We do not pretend that a man shall be called to an account by God for not believing a thing when there was no reason to believe it ; nay, neither do we say that a man shall be called to account for not believing every thing, tho' yet he had the greatest reason in the world to believe it. For it may so happen (as it doth every day in a thousand cases) that a thing may be true, and a man, if he will enquire, may have proof beyond all contradiction for the truth of it, and yet it shall be of no ill consequence to him, whether he believes it or no, because it was not his business, nor his interest, nor his duty, to take pains to inform himself right about it. But this is that which we say : In a matter where it is a man's greatest business, and greatest interest, and greatest duty to inform himself aright, and to believe aright, and in a matter likewise where there are sufficient means and opportunities afforded to every one for the gaining a right information, and having a right belief ; and lastly, in a matter where there is so much evidence and proof of the thing, that every one would believe, if he did all that either an honest or a wise man would think himself obliged to in these circumstances : I say, where-ever this is the case (as we say this is the
case

case among us) it is nonsense and madness for any man to plead that it is not in his power to believe, and therefore he thinks it unjust he should be called to account by God for not believing. Here therefore is the issue we put the point upon : We do not pretend that any man shall be damned for not believing what it was not in his power to believe ; but we say, if it is thro' your own fault that you do not believe, or if the case be such that if you had been sincere, honest, virtuous men, you would have believed ; then your unbelief is the effect of vice and wickedness, and is a plain piece of immorality, and you are accountable for it, as you are for adultery or murder, or any such wilful crimes.

And therefore, to conclude : I do here, by way of application, earnestly address myself to all those among us, that are in their hearts unbelievers, however they do outwardly profess the christian religion, and frequent our assemblies. I beg of you, in the name of God, to examine yourselves seriously concerning the grounds of your unbelief, and see whether you can satisfy your own consciences that you have done all that serious, prudent, unbiass'd men would do in a matter of such importance as this is, wherein no less than your everlasting salvation or damnation is concerned. If your own consciences can testify to you, that you have dealt honestly and impartially in this matter, and that yet, after all your endeavours, you cannot find reason enough to persuade you heartily to believe in Jesus Christ, I have nothing further to say to you ; let God judge this matter between him and you, as he certainly one day will. Charity will oblige us to believe the best of you. And therefore, if this be your case, we cannot rank you otherwise than in the number of those heathens that do

not believe the gospel, because it was never fairly proposed to them.

But then, in the mean time that you make this enquiry into your own state, be not too forward to deceive yourselves, nor to entertain a good opinion of yourselves, upon a general and slight view of your own condition, but put such questions honestly and home to your consciences, as any sincere man would do in such a matter as this.

As for instance :

Have you seriously and deliberately considered the christian religion in all the parts of it? Have you acquainted yourselves with all the doctrines of it, how suitable they are to the natural notions that man has of God and religion, and how extremely they tend to the making mankind both wise and happy?

Have you examined the precepts of the gospel, and taken notice how much they excel the morality of the best philosophers, and how wonderfully they are contrived and accommodated to the uses and indigencies of all sorts of men, in whatever state and condition they be; and in a word, how happy the world would be, if all men were hearty believers of these doctrines, and serious practisers of these precepts?

Have you seriously taken into your consideration the rich and invaluable promises that are in this religion made over to mankind, which no other religion can pretend to; such as the forgiveness of all our sins upon repentance, and assistance of God's grace to enable us to live holy and pure lives, and lastly an eternal, immortal life of glory and happiness in another world? Why, natural reason will teach us that all these things are worthy of God to promise, and that we want, extremely want, the assurance of these things, in order to
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the making us good. And yet no other religion in the world hath assured us of them; but the religion of our Lord Jesus.

Have you likewise impartially examin'd the evidence and proof that our Lord Jesus Christ gave for the truth of his being sent by God to teach all these things to the world, and the little or no objections that are to be made against it? Have you looked into the prophecies of the Old-testament, which for two thousand years together spoke of a Saviour to be sent to mankind, and taken notice how exactly they were fulfilled by our Saviour? Have you considered the person of our Lord Jesus, and his way of living, how innocent, how sincere, how pious, how charitable, how entirely devoted to God's service, how free from all suspicion of being a designing man, and how constant to the death in asserting his pretensions?

Have you thought of the prodigious miracles that he wrought all his life long for the confirmation of his doctrine; the voices of God from heaven to attest that he was the Son of God; his resurrection from the dead, and visible ascension into heaven? Which things are demonstrations to all mankind, that believe a God and providence, that Jesus Christ was no other than he pretended to be, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world?

Lastly, Have you considered that the same power and virtue that was in Christ for the doing all these wonderful things, was, 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 Christ Jesus? And that by no other ways nor methods, but by the excellency of their doctrine, and the holiness of their lives,

and

and the wonderful miracles they performed, and their readiness at any time to lay down their lives for the cause of the christian religion.

These are some of the things which you ought very well to consider before you can satisfy yourselves, that you have reason to keep off from being christians. But you will perhaps say, you have thought of all these things, but yet you are not convinc'd that you ought to embrace Christ's religion. Why, it is almost impossible. Sure you have not thought of them as you should do. Sure you was biased and prejudiced on the other side, when you took these matters into your consideration. But that is not fair thinking. You ought to come to those matters wholly free and indifferent, at least as much as is possible. But pray say seriously, whether the objections and dissatisfactions which you have met with about the christian religion be the result of your own thinking, and such as you naturally fall into; or you have rather learned them from the discourse of that lewd, debauch'd, hot-headed company that you have used to converse with. If so, there is no great reason you should insist upon them.

I pray be pleas'd to examine yourselves further. Are you really concerned for another world after this? and do you really desire and endeavour to approve yourselves to God as well as you can? If you do, then I am sure you will do all that natural religion will teach you about this matter. Tho' you do not believe in Christ, yet you will live very sober and virtuous lives, and you will heartily pray to God likewise to direct you in the way that is acceptable to him. Now do you do this? Do you every day address to the throne of grace for assistance and direction? and do you hate every thing that is apparently evil, and make it your business to be as

pious, and charitable, and sober, as is possible? Why, whether you believe in Christ or no, these are the dictates of natural religion; and you must thus frame your life, otherwise you are not qualified for any direction or assistance from God Almighty. And if any man among us do thus frame his life, I shall think it very strange if such a man be not a hearty christian. Sure I am, I never yet heard or read of any instance to the contrary.

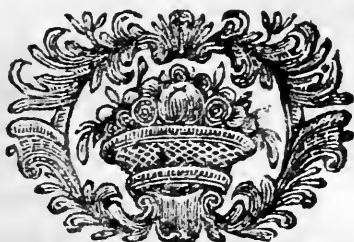
The truth of it is, men that are of this temper, men that are thus honestly disposed, never fail to believe in Christ at last, tho' at the beginning they do not. All such shall come unto Christ, because the Father draweth them. All such, because they endeavour to do God's will, shall know of Christ's doctrine, that it is of God. All this our Saviour hath long before told us.

But here is our case :

It is not the virtuous, the good, the humble, the modest, the charitable, the piously-disposed souls that disbelieve christianity among us, but another sort of men. And I pray God the great reason of their unbelief be not this, 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 they are of all mortals 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 kingdom, as well as to those particular persons who maintain and promote

promote them. And I pray God that all of us, who do heartily embrace and believe the christian religion, may frame our lives and conversation suitably to it, that so we may be no disparagement to our holy faith, but may rather *adorn the doctrine of God* we do profess in *all things*: This is the true way to obtain happy, peaceful days in this world, and the way likewise that will infallibly bring us safe to the kingdom of heaven after this world is ended. May God Almighty grant us both these blessings for the sake of his dear Son our Lord Jesus; *To whom, &c.*





DISCOURSE VIII

Of conformity to the customs and ways of the world. How far allowable, and how far not.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world.



THE whole verse is this: *And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*; that is, ye that call yourselves christians must not follow the ways of the men of this world, nor frame your conversation according to the evil customs you see before you; but you are to look upon yourselves as men of another world: your minds are to be formed and acted with new spiritual principles, that so ye may both approve and

and practise what the gospel of Christ requires of you, which is that good, and acceptable, and perfect law by which God would have you to frame your lives.

This point of not conforming to the world is so essential to christianity, that it is one of those things which we all vow in our baptism : for as we then promise to renounce the devil and all his works, so do we also promise to renounce the pomps and vanities of this world ; and therefore, as there is the greatest obligation that is possible laid upon us to practise this duty, so it is of mighty concernment to us that we do well understand it, otherwise we shall bring endless scruples and difficulties upon ourselves. For to think of living in this world, and not in many things conforming to it, or complying with the customs of it, will seem even to the best of men an hard, if not impossible, task ; and consequently, if the bounds and limits of this precept be not well understood, we must unavoidably be entangled in many perplexities.

To fix these bounds therefore shall be my endeavour in the ensuing discourse. And in order hereunto I shall do these four things :

I. First of all I shall shew what kind of conformity to the world is allowable to christians.

II. What kind of conformity to the world is here forbidden.

III. I shall name some particular instances in which this precept of not conforming to the world doth more especially seem to concern us at this day.

IV. I shall give account by what rules and measures we are to guide ourselves in this point of conformity to the world, that what is lawful in itself may not be unlawful or sinful in us.

I. I begin with the first of these points, that is, to shew what kind of conformity to this world is allowable to christians. And what I have to say upon this head I shall comprize in two propositions :

1st. First of all ; No man is bound to differ from the world merely for difference sake.

2dly. That it is not only lawful, but expedient, that in things which are not by the law of God forbidden, we should frame our conversation according to the course of the world.

1st. No man is bound to differ from the world in his way of living merely for difference sake.

My meaning is this : No man is oblig'd to forbear or abstain from the practice or use of any thing merely upon this account, that it is a thing that the world, or, if you will, the wicked men of the world, do practise or use.

This proposition I lay down to obviate the pretences of some enthusiastical men among us, a main article of whose religion is, to be at as wide a distance from the world in their way of living as possibly they can be ; for say they, *the whole world lieth in wickedness*, and all the people of God are to come out of it ; no further to comply with the manners and customs of it than what absolute necessity doth require, for all further compliances favour of the wisdom of this world, which is carnal, and sensual, and devilish : And so far have they run this point, that it is accounted unlawful to use the same language or speech that is commonly used in the world, but every thing is to be spoken, so far as may be, in the scripture language. And as much do they declaim against the common ways of behaviour and deportment that are practised among men. All that expression of duty to our superiors, and of civility and respect to others,

others, which is according to the mode of the country, whether it be by uncovering the head, or bowing the knee, or by giving them their just and usual titles, or by saluting them in the common form of ceremony and address ; all this is exploded as an unchristian thing. And the same war do they declare against the habits and garments of the world that they do against its language and behaviour. Whosoever gives up his name to the profession of religion, must mortify himself as to all gaiety of attire, and even decency too ; he must strip himself of every thing that is rich or ornamental about him, and must wear nothing that is superfluous, nothing by which his rank and quality may be distinguished from that of others.

This is the principle which one whole sect has espoused, and which a great many who have not wholly given up themselves to that sect, are yet unsatisfied about. But to shew the extreme absurdity of it, there needs nothing more to be done, than only to name these following things: for to insist largely on them in so plain a case, would be only to mispend time.

(1.) First of all, if this principle be admitted, we shall never be able to fix any certain boundaries or measures of what is lawful to christians, and what is sinful in them ; and consequently every man will be eternally entangled in scruples and perplexities, and there will be no cure for them. If a conformity to the modes and customs of the world be unlawful in all cases, save only where that conformity is absolutely necessary to our living in the world, then we cannot be certain but that every day we do that which is unlawful ; for we are not sure but that every day we have complied more with the customs of the world than was barely necessary. There are a hundred things which every man daily doth in compliance with the common usages of mankind, which are

no ways needful to be done, and may, without any detriment to his life and fortunes, be as well done another way, but only that custom prevails. Now, according to the aforesaid principle, every such action that a man doth, must be a sin. But,

(2.) This is a principle which none of those who stand up for it, no not the strictest of the Quakers themselves do live up to. (Or if they did, they would be much more uncouth and ridiculous than they are.) They say we must not be conformable to the mode of the world, as to matter of apparel, for instance: But if this be a true rule, why do not they wear different sort of cloaths from what they do? And since they will take their pattern from scripture, why do not they go in sandals instead of shoes? why do not they wear long loose vestments, after the manner of the eastern nations. Both these are undoubtedly more agreeable to the practice of the saints, not only of the Old, but of the New-testament too. Again, if it be unlawful to comply with the times in the matter of cloaths and dress, why is it not as much unlawful to use the same way of eating and drinking that others do? How comes it to pass that they dare use the posture of sitting when they take their meat, since that is the way of the world, and is quite different from that posture that our Saviour and the christians in his time used at meals; for their way then was to lean on couches or beds conveniently disposed about the table: But this none of our moderns do observe, notwithstanding their zeal and care to imitate the saints. And a hundred other things there are in which men must reform their manners if they will practise according to this principle, which yet none of them who contend for it do; and indeed, they are the wiser for not doing it: But yet it is a shrewd argument either
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that they do not believe their own doctrine, or if they do, they think it impracticable.

(3.) But further : This principle that we ought not to be conformable to this world in any thing where we can avoid it, is so contradictory to the Spirit by which our Lord Jesus and his apostles were acted, and according to which they practised, that nothing can be more. As for the apostles, they conversed with all men promiscuously, and after their own way and mode, and one of them was openly reprov'd by St. Paul (Gal. ii. 14.) for not conforming himself to the Gentile way of conversation, when he came among the Gentiles, but sticking too closely to that stinging principle of the Jews, who, thinking themselves more holy than the other nations were, would not join with them in the innocent freedom of a common table. And the same St. Paul declares, that he *became all things to all men, that by this means he might gain more souls*, 1 Cor. ix. 22. And it doth not appear, that ever the apostles, or the first christians, made any scruples of accommodating themselves to the guise and manner of the people they preach'd to ; except only in things which were of themselves unlawful, and contrary to the religion which they were to preach.—As to our Saviour, he was a person so far from being morose or reserved in his carriage, or a lover of singularity, so far from setting up a way of conversation of his own making, distinct from the way he found in the world, that he was the most free, obliging, and civil, and, if I durst use the word, I would say, the most complaisant person that ever perhaps appeared in the world. Both his language and way of converse, as also his garb and attire, and the whole manner of his carriage and behaviour, was perfectly the same with that of the country in which he dwelt : which thing I wish

were well considered by those we have to deal with ; for if they did seriously mind it, they would from hence rather draw an argument that we at this day ought to comply in these things with the customs of the place where we live, because our blessed Lord did so, than conclude from his way of speaking, and carriage, and garb, that we are in this age and in this country precisely to imitate him in those particulars. If he in all these things conformed himself to the mode of the country, then in reason we ought to conform ourselves to the mode of ours, and in so doing we shall more truly follow his example. By these light strictures I have made it sufficiently appear, that it is a very absurd principle, that in all things, where we may, we are bound to frame our conversation in a way different from the customs of the world, and therefore my first proposition stands good, that no man is bound to differ from the world merely for difference sake.

2dly. But now for a more direct resolution of the question we are upon ; *viz.* What kind of conformity to the world is allowable to christians, I lay down this second proposition, That, generally speaking, it is not only lawful, but expedient and adviseable, that in things which are not by the law of God forbidden us, either in general or in particular, we should in such things frame our conversation according to the course of the world. This, I say, is the most general rule, and the practice of it is both lawful and expedient. First of all it is lawful. This appears from the very terms of the proposition, which supposeth, that the thing to which we conform is not forbidden by any law. And certainly, whatever is not forbidden by a law, may lawfully be practised. And that likewise such kind of conformity is generally and for the most part adviseable

able and expedient, appears from these two things; first, that otherwise we shall bring a great many needless troubles and inconveniencies upon ourselves by swimming against the common stream, and yet reap nothing from hence but the reputation of fantasticalness and singularity; which reputation no wise man would much covet, or indeed endure, if he could help it: But secondly, by not practising this rule of compliance with custom, we shall do a great prejudice and disservice to the christian religion, by possessing men with an ill opinion of it. Our moroseness and singularity in our way of living will be apt to fright all those we converse with from the application of themselves to piety and devotion. If a man cannot live a religious life, and serve God, without living contrary to the rest of mankind, without quitting all those liberties and compliances which have always by the most sober part of mankind been thought to be innocent, who will have the courage to set upon religion? Men will necessarily be tempted either to believe that this religion of Christ's is not the true religion; or if it be, that it is so hard and severe a one, that there is no venturing upon it.

But thus much concerning our first point, what kind of conformity to the world is allowable to christians.

II. I now proceed to the second; What kind of conformity to the world is here forbidden.———But concerning this we need not make any words; for having seen what conformity is lawful and allowable, we easily may perceive what that is which is unlawful and forbidden; *viz.* all compliances with the customs of this world which are sinful and repugnant to the precepts of our Lord, how much soever they are in vogue. I say, all that kind of compliance is here forbidden us. In every age there always hath been, and will be, some
sins.

sins that are in fashion; some customs which, by reason of their commonness and the countenance that is given them by those whom we are most apt to propose for our examples, are not only accounted no sins at all, tho' they be really great ones, but get reputation in the world, are thought very decent and commendable. Now as to such as these every christian is infinitely concern'd more especially to watch over himself, that he be not carried away with the common stream; that the customariness of the things, and the approbation and encouragement that they receive from the men of the world, be not a snare to him to go and do likewise. And certainly there are great temptations to a man to practise that which he sees the generality of those he converseth with not only to practise, but to applaud. But here lies the christian magnanimity: If we will approve ourselves to Jesus Christ as his true disciples, we must not desert our station, or in the least depart from those laws he hath set us, though the whole world set us a contrary example. Be a thing never so modish, never so universally practised, never so creditable, yet, if it be sinful, if it contradict that christianity we are all sworn to, we must abstain, we must not comply, *we must obey God, rather than conform to man.* This, without doubt, is the meaning of those frequent precepts we meet with in the New-testament of dying to the world, of crucifying the world, and of not framing our conversation according to the fashion of this world. And this likewise is all that is meant by that promise we all make in our baptism, *to renounce all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.* It is not hereby meant that we should quit every thing that is accounted brave, or splendid, or glorious, or magnificent in the world; No, every thing that attracts the eyes of ordinary spectators is not

a pomp; neither is every thing that doth not tend to spiritual edification a vanity, in the sense of pomps and vanities, which we renounce in our baptismal vow; but only such pomps and vanities as are contradictory to the laws of the gospel, that is to say, are either in their own nature sinful, or do minister to sin. The truth is, these words, when they were first put into the baptismal vow, had a particular respect to the heathen shews and spectacles, which were made in their theatres in honour of their idols. And the manner of them was this: There was, besides the shews themselves, (which were indeed barbarous and inhuman, as well as impious, the whole business being the fighting of men with beasts, and with one another, and the representations of the lewd and ridiculous actions of their poetical Gods: I say, besides these shews themselves, there was also) a solemn procession of their idols, which went before the shews, and were to usher them in; that is, there was a long train of the images of their Gods carried through the streets, and attended with great devotion by all the multitude: And this is that which the first christians called the pomp of this world. And for a man to be present either at these shews, or the processions that went before them, was always held a thing utterly inconsistent with christianity. This seems to be the primary notion of the pomps which christians were to renounce at their baptism, if we may believe those who have the most accurately treated of those matters.

Whether the representations which are made in our days upon the stage, do fall under the notion of those pomps we have now spoken of, is a point which I think needs not much be disputed. The representations and spectacles of the heathens were upon a religi-

ous account; they were designed in honour of their Gods, and were a part of the idolatrous worship which obtained among them. But I believe it will easily be granted, that none frequent our theatres upon account of serving any ends of religion, or doing any honour either to the true God or the false ones. But though it be granted, that our shews are not of the nature of those among the pagans, being no ways design'd for the promoting of an idol worship, and consequently that they do not fall under the precise notion of the pomps of the world, as the first christians understood that term: yet if it do appear that they minister to vice and sin, if they tend to the debauching mens manners, if they promote wantonness and luxury, if they insinuate into the minds of the spectators principles of atheism or irreligion; I say, if these be the effects of them, though they are not strictly the pomps of the ancient world, yet they are justly to be stiled the pomps of the present, and by parity of reason are to be abandoned by the present christians, as much as those were by the primitive. But whether they be of this nature, or do directly or necessarily tend to the production of such effects, let those who know them best determine. If they do not, I have nothing to say to them. But this by the by.

That which I was saying is, That a christian's not being conformed to the world, or to the pomps and vanities of it, doth in general consist in not complying with those sinful customs and usages, which do generally obtain in the times and places in which he lives, of what kind soever they be. The precept is levelled against the prevailing fashionable sins of every country, which are various, according to the different ages, and the different climates of the world; so that every one is

to make an application of the precept to himself, according to the times and places in which he lives.

Now to make some kind of application of it to us at this time: To name some particular instances in which this precept of not conforming to the world doth more especially seem to concern us of this nation, is the third head which I proposed to insist upon.

III. And God knows, there are two many instances of sins, and great ones too, fit to be taken notice of, which, thro' the prevalency of custom and ill example are become modish and fashionable, even to that degree, that they are accounted creditable amongst many, and venial by the most. Oh! that every one of us would seriously lay these to heart, and whenever we remember our vow of renouncing the world, and not being conformed to it, would seriously think ourselves concerned to avoid these sins especially! I shall name some of them, and think it very proper and seasonable to insist a little upon them.

1. The first is profane swearing in our ordinary conversation, which is so customary, that for a man to use it, is accounted no disparagement to him: Nay, it is even thought by some persons ornamental. It is made the seasoning of their discourse: It supplies the place both of wit and courage, and of truth too. Yet there is nothing more expressly forbid by the laws of our Saviour, nor any thing that is more unreasonable in itself, nor from whence either less pleasure or less advantage doth arise to them who use it.

2. Another vice, which by reason of its commonness hath almost lost all disrepute among us, and among some is passed into credit, is revelling and drunkenness. A sin so odious to God, that it is put into the black catalogue of those vices, which *whosoever lives in, shall*

not

not enter into the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 21. and 1 Cor. vi. 10. And yet so frequently, and with so little scandal is it practised in our days, that business can scarce be dispatched, or any mirth or society made without it. And the worst censure that a man ordinarily undergoes for it, is, that he is a man of a free humour, an honest-hearted, good-natured companion, and one who is the greatest enemy to himself. As to this, we ought to learn wisdom, even from some of those nations of Europe, whom we should be loth to imitate in other matters. How lewd and dissolute soever they may be in other respects, yet this sottish vice is generally abhorred by them. And a man who is found guilty of it, shall undergo as severe a penance for it from his spiritual guide, as for the greatest of crimes.

3. And this gives us occasion, in the third place, to name another sin among us, which is grown so common, that it ought to be cautioned against, as one of the prevailing modish sins of this age, *viz.* the sin of lewdness and uncleanness. It is a very sad consideration, that we should be so far degenerated from the severity and honesty of our forefathers, that that vice, which was heretofore accounted foreign to us, and proper to the southern climates, should not only find entertainment among us, but thrive and propagate as fruitfully as it doth among them. They yet keep our sins out from among them (namely, those of excessive eating and drinking, as I now said :) But we not only preserve our own sins, but to increase our condemnation, have taken in their sins too. I fear this is not spoken without ground; for any one that lives among us, and hears what a slight matter is every day made of pursuing unlawful love, and how trifling a business even adultery itself is accounted, will be convinced that

we are grown to a strange pitch of debauchery as to this point. The sense of justice, and faith, and charity, is so far lost among us, that an adulterous love is so far from being punished, so far from being detested and branded, as it should be, that it is only made a business of laughter and merriment. As for that which they call simple fornication, it is by many, and by such too as would be thought christians, doubted whether it be a sin or no. Will not God visit for these things? Will he not some time or other call us to a sad account for this open and scandalous violation and defiance of his most sacred fundamental laws, by which the world is governed and doth subsist? There is not a serious writer among any of the pagans, whoever excused such things, much less justified them: And shall we christians dare to do it? Oh! that we would all seriously consider what St. Paul says in his 6th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, verse 9. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, shall ever enter into the kingdom of God.* So far is he from accounting fornication, of what kind soever it be, a slight business, that he tells us plainly, it is the sin which most of all unhallows and defiles our bodies, which are consecrated by our christianity to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; ver. 15, 16, 17. and doth so alienate the Holy Spirit from us, that he will no longer dwell with us, as we have it in the same chapter. Nay, so severe he is against this vice in any one who calls himself a christian, that he chargeth the Corinthians, *not to have any communication, no not so much as to eat with any brother who is guilty of it,* 1 Cor. v. 11. And as for the primitive church, wherein the religion of Christ was most purely taught and observed, so great an abhorrence had they of these crimes, that

even

even for one act of fornication a man was excluded from the congregation of the faithful, and not admitted again to their communion, but after a very long and severe penance. And as for the sin of adultery, that was a sin of so heinous a nature, that it was a very great question in some churches, whether any christian who was guilty of it should ever again be restored to the peace of the church.

4. Another reigning sin among us, and which ought not, upon this occasion, to be pass'd by without some animadversion, is, the general (unconcernedness shall I say? or the) contempt of religion, and things sacred, which is every where to be seen. We are grown so lukewarm and so indifferent as to these matters, which yet are our greatest concern in this world, that we can patiently hear religion affronted and run down; nay, it is well if we ourselves do not sometimes cast in our mite to the lessening and exposing of it. What is become of that face of devotion that heretofore was to be seen in families, and in private conversation too? Where is that care to read God's word, and to teach it to our children and servants, and to perform the duties of devotion both at church and in our own houses, that was practis'd in former times? Far am I here from commending the late times, when a great many made a great appearance of religion, and yet acted upon such principles as were contrary to all religion. And far am I from giving the least countenance either to such kind of principles, or to such kind of actions. But this I am afraid is true, that our zeal for the outward service of God, and the public profession of religion, is much abated, and that we are not so strict in these matters as we ought to be, nor as we have been. And let them who kept up the external and visible characters
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of religion have been otherwise never so bad, and never so hypocritical, yet we have a sad account to make for our open profaneness. Hypocrisy and profaneness, I think, are both equally damnable to the person who is guilty of them. But yet it is certain to the public it doth less hurt to be strict in the outward profession of religion (though in a wrong way, and to serve secular ends) than it doth to neglect or to despise religion, and to live without any regard, or even pretences to it. This latter will, without doubt, sooner draw down the judgment of God upon a people. Let all of us therefore, who have any concernment for our souls; or if we have not for them, yet who have any concernment for the peace and safety of the kingdom where we live, take especial care to own God and his religion in all our conversation. Let us not be so foolish as to forsake it, or so timorous as to be rallied out of our profession of it by the drollery of atheistical men. I am confident there are abundance more in this nation, who have a hearty sense of the truth of religion, than there are who have not. And is it not a pity that the impudence of a lesser party, who have a very bad cause, a cause condemned by all laws, and all good men, who have ever been in the world, should either affright or ashame, or any ways put out of countenance the practice of those men, who, as they have the best cause in the world, so are they more in number. It is really our timorousness, and easiness, and desire to comply with the humour of our acquaintance, that makes many of us so little careful of God's worship as we are. We have, many of us, better principles in our hearts, than we dare own in our conversation. Is not this a fearful reproach to us? But let us remember what our Saviour hath said, *He that confesseth me before men, him will*

will I confess before my Father which is in heaven, Matt. x. 32, 33. But he that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father, and before the angels of God, Luke xii. 8, 9.

5. Since we are speaking of the prevailing sins of the age, we ought not to conceal another thing, which, by reason of its great commonness, is accounted either no sin at all, or a very slight one; and that is, the great liberty we take in discoursing of, scanning and censuring other mens actions, the boldness we make with our neighbour's reputation and good name; taking pleasure in exposing them, and telling stories to their disadvantage. This is so much in use, that it is the entertainment of most conversations. We can hardly find talk enough to furnish out the civility of a visit, but at the cost of other persons. If they be not the subject of our discourse, how many of us are there who have nothing to say? Nor is it the custom to spare any, but to talk as freely of public persons, and to censure the administration of public affairs, as if the persons were our own servants, or the affairs our own domestic concerns. But this is also one of the customs of the world, which by no means we ought to conform to; for it is against the genius and spirit of christianity. It is contrary to that charity and kindness, to that modesty and peaceableness which our Lord Jesus hath obliged us to. His law has forbid us to *judge or censure others, lest we be judged ourselves*, Matt. vii. 1. And his apostle has given us in charge, that we should *speak evil of no man*, Tit. iii. 2. Jam. iv. 11. and therefore least of all of those who are in authority.

6. Another thing, which is not often taken notice of, but is really a conforming to the unlawful customs of the world, is vanity and excess in our apparel, or in the
other

other outward circumstances of our lives. The humour which most prevails is, to be as splendid and brave as we can: To carry it out with all the pomp and outward shew that our purses can reach to; nay, often beyond that, both in our cloaths, our equipage, our attendants and entertainments, and the like: And all this, that we may be taken notice of by others, that we may make some figure in the world, as the word is. But we have all this while no regard either to the gravity of the christian religion, or our own quality, or estate, or those more necessary expences, which ought to be defray'd by us. This now is against the christian law, and is a following the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, which we have renounced in our baptisin. I deny not but every one may so far conform himself to the guise of the world, as to go in the same habit, and use the same way of living that others do; but then it is always to be remember'd, that there is a great deal of prudence to be used in these things. We ought to consider our religion, which, by the nature and contrivance of it, is a grave, serious thing, and enjoins great modesty and severity as to our outward garb and behaviour; and therefore every thing about us that is loose, that is undecent, that is light, that ministers to pride, and lust, and vanity, all that is perfectly abhorrent from it. We ought also to consider the rank and quality in which we are in the world. As it is fordid, and favours of an avaritious penurious spirit, to live below our rank; so to live above it, is an instance of luxury. And lastly, in these things we are also to consider our estate and fortune, and the necessary charges they are to support. We are but stewards of God's blessings; and the main use he gave them us for, is, after our own necessities are supplied,

to make provision for our children and our families, and to minister to the poor and needy. If therefore we spend our revenues in unnecessary finery and entertainments; if we put them upon our backs, or into our bellies; or if we throw them away in drink, or gaming, or in maintaining a needless pomp and grandeur among men, whilst our families are not duly provided for, nor the poor relieved, nor the public served by the wealth we are blessed with, what a sad account have we to make to God in the other world for these extravagancies!

7. But lastly, to conclude this head: Besides all the fashionable vices I have named, there is one more which ought by no means to be forgot upon this occasion, as being one of the forbidden customs of the world, which comes within the compass of my text; and that is, the practice of duelling, or fighting in private quarrels. A practice which, though both the laws of God and man forbid under the severest penalties, yet is still accounted so creditable, that he is no man of honour, who either dares not, upon any direct affront, send a challenge, or dares not accept one. It were heartily to be wish'd, that men would consider to what master they belong, and what religion they profess. Was this the spirit of our blessed Saviour, who came to give us an example? and whose example we must either follow, or we cannot be his disciples? Is this an imitation of his meekness, and patience, and gentleness, and charity, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, 1 Pet. 2, 23. but willingly gave his back to the smiters, Isai. 1. 6.* and instead of revenging himself on his enemies, as he easily might have done, *laid down his life for them?* And what is there which his religion doth more severely forbid, than this revenging

of injuries in a private way ; or doth more strictly enjoin, than forbearance and forgiveness, even so strictly, that we cannot, according to his religion, without hypocrisy, say our daily prayers, unless we be in charity with all the world ?

Well ; but a man's honour lies at stake, and for the saving of that a man must demand satisfaction when he is affronted, or he must give satisfaction when it is demanded. Why let it be so : But sure there are other kinds of satisfaction both to be demanded and given besides that of murdering one another, especially in a civilized country, where the law hath provided for the reparation of all such injuries as need reparation, and where the execution of vengeance is only entrusted in the hands of public authority. But suppose a man's honour cannot be saved this way, yet is it not very unreasonable to prefer our honour before our christianity ? If our honour and our obedience to God must necessarily come into competition, surely we should resolve to part with that, and every other thing that is dearest to us, rather than to depart from this. Oh ! if men had any belief or consideration of another world, when they engage in these kinds of actions, they would tremble to think what a desperate venture they run. If either of the parties should happen to die in the encounter, in what a dismal condition are they both ! the one in dying without repentance, with all his sins about him ; the other for being his murderer !

But after all, what is this honour, which we prize so much, that we will venture upon damnation, rather than it shall suffer ? Is it not an unaccountable fancy without any foundation in reason or nature, taken up at first by boisterous unthinking men, and afterwards as foolishly embraced by others ? Sure I am, these notions
of

of honour which obtain in the world, and which occasion these private quarrels, were never put into the minds of men by God Almighty, but are rather of the devil's devising, because they do so directly tend to make us of his spirit and temper. The natural notions of honour are of another strain. That man only, according to the measures of reason and nature, is a man of honour, who hates to do any thing that is mean and base, be it never so much for the gratifying his private interests or passions; and who hath such a quick and tender sense of virtue and goodness, that he always chuses to do the best, and the worthiest actions, without any respect to himself, or his private concerns. Now this is truly generous, and brave, and honourable, and all the world must acknowledge it so; for it is to act as God doth; it is to copy out his perfections, and to live up to the dignity of our nature. But now for a man to venture upon a bad and wicked action, an action that he knows his religion hath strictly forbidden; an action which, besides the ill consequences to his family, doth expose both his body and soul to destruction; and this too for no other reason, but to gratify a private, blind, impotent passion of his own, *viz*, either the passion of anger, that he may be revenged of his adversary; or, which is worse, the bare passion of fear, that he may not be thought a coward: I say, for a man upon such accounts to venture upon such an action, (and yet there is not a duel fought, but it is both such an action, and is undertaken upon such account) where is the sense of honour in this? Where is the bravery, and greatness, and magnanimity that is expressed? Certainly thus to act is so far from being an argument of a great and generous mind, that it rather shews a man to be of a mean, narrow, selfish, and contracted spirit.

I cannot indeed deny, but that there may be a great deal of courage expressed in these kinds of undertakings ; but yet must say, it is a brutish courage, such as is common to other animals of our climate as well as our men. But if indeed it be so absolutely necessary to the preservation of a man's honour and reputation, that he should express his courage and valour, I do believe that wise and good men may every day find occasions enough of doing it, without ever putting themselves to the trouble or the danger of fighting duels.

But thus much is sufficient to have spoken as to the particular instances of fashionable sins which are here forbidden in the text, which was our third point. But it must be acknowledged that the prohibition in the text of not conforming to the world, may and ought to be extended further than to the customs of the world, which are plainly sinful, and against the laws of God, such as all those are that I have hitherto mentioned. There are several other things which, though they are not perhaps against any express command of God, yet it will be fit for sober christians to abstain from them. And there are several things and customs likewise, which, tho' they may be lawful and innocent in themselves, yet prove sinful by accident, at some times, and in some circumstances, and to some persons ; and yet at other times, and in other circumstances, and to other persons, they will not be so. Now, with respect to such things and customs as these, I put our

IV. Fourth and last enquiry, *viz.* By what rules and measures we are to guide ourselves in the matter of conformity to the world, that what is lawful in itself, may not become unlawful or sinful to us.

And because the circumstances of things are infinite, all that I can do is to lay down three or four general rules for our conversation, to which we are to apply particulars, as they come in our way. I shall do little more than name them, and so conclude.

1. If we mean to live serious and conscientious lives, and not to abuse those liberties which our religion allows us, it is fit that we should abstain from a conformity with the world to those customs and practices, which, tho' they are not directly forbid by the letter of God's laws, yet are of ill fame and report among wise and good men. This is that which St. Paul obligeth christians to, when he bids them *to provide things honest in the sight of all men*, 2 Cor. viii. 21. By honest things he there means things that are decent and comely, and such as no good person can justly take offence at. Again, in the Thessalonians he bids christians *to abstain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Ep. v. 22. Any thing that looks like a sin, or is so accounted by wise and conscientious men, should be forborne by christians, unless there be great and urgent reasons for the contrary. And accordingly as christians are exhorted to pursue every thing that is *just, and good, and virtuous*, so are they every thing that *is laudable and of good report*, as the same apostle elsewhere speaks (Phil. iv. 8.) Now nothing is of good report but what is thought well of, at least thought innocent, by serious, prudent, and virtuous christians. Tho' it passes never so currently, among some of our acquaintance, yet if it be of an ill name among those whose judgments in point of prudence we ought most to set by in this matter, and whose examples we ought chiefly to follow, it is a sufficient reason to make us forbear the practice of that thing, if we will act safely. It would be easy to name
some

some practices too much in use among several of us, which, if this rule was observed, must necessarily be laid aside.

2. A second rule which I lay down is this : Those innocent compliances with the world, which are unquestionably unlawful in themselves. yet if they be practised by us out of ill designs ; if by these compliances we mean to serve any ends of pride, or lust, or ambition, or the like, they cease to be innocent to us, and we are guilty thereby of an unlawful conformity to the world. The main thing in those compliances that God looks upon, and that we ought to look upon also, is the inward principle of the heart from whence they proceed. If that be laudable and justifiable, the usage is so likewise. But if we will follow the mode of the world to gratify some ill affection in us, the whole thing is naught ; it is a *making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 14.

3. In this kind of things there is great regard and consideration to be had of our own tempers and inclinations. There are several things we might innocently enough comply with, and conform to the world in, if we had the perfect government of ourselves. But yet the weakness of our tempers may be such, that if we use these compliances, we shall be drawn into horrible great inconveniencies : We shall be betray'd into sin, tho' we meant no such thing. Now where we have such experience of ourselves, in this case it is adviseable to abridge ourselves even of our lawful liberties. Thus for instance, if we cannot adorn ourselves, or wear rich cloaths, but we are in danger to think ourselves, the better for them, or to be drawn away to pursue some undecent design upon the account of them ; if we cannot go into such a sort of company, but we are drawn into

intemperance, or foolish talking: If we cannot play at any innocent game, but we are apt either to be angry if we lose, or to play for considerable sums of money, or the like; in all these cases it is the best wholly to forbear these things, and to deny ourselves lawful liberties, that we may preserve our innocency, and not engage in things unlawful.

4. To conclude: Though we may conform to the world in all lawful things, yet to make a constant practice of some things, which are lawful in themselves, will become unlawful to us, and will prove such a conformity to the world as is here forbidden. A thing may be done now and then that may be innocent enough, and we shall deserve no blame for it. But if we make a common practice of the thing, so as to spend our time in the minding of it, to the neglect of other more necessary business, it will in this case be so far from being lawful, that it will be a grievous sin in us. For instance, to use innocent pastimes and recreations, to enjoy our friends, and make visits, and the like, is not only allowable, but highly commendable: But yet to make a trade of these things, so wholly to give up ourselves to them, as to spend most of our time in them, this is intolerable, and we shall be called to account for it in the other world. The reason of this is evident: The main business we have to do in this world, is to serve God, and benefit our neighbours, and to fit ourselves for eternity. This is our great work, and all those other things we are speaking of, ought to be managed and ordered by us in subservience thereunto; so that they may promote that great end, and no ways hinder it. But if we so place our affections, and bestow our time upon them, that one would think we make them our great design, and not the other; then

then we cannot be innocent, but are horribly unjust both to God and our own souls.

These are the general rules by which we ought to steer ourselves in the practice of the apostle's precept of *not conforming to the world*. The farther applying them to particulars, is left to every one, as he finds himself concerned.

The sum of all is, *We should first seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, Matt. vi. 33. and seriously endeavour in all our conversation to recommend ourselves to our Lord and master, by a diligent observance of all his commands, and abstaining from all the pollutions of the flesh and the world. And as for those gratifications and liberties that our religion allows us, we should, as to them, *use the world, as tho' we used it not*; taking them only by way of convenience and accommodation for our more easy passage through this world into the other.





DISCOURSE IX.

Our obligations to live as CHRIST lived.

[Delivered in four Sermons.]

1 P E T. ii. 21. (latter part of the verse.)

*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow
his steps.*



THE whole verse runs thus: *For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, &c.*

St. Peter here is exhorting servants to be subject to their masters, and with patience and submission to bear whatever hard usage they might meet with from them. And the argument wherewith he enforceth this exhortation is the example of Christ. He patiently for our sakes underwent a great load of sufferings, and therefore highly reasonable it is that we should not repine at any hard measures we meet with in the world. The force and strength of this argument lies in that which St. Peter addeth in the last part of this verse, namely, that

that Christ's life was framed for our example; that it was design'd to be a pattern for christians to walk by, and that we are all of us bound to follow his steps, *He left us an example, &c.*

This point of the example of Christ is that I have now design'd to treat of; and in speaking to it I shall not restrain it to one instance, that of his sufferings; (nor indeed do St. Peter's words so restrain it, though it must be granted he brings it in upon that occasion) but I shall consider it in its full latitude with respect to his whole life and conversation in the world.

And in treating of this argument I shall endeavour these three things:

I. First of all in general, To shew the great obligation that lies upon all christians to follow Christ's example.

II. Secondly, To explain the extent of this obligation; How far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

III. Thirdly, To propose some of those virtues that our Saviour was most eminent for, and which are of the greatest use in human life, and seriously to recommend them to your imitation.

I begin with the first thing, the obligation that lies upon christians to follow Christ's example. And this shall be my argument at this time.

And I think it the more needful to be insisted on in regard of a notion that some people are too forward to entertain, which asserts, that the life of Christ was not design'd for an example to us, but for a means to procure God's acceptance of us. They explain their mind thus: No man can be accepted by God, and entitled to his favour, unless he be perfectly righteous in the eye of God. Now to make a man so, he must either have a perfect inherent righteousness of his own,

or the perfect righteousness of another must be imputed to him, as to all intents and purposes to be made his own, and to be look'd upon as such. The former sort of righteousness no man can pretend to; nor is he obliged to have it under the second covenant. The latter sort of righteousness therefore is that we must rely upon, and by which we are to expect to be justified. Now this is no other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who only was perfectly righteous: This righteousness of his being made ours, being imputed to us, is that that must make us perfectly righteous in the sight of God. As therefore the end of Christ's death was to satisfy for the breach of God's laws in our stead, we having all sinned and so deserved God's wrath; so the end of his life was actually to fulfil the law in our stead, that we might be accounted righteous before God, as if we had fulfilled it ourselves. As his passive obedience, his death and sufferings, were designed for this end to be imputed to all believers, for the excusing them from the punishment due to their sins; so his active obedience, the righteousness of his life, was designed for this end to be imputed to all believers to make them appear righteous before God, though they were not righteous in their own persons. Now the instrument, say they, whereby this righteousness, this obedience of Christ, both active and passive, is made ours; the hand that conveys it to us, is no other than a lively faith; that is in their sense, a believing in Jesus Christ, a disclaiming all our own righteousness, and confidently applying his righteousness to ourselves. And whoever doth this, is, in God's account, a righteous man without more ado, having all Christ's righteousness so imputed to him as to be made his own.

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This is a scheme of christian religion that some men have laid down to themselves ; and if it be a true one, then what becomes of the exemplarity of Christ's life ? what becomes of our obligations to walk as he walketh ? Why verily it all falls to the ground. For since (according to this hypothesis) the very design of Christ's life was to fulfil all righteousness ; and all that righteousness of his is made ours by faith ; what need can there be of our fulfilling the same righteousness over again, by endeavouring to copy out Christ's example in our lives ? I own that a great many good men may have been bred up in the use of such expressions as these that I have now been mentioning, but yet abhor the consequences that I would draw from them : For all that they mean by Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, and made ours, is no more than this, that we are justified and accepted by God purely and solely for the merits of Jesus' Christ, and that not for any righteousness of our own. But they own nevertheless that we are all bound, nay even under pain of damnation, to endeavour as much as we can to be virtuous in our persons, and to imitate our blessed Lord in all the instances of virtue and holiness that he hath set before us. Now if this be all their meaning, God forbid that any man should open his mouth against it ; for it is undoubtedly the scripture doctrine, though the words whereby they express their meaning are very improper and unscriptural. But I would never dispute with any one about words, where we agree in the sense. That which I oppose, and which all men, that have any regard to the honour of the gospel, and the interest of souls, must be concerned to oppose, is the Antinomian principle, that is to say, that the righteousness of Christ's life is so imputed to believers, as to serve instead of their own

righteousness; that Christ's perfect obedience to the moral law hath discharged us from all obligation to the observance of it. So that provided we do apply this his obedience, this his righteousness to ourselves by faith, there is no need of our being righteous as he was righteous, and framing our lives after his holy example. This, I say, is both an absurd and a pernicious doctrine, and not to be endured among christians.

If I should set myself to shew you this at large, and expose this doctrine in all the parts and consequences of it, and to shew how contradictory it is to the account which the scriptures give of this matter, I should spend more of my time, and of your patience, than I am now willing to do. And therefore I will only remark two things concerning it, and which are very obvious :

First, It supposes Christ not to have performed that which he came into the world to do. Secondly, it supposeth that he came into the world with a very ill design.

First, I say, this doctrine disparageth Christ's undertaking, and supposeth him not to have done that which he came into the world to do. For did not our blessed Saviour come into the world for this end, that he might redeem us from all evil and misery, and put us into a state of real happiness? There is no body doubts of it. And now is not a state of sin and wickedness a state of slavery to the devil and our own lusts, and a very great evil? Nay, is it not the greatest evil in the world? No body, that hath any serious sense of things, will deny it. But now, according to the aforesaid doctrine, that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to believers, that they are thereby accounted righteous without being so in their own persons; and that this is all the righteousness required to qualify us for heaven: I say, according

to this doctrine, after all that Christ hath done or suffered for believers, they may remain in this evil state for ever; they may continue all their lives long under the tyranny of vicious habits, and be perfect bondmen to the devil, (if vile affections and lusts can make a man so) and go so into the other world. Christ hath indeed by his death delivered them from his Father's wrath, and the outward punishment they were obnoxious to for their sins; and he hath likewise by his life covered them over with an external robe of righteousness. But still, for any thing he hath done to the contrary, that venomous nature of theirs may still remain, and they may carry it with them into heaven, where, notwithstanding all the glories they may be presumed to be encircled with, it will be a plague and a torment to them for ever. Either therefore Christ must be supposed to have intended the destroying of all sin and naughtiness out of men, as well as that it should not be imputed to them; to have meant the furnishing their souls with an inward real righteousness and purity of their own, as well as the cloathing them with a righteousness of his; or else he hath but done them half that kindness which he pretended to have designed them when he came into the world: He is but half a physician; he hath palliated our sores and our diseases, but he hath not removed them.

But, secondly, The doctrine that asserts that the life of our Saviour was not design'd for an example to us, but to be a fulfilling of the law for us, so that thereby we are excused from our obedience to it; the doctrine that asserts that the righteousness of Christ's life is made so much ours by faith, that we need not conform ourselves thereto in our practice, doth not only render Christ imperfect or unsuccessful in his undertaking, which

which was that I said before ; but, which is far worse, makes it look as if he came into the world with a very ill design. This is a most blasphemous consequence, but really it cannot be avoided ; for let any man say, suppose a man had really a design to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, and to promote and encourage all sorts of vice, and wickedness, and debauchery in the world ; how could he do it more effectually than by this method, namely, to possess the world that he was sent from God, and that he was sent with this intent, that by the innocency of his life he might make amends for the wickedness of theirs ? that all his virtue, and good qualities, and laudable deeds should be as much theirs, and they should be as much rewarded for them, as if they had done them themselves, tho' in the meantime they did not one of them, nor any thing like them ; and that all the crimes they should commit, should be put to his account, and they should never answer for them, he having once for all paid the general score of the sins of mankind. Only this condition he strictly required, that they should firmly believe all this ; that they should with the greatest confidence and assurance imaginable, apply all those benefits, all those privileges to themselves ; that they should from their very hearts disclaim all good deeds of their own, and throw away every rag of their own righteousness, and shrowd themselves entirely under the robes of his righteousness. If they did but this, all was safe, nothing should hurt them ; no sin, no habits of sin, tho' never repented of, should do them mischief. On the contrary, if they thought of any other terms of obtaining God's favour, they were under a great and dangerous mistake. I say, how could any man do a greater disservice to all piety and virtue, and all the interests of

true religion? How could any man take a more effectual course to destroy the fear of God from among men, and to let in a flood of impiety and wickedness to over-spread the earth, than to preach such a doctrine as this, supposing he had the means to make himself believed? And yet, according to the principles before laid down, such as this in effect must be the doctrine of our blessed Saviour. I dare say, there is none that calls himself a christian, can be so bad as to own these consequences; but yet I do not see how the Antinomian doctrine in this matter can be acquitted of them.

Well; but it will be said, Are there not texts of scripture that do plainly seem to countenance this Antinomian doctrine, as you call it? Doth not St. Paul say, that *to all believers their faith is imputed for righteousness without works*? And doth not the same St. Paul say, *That he desires not to be found in his own righteousness, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith*? What will you say to these texts?

Why, I say, give me but leave to lay these texts fairly before you, and then you yourselves shall judge whether they make any thing for the doctrine I am now disputing against. I am indeed the more willing to take these two texts into consideration, because those I am now dealing with have them always in their mouths, and do in a manner lay the whole stress of their cause upon them.

The first text is in Rom. chap. iv. ver. 22. There St. Paul tells us, that Abraham's faith *was imputed to him for righteousness*; and that *it was not written for his sake alone, that it was so imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead.*

Now

Now from this text, say they, it is plain, that faith is imputed to all christians for their righteousness: Nay, more than that, the apostle tells us in the sixth verse of this very chapter, that *the blessedness of christians is described by this, that righteousness is imputed to them without works*. So that here is a righteousness imputed, and a righteousness imputed without works: How then dare we speak any thing against an imputed righteousness?

I answer, nobody, that I know of, speaks any thing against imputed righteousness in the apostle's sense, but only against Christ's righteousness, and virtue, and innocence, and holy conversation, being so imputed to us, as that there is no need of our righteousness, and virtue, and innocence, and holy conversation, which I am sure was not the apostle's sense, nor ever entered into his mind. But I pray consider this text a little more narrowly, and be not carried away by the sound of a word. St. Paul here tells us, that Abraham's faith *was accounted to him for righteousness*, in the 3d verse. In the fifth verse, that *it was reckoned to him for righteousness*. And in the 22d verse, that *it was imputed to him for righteousness*. All these phrases mean the same thing. But is it here said, or is it said any where else, that Christ's righteousness was reckoned, or counted, or imputed to Abraham for righteousness? Nay, is it said any where in the whole scripture, that Christ's obedience or righteousness should be accounted or imputed to any men in the world for their own righteousness? Not a word of it. There is a vast difference (if any body will mind) between these two propositions or expressions; *To a true believer his faith is reckoned or imputed for righteousness*; and this, *To a true believer the righteousness of Christ is reckoned and*

imputed.

imputed for his righteousness. I say there is a vast difference between these two propositions: The meaning of the former is, that under the covenant of grace (which was procured by our Lord Jesus Christ) God is pleased to accept of a true sincere faith instead of a perfect obedience to the law. Whosoever truly believes in Jesus Christ, and shews forth the fruits of his faith, by a sincere, though not perfect, obedience to God's commandments, as Abraham did (and without this his faith is not a true faith) such a man is justified, is accounted righteous before God, as much as if he had performed all the righteousness of the law of works: His faith is accounted to him for righteousness.

But when we say that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, as if it was our righteousness, (which is the other proposition) it is capable of no other meaning but this; That upon account of Christ's obedience to God's laws, God will account us righteous, as much as if we had obeyed them ourselves. The holiness of his life is so made ours by imputation, that God esteems us holy persons upon the account thereof, tho' we are not really so in our own persons.

The former proposition, of faith being imputed for righteousness, is certainly true, and I know no christians that deny it.

But the latter proposition, of Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, hath no foundation in scripture: Nay, it is certainly not true in that sense of the words that the natural proper grammatical construction of them leads to. And thus much for the first text.

Well then, (saith the objector) it seems you plead for a righteousness of your own, distinct from Christ's righteousness. I must confess we do so. What then? Why, says he, that other text of St. Paul will for ever confute

confute and quash all such pretensions ; for doth not he in the 3d of the Philippians, ver. 8, (which is the other text I am to consider) doth not he there expressly say, *I count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord*; and I desire to be found in him not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness of which is of God by faith? Doth not St. Paul here expressly declare against and renounce all righteousness of his own? I grant he doth so. But what then? If you will seriously mind what kind of righteousness of his own he here declares against, and what righteousness that is which he desires to be possessed of, you will certainly be convinced that he is so far from opposing our doctrine, that he earnestly pleads for that righteousness we are all this while contending for.

Let us look a little back into the occasion and scope of these words. His design is, in this chapter, to set forth the excellency of the christian religion above the jewish, and to shew how mean, nay, how altogether insignificant all those things the Jews so much gloried in, were, in comparison of christianity. And he here reckons up all the magnificent things they boasted of, and wherein they placed their righteousness, and tells us, that upon those accounts he had as much reason to be confident of his own estate towards God, as any of them had. *If any other man* (saith he in the 4th ver.) *thinketh he hath wherein he might trust in the flesh, I have more. I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. As touching the law, I was a pharisee* (which was the strictest sect among the Jews) *and as for my zeal in the law, I was a persecutor of the church,* (than which nothing could be more meritorious among the Jews) *and as for the right-*

righteousness which is by the law, I was blameless. There was no man could say but that I lived up to the precepts of the law of Moses, and was blameless in my conversation, as far as the letter of it required. But what, after all this, should I plead my confidence in any of these things? *No, verily,* (as he goes on in the 7th verse) *but those things which were gain to me, I accounted loss for Christ:* That is to say, all these prerogatives, my birth, my profession, my sect, my reputation, my strict way of living, which might be thought to be of great advantage to me; now that I am come to the knowledge of Christ, I abandon them all; I see that they are nothing worth; nay, I account them as a loss, as things like to be rather a hindrance to me, than a gain. *Yea, doubtless,* (as he goes on in the next verse) *I account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and I account them but dung that I may win Christ.* And then comes in the verse that I am now concerned with, *That I might be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This is the passage that is brought to establish the doctrine of imputed righteousness. This is the text that doth so utterly blast all righteousness of our own.

I pray mind what sort of righteousness of our own that is which St. Paul here would not be found in. Is it not the legal pharisaical righteousness? Is it not the righteousness which is by the law? Are not these his very words?

I pray mind what righteousness that is that he would be found in. Is it not that righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ? He doth not say the righteousness.

eousness of Jesus Christ: It is not that that he would be found in; (if he had said so, that indeed had been to the purpose) but that righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that is to say, that righteousness which is to be obtained by believing in Jesus Christ by becoming a christian. Certain it is, that St. Paul doth not here oppose an inherent righteousness to an imputed one; but an outward natural righteousness to that which is inward and wrought in a man by the Spirit of God. The righteousness that he would be found in, is not the righteousness of Christ, made his or imputed to him; but it is a righteous, holy state of soul, wrought in him by the Spirit of God, through the faith of Jesus Christ.

The clear sense then of these words is this; That which above all things I desire is, to be found in Christ: that is, to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ: not having my own righteousness, which is by the law; that is to say, not being content with those outward privileges, and that outward obedience which by my own natural strength I am able to yield to the precepts of the law; (which is that righteousness in which the Jews place all their confidence, and by which they expect to be justified before God) but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ: that is, the righteousness which I desire, and in which only I shall have the confidence to appear before God, is, that inward spiritual obedience to his laws, which he doth require as the terms and conditions of his favour and acceptance, and which I can never attain to, but by the faith of Christ, by becoming a christian. This is none of my own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, as being revealed from heaven by Jesus Christ, and wrought in me by God's Spirit accompanying the preaching of the gospel. And as it is

is his gift, so he will own it, and reward it at the last day. I will appeal to any man that will carefully read this whole passage, whether he must not in his conscience believe that this account I have given is the true sense and importance of the apostle's words. And now, whether they make any thing against our being righteous and holy, as well as Christ was righteous and holy, against the necessity of walking as Christ walked, do ye judge.

But I am sensible I have made too long a digression upon these two texts. But I thought it worth the while to give a plain account of them. I now return to my argument: And that which I have farther to say upon it, shall be dispatch'd in a few words.

My business is to press upon you the obligation and necessity of following Christ's example, if we would approve ourselves christians: And in order thereunto, besides what I have before said, I would desire you to take into your consideration these two or three things:

First, I beseech you, consider how solemnly our Saviour and his apostles call upon you to the practice of this. As for our Saviour, I might quote many passages in his discourses to this purpose; but I will only take notice of two, because I said I would be short. And I mention one of them the rather, because the beginning of it seems to favour the pretences of those men we have been now talking of.

The text is in the xith of St. Matthew, ver. 28, 29. There our Saviour makes a general and solemn invitation to all sinners to come to him. *Come unto me, saith he, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* What words can be sweeter than these? Whoever is oppressed with the guilt of his sins, it is but coming to Christ, that is, as they usually expound

it, believing in him, and casting themselves wholly upon him, and they shall have their burdens taken off, and be at perfect ease and rest. But what follows? *Take, saith our Saviour, my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and then ye shall find rest for your souls.* Here our Saviour shews that he means something more by coming to him: Coming to Christ in his sense, is to take his yoke upon ourselves (and a most easy and comfortable yoke it is) and to learn of him, to imitate his example, to frame our minds, and spirits, and tempers to a conformity with his mind, and spirit, and temper; to be meek and lowly in heart, as he was; and so in all other instances. This is that which every one must do, if he means to find rest for his soul.

Again, When our Saviour gave that unheard-of instance of kindness and condescension to his disciples in vouchsafing to wash their feet, pray mind the application he makes of it, John xiii. 15. *I have given you, (saith he) an example, that ye should do to one another as I have done unto you. If I, says he, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, then ought ye to wash one another's feet.*

You see by this, that his example was intended by him to have all the force and obligation of a command; only in this it had the advantage, that it was more moving and persuasive.

As for the apostles, it would be endless to repeat all the passages wherein they propose our Saviour to us as a pattern and example of living: How they bid us to *look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*, lest at any time we should be weary and faint in our minds! How they call upon us to walk in his steps, to be followers of him, nay, to be followers of them, because

because they were followers of him ! How often do they mention his patience, his humility, his meekness, his boundless love and charity, as arguments and encouragements to us to proceed in those virtues ? Lastly, they lay such stress upon this point of conforming ourselves to the example of Christ in all things, that they make the very notion of discipleship to him, to consist in it. *Whoever* (says St. John, ep. i. ch. ii.) *saieth that he abideth in him,* (that is, pretends to be a disciple of his) *ought himself also to walk even as he walketh ;* without this he cannot be accounted a disciple of Christ.

And indeed it must needs be true in the reason of the thing. Which is the second thing I would desire you to consider. For what is it to be any one's disciple, but to be a follower of him in the mystery that he professeth. If a man sets up for a master in any science or speculative matters, in that case to be a disciple of his, is to embrace his notions and sentiments of the thing he pretends to teach. If he be a teacher of some art, or matters of practice, why then his disciples are those that conform themselves to his methods and ways of practice in that art. This is the notion that all the world has of a disciple.

If now we would know what it is to be a disciple of Christ, the way must be to know what it is that Christ professeth ; what mystery it was that he pretended to teach to the world. If his business among mankind, was only to teach men some new notions they knew not before, then I grant there is no more required to the being his disciple, than only to believe and understand those notions he delivered : Or if his business was further, to gather together a number of men that should openly profess such a set of propositions ; and to oblige

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them

them thereto, they should all of them, upon the entrance of that profession, be baptized with water, as a solemn ceremony of initiation into it; then indeed to make one a disciple of his, it would be sufficient that he was a professor and a baptized person, let him live what way he pleased. But now, since, as all must acknowledge, the chief skill that our Saviour professed, was that of living; the main art and mystery he pretended to teach, was the art of ordering our conversation so, as that we might please God, and be accepted of him; there must go more to the making a disciple of his, than either belief, or profession, or baptism. A man, if he will deserve that name, must live as he lived, must conform himself to his manners, and precepts of living, and way of walking, otherwise he doth not follow him in the art he professeth, and consequently is no more his disciple than a man because he wears a turbant is the disciple of Mahomet, tho' in all things else he be a Jew; or than a man of old was a stoic, because he, like them, walked in the portico, though in the mean time he held the principles of Epicurus.

This is so plain a thing, that tho' we may sometimes with a great deal of pains, cheat ourselves, yet it is impossible to impose upon any indifferent person in the matter. Let us suppose a heathen to have read the history of our Saviour, and from hence to be informed what his pretences and designs were in the world; what good precepts he gave for the conduct of mens conversation; what a kind of life he led; how innocent, sober, chaste, meek-spirited, patient, humble, devout, charitable a person he was: Will he not from this conclude, that surely all that pretend to be the disciples of this Jesus, are obliged, not only in conscience, but in decency, and for their own credit, and the credit

of their master, to live as he lived; or if they do not, they shew they do not belong to him? Shall any of us be able, with all the art we have, let us pretend never so much devotion to our Lord, let us make never so many reverences at his name, tho' we extol him to the skies, tho' we profess we glory in nothing so much as in being his disciples, tho' we are zealous for his religion above all things, nay, tho' we swear we would die for him, if there was occasion; yet, I say, can any of us, with all these artifices, make the man believe that we are truly his disciples, if we lead our lives in a contrary way to what he did? May he not truly and justly reply to us, I hear your words indeed, you are very civil and complimentary to this person whom you call your Saviour; but you must pardon me, if I cannot believe you have any real respect or inward veneration for him? I cannot think that you either truly believe in him, or expect to be saved by him; for if you did, you could not possibly live so contrary both to his precepts and his practices as I see you do. He, as your own story tells, was a meek, modest, quiet-spirited man: But you are all fire, when you are in the least provok'd. His character was, that he did not only forgive great injuries, but did good to those that did them, and prayed for his bitterest enemies: But you, on the contrary, on the least affront, meditate a revenge, and think your honour never safe till you have effected it. He despised the world, and was very well contented with his innocent poverty: But you are for getting no more than all you can; and that too by all base and unjustifiable ways; and when you have done all, you are not contented with what you have, but still would have more. He was much a stranger to all bodily pleasures, and very moderate in the use of the good things

things of this life: But you cannot live without luxury, and uncleanness, and drunkenness. How can these manners comport with the being a disciple of Jesus?

I must confess, I cannot see how the subtlest man can answer these reproaches of a pagan. Either therefore let us live like Jesus Christ, or throw away the name of his disciples. To keep that, and yet not do the other, is a piece of as great hypocrisy and impudence as any man can be guilty of.

But, thirdly and lastly, to conclude all. If neither of these two foregoing considerations will persuade us to set ourselves to the imitation of Christ's example, let it be considered further, that there is an absolute necessity that we should do it, even to such a degree, that we are no way capable subjects of the mercies of Christ, or of any of the benefits he hath purchased for mankind, if we do not.

The proof of this is that known maxim of the apostle in 2 Cor. vi. 15. *What fellowship hath light with darkness? or what agreement hath Christ with Belial?* All christians do agree, that whatever they are to hope for in another world, was purchased for them by Christ, and that he is the bestower of it; and that the sum of it consists in this, that they shall be where Christ is, and shall for ever enjoy him. Now I ask, can any man reasonably expect that Christ should have any kindness for him, or confer any of the benefits he hath purchased upon him, if he be of a different spirit and temper from what he was? Can he think that Christ intended any drop of his blood, that was shed for man's salvation, for those ungrateful wretches, that had so little regard to him, that they would not so much as endeavour to frame their minds and souls to his will,
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and copy out his example in their lives? No man can, with reason, think he did: for if the Spirit and temper of Christ was really amiable, was to be esteemed and beloved, then the contrary spirit and temper is to be despised and hated. And therefore, if we will suppose our Saviour to make true estimates of things, he must not, he cannot have any kindness for those that, notwithstanding all the obligations he hath laid upon them, do still retain and hug those evil qualities which of all things in the world, are most contradictory to his holy nature.

But supposing we could imagine that our Saviour was as unaccountably kind, as some presumptuous men would have him; supposing he would save those very persons that were most opposite and contrary to him in their natures, and continued to their dying day so to be; yet it ought to be considered, whether there be not a repugnancy in the nature of the thing, that such men should be saved or made happy by Christ. My meaning is, how good soever Christ's intentions may be supposed towards them, yet their own qualities, which they carry out of the world with them, will put an eternal bar to their salvation. For, as I said before, from St. Paul, *what concord hath Christ with Belial?* If the supreme happiness of a christian be to be with Christ, and to enjoy him, what a small portion of happiness are such men like to have in the other world? Nay rather, what uneasiness and torment shall they not have, if they be put into that state? Can it be any pleasure to them, to be continually in the company of one whom they cannot heartily love, and whose nature and temper is as contrary to theirs, as fire is to water? Are they like to have any enjoyment of such a person, nay, will it not rather be un-

supportable to them to be near him? Can baseness, and lust, and sottishness, and villainy, and filthiness, receive any delight or gratification from the society and communication of perfect purity, and holiness, and charity?

Ay; but it may be said, that at the moment of their deaths, Christ may, in kindness to them, quite change their nature, and make them like unto himself, and then all is well.

I answer, if it be so, yet still what I assert is true, namely, that every one must be, sooner or later, conformed to the life of Christ; must be possessed of his nature and temper, before he is capable of the happiness that he hath purchased for us.

But then, since the effecting so sudden, so miraculous a change in us as is here pretended, is by no means to be expected, since Christ has made no promises, given no encouragement to hope, that any that live unlike him, shall, dying, be made like him. It will infinitely concern us all, while we are alive and in health, to conform ourselves to the example of our blessed Lord, and to possess ourselves of that spirit, and those qualities, that he was so remarkable for in the world: Which is all that I meant to press upon you; and God almighty grant we may all do so, &c.



SERMON II.

Our obligations to live as CHRIST lived :
A casuistical discourse on the same text.

I P E T. ii. 21.

*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow
his steps.*



MY argument here is the imitation of Christ, or the following Christ's example. And in treating of it, I proposed to do these three things :

First of all in general, to shew the great obligation that lies upon all christians to follow Christ's example.

Secondly, to explain the extent of this obligation ; how far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

Thirdly, to propose some of those virtues that our Saviour was most eminent for, and which are of the greatest use in human life, and seriously to recommend them to your imitation.

The first of these points I have already dispatched, and shall not now trouble you with a repetition of any thing about it.

I proceed therefore to the second, which is to give an account how far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

And here the case that comes to be discussed, is this : Are we christians so to propose the life of Christ as the pattern and model of ours, as to take ourselves to be obliged to do every thing that our Saviour did, and in the same manner that he did it ? Or, if we be not bound precisely to do this, what rules and measures are we to take in this matter ?

It is a very weighty case, and deserves to be very carefully considered, because indeed, upon the well adjusting of it does depend the resolution of a great many particular cases of conscience, which daily happen in human life, and which, if men have not right notions of this general point, do frequently bring both inconveniencies upon themselves, and harm to the public.

Now what I have to offer for the resolution of this case, I shall, for my more distinct proceeding, comprize in six particulars. And the first of them is this :

I. Our Saviour cannot be supposed to have given us an example in all the passages of his life ; because in some of them it is not possible for us to imitate him. Several of our Saviour's actions were wholly extraordinary, and the immediate effects of a supernatural divine power. Such were all the miracles and wonderful works he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, and giving testimony to the world that he was a prophet sent from God ; as his curing all diseases, casting out devils, opening the eyes of the blind, making

making the lame to walk, and the dumb to speak, feeding many thousands with a very small quantity of meat, raising the dead to life, fasting forty days and forty nights, with many more instances of the like nature. Now in these things, I say, we cannot pretend that Jesus Christ was an example to us, because they are above the powers of human nature to perform.

Some of the Quakers indeed heretofore have been so extravagantly vain, as to think they could do these things by the power of the divine Spirit that was in them. And accordingly, as I have read, some of them have attempted to raise a dead man out of his grave; and others, to fast forty days, as our Saviour did. But their shameful disappointment in the first enterprize, and their losing their lives in the second, hath been a demonstration that it was not the Spirit of God (as they pretended) that they were acted by, but the spirit of error and delusion.

II. But secondly, neither was our Saviour an example to us in all those actions of his life in which we are capable of imitating him. He did several things which it is not warrantable for us to do; and he did likewise several things which, tho' we can be supposed to do them lawfully, yet we are not obliged to do them: Nay, oftentimes it would be highly inconvenient if we should. This is my second proposition; and the reason of it is this: Our Saviour was not in the same circumstances that we are in this world. He had a particular office committed to him by his Father, for the discharge of which many things were necessary, and many other things highly convenient to be done by him, which would by no means be allowable in us: and such of them as would be allowable, yet would be very indiscreet.

As for instance; our Saviour, as being a prophet sent from God, was vested with an authority to reform religion, and the abuse of God's worship among the Jews; and by virtue of that commission and authority, we see he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. These being great profanations of the temple, which was designed, as our Saviour tells them, to be a house of prayer, and not a place of merchandize. But now for any of us to do such an action, who are private persons, and have no commission from God, nor warrant from public authority, tho' the cause of religion was never so much concerned, would be a thing highly reproveable. I mention this the rather, because this fact of our Saviour's hath sometimes been pleaded for the countenancing of all outrageous, tumultuous, seditious actions, that bold and mistaken zeal could prompt a man to. Men have thought, that by this precedent they were warranted to affront the ministers of religion, even when they were doing their office, to disturb the public service, to tear the liturgy, to deface church windows and monuments, to defile the font and the holy table, and to do any extravagant action, that tended, as they thought, to the reformation of religion, and the pulling down (as their phrase was) of Dagon and superstition.—But supposing these things they were so hot against to be as corrupt and superstitious as they would have them; supposing them to be great abuses in the worship of God; to be very rotten rags of popery; to be every whit as idolatrous, as they were really innocent, and decent, and convenient; yet this would not in the least justify such actions; tho' their design was good, and the work they went
about

about was good, the whole action was very bad. Whoever makes a riot, or disturbs the public peace, or worship, or affronts authority upon account or pretence of redressing abuses in, or reforming of religion, unless he can give evidence that he hath an immediate commission from God (having none from man) and shew too the seal of that commission, namely, all manner of signs and wonders, and miracles, however zealous he may be for religion, yet he hath not a zeal according to knowledge; and God will be so far from rewarding him for it, that he stands justly accountable both to God and man for his extravagancy.

But to leave this, and to give another instance or two in the matter we are upon. Our Saviour, we know, after he was baptized, and entered upon his public ministry, left his former employment and habitation: for before that he lived at Nazareth, and, as is probable, exercised the art of a carpenter; for he is, in the 6th of St. Mark, ver. 3. called the carpenter by the Jews. I say, he left his employment and habitation, and from henceforward gave himself in a manner wholly to an ambulatory life, going from place to place to do good to all persons, and to preach the gospel to all he met with.—But now for any of us to imitate him in this, to leave our callings, and our employments, and our relations, and our way of living, and to travel about from town to town, tho' we proposed to ourselves ends of never so great charity to mankind in so doing, yet it would be so far in us from being a praise-worthy action, that if all of us thought ourselves obliged to it, it would destroy all trade and commerce, and settled way of living in the world. This kind of life was indeed necessary to our

Saviour, and to his apostles too, because the discharge of the office committed to them did require it. Our Saviour's errand was to preach the gospel of his kingdom in all places among the Jews (and this office he entered upon at his baptism.) And the apostles they were to preach the gospel, and to gather churches throughout all nations. But now where the gospel is already preached, and churches planted, and the government of them settled, for any one to imitate this practice, would probably be so far from doing good, that it would do hurt; at least those that undertake it are no ways obliged to it.

Thus again; our Saviour chose a life of great meanness and poverty: he had not a house to lay his head in, but lived wholly on the charity of others: Nay, he obliged his apostles likewise to quit all their fortunes and follow him. This now in him and them was very reasonable, because it did very much tend to promote those ends for which our Saviour came hither; did much conduce to the spreading of the gospel, and gaining it entertainment in the world. But now, when all things are settled, and the gospel is become the law of a nation, and the profession of it is not only freed from danger and persecution, but is creditable and advantageous; for any man, upon account of conformity to our Saviour's life, to vow a voluntary poverty, or to give all that he hath to the poor, and to go about seeking a livelihood from the charity of others, as he hath no warrant for it, so will it never procure him a greater reward in the other world: unless we suppose God will reward a man for deserting his station which providence has put him in, and rendering himself less useful to the world, and indeed

indeed (which is the tendency of it) doing his part toward the dissolving civil society.

You see in the circumstances our Saviour was placed in, the person and character he bore, and the office he was to execute, ought thoroughly to be considered, before we pass a judgment what actions of his are to be imitated by us. If we be in a different state and condition, in a different quality from what he was in, it will often fall out, that the same action will not become us, that was extremely proper and decent in him.

To give one instance more of this that is very considerable :

I have already said, that our Saviour acted in one respect as a public person; that is, he was sent by God with authority to reform religion in the world. But now this office of his did only extend to affairs of religion. He did not pretend any jurisdiction or authority as to civil causes and concernments, as he that now calls himself his vicar doth. Those he left in the same hands in which he found them; in that respect he was only a private person, and was as obedient to the civil government, and the laws, as any in the country where he lived. And hereupon it was, that when a man came to him to desire him to divide an inheritance between him and his brother, that it seems they could not agree about, he solemnly refuses to have any thing to do in the matter, saying to him, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* Luke xii. 14. And again, when the woman that was taken in adultery was brought before him, (John viii. 4.) and he was asked his opinion, whether, there being sufficient evidence of the fact, she ought not to be stoned, as the law of Moses had commanded, he,

instead of passing sentence upon her, endeavours to shame the accusers, bidding those of them that were without sin, to cast the first stone at her. And when, upon this unexpected answer, they all sneaked away, and the woman was left alone, all the censure that he passed upon her was this, That since she was not already condemned, neither would he condemn her; only let her be careful that she sinned no more. Now, I say, this kind of deportment and these answers were very prudent and proper in our Saviour, who was no ways concerned in the administration of justice, or the deciding controversies between man and man about their civil rights and titles. But if any of his followers, who is a judge or a magistrate, and intrusted with the execution of laws, should take this carriage of our Saviour's for a precedent for him to walk by, and should give such answers, when justice, according to law, is demanded of him, he would very ill employ his power, and could no way answer it to God or man.

Well; but since by this discourse it appears that there are some actions of our Saviour's that cannot be followed, and some that must not, or at least cannot, with prudence and convenience, be followed, the question is, what measures we are to take in this matter? How shall we know when to imitate our Saviour and when not?

III. By way of answer to this in general, I lay down my third proposition; and that is this: The great rule that is to direct us in this affair, is our Saviour's precepts and commands. In what matter soever our Saviour has laid his commands upon us, in that we are bound to follow his steps: But where we have no law, no command, as to the particular mat-

ter.

ter, there we may, or may not, imitate him, according as the reason of the thing directs, or the parity or disparity of our circumstances with those of our Saviour doth fall out. The truth is, the proper end and design of examples, is rather to invite and encourage to their imitation, than to oblige. No man can be directly obliged in conscience to follow another man in his actions, merely because he sees him do them; for then he would be obliged indiscriminately to do whatever that person did, which, as I have shewed before, would be intolerable. But we therefore take ourselves obliged to follow any person's example, either because that person hath authority over us, and hath commanded us to follow him in such and such things; or whether he have commanded us or no, we are sensible that those instances, wherein we take ourselves obliged to follow him, are really matters of duty to us, and bound upon us by some law of God. So that, in proper speaking, it is the law of God, or of our Saviour, commanding us to do or to forbear such and such particular things, which creates our obligation to follow his example in those things, and not his example itself: Thus for instance; if it had not been our duty, by Christ's command, to pray constantly, to forgive injuries, to deny ourselves, and to take up the cross, and the like, his example in these matters would not have been of obligation to us. But now, since by his laws all these are matters of duty to us, hence it comes to pass that we are indispensibly obliged to follow his example in every one of these instances, even to that degree, that we cannot call ourselves Christ's disciples if we do not.

The main thing therefore that is to be done by us, in order to our taking right measures about the imitation

tion of Christ's example, is to inform ourselves carefully about all the points and branches of our duty, as they are laid down by our Saviour in his holy gospel. When once we are rightly instructed in these, we shall seldom be at a loss to know what those things are in the life of our blessed Saviour, that we are to charge ourselves with the imitation of; and what those things are, that do not so immediately concern us to put in practice.

IV. But, fourthly, tho', as I said, it is our Saviour's laws that give force and obligatoriness to his example, yet this doth not hinder but that we may likewise receive great benefit and advantage, and sometimes directions also, from actions of his, that, in strictness, we either cannot, or are not bound to imitate. For all these actions of his, both those that were wholly miraculous, and those that related to, and were pursuant of that public office that was committed to him, and those also that seemed the most indifferent and arbitrary, and in which he hath given us no command: I say, all these do mightily help us to make a judgment what manner of person our Saviour was; what his spirit, and temper, and qualities were. Now certainly in these we are bound always, and without exception, to imitate him, because he himself hath over and over again commanded us so to do; tho' we are not bound to do those particular actions by which that spirit and temper, and those qualities were expressed. So that take any action of our Saviour's, that is recorded in the whole gospel, whether it be such a one as we are bound to imitate him in, or such a one as we are not bound, yet it will be, some way or other, of great use to us in the conduct of our lives.

I shall explain my meaning in two or three instances.

When we consider the nature and kind of those many wonderful works that our Saviour wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, and find they were not merely signs and prodigies, and such supernatural operations, as did only tend to amaze and astonish people (as those were that are said to have been wrought by Apollonius Tyaneus) and likewise that they did not consist in judgments, and in executing the vengeance of God upon sinners and wicked men (as did those miracles which Moses really wrought, when he brought the children of Israel out of the Egyptian slavery) but they were all of them miracles of mercy, actions of kindness, and charity, and beneficence to mankind; that though they were primarily intended to shew that he was a prophet sent from God, yet they were done in such a way, that still somebody or other had benefit by them: either some blind man was restored to his sight, or some sick man cured, or some lunatic brought to his right wits, or some hungry man fed, or the like. I say, tho' we cannot propose to ourselves to imitate our Saviour in these miraculous works of his, yet we may, from the nature of these works, be notably instructed what kind of spirit our Saviour was of, and what kind of dispensation that was that he came to set on foot in the world. It appears plainly from hence, that our Saviour was a preacher of mercy, and a lover of mercy; that he came to save men, and not to destroy them; that his kingdom was to be a kingdom of love and peace; and that he himself was so far from being wrathful and vindictive in his temper (tho' never man was more provoked than he was) that on the contrary he

he was beyond all expression kind, and benign, and compassionate, and long-suffering, and took the greatest delight in the world to do good to all that came in his way.

Now this very observation cannot but be of great use to us; for it will teach us to set a higher value upon those qualities of beneficence and charity, and will let us see that we are not of the christian spirit, if we do not study to do good to all, according to the ability that we have; and that, tho' we cannot work miracles for the relief of necessitous and miserable persons, as our Saviour did, yet we should be as kind and as serviceable to them as we can.

Thus again; When we consider that action of our Saviour's, of driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, we cannot but from hence observe, what a great zeal our Saviour had for the honour and the reverend usage of places dedicated to God's service; and how concerned he was, that they should not be profaned, and put to a common use. Now tho' this action of his (as I said) will not warrant us to do the same, because we have not the same authority that he had, yet it will teach us, that we ought every one of us to behave ourselves reverently in the house of God, and in our sphere, and as far as we lawfully may, to do our endeavours to vindicate both places and things that appertain to God as much as we can from profanation and contempt.

Thus again, When our Saviour washed the feet of his disciples; this action of his doth not pass any obligation upon us to do the same, in a literal sense, either to our servants or friends: yet it plainly shews what a mighty stress he laid upon all actions of humility, and condescension, and obligingness, in that

for the recommending such actions to us he would stoop to so mean an office as the washing his disciples feet. Now this will still add a greater weight to the command that he hath given us in this matter. For thus we are to reason (as he himself applies this action, and it is such a reasoning as hath the force of a demonstration). If Jesus Christ, our great Lord and master, descended so low as to wash the feet of his servants, then sure the best of us ought not to think ourselves too good to serve our brethren even in the meanest instances.

Lastly, Suppose any of us, in a case where our rights and privileges are concerned, should be doubtful how we are to behave ourselves, whether we should insist upon them, or whether we should depart from them; and the case is such, that we have no express command of God to determine us either way: Why now in this case we have an example of our Saviour, that will be of great use to us, because it shews what kind of principles he himself then acted by, tho' he gave no command in the matter. For when the tribute-money towards the repairs and service of the temple was demanded of him by the Jewish officers, tho' he made it appear to them that he was not obliged to pay it, as being, by a peculiar privilege and personal right, free from that imposition, yet rather than offend them (as he expresses it) rather than do a thing that men might make an ill construction of, and that might encourage others to refuse the payment of their dues, he orders St. Peter to lay down the money they demanded, tho' yet a miracle must be wrought before that money could be come by. See this history in the 17th of St. Matthew, ver. 24.

Here.

Here now is an everlasting rule given to all christians, how they are to behave themselves in such cases as these, namely, that it is better to depart from our rights, than from our charity; and that privileges are not to be insisted on against a public good, or when the insisting on them proves matter of scandal, or gives ill example to others.

The sum of what I have said upon this head, comes to this: Though the general rules and measures of our following Christ's example be his laws and precepts, yet all his actions, if we do not so much attend to the particular action, as to the mind and spirit with which it was done, will be of wonderful use to us, both for the reforming our judgments, and directing our practice, and for the encouragement of us in all godly and holy living. We ought in all instances to be of the same spirit and temper that our Saviour was; and if we are sure that we are in the same circumstances that he was, then to do as he did. And in any case that happens to us, where we have no direct law of our Saviour's to guide ourselves by, we may then have recourse to his example (I mean the example of his genius and temper) putting the question to ourselves, How would my Lord have done in this case, had he been in the same circumstances that I am now in? And if we resolve sincerely to act, as we believe he would have done in the case, according to those notices we have from the history of his life, of his humour, and qualities, and temper, there are few cases wherein we shall fail of good direction.

V. My fifth proposition about this point is this: In a matter where Christ hath laid his commands upon us, yet we are not bound to come up to the precise measures of our Saviour's life: We are not oblig'd

lig'd to that degree of exactness and perfection in our actions that he attained to: It is enough for us, that in these matters we follow him as far as we can; that we endeavour to imitate him according to our measures, tho' we never reach that excellency, that heroic virtue that he gave proof of in all his actions.

The reason of this is plain. As our Saviour was an extraordinary person, so the instances he gave of his virtue were sometimes extraordinary also. And the duties he recommended to others, he himself performed, not only in full perfection, without any mixture of sin and infirmity, but also sometimes in such instances, and with such circumstances, as the weakness of our present state, and our course of life in the world, will not allow us to imitate.

To give an instance of this: He was much in his devotions to God: So ought we, because it is a plain command: But he was so intense and fervent in those devotions, that we may reasonably believe no wandering thoughts, no distractions of mind did ever discompose or interrupt him. Why in this too we should imitate him as far as we can. But yet to attain to the same degree of fixedness and fervency of spirit, we must never expect, and therefore certainly we are not bound to it.

But further; so great was the ardor and flame of his devotion, that he spent whole nights in retirement and prayer to God, as the gospel informs us. But now for us to think ourselves obliged to do so, would be very unreasonable, and might draw great inconveniencies upon us. It is sufficient for us that we be as earnest, and as diligent, and as frequent in our devotions, both public and private, as our strength and our necessary occasions will allow: But to tie up ourselves

elves rigidly to so many hours, or to whole nights of prayer, in imitation of our Saviour, is more than sometimes our constitution will bear; or if it would, there is no obligation upon us to do it.

VI. Lastly, To all this, let me add one proposition more, and then I have offered all that I have to say upon this argument. And it is this:

That in those very particular actions of our Saviour, that he hath obliged us to imitate him in, yet, as to the circumstances of them, he hath left us at liberty, and we are to govern ourselves by reason and prudence; or by the custom of the country where we live; or by the laws of our superiors.

Thus, for instance; our Saviour at his last supper took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, *Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me.* And so likewise the cup after supper. This action now the ministers of the gospel are to imitate our Saviour in as long as the world lasts, because he hath solemnly commanded that they should do so. But they are not bound to imitate him in all the particular circumstances of this action of his: they are not bound, when they celebrate this holy supper, to do it just in the same manner, and at such a time of the day, and in such a sort of place, as our Lord himself did, because this is no where commanded either by Christ or his apostles; nor indeed are these things at all of the essence of the action, but particularly separable from it, and adventitious to it. I the rather chuse to mention this instance, because it hath afforded matter for many scruples and much dispute in our days. How comes it to pass (say some) that you of the church of England oblige all those that receive the sacrament
among

among you, to receive it in the posture of kneeling? Is not this contrary to the practice of our Saviour? Did not his apostles receive it at his hands in a different posture, namely in a table posture, and not in a praying posture? And is not every religious action of our Saviour's to be imitated as far as we are capable of imitating it? This is the great argument that is brought against our usage of kneeling at the sacrament; and is of such force with some, that, upon account thereof, they dare not join in our communion.

I will not here enter upon a vindication of the unexceptionableness, lawfulness, decency, and antiquity of this posture in receiving the sacrament, and the fitness of it above all others, but shall just consider the matter so far as my present proposition leads me to speak of it. And that which I would say, is this: Those people that make the objection against kneeling that I have now mentioned, do not seem to consider the difference of an action, and the circumstances of an action. Gesture or posture is not an action, but the circumstance of an action. Let us therefore be never so much bound to imitate our Saviour's or the apostles actions, yet it doth not from hence follow, that we are bound to imitate their gestures or postures in those actions. And if any will affirm that we are, they ought at least to give us some sort of proof for it, either from scripture, or the sense of the primitive church. The scriptures, I am sure, can produce none; and the primitive church, if we may judge of their sense by their practice, is quite against them.

But I wish those that insist upon this, would give me an answer to this question: Why should we be more obliged to imitate the posture of our Saviour and

his.

his apostles, in receiving the holy sacrament, than to imitate the time, the place, the habit in which they did it? Ought there not to be as much regard had to these circumstances in any action as to the former? Are they not all of equal moment and consideration? If I must be bound to partake of the holy supper only in that posture in which it was instituted, and taken at first by our Lord and his apostles, then I must likewise, by parity of reason, be bound to receive it in such a place as they did, that is to say, not in a church, but in a chamber. I must be bound to receive it at the time that they did, that is to say, not in the morning and fasting, but after supper. The minister that gives it me ought to have on such a habit as our Saviour had, that is to say, a long woven robe without seam, and not a gown or surplice. But now since none do think themselves obliged to observe these things, why should they think themselves so tied up as to the other? unless they can shew that there is something peculiar and particularly obligatory in this circumstance of gesture, which there is not in the other three. But this no man has ever yet shew'd, nor, I believe, ever will.

But I would farther ask these our brethren, Do they themselves observe that law which they would impose upon others? Do they use that gesture in taking the holy supper that our Saviour and his apostles did? If what they say be true, namely, that the apostles received the sacrament at our Saviour's hands in a table posture, then I am sure they do not. For the posture which our Saviour and his apostles used in taking their meals, was not sitting, as we practise, but lying or leaning on a couch: as may be proved from several texts of scripture; and particularly from the
account

account that is given by St. John, of this very last supper of our Saviour's. But now I never heard that any of our brethren used to receive the sacrament in this posture, but they do it either sitting or standing, which is a quite different gesture. But in answer to this they say, that we are not obliged to observe precisely that particular posture that our Saviour used, but only in general, that posture which is used at meals, because he did so. Now the custom of our country is, to take our meals sitting, and therefore, in using that posture at the sacrament, we do sufficiently follow our Saviour's example.

To this I reply first, That this is *gratis dictum*; those that say this, can give no reason why they say so. If the principle they build their notion upon will hold water, it will every jot as much prove the necessity of imitating Christ in the particular posture he used, as of imitating him in the general, that is to say, observing the common table posture used in our country.

But further; If the general received posture at meals be the only allowable posture of receiving the sacrament (as must be concluded from this doctrine, if any thing can be concluded from it) then what will become of them that receive the sacrament standing (as many do) that is no more the common posture at meals than kneeling is. It is sitting that hath universally prevailed in our country; and therefore to receive the sacrament standing, or in any other posture but sitting, must, according to this doctrine, be irregular; which yet, I hope, none of them will affirm. But lastly, to conclude; Pray let this be consider'd: Why should the custom of any country be sufficient to make standing or sitting to come in the place of ly-

ing or leaning at the sacrament, and yet the public law of a nation shall not be able to do as much for kneeling? Shall not a law made by public authority, and confirmed by long usage of the church, have the same force to establish kneeling in the place of sitting, (there being no more unlawfulness in the one posture than in the other) as a custom brought in by little and little, and without any public authority, had to bring in sitting in the place of leaning?

But I am sensible I tire you with being so long upon this head. All the apology I have to make, is, that I thought it would serve some purpose to make this matter as plain as was possible.

I have now done with my cases of conscience concerning the extent of our obligation to follow Christ's example, which, you see, I have resolved in six propositions.

The next thing I am to do, is to propose some of those virtues which our Saviour was most eminent for, and which are of the greatest use in human life, and seriously to recommend them to your imitation.

I pray God give a blessing to what has been said.

Now to God, &c.





S E R M O N III.

Christ's piety, and diligence, and charity.

I P E T. ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.

HAVE made two sermons upon this text. In the first of them, I laid before you in general the great obligation that lies upon us to follow our Lord's example. In the second, I endeavoured to shew the extent of this obligation; how far, and in what instances Christ's life was an example to us; in what cases we are obliged to the imitation of it, and in what cases not. I now come to the third thing I proposed upon this text, and which indeed is the principal thing I intended, when I first pitched upon it; and that is, to give a more particular account of our Saviour's life, as it was designed for an example to us; and to draw some sort of picture of him, as to those virtues and qualities which he was most eminent and remarkable for, and in which he chiefly proposed himself to our imitation, and most earnestly to recommend them to your practice.

And

And indeed very great benefits and advantages shall we reap to ourselves by seriously employing our thoughts and meditations upon this subject. Oh! what a mighty check would the frequent consideration of our Saviour's holy and immaculate life give to the temptations of vice and lust, with which we are daily assaulted; and how powerful a spur and incitement would it be to us, vigorously to pursue all manner of virtue and holiness! We should think no attainments too big for our courage and endeavour, so long as we had but the Holy Jesus before our eyes. To consider what victories he obtain'd against sin and the world, and the kingdom of darkness, would inspire us with resolutions worthy of those that pretend to be the followers of so great a master: Nay, we should not only receive encouragement, but also very considerable assistances and directions for the conduct of ourselves in this christian warfare, from a due consideration of this example of Christ. If we were thoroughly instructed in the spirit and temper of our Saviour, it would be hard to impose upon us with any false notions of religion, or new-fangled modes of worship. We should be able to give every duty its just value, and not be apt, as it too frequently happens, to lay a greater stress upon some things than God has laid upon them, and to make others more inconsiderable than they really are in God's account. In a word, we should not want a very good and useful rule to steer ourselves by in all cases and circumstances that we happen to be engaged in, where the express laws of God seem either to be short, or too obscure. Let us all therefore be diligent and frequent in reading the gospels of the New-testament, wherein the history of our Saviour's life is recorded.

And

And let us from hence thoroughly acquaint ourselves with the manner of his conversation, and observe what a person he was; what kind of genius and disposition he had; what were the great ends and designs he pursued in all his actions; what duties of religion he was most zealous in; how in such and such occurrences he behaved himself: And when we have so done, let us, in these things, seriously propose him to our imitation; so shall we not fail of the aforesaid benefits.

Now, if we consult those sacred writers, we cannot, in the first place, avoid observing how devout a person our Saviour was; and that both in public and private. Of his devotions in public he gave a very early instance, when being brought to Jerusalem by his parents (which was when he was but twelve years old) he constantly frequented the temple: That was the place where they found him after they had three days missed him, being in their journey homewards. And when they told him how long they had been seeking him, and seemed to complain that he had absented himself from them, his answer is very remarkable, Luke ii. 49. *How is it, saith he, that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my father's house?* Our translation doth indeed render it, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* But this sense, in the judgment of the most learned critics, doth not so well suit with the signification of the words: The phrase ἐν τοῖς τῶ πατρὸς μου, being most naturally to be expounded *in my father's house*; and so some of the best interpreters, both antient and modern, have translated it. This then is our Saviour's answer: Ye needed not, O my parents, have gone far to seek me; for if ye had well considered either the office I am

designed for, or the duty I owe to my heavenly Father, ye might easily have concluded that his house, his holy temple, was the place where ye might have found me, it being there that my business chiefly lies. And what he now declared, he made good in his practice all his life after. He was constantly present at the public assemblies appointed by law for the worship of God in all places where he had his abode. Nor do we ever find, that either he himself held separate religious meetings from the established Jewish church, or encouraged others so to do. On the contrary, when he was in the country, he failed not to frequent the synagogues on the sabbath-day, which were the places of public worship there. And when he was at Jerusalem, he was, as he himself tells us, *daily in the temple*: tho' yet he knew that the synagogue worship was not commanded by any express law of God but was only of human institution. And as for the temple, tho' it was a place of worship of God's own appointment, yet he knew, and declared that the service of it was just upon the point of expiring, and that the time was coming when men should no longer worship there, John iv.

How religious was he in observing all the solemn festivals of the Jewish church, not only those that were of God's appointment, (as the sabbaths, and the three great feasts of the passover, pentecost, and the tabernacles) but those also that had no other authority but what the laws of the land could give them? As we have an instance in the feast of the dedication, for the solemnizing of which we find our Saviour making a journey to Jerusalem, tho' yet that festival was only of human appointment. John x, 22.

How

How zealous an assertor was he of the reverent usage of places devoted to God's service? For he would not endure that the house of God should be put to a common use, but whipped out those that bought and sold in the temple (tho' yet it was only such things they bought and sold as were for sacrifices and oblations to God) declaring that the house of God was a house of prayer to all nations, and therefore ought not to be made a place of merchandize.

How ready was he to submit to all the rates and taxes that were imposed for the repairs of the temple, and the defraying of the charges of the public worship there? Infomuch, that tho' he was very poor, and was besides a privileged person, yet he would be at the expence of a miracle rather than not pay the half shekel that was demanded of every son of Israel, as a tribute to the house of God. Matt. xvii. 24.

Any one now that reads and considers these passages of our Saviour's life, cannot but see a wide difference between his principles, and temper, and carriage in these matters, and those of many of his followers in our days. Several there are among us that would be thought christians, who are so far from being duly and constantly attendant on the public worship of God, that they rarely join in it at all, except invited by curiosity, or to save themselves from the reproach of being infidels, and of no religion. Others are zealous for a public worship, and do constantly attend it: But unhappy it is for them, and for us, that we cannot worship God in the same way, but are parcelled out into several communions. Sure, every good man should think, that it is not a little thing that should divide us from the established church, when he considers that our Saviour paid such regard to the pub-

lic establishments, that he made no scruple of communicating in the services and liturgies of the temple and synagogue of his time; which yet certainly were not the perfectest and most unexceptionable, since the Scribes and Pharisees had the chief management of them.

I might go on in comparing our Saviour's practices with some modern ones, and shewing the difference between them as to all the other instances I have mentioned out of his life: But I take no delight in such a subject, and therefore will pursue it no further.

All that I meant by the passages I have quoted, was, to give you some kind of taste of what nature our Saviour's public devotion was; from whence you may easily gather, that if we mean to copy out our Saviour's example, and to be devout as he was, it will concern us to take all opportunities, that our occasions will allow us, of worshipping God in public, and not think it sufficient to say our prayers in private. It will concern us, especially on the solemn days appointed for this end, never to absent ourselves without very great reason. It will concern us likewise to worship God in public, according to the laws and constitutions of the place where we live, unless it do plainly and evidently appear to us that there is something in the established worship that we cannot join in without sinning against God. It will concern us also, when we are at the public assemblies, to behave ourselves decently and reverently, as remembering we are in the presence of God; and at all other times likewise to make a difference between the house of God and houses to eat and drink in, as St. Paul distinguishes them. Lastly, it will concern us to contribute, according to our measures and proportion,

to the maintenance of a decent solemn worship of God among us. All these particulars may, I think, be gathered from these passages of our Saviour's life that I have now quoted to you.

These instances may serve to give you a taste of our Saviour's devotion in public, and of the nature of it, and of what principles he was acted by, and what his temper and carriage was in matters relating to the outward worship of God. Application hereof I make none. I leave that to be made by every one's self, as he finds occasion for it.

But farther, which deserves our special consideration : Our Saviour was not more exemplary in his devotions in public than he was in private ones. He was much conversant with God by prayer and meditation. He frequently took occasions of retiring himself from all business and company, that he might the more freely contemplate, and the more intensely fix his thoughts upon spiritual things, and the more ardently pour out his soul to God, and enjoy communion with him ; and very considerable portions of time did he spend in such devout privacies. When the time came that he was to enter upon his office, which was at his baptism, we find he prepared himself for it, by a retirement of forty days, which he spent in fasting and prayer, in conflicting with the devil, and in all the exercises of faith, and trust, and devotion towards God, (in imitation of which our forty days fast of Lent was appointed.) Here he gained his first victory and triumph over the devil and his kingdom ; and here he experienced all the sweetness of an uninterrupted converse with God and angels, and found the influences of it his whole life after.

And as he thus began the great work committed to him, so in the same manner he carried it on, though never any lived a more public life than he did; though never any was more crowded with company, or had his hands fuller of business than he had; yet nevertheless he would either find, or make, his times for his privacies and devotions: If he could not have it in the day, yet would he take it from his rest in the night; nay, sometimes in such portions as to continue a whole night in these his retirements, as you may see in the 1st of St. Mark ver. 35. Luke vi. 12.

This practice of our Saviour's may convince us how necessary it is that we should be frequent and diligent in the performance of our private devotions; that we often take occasion to abstract ourselves from worldly business, that we may the better be at leisure for pious thoughts and meditations, for devout prayer and other religious exercises. If our Saviour found it needful so to do, who had attained to the perfection of virtue, who had a constant presence of mind, who was master of himself and his business, and could not be supposed easily to be prevailed upon by any temptation either from without or within; how absolutely needful will it be for us to put this duty in practice, who are pitiful, sorry, weak creatures, apt every moment to be distracted by worldly objects, and to be drawn away by the temptations and allurements of sin that are round about us.

People may imagine what they please about the mighty feats that may be performed through the strength of a good resolution. But when all this is done, they will find that there is no getting such a victory over their lusts and corruptions; no living such a christian life, as the gospel requires of us, without the practice
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of earnest and ardent prayer to God, and a constant attendance to reading and meditation, and other such devout exercises. Though we have formed our purposes, as we think, never so strongly, and doubt not but we shall be sufficiently able to stand upon our guard; yet, if we do not daily apply ourselves to the throne of grace for strength, and influence, and support; if we do not frequently take times to recollect, and renew our resolutions, and fortify our minds by strong consideration, by repeating to ourselves the great obligations we have to God, and the absolute necessity there is of forsaking our sins, and pursuing a course of virtue and holiness; and lastly, by fixing our thoughts on the vast, immense rewards that await us at the end of our pilgrimage, if we behave ourselves worthily: I say, if we do not daily give ourselves to the practice of these things, how good soever at the present our intentions and purposes may be, yet there is little hopes we shall make any great progress or advancement in christianity, but shall at last insensibly sink down into a state of carelessness and indifferency as to those matters, if not return to a worldly, sensual, or vicious life.

But, secondly, let us propose our Saviour to ourselves as a person that, as he was very devout towards God, so was he also very diligent in the business he had to do in the world. He did not so spend his time in solitude and abstractions, as to hinder the discharge of any of the works of his calling. On the contrary, he lived more publicly, because of his frequent privacies. His retirements served for no other purpose, than to make him more active and vigorous in doing good when he came into company. He so managed his devotions towards God, that they were no obstructions,

but a great furtherance of the duties he owed unto men; and hereby, as he gave us the true notion and measures of a perfect life, so did he effectually confute the superstitious fancies, that too many of his followers have entertained concerning religion.

There are a sort of men, we know, in the world, that place the perfection of christianity in living at a distance from the concernments of the world. With them, to serve God in the best way, is to dwell in a wilderness, or to be cloistered up within the walls of a monastery, and to sit loose from all the business of common life. And so far hath this notion of religion obtained, that none are accounted among the number of the religious, but those that have taken upon them this kind of life. I wish there were not also some among us that are too much popish in this respect, tho' they yet sufficiently hate the name of papists. Are there not those that make religion wholly to consist in doing of duty, as they call it? If they do but go to prayers often enough, and hear sermons enow, and spend their time in reading godly books, and such other exercises and amusements, they think it is all that is required of them; it is with them the sum and perfection of religion.

God forbid that I should blame any body for doing these things! On the contrary, I would encourage every one in the practice of them: for, as I said before, they are necessary duties; so necessary, that it is impossible to be religious, to any great purpose, without a conscientious respect unto them. But this is the thing I blame, the thinking that we have no other work to do in the world but this. The being so taken up with these things, as to neglect all the other weighty business of our callings, and the duties
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which our families, our neighbours, our country do call for at our hands. As God hath not confined religion to cloisters and desarts, so neither hath he shut it up in churches or closets: But he hath so contrived it, that it may flourish in our cities, and in our fields, in our shops, and in our markets, even in all the places where our employment lies. God never intended that religion should be an enemy to business and an active life; but rather an instrument to promote the one, and encourage the other. We then serve God best, when we make our religious offices and contemplations a means to advance the diligent pursuit of our callings, and the doing good in the world. We are then most devout, when we most benefit others. And it is the most acceptable sacrifice to God, to be useful in our generations.

This, I am sure, was the thing that our Saviour proposed to himself: For tho', as I said, he had his time of retirement, wherein he gave himself up to meditation and prayer, yet the design hereof was, that he might the next moment more illustriously appear in the world as a pattern of good works. His devotions did not spend themselves in unprofitable ardors, and for his own content and satisfaction only, but they influenced his actions, and made him more busy, more vigorous in the discharge of that employment that God had committed to him: Nay, whenever the duties of his calling and the duties of devotion, properly so called, came into competition, we find that he made the latter give way to the former; as we have a famous instance in his preferring acts of charity before the exact observation of the sabbath. And he backed his practices herein with a memorable axiom, which he had made a standing rule in all

such cases, that *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* Not that to offer sacrifices was not a duty, or that God would refuse them when they were devoutly offered; but that of the two he rather delights in works of mercy; and that if both cannot come together, the former must give place; we then best expressing our love to God, *whom we have not seen*, when we express our love to men, *whom we have seen*, as St. John tells us.

And this leads me to the third thing, wherein we are to propose our Saviour to our imitation, (and it shall be the last I shall consider at this time) namely, his boundless love and charity.

Of all his other virtues and excellent qualities, this was most conspicuous in him, and this was that which he most recommended to our practice. His whole life was but one continued illustrious expression of kindness and charity. Never was any person in the world known to be so sweet, so obliging, so compassionate so kind, as was our Lord Jesus. How eager, how insatiable a thirst had he to do all the good he could to mankind! How did he seek opportunity to oblige and to benefit every body! He went up and down to see who stood in need of his presence and assistance, either for soul or body; and who so did, never failed of it. So intent was he upon doing offices of charity to others, that he often neglected himself, and would rather deny himself the due satisfactions of nature, than that they should not be benefited. How many sick persons did he restore to their health, blind to their sight, and lame to their joints, and dumb to their speech, and possessed and distracted persons to their right minds? Nor was he less kind to the souls than the bodies of men. How zealous, how constant,
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how laborious, how indefatigable was he in preaching the glad tidings of God's grace and favour to all poor souls! How did he take every opportunity of making men better by his discourses! No conversation that he was engaged in, though the subject of it was never so ordinary and indifferent, but he would improve it to the purposes of doing good to mens souls, taking every occasion that offered itself in discourse, to raise up the minds of the hearers from carnal and sensible things, to spiritual and heavenly.

Oh, with what plainness and condescension would he instruct the ignorant! With what power would he convince gainsayers! With what freedom, and with what authority would he reprove vice and sin where-ever he found it!

Oh, how gently would he deal with weak persons, never breaking a bruised reed, nor quenching the flax that had the least smoak in it!

Oh, how affectionately would he embrace all those that came unto him, and how tenderly would he even weep over those that obstinately refused their own mercy! witness, the kind tears that ran down his cheeks when he beheld his incorrigible city. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (saith he) thou that killedst the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! but now your house is left unto you desolate:* and then the gentle Jesus wept. What should I say more of the large, intense, universal charity and good-will with which our Saviour endeavoured to oblige the world. The time would fail to reckon up the instances of it. The sum of all is, as he lived a miracle of love, so he died one. That same Jesus, who had every mo-

ment of his life been doing good to some one or other ; and that same Jesus, that had never received any other requital from the world for all this goodness, but affronts and injuries, contempt and reproaches ; yet this same Jesus, so far was his love from being abated by all this unworthy usage, that, as if what he had hitherto done for mankind had signified nothing, he offers up his precious life as a ransom for the world : He voluntarily submits to all the outrages that malice could invent, to lewd mockings, and buffetings, and scourgings, to an unjust sentence of an unjust judge, to a cruel, painful, ignominious death in ignominious company.

This did the most innocent, the most virtuous, the most noble of mankind do, that he might purchase happiness for the world, not for his friends only, but for his enemies, even those very enemies that thus contumeliously treated him ; and at the same time that they were expressing the utmost of their cruelties and malice against him, loading him with new torments, did not only forgive them, but with a generosity without example, prayed to God to forgive them also ; nay, and made excuses and apologies for them, *Father, (saith he) forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Oh, how heroical was this goodness ! How unparallel'd was this kindness ! Who can declare the greatness and the strength, the height and the depth of thy love, O thou great benefactor to mankind ! We can never utter it, but we stand amazed at it, and we will for ever adore it. O holy and immaculate Jesus ! Blessed, for ever blessed be thy glorious name, O thou king of love, for thy inexhausted treasures of love towards us, and the excellent example thou hast hereby given to us.

And

And now we have some part of the picture of our blessed Saviour, tho' it must be confessed it is very rudely drawn, and infinitely short of the original; yet these are the lineaments in which he himself desired chiefly to be expressed and represented to the sons of men. This is the temper, and these are the qualities which he was most of all to be known by, and which God most valued in him, and which he himself hath most laid his commands upon us to imitate him in.

And Oh, that we would so long and so earnestly fix our eyes upon this loving Saviour, as to be transformed into his love!

Oh, that we were so affected with his goodness, as ourselves to become all goodness, all kindness to our brethren! Oh, that this flame of love that was in him would seize upon our hearts, and utterly turn out of them all self-love and narrowness of spirit, that we, with as extended arms as Jesus, did embrace the whole creation of God! Oh, when will the time come, that, laying aside all piques, and quarrels, and contentions, all hatred and animosity, all parties and factions, all wrath, and bitterness, and evil-speaking, all malice and censoriousness, all sourness and moroseness of temper; we shall be kind and affectionate one to another, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, doing all the good we can, obliging all sorts of persons, as much as is in our power, being easy of access, ready to do kindnesses, relieving, according to our abilities, every one's necessities, and, as much as in us lies, setting forward the salvation of all men.

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This is to imitate Jesus; this is to walk as we have him for an example; and in vain do we call ourselves his disciples, if we do not thus walk, if we do not possess ourselves of this spirit and temper. If we would have recourse to Jesus himself, and desire to know of him what evidences he would have us give to him, and to the world, that we are truly his followers and disciples, he hath already resolved us, us, John xiii. 34. *Hereby (saith he) shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* And if we further desire to know of him how we must love one another, what kind of love he expects from us; he hath, in the foregoing verse, told us that also: *A new commandment (saith he) give I unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye love one another.*

Away therefore with all other marks of christianity that fall short of this. Let us have never so much knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel; let us have never so strong a faith in Christ, though it were even effectual for the removing of mountains; let us be never so orthodox in our opinions; let us preach and pray never so fluently and affectionately; nay, though we spoke with the tongues of men and angels; nay, though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give ourselves to be burnt for martyrs, yet, if we have not the true love and charity that was in Jesus, all signifies nothing. This the apostle St. Paul does largely and eloquently set forth to us in the whole 13th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians.

And so much for my third general point. Other particulars remain to be spoken to, which I shall

reserve to another occasion. In the mean time I will conclude this discourse with a collect of our liturgy :

Almighty God, who hast given thy only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace, that we may alway most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life, thro' the same Jesus our Lord.

To whom, with the Father, &c.





S E R M O N IV.

CHRIST'S humility, and meekness, and
acknowledging God in his actions.

I P E T. ii. 21.

*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow
his steps.*

THE last time, I gave an account of some
of those particular virtues and qualities
that our Saviour was most eminent and re-
markable for, and in which he chiefly
proposed himself as an example to us; and here the
first thing I instanced in, was his exemplary devotion,
both public and private; the second was his diligence
in the discharge of the duties of his calling; and the
third was his fervent love and charity to mankind. I
now proceed to some others.

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The fourth great instance, wherein we are especially to propose our Saviour to our imitation, is his wonderful humility. In this quality, and that other of meekness, (which never fails to accompany it, and of which I shall speak more by and by) he himself doth particularly recommend himself as a pattern to us, in that memorable passage in the 11th of St. Matthew, last verse, *Come unto me (saith he) all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

And certainly a greater example of humility and lowliness there never was, tho' he knew that both upon the account of the excellency of his person and the dignity of his office, he was the greatest of the sons of men, yet he made such condescensions as never man did.

Was it not an astonishing condescension for the greatest prince in the world, to make his first entrance upon earth in no nobler a guise and appearance, than as the son of a poor maid espoused to a carpenter, and to take up his first lodging in no better a place than a manger? Was there ever so great an expression of lowliness of mind, as that he who could command all the world, should become a servant to all the world? And yet thus did our blessed Saviour all the time he lived. He that was the sovereign of men and angels, yet took upon him the form of a servant. He, of whom God himself had said, *Let all the angels of God worship him*; and of whom it is said, that, *de facto, the angels of God came and ministred unto him*, yet saith of himself, that *he came not to be ministred unto, but to minister.* And this saying he made good in all the periods of his life;

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for while he was under the tuition of his poor parents, he faithfully served them, being, as St. Luke tells us, *subject unto them*. So subject indeed, that, if we may believe Justin Martyr, he submitted himself to follow his father's trade and occupation; and of this truly we have some intimation in the 6th of St. Mark. For whereas in other places he is, by way of reproach, called the carpenter's son, in that place he is called the carpenter; from whence one may probably gather, that, during his minority, he professed the same art that his reputed father Joseph did.

After he came to his own disposal, and to a more public employment, he still made good the character of a servant; he had nothing of outward pomp or greatness in his circumstances, that might attract mens eyes, and recommend him to the esteem of the world. On the contrary, the way of living that he chose, was mean and poor, his attendants a company of fishermen, his income and revenue what providence sent him and the charity of others bestowed upon him, living from hand to mouth, and waiting upon God for his daily bread. It is true, the beams of his divinity shone sometimes so brightly through this cloud of his outward circumstances, in the mighty works that he did, that the people were struck with admiration of him, and thought him worthy of a throne and empire, and would have invested him therewith. St. John tells us, that once they would by force have made him a king. But our humble Saviour would not so quit his innocent poverty and privacy, but withdrew himself from them, leaving them to guess at what he afterward declared to Pilate, that *his kingdom was not of this world*.

But

But the meanness of his appearance, and his contempt of worldly greatness, were not the only instances of his humility: indeed if they had, he had not been so recommendable to us upon that account; for tho' he might prefer a cottage before a throne, yet in that cottage he might be imperious enough among his own domestics. But so far was he from that, that after he had several times rebuked his own family for their contentions about precedence, and their disputes who should be greatest, telling them often, that he that was the least and humblest among them, should be the greatest in his esteem, he at last, in his own person, gives them such a surprising example of humility and condescension, as, if it was considered, would for ever put an end to all their ambitious thoughts and pursuits. He washed the feet of his disciples one by one, and told them withal, that the reason he did it for, was, that they might do so likewise one to another. *Ye call me* (saith he, John xiii. 13, 14, 15.) *Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.* O how ought the consideration of these things to take down that high spirit, as we call it, that reigns in too many of us, to abate that tumour of pride and ambition and vain-glory, which is too apt, God knows, to blow up our minds! Oh, what a rebuke hath our Saviour here given to all that we call great, and brave, and rich, and magnificent in the world! How little valuable in the eyes of God hath he, by this his example, made it appear to be; and how ridiculous hath he rendered those lofty looks, and that surly stateliness, that too often attend it!

Can any one that calls himself a disciple of Christ, and seriously reflects upon these passages of the life of his master, be easily proud of that wealth, or those titles, that fortune has given him above others? Who art thou, that thou shouldest value thyself upon the nobleness of thy birth, or of thy relations, when thy Lord was born in the stable of an inn? Who art thou, that thou shouldest pride it in thy rich cloaths, and thy great possessions, and thy splendid equipage, and thy sumptuous way of living, and despise all others that are inferior to thee in these respects, when he, whom thou adorest, was meanly clad, and lived in great poverty, and had not so much as a house to lay his head in? Who art thou, that thou shouldest be so difficult and inaccessible, and so mortally offended, if every punctilio of place, and ceremony, and address be not observed towards thee, when the person, by whose name thou callest thyself, and whose life thou pretendest to copy out, vouchsafed even to wash the very feet of his servants, and commanded thee to go and do likewise? Not that we are to think that these instances of our Lord's humility and self-denial do oblige any of his followers according to the letter: Far be it from any christian to think, that he is bound, by virtue of our Saviour's example in these particulars, to throw away his rich attire, or to take upon him a voluntary poverty, or to lay aside his titles of dignity, or to refuse those respects or distances that are due to his quality. No, no: christianity doth no way favour the principles of quakers or levellers; it certainly allows, and the constitution of human affairs necessarily requires, that there should be different orders and degrees of men; that there should be superiors and inferiors, and men of all ranks and qualities;

lities ; and that every man, according to his degree, should have his different way of living, and a different respect paid to him. Those that are placed in a higher sphere, ought to be distinguished by several outward badges and characters from the common crowd of mankind. And whoever hath a plentiful portion of outward goods allowed him in this life, may, without offence, freely enjoy them, not only for the supply of his necessities, but even for his conveniency and delight. A man may be a good christian, and yet wear rich cloth, and fare sumptuously, and have a great retinue, and receive the respects, and keep the distances that are due to the post and station he maintains in the world.

All that the example of our Lord calls for at our hands in this matter, is, that we do not one jot the more esteem ourselves, or undervalue others, upon account of these outward things ; but that we be affable, and courteous, and ready to serve others in the meanest instances, whenever it is in our power ; that we be poor in spirit in the midst of our wealth, or state, or bravery ; that we use this world as if we used it not ; that we keep our hearts so unintangled by it, so loose from it, that we never forget God, nor our neighbour, nor ourselves, so long as we possess it ; and are heartily willing to part with it the next moment, if the cause of God or virtue doth require that we should. Whoever is thus qualified, thus disposed and prepared, is a true follower of our Lord Jesus in his humility, and poverty, and condescension, let his outward circumstances and way of living be never so pompous and magnificent.

But besides our Saviour's infinite condescension, he gave us other evidences of a great humility, which
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it will highly concern us to imitate him in. He was perfectly dead to the praise of men, and studied only to approve himself to God. So far was he from ostentating himself, from catching at the applause of the people, that he seemed studiously to conceal all those qualities and actions of his that might procure it. When he had done any great work that was praiseworthy, he was so far from publishing it himself, that he often laid a strict charge upon those that had received the benefit of it, that they should tell no man. No man, with a thousandth part of his excellencies, and perfections, and heroical actions, ever made so little a noise in the world; nay, even then, when his virtues and wonderful works became so illustrious, that they could not be any longer concealed, yet even then he was so far from pleasing himself in this, or assuming any praise to himself upon account thereof, that, on the contrary, he attributed nothing to himself, but gave all to his Father, ascribing the whole glory to him. *I can do nothing* (says he) *of myself; the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own, but the will of my Father which hath sent me.* When the woman, being struck with admiration of his wonderful preaching, and his wonderful works, cried out in a transport, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!* See how he turns this acclamation, that seems to reflect some glory upon himself, to quite another purpose, namely, to the encouraging the by-standers in virtue; *Yea, rather* (says he) *blest are those that do the will of my Father.*

This now is that divine humility we are all to labour after. We are not to think them the humblest

persons that make the largest declarations against themselves, and entertain all companies with their own infirmities; for this possibly may be only an art to catch praise: no, nor those that are really sensible of their several defects, that know their own poverty, and how far a great many others do outstrip them in several accomplishments; for this is not always so much an effect of virtue, as of the soundness of a man's understanding; for it would argue the man to be a fool, if he had other thoughts of himself: Much less is it the perfection of humility to think one's self the worst, or the meanest, or the most contemptible of mankind; for it is certain such a notion of a man's self cannot be true in all instances; there can be but one of mankind that is the worst, or the meanest, or the like. And therefore, if all men be obliged, upon the account of humility, to think themselves that man, it is manifest that all of them, except one, hath false apprehensions of himself. And sure it can be no part of any man's virtue to think otherwise of himself than he really is. But he is the true humble man, and most imitates our Saviour, who, though he knows he is possessed of many excellencies and virtues, which perhaps others have not, though he knows he doth many commendable actions, which ought justly to render him esteemed and taken notice of by others; yet he is not at all the more puffed up for this; his designs are braver and greater than to seek himself in any thing that he doth. Vain-glory, and the desire of praise, is no ingredient in any of his actions. On the contrary, provided he but do the work that God sent him hither to do, and maintain the post in which he is placed, he cares not how meanly and contemptibly he be thought on in the world.

world. So far is he from being his own trumpeter, or from making popular applause the end of any thing that he doth, that so that the good be done, he matters not whether any body knows that it was he that did it: Nay, tho' instead of the acclamations of the neighbourhood, he should be pursued with their censures and reproaches, he is not a-whit disturbed, so long as that which aused them was well intended.

But tho' he be little concern'd for his own praise, and be indifferent whether he hath it or no, he is highly concerned that God have his. And therefore, as he very well knows and considers, that whatever virtue he hath, whatever good action he doth, is wholly owing to the mercies and favour of God; so is he ready always to attribute the glory of all to him, looking upon himself as a poor indigent creature, nay, as one that had been worse than nothing, had he not been made what he is by the divine bounty. So that, with the lowest prostration of his soul, he continually adores the riches of God's grace to him, acknowledges himself to be infinitely unworthy of the least of his mercies, and in every instance of his life, whatever he doth, whatever he professeth, whatever he suffereth, that any way seems to redound to his own praise, he refers it all to the goodness of his heavenly Father, continually saying with David, *Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.*

Thus have I given you some kind of description of the humble man, as our Saviour hath in his own person represented him. I now pass on, in the fifth place, to another thing, wherein he hath proposed himself to our imitation, and that is, his extraordinary meekness.

This,

This, as I said before, is one of those qualities that he would have us learn of him ; *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in heart*. And indeed, he that was so eminently humble, as has been said, must needs be a very meek person ; this virtue being a natural and necessary consequence of that : All anger, and wrathfulness, and hastiness of temper, being generally the effects of pride, and an over-weening conceit and fond love of ourselves. If we truly had those lowly thoughts of ourselves that we ought to have, we should not be easily provoked, or put out of our temper, by any thing that could be offered to us.

But to come to the point. Well might our Saviour bid us learn of him to be meek, for no one else could ever so teach us as he did. There was nothing of harshness or ruggedness in his disposition ; but we may truly say of him, that he was the quietest, gentlest, evenest-tempered man in the world. That which we call good nature, was in him in perfection. He would neither give any offence to others, nor take any offence at any thing that others could say or do to him. As he would not be provoked, so neither would he willingly provoke any. On the contrary, he was full of humility and courtesy, affable and sociable, ready to yield all innocent compliances to the persons with whom he conversed. So that in this sense he was a truly complaisant person, as we express, if we may use such a word of such a person.

His history affords instances enough for the making this good ; witness, his receiving little children to his embraces and benedictions, whom yet his disciples repulsed as troublesome : His treating kindly all that came to him, and answering their questions, though sometimes impertinent enough (except where they

proposed them on purpose for a snare to him): His conversing freely with all sorts of men, even publicans and sinners, and accepting invitations from them to their tables, whom the supercilious pharisees so much despised, that they would not come near them: His vouchsafing his presence even at a marriage feast, and even adding to the entertainment, by a changing of their water into wine, when their own provision of wine was spent. Thus gentle, thus complying was our blessed Saviour in all his conversation. Nor was he more studious to avoid giving offence to others, than he was careful not to take any offence at them: Tho' never any received greater provocations to anger and impatience than he did, yet never was he known to be moved thereby. His spirit always kept the same calmness and evenness, nor were ever any undecent passionate speeches heard to come from his mouth. How many interruptions in his discourses did he patiently bear? How much injurious contumelious language did he unconcernedly put up? Oh, how great was his mildness, when the barbarous inhospitable Samaritans shut their gates against him, and denied him the common civility of passengers! He took no notice of it, but meekly went his way. His disciples indeed took it not so well, but were for calling for fire from heaven (as Elias did) to consume the town; but our Lord was so far from approving their motion, that he sharply rebuked that spirit of revenge that was in them. *Ye know not* (saith he) *what spirit ye are of*; the gospel spirit and dispensation is not like that of Elias, but a spirit of meekness, and patience, and forbearance, and forgiving of injuries. This is the spirit you must be acted by, if you mean to be my disciples.

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And a great instance of this kind of spirit did he afterwards give us, when he was in the basest manner betrayed into the hands of his enemies by one of his own disciples and domestics. Instead of reproaching the traitor, or giving him bitter reviling terms, as most others in such circumstances would have done, all he said was, *Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?* And when at the same time, thro' the zeal of one of his servants in his defence, an officer that came to apprehend him happened to be wounded, so far was he from approving this act of passion, that he stretched out his hand and healed the man. And the same meekness of behaviour that he shewed at his apprehension, did he continue all the time of his trials, and to his death. No affronts that the rude soldiers could put upon him, no buffetings, no scourgings, no mockeries, no spitting upon him, no reviling terms, could in the least work him to any discomposure of spirit, or make him once complain, or so much as to give out one harsh word against those that thus treated him. So true was that which the prophet foretold of him, *He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair.* He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

Oh, what an example have we here of meekness, and patience, and gentleness, and long-suffering.

Oh, how can we hear or read these things of our Saviour, and not be ashamed and angry with ourselves, that we are so much unlike him in these qualities! How can we call ourselves his disciples, and yet continue of so froward, so peevish, so wrathful, so revengeful a temper as we many of us are! In good earnest, I doubt there are many among us that pass

for very good christians, that are exceedingly to be blamed upon this account; tho' they seem to be very well disposed towards God, and to have obtained some victory over many of their other sins and evil affections, yet this of anger, and fretfulness, and impatience, they fatally lie under. Every little thing is able to vex them, and quite puts them out of their humour, they will be angry upon the least occasion; a laughter, or a jest, an unexpected answer, an unforeseen accident, is sufficient to make them lose their temper; if a child be froward, or a servant be negligent, or those they converse with be impertinent; if any thing happens cross to their business, or a small loss doth befall them, or a little pain seize them, or the like, they are quite out of patience; and oftentimes they are put into a rage; and when they are so, they care not in how unseemly language they vent their passion. Oh, how far is this from the temper of the meek and patient Jesus!

But still further are they from it, and much more to blame, that make it a piece of greatness of soul and good-breeding to be quarrelsome, and implacable, and revengeful; that account it a point of honour to be sensible of the least affront, and not to put it up without full satisfaction. What, say they, pocket up an injury without a revenge! He is no gentleman that doth it. Whether that be so or no, I know not; but sure I am, he is no christian that doth it not. No, no; whatever our notions of honour be, if we mean to have any benefit of our christianity, we must be of the temper of the holy Jesus: We must be meek, and gentle, and peaceable, and long-suffering, neither provoking others, nor being easily provoked ourselves, rather suffering evil than doing any, nay,
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and doing good against evil; *For hereunto were we called* (saith the apostle in my text); *hereunto were we called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

And now I might proceed to discourse of some other particular virtues, which were very conspicuous in our Saviour, and wherein he left us a noble example to follow, shining forth as a light to the paths, and a lantern to the feet of all the ages and generations of the world; as for instance, his admirable courage and fortitude, his great prudence in the conduct of his life, for the bringing about the ends he proposed to himself; the ingenuous plainness and simplicity he used in all his conversation; and lastly, his hearty faith and trust in God, and intire dependance on him, and absolute resignation of himself to do his will in all things.

But to treat of these things particularly, would engage me in too long a discourse, (and I would finish my text at this time) and therefore I shall only now touch a little upon the last of them I now mentioned, namely, his continual respect to God in all his conversation; and with that I shall conclude.

It cannot but be taken notice of, that in the history of the great men among the pagans, who have been often recommended to the world for patterns of virtue, there is little of this divine temper of mind to be met with. The pagan heroes seem to be set out to us rather as self-sufficient independent beings, than as servants and votaries of God Almighty. We meet

with great instances among them of the moral human virtues; such as courage, and justice, and temperance, and gratitude, and moderation, and beneficence, and love to their country, and the like; which indeed we cannot deny to be noble and excellent qualities. But we find little in their story of spiritual and religious virtues, of their love to God, and zeal for his honour and service, and entire dependence upon him in all conditions of life: And yet these are the things that must adorn and perfect human nature, and most of all contribute to the happiness of the world, and of every man in it. This now was a great defect and inconvenience, that the world laboured under till our Saviour's appearance. Their notions of virtue were in a manner wholly calculated for the civil life; and a man among them might be accounted virtuous, tho' he was not sincerely pious: whereas in truth it is of the essence of virtue, that it should proceed from religion. That is the true virtue indeed, let the object of it be what it will, that is founded in a hearty sense of God, and love to him; that inclines a man to live well, and to do good actions, not only because it is decent and reasonable, brave and generous, convenient and useful so to do, but chiefly and principally because God requires it of us; it is his will and pleasure by whom, and to whom, and for whom we live, and tends to his honour and glory that we should thus exercise ourselves. This, I say, is the true notion and idea of that virtue which we ought all to labour after, and in which alone the happiness and perfection of all created natures doth consist: And this is that virtue which christianity (which is the only true philosophy) doth most affectionately and earnestly recommend to our pursuit; namely,

namely, to be so heartily persuaded of the being of God, and of his wisdom, power, goodness, and providence encompassing and watching over all creatures, and to preserve upon our minds such a constant and lively sense of these things, as to love God above all things, to dread his displeasure more than death, to trust in him, and to depend upon him continually, to resign up ourselves entirely to his conduct and government, to live always as in his presence, and to do all our actions, as much as is possible, with a design of recommending ourselves to him.

Oh, what a glorious example hath our Lord Jesus given us as to all these things! He did truly acknowledge God in all his ways; he set God always before him; and the design of all his actions was to do him service. It was, as he himself tells us, *his meat and drink to do the will of his father*. Nor did he propose any other end in all that he did, or all that he suffered, but to bring glory to God's name, and promote his honour in the world. He minded not himself; he had no regard or consideration of his own ease, or convenience, or reputation, or any other thing that is most dear to flesh and blood. But all his aims, all his studies were, that God might be glorified, that his honour and service might be advanced in the world. His whole life was but one continued expression of dependance on the divine providence; for he possessed nothing: nay, he had not so much as the common conveniencies of life to trust to; and yet he lived as cheerfully and contentedly by the faith he had in God's goodness, as if he had been possessor of the whole world. It was enough for his support, and enough too to repel the devil, when he tempted him with want of bread, to consider, that *Man liveth not*
by

by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. His meaning was, that God, if it pleased him, could preserve life without human means, and that was enough for him to be satisfied with his present condition. He had no will of his own; but whatsoever pleased God, that was his will; and even when the bitterest cup was given him to drink, that ever was mingled for any of the sons of men, I mean that dreadful agony which he underwent for our sins in the garden, and the painful death that followed it; tho' as a man, as partaker of the tendernefs of human nature, he was so terrified at it, that he could not forbear saying, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*; yet so entirely resigned was he even at that time to the will of God, that he immediately corrects the desire of flesh and blood in these words, *Yet, O Father, let it not be as I will, but as thou willest.* He would have God's will done, whatever it cost him.

What lessons now are we to learn from hence? Why, truly, I am afraid almost to number them, considering how the temper of most of us that are his followers generally stands. Oh, what a wide difference is there between us (even those we may account the best among us) and Jesus our Lord and master, as to these things! How narrow and selfish are our spirits! How little regard have we to God's will in all our concernments! Our way is to lay out ourselves upon a hundred things, and eagerly and solicitously to pursue those designs, but without any regard or deference to the pleasure of him that made us, and governs us. If our designs prosper, we are pleased: If we have what we desire, and can keep what we love, we are at ease; but if we be disappointed, or

if we happen to lose that dear thing we had set our hearts upon, why then we are angry, we are miserable, we are out of humour, like children, and it requires a great deal of time, and no small pains, to bring ourselves right again. Thus again, as to our trust in God, and dependance on him, we do all of us readily own it as our duty so to do in all circumstances; but, in the name of God, how do we practise it? Why, we are willing to trust God for our livelihood, so long as we have something to live on: We are willing to trust God with any other concern, so long as that concern goes on prosperously: But if our visible supports do chance to fail us, or if the thing we are concerned for seem to go contrary to our desires and expectations, why then our trust in God is gone, and we are as anxious, and as querulous, and as discontented, as if we were no christians; or, as if indeed there was no God that took care of our affairs. The truth is, most of us do live too much without God; though we talk much of him, yet we have little respect to him in our designs and actions. We say our prayers to him perhaps, and have our constant times of appearing before him for religious worship (and assuredly, as things go, even this is a great virtue.) But take us out of our devotions, I doubt God is not much in our thoughts; at least our love, our fear, our sense of him, doth not much influence either our words or our actions. Indeed our conversation, generally speaking, is so managed, as if we were no way concerned with God, had nothing at all to do with him, save just at the time we are making solemn addresses to him. But all this is infinitely different from the spirit and temper of our Lord Jesus, and the way that he lived in the world. If we
mean

mean to follow his example, we must be religious, as he was ; we must endeavour to possess our hearts with such a vigorous sense of God, and his presence and sovereignty over us, as most entirely to devote ourselves to his service ; so that the fear, and love, and sense of him, shall have some power and influence upon the government of our whole lives. We must make it the business of every day's conversation to serve him, and promote his interest in the world, and not think we have well acquitted ourselves towards him by now and then offering up a few prayers. We must acknowledge him in all our ways, by owning all the good we do enjoy or hope for to be the mere effect of his bounty ; by bearing patiently and quietly all the hard things we suffer, though, as we think, never so undeservedly ; by reposing our trust and confidence in him in all the extremities we are reduced to ; by applying to him for succour, or direction, or support, under all temptations and difficulties ; and lastly, by resigning ourselves entirely (as far as the imperfection of our present state will allow) to his will, being heartily willing to be whatever he would have us to be, being willing to do whatever he would have us to do, and being willing to suffer whatever he thinks fit to lay upon us. This is to love, this is to serve, this is to honour and glorify God, as our blessed Lord and Master did. This is to walk as we have him for an example. And indeed this, and this alone, is the true spirit of christianity, and the true principles from whence all the other duties of our religion, whether they respect our neighbours, or ourselves, will naturally flow. And for your encouragement to labour after such a frame and temper of soul, I will add this, that this is the certain and never-failing method,

thod, not only to sweeten all the labours and troubles that we weet with in this life, and to make our passage through this world, in all conditions and circumstances, easy and comfortable ; but also to anticipate the joys of heaven, to have some share of the happiness above, even while we live here below, through the ineffable peace, and contentment, and satisfaction, and pleasure, that will continually arise in our minds from the having our wills thus united to God's will.

And thus I have said what I intended about the life of our Saviour. God Almighty give a blessing to it, that we may all so consider this example which he left, that we may follow his steps.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

E N D of the FIFTH VOLUME.



100
The first of these is the
fact that the world is
not a uniform whole, but
is divided into many
different parts, each of
which has its own
character and history.
This is true of the
different nations and
civilizations of the world,
and also of the different
parts of the world itself.
The second is the fact
that the world is not
static, but is constantly
changing and
developing. This is true
of the different nations
and civilizations, and
also of the world as a
whole. The third is the
fact that the world is
not isolated, but is
interconnected. This is
true of the different
nations and civilizations,
and also of the world
as a whole. The fourth
is the fact that the
world is not perfect, but
is full of imperfections
and problems. This is
true of the different
nations and civilizations,
and also of the world
as a whole. The fifth
is the fact that the
world is not eternal, but
is subject to change and
decay. This is true of
the different nations and
civilizations, and also
of the world as a whole.





